

EDMONTON EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE

photos by Barry Headrick

If you walk down into the bowels of the old Garneau Church hall, site of the downfallen Barricade, on any weekday between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., you'll find a kind of neat thing. In fact, you'll find 10 or so happy people who are happy because providence has allowed at last that they be permitted to do something that they consider to be truly worthwhile, and get payed enough to live.

They're also happy because they're doing a play that is nifty enough to have originated as a Cree Creation myth, called *A Dream of Sky People*, and they're doing it with the guidance and blessing of a real live Indian Shaman Chief, who plays enough tricks to keep the wolves awake, or at least on their little pointed toes.

AND NOW THE FACTS

Ramsy Hall, in Garneau Church, is now the working centre of a



semi-professional theatre troupe whose name is registered under the Corporations Act as Edmonton Experimental Theatre. Historical studies of the EET reveal that its roots stretch back to March of 1971, when a few of the city's drama freaks banded together to do something new, and the Edmonton Free Theatre was born. It survived on love and air and produced a play called *Junkyard*, and then last fall

received a grant from the Junior Arts Council, which was enough to get a show called *Soft Streetcar* on the road.

While all this was happening, a young lady named Isabelle Foord was busy thinking up ways of making this foothold permanent. Isabelle helped conceive, acted in, wrote for, and directed Free Theatre, and decided that the Local Initiatives people might accept a grant proposal to give the troupe means to support a season of production. Isabelle's proposal was accepted, and Edmonton Experimental Theatre went into operation as a semi-professional repertory group on a grant of some \$21,000.00, which should keep 'em going till about the 27th of May.

The present production of *A Dream of Sky People*, written by Isabelle Foord, is being presented on the 8th to the 15th of this month, under the direction of (you guessed it) Isabelle Foord. The cast of seven and the production crew of 10 are merrily working on the play, and cooking up a few schemes to bring drama into the general consciousness. They think the play will be a considerable success, it having been visited by about five major and countless smaller good omens, and also their having worked incessantly for about three weeks.

One of the aforementioned major omens was the timely arrival of Shaman Chief Kitpou, an Algonquin medicine man who makes authentic costumes, tells animal stories (four of the characters in the play are animals), and is generally looked upon as Spiritual Advisor of the Indian Way. He's also a Merry Prankster. Add Kitpou's energy to that of the rest of the cast



and it looks like the Theatre's first play is going to be quite special.

Incidentally, *A Dream of Sky People* was first produced by the Citadel—On—Wheels, directed by Irene Watts.

The theatre group is also busy with four workshops, a media forum, an Actor's Union Forum, a reading of feminist material, and a reading of the diaries of

Louis Riel, upcoming in March and April. Information on any of these events will be gladly supplied by someone in the theatre office at 433-1017. Please get involved, either as an audience or in one of the workshops. Theatre needs your support! So much for heavies. Guten Aben.

by an Idiotic Villiager

