

Week in Juneau shows fun ... and style

By Ceceile Kay Richter
Tundra Times

Native Americans Emphasis Day was returned to Juneau March 10, after one year of absence, for a celebration involving Tlingit and Tsimpsian dancing, singing, music and regalia displays, and the sales of Native crafts and foods.

Festivities were broadcast live to Southeastern communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Sitka and Wrangell as well as Juneau over local public radio station KTOO-FM.

The Juneau Indian Studies Junior Tlingit dancers won awards for best overall performance, best singing group, and overall most entertaining, while the Juneau Tlingit Dancers were recognized for having the most traditional performance and dress.

The Haines Gei Sun Dancers, noted as the group that had travelled the farthest, were judged best dancers and best instrumentalists.

Unlike past years when grants brought performers to Juneau and paid for other costs, this year's effort was zero budgeted with dancers paying their own way from Hoonah and Haines.

Volunteer efforts were organized by Sylvia Romero, who acted as chair, Penn Goertzel, and Cy Peck, Jr. Participating organizations included the Alaska Native Sisterhood, Juneau Indian Studies, Juneau Community Schools, the Juneau Adult Education Center, the Juneau Inter-Tribal Club, KTOO, and AWARE, the local women's shelter.

Performers were judged by Ed Kunz, Alice Vavalis, Sue Wilson and Lynn Bohannon.

Crafts persons who displayed and sold their own work included several beadworkers. Their goods ranged from decorative but utilitarian moose and sealskin slippers, moccasins, vests and handbags, to ornamental hair pieces, tie clasps, barettes, earrings, clothing decorations, and a dance blanket.

This group included Mary Choate, Klukwan; Daisy Fields, Haines; Jerry Horton, Juneau; Tillie James, Angoon; Charlotte McDonald, Juneau; Emma Marks, Juneau; Mary Marks, Sitka, and Floyd Dryden Junior High Indian Studies students.

The veteran of the beadworkers was Bessie Visaya, 84 years old, a lifelong resident of Juneau, who does beadwork on seal, moose and deer skin the way her mother taught her.

May George had handicrafts

of another sort, dried seaweed, seal grease, and canned smoked salmon. In addition, Von Williams, a New Mexico Pueblo who has lived in Alaska since 1978, sold twice-fired and glazed Pueblo pottery.

Williams is a member of the Inter-Tribal Club, and organization of Lower 48 Indians who were busy selling Navajo fry bread.

The occasion was also an opportunity to view the just-released video tape, "Angoon One Hundred Years Later," by Angoon's Kootznoowoo Heritage Foundation with Juneau producer Larry Goldin. They received a \$20,000 donation from the Greens Creek Joint Venture, a mining operation on North Admiralty Island.

The television special documents, how last October, after a century of holding back its anguish, the traditional community on Admiralty Island commemorated the bombardment and destruction of the community on Oct. 26, 1882 at the hands of U.S. Navy troops led by Commander E.C. Merriman.

After the accidental killing of a shaman in the explosion of a whaling gun on a boat owned by the Northwest Trading Co., the Angoon community requested payment of 200 blankets.

Until two weeks before, the company had made reparations payments, honoring Tlingit law, when company-related deaths had occurred, but on an occasion then had refused to do so and the community did not press the issue.

But a shaman's death was something else. When the Tlingits persisted in their demands, the trading company panicked and asked for Naval assistance.

For whatever reason, Merriman, when he arrived on his battleship, asked for 400 blankets. The town could produce only 81.

The Navy shelled the town, and as it burned seamen came ashore and destroyed food caches and the village's canoes. Six children died that day in fires. Other villagers succumbed during the winter without shelter, blankets, boats and a store of food, but the community survived.

Through historical photographs, original works by Angoon artist Jo Ann George, animation, and recent film footage, the film tells of past events, last year's community commemoration and last year's refusal of the U.S. Navy to apologize to the village for the incident.



Charles Jimmie, Sr. of Haines.

PHOTOS BY LUDWIG LAAB



Harriet Knudson, left, of Juneau wears a Killer Whale clan blanket willed by her grandfather while Lillian Austin of Juneau models an old button blanket.