

Sealaska elders "Speak to the the Future"

(Editor's note) In reprinting a portion of the text of "Because We Cherish You ..." with a transcript of a meeting held in the public school house of Juneau, Alaska, by request of Indian leaders on account of the presence of his honor, Governor John G. Brady (1898), the Tribal News hopes to offer its readers a contrasting view of Tlingit elders speaking then and now.

Though the content of the 1898 meeting is mostly about land claims, the intent in publishing the transcript is to give the reader an example of the oratory style of early Tlingits.

Both transcripts are published here courtesy of the Sealaska Heritage Foundation. "Because We Cherish You ..." Sealaska Elders Speak to the Future, transcribed, translated and edited by Nora and Richard Dauenhauer, is available from the Sealaska Heritage Foundation for \$10.

(In this excerpt, George Davis is speaking to Charlie Joseph, who had just finished telling how he came to be the custodian of his maternal uncles' ermine headdress, Killer Whale staff and Shark Tunic.)

George Davis: "I was reluctant. Yes. When you sang to the child of the Kaagwaan-taan it was only my mind that rattled its hand beside its temple. Yes. This is how I have weakened. Please forgive me."

Charlie Joseph: "Thank you. Thank you, son. Thank you."

George Davis continues: "Yes. Now. Yes. Yes. Now that you have stood up there, yes, from where people originate when the words of a song are just for them whoever the words of a song are for then he'd rattle his hand beside his temple, yes, he'd begin to move to its beat. Yes. To a

child when the words of a song are sung for him from where they began to know each other. Yes, whoever's child a person is. That is what you now performed. Yes. Thank you indeed."

(Here, he introduces Walter Soboleff)

His grandfathers usually called for him . . . "Is Kaajaakwti among his people?" Even when they can see him sitting in the crowd they would call for him then. Yes. "Here I am" is what he would reply. Yes. This is what you will imitate. Your grandfathers are here. Please make yourself a servant of them."

Walter Soboleff — "This program this evening is indeed a meaningful one to Tlingit culture. Kaajaakwti years ago never spoke English and I am taking that role tonight.

We wish to pay tribute and



Bold, inventive and highly graphic, the indigenous art of the Northwest Coast is distinguished by its sophistication and complexity. It is also comprised of basically simple elements, which, guided by a rich mythology, creates images of striking power. Art is just one segment of this culture that is well worth saving.

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indeed thank you many thank yous to the young performers who came before us tonight. I believe little did you realize the songs you sang were very close to the sacred songs of Tlingit culture.

As you were singing each piece they wanted to get up and dance in response at the proper moment. It was a moving experience for many of them. So moving sometimes that they felt like they should shed some tears. Because that is the heart of their culture which you were striking at tonight.

And so I wish to convey to each one of you dancers that for the time you put into it that you have gone into some meaningful things of this culture. That when my brother-in-law leaves this earth and others who are older leave you

may take their place.

I listened to your drumbeat and it was wonderful. I watched your dance movements and there's none better. I heard your singing and it was right up to par. And these are the things that come from the depths of the feeling of the people and you have those words.

And so in the name of my grandparents and my tribe and clan, which is the Dog Salmon Clan, the Aan X'aak Hit Taan people, I wish to convey also our heartfelt thanks just as though it's my tribe, my clan which set before you our dog salmon emblem in appreciation for what you have done and we put these up that you might see them that it might bring you good luck or good blessing and we would be blessed in return. Yei awe. Gunalcheesh."



The Sealaska Heritage Foundation, with help from a few of Southeast's elders, planned the traditional gathering for late February. (Back Row L. to R.): Judson Brown, William Johnson, Paul Young, Austin Hammond, Ira Booth, George Davis and Daniel Paul. (Front Row L. to R.): Helen Sanderson, Barbara Nelson, Willis Peters, David Katzuk and Paul Marks.