

# Festival of Native Arts draws thousands to UAF

by Steve Kakaruk

Tundra Times

Organizers of Fairbanks' Festival of Native Arts housed, fed and successfully brought Alaska Natives, non-Natives and American Indians together from all four corners of Alaska for the thirteenth year.

FNA staff boasted there would be no admission fees many years ago during those first gatherings. Donations, contributions and volunteers helped carry out the tradition of free admission to festival goers.

In the past FNA organizers have never charged admission or registration fees. Often being told to charge some sort of entry fee, festival organizers sought donations and other

contributions instead as they have done before.

College students from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks shared the work and gave up many hours long before the welcome address of the Thirteenth Annual Festival of Native Arts last Wednesday commencing the four-day festival.

The events during the festival are sponsored and organized by the UAF students. Also there are many support groups that contribute in some way or another. Volunteers, grant writers, security staff, drivers, call them what you wish. If not for their support things may not happen according to plans.

Song, dance, theatre, artwork and traditional Native foods attracted thousands to the festival of Native Arts.

Timothy Gologergen, Nome/Saint Lawrence Dancers said, "this group here singing now (King Island Dancers) are very good, we will sing songs from our region too; we're very anxious to perform." The Nome/St. Lawrence and King Island group can perform the same songs as many do from nearby regions.

Tuma Theatre, UAF's Performing Arts group shared scenes of a Princess seeking the magic stone. The Shaman's wisdom instructed the Princess to use the stone so that she may give birth. Children in the front row at the center of the stage were amazed during the performance and cheered on the Princess as she took the magic stone in her hands and raised it. The powers to give birth were hers



*These elderly Women appeared to enjoy the Grand entry of a Dance Group during the Thirteenth FNA.*

photo by Steve Kakaruk

forever and protected her from then on.

Outside UAF's auditorium Native artists talked to customers seeking authentic handcrafted items outside of the auditorium. Many were old friends who shared and answered questions of their artwork. Hannah Solomon displaying her beaded garments of dance slippers, gloves wallets and belts shook hands with strangers she didn't know. Artists are often recognized for their art abilities as Hannah's case and are recognized. Solomon said, "this fella here, he came up to me and said

hello out of nowhere." She continued, "I never met him before but he said, 'I know who you are' and introduced himself."

Inside the West Valley School cafeteria more volunteers prepared Native foods. Three groups had already moved into the cafeteria. These groups were scheduled to perform between five and seven when the majority of people would sample Native foods from all regions of Alaska.

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*Greatland Traditional Dancers sample greatland traditional foods at the potlatch.*

photo by Steve Kakaruk

# Festival of Native Arts

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Nick Brokeshoulder, Leadsinger for the Northernlights Intertribal Pow-wow club said, "after work (Army Serviceman) I drove all night so I could come here to sing the last night of the Festival."

The Northern Lights Intertribal Pow-wow club consists of American Indian and Eskimo tribes. Sam Lamebull, Drum-keeper addressed a crowd waiting to see the last performers, The Crossing Path group and

the Northern Lights Intertribal club perform. Lamebull said, "our songs and our drum consists of young men and women. We don't use alcohol — the Grandfather has guided us away from it — these things are evil and Grandfather will reach out to you tonight."

Lamebull further introduced the group from The Northern Lights Intertribal group saying, "when I say 'Intertribal' which includes many Indian tribes we also have four young Eskimo men and a Tlingit sitting at our drum that sing and understand our ways."

The bleachers roared and people welcomed the two groups spontaneously to the introduction which led to the two drums closing the festival with songs from the Southern-plains and Northern style.