

Short film features story about Tlingit Raven myth

JUNEAU — "Raven looked around, and it was dark. There was no sun, no moon, no stars. That was the way it was back in those ancient days."

So begins "The Box of Daylight," a new short film produced in Juneau and recently released on videocassette.

This dramatic presentation from Sealaska Heritage Foundation portrays the Tlingit myth of Raven bringing daylight into the world.

It tells the story of how Raven, transformed into a human child, opens up three precious boxes owned by his grandfather, a wealthy old nobleman.

One by one, the stars, moon and the sun fly up through the smokehole and into the night sky.

"This myth can be looked upon as the awakening of a people regardless of who they are," said David Katzeek, president of the foundation.

"Many stories give the same message. This particular story gives a message similar to the story of Christ, but the storyteller is speaking to us in symbols," says Walter Porter of Yakutat, host of the program. "He is saying that at that time the world was experienced without spiritual knowledge."

The piece was adapted for film and co-directed by Juneau resident Dave Hunsaker, an internationally known playwright and director of the acclaimed "Yup'ik Antigone."

Chris Makua, Gary Waid and Diane Benson play the parts of Raven, the Old Man and his daughter in the program, while their "voices" are played

by David Katzeek and his mother, Anna.

The program was co-directed by cinematographer Lisle Herbert. His dramatic lighting and camera work add to the unique style of the production as staged by Hunsaker.

Janet Fries and Eric Eckholm, also of Juneau, produced the 8½-minute program. Their company, Pacific Communications and Marketing, is distributing the video for use in museums, classrooms and for home viewing.

The retail price for a VHS copy will be about \$10.95.

Bruce Kato, administrator for the Alaska State Museum in Juneau, sees this as the first of many legends in the Alaska Native community to be recorded in this format.

"It is a way of documenting and preserving Alaska's rich Native heritage of oral literature, dance and song," notes Kato.

The museum, co-sponsor of the project, is planning a special showing for the program at a legislative reception in February.



Raven, played by Chris Makua, is the main character in "The Box of Daylight."