



Performing for movie producer Percy Adland are, from left, William Tyson, Marie Tyson, Ben Snowball and Virginia Thomas.

Greatland Dancers audition for 'Salmonberries' movie

Members of the Greatland Dancers recently auditioned for background singing in the upcoming movie "Salmonberries," currently being filmed in Kotzebue.

Film producer Percy Adland traveled to Anchorage last month to hear Elders Marie and William Tyson sing. Other Greatland Dancers auditioning were Virginia Thomas and Ben Snowball.

Upon arrival, Adland explained that his movie will feature one contemporary number by "Salmonberries" star, K.D. Lang.

Adland plans the remaining soundtrack to consist of authentic Native songs, possibly a female solo along with the sounds of glacier ice calving and seals barking. Adland told the Greatland Dancers, "I'm interested in your music, but explain more how certain songs belong to certain families."

Snowball offered that in the Yupik culture, "A family may make a song, but they do not claim it. Other villages and families can use it also."

"The mourning song is the only one they own, and no one else can sing it," he said. "It is passed down from a man to his son. If a man has all daughters, then it has to wait until a grandson is born."

The Greatland Dancers sang, accompanied by their own drumming, as a group and also solo. Tyson explained the meaning of the Yupik lyrics as they finished each number. One song titled, "I'm so stupid, I can't sing," brought laughter from the group when translated.

"This humor, I love it — it's very subtle," Adland said.

Adland plans to return with sound engineers to record the Yupik songs later this fall. He felt the singing was very powerful and is considering using it for his movie.

Upon departure Adland contributed a donation toward the Greatland Dancers fund-raising effort so they may travel to San Diego Friday to compete at the National Indian Education Association Conference.