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Eskimo Lamp dedication at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

Emily Brown (Ticasuk, 1904-1982)

June 29, 1976

Fairbanks, Alaska

Recording starts with background noise and audio testing.

Unidentified moderator welcomed everyone to the dedication ceremonies. She introduced a few people: Sam Kito, Tom Richards, and Roger Lang. Speaker President Robert Hiatt is introduced.

Robert Hiatt said it a pleasant opportunity to welcome everyone to the new Heritage Park and lamp. He said the park and the lamp were made possible under the inspiration and perseverance of Emily Ivanoff Brown. On the first or second day of his presidency Emily Brown and friends showed him what they had in mind for the Heritage Park featuring the Eskimo lamp. He remembers being on his knees in his office going over the plans. He gave his blessing to the plans. He said Emily Brown is a perpetual student and has a natural curiosity about the origins of her people and cultural traits. In order to understand her culture she has made a non-ending study of her people on the Bering Sea and Arctic Sea coast. She has interviewed the elders to discover her cultural background and where it came from so that she might begin to document it and others can learn from it. Her master's thesis was published, Grandfather of Unalakleet which was a culmination of her more formal education on this campus. Brown became aware that the Eskimo lamp was not only an object of great utility but also had great symbolism. Hiatt said Native women were judged on how they kept the lamp wick trimmed. Hiatt said Emily decided that she would reproduce lamps and learned ceramics on campus. They became very popular and she turned the business over to others. The lamp is symbolic of many things including everlasting light consuming the darkness. The Olympic Games are started by lighting a lamp, the eternal light on President Kennedy's grave is symbolic, and the light on the Unknown Soldier's graves portrays the futility of war. In the Caucasian race the light symbolizes education and knowledge. He brought up a few more examples. In the Eskimo culture it lights the darkness of the arctic winter and the windowless igloo. Emily Brown wrote a poem for the program brochure about the lamp. The Heritage Park also has symbolism. It brings the Native people of the north to the principle place of higher learning in Alaska. It stresses the oneness of all people in the social institution where knowledge dispels ignorance. Even the propane gas used in the lamp represents the natural resources of Alaska. This fuses Alaska's heritage with the bountiful resources of Alaska. He appreciates the park, the symbolism of the park and Emily Brown and others who have brought the park to fruition.

Unidentified moderator said it is a privilege to be a part of the unveiling of the Indian-Eskimo lamp. She said there are representatives from Natives throughout Alaska. Their Olympics runner will light the lamp. Willie Hensley will unveil the lamp and present a speech. The Olympic runner is Reggie Jolo who holds the championship for the high kick. She will introduce people who have been involved with the creation of the Heritage Park: Vera Kanashara, Elmer, Mr. Sikipik, and Dorothy Roos. She introduced Willie Hensley who is past-president of the Alaska Federation of Native and a native of Kotzebue.

Willie Hensley said he was happy to be on campus again. He had lived in McIntosh Hall when he attended college here in the early 1960s. He said he was pleased to be there to dedicate the lamp. He said Emily Brown wanted a symbol to represent the Eskimo people. He can recall a time when they did have to use seal oil when they ran out of other fuel. It provided light and was used as a cooking fuel in the past. He said there were days in Kotzebue when they didn't have power to provide heating and light in the community. There are still communities that don't have anything except gasoline lamps for power and light. He thinks the lamp will serve as a symbol of the struggles of the Eskimo people had to conquer the Arctic. They used their ingenuity, a spear, a bow and arrow, and a lot of courage. Other people have spent billions to be able to survive in the arctic. He thinks the lamp will symbolize those that came and conquered the arctic as a symbol to those who come to the university that the native heritage is alive, flourishing and will continue to be a part of Alaska. [unveiling of the statue and lamp]

Unidentified moderator thanked Reggie. She introduced Daphne Gustafson who will give a history of the lamp. Daphne Gustafson said throughout the history of the northern people of the Arctic the lamp has been the central focus of domestic life. The women have been the lamp tenders, the lamp keepers and the lamp owners. This scene will be recreated at the Eskimo Indian Olympics at the Patty Center. An Eskimo woman will be seen tending the seal oil lamp. An Athabaskan Indian woman will be seen tending the moose tallow lamp. It is only appropriate therefore that the idea for this great lamp was originated by an Inupiaq lady, Ticasuk (Emily Brown). In 1967 a group of Alaska Native students who were graduates of the University of Alaska in education organized what is now the Alaska Heritage Writer's Association. Membership of about thirty are scattered throughout the state. A few members are present for this occasion. She named the first directors and officers: Peter Three Stars, Dr. Walter Soboleff, Charleen Kumahol, Emily Brown, and Bob Aikens. During their first year their constitution, by-laws and goals of the organization were established. The overriding goal of the Alaska Heritage Writer's Association was to preserve the Alaska Native cultures indigenous to their statewide membership. Dual objectives were set to reach that goal. The first goal was to record and document the history every Alaskan Native village in the state of Alaska. Each member has been assigned to write his or her village history. The first volume has been completed, Grandfather of Unalakleet written by Emily Brown and published in 1974 with several printings. They hope each one of their books will be as successful. The second objective was to place an Eskimo lamp in its original form on the university campus and today the objective is met. The dream of ten years is a reality. She talked about the fund drive for the lamp. The largest donation came from the Calista Corporation. The rock was provided by the Army. Emily Brown designed the lamp in the typical shape of the Inupiat lamp. Stan Zelinsky created the mold. The Association offers their gratitude. She thanked Dr. Hiatt, Elaine Ramos, Dr. Cutler, Dr. Hilliard, Dr. Moyer, and Larry Huffle. She said they are most indebted to Emily Brown. The beauty and the light of the special lamp will have a beauty and meaning to all of them. The great lamp will also remind them of the spirit and the determination of Emily Brown. The lamp located at the gateway of the university will serve to remind them of the importance of the lamp in the past. Higher education has become a focus of her people and all Alaskan people.

Unidentified moderator introduced Emily Ivanoff Brown. Emily Brown said she was born a comedian and will sing a funny song. She thanked Dr. Hiatt for giving them permission to build the park. She sings Eskimo good man. She said Kobuk loves songs. It would take too long to tell you the history of the next song. She sings the song in Eskimo and in English. The unidentified moderator thanked Emily Brown. She said Emily Brown was born in Unalakleet and is of Eskimo and Russian descent. They appreciate the

dedication of Emily Brown to the Heritage Park. She thanked everyone for attending. She introduced Dr. Howard Cutler. She thanked Mr. Willie Hensley for speaking.

Howard Cutler said when they were in the program committee Emily asked him to say a few words. He said it is his privilege to represent the campus and to receive the lamp on behalf of the campus. It is the function of the university to help each of them to define their heritage, examine their heritage, and renew their heritage. They have a special privilege at the university over other universities in the world because of the rich heritages that they have with them, among them and reviving them every day. The lamp and the park are on the site of the famous college archaeological dig which connected the hypotheses of the land bridge between two cultures of the eastern world and the west. The university has done so much to revive the Alaska Native languages. Over 200 Alaska Native students have come to the university every year. He said there are nine Native students who have received advanced degrees at the university. The university has also recognized and honored three honorary degrees to Alaska Natives.