

With BP \$1,000 Grant—

Historic Kake Totem Raising to Be Filmed

BP Alaska announced the award of a \$1,000 grant toward filming of the historic Tlingit and Haida Indian "potlatch" scheduled in Kake, in Southeastern Alaska, at the end of September.

Alaska filmmaker Larry Brayton will film the event, featuring the raising of the world's tallest totem pole, carved to record the history of the Tlingit and Haida people.

Dancing, singing, the telling of ancient legends, feasting and the ceremonial raising of the totem will form the major part of the festival.

"Such an event is in the heart of the Tlingit and Haida cultures, and it may never take place again," said Brayton.

"Not to record it would have been unfortunate, and BP's grant along with others, will make this possible."

Brayton's community sponsored documentary film will be available to Alaska Native groups, villages, museums, universities, and the general public when completed.

The ceremony of the "potlatch", to Southeastern Indian groups, is that of a major feasting experience with ceremonial rituals to celebrate a great event.

In this case, the event is the symbolic return of the big totem, carved as a 1967 Alaska Centennial project and displayed in the Alaska Pavilion at the World's Fair in Osaka.

Return of the totem has symbolic meaning, since in early days missionaries burned or carried off the totems. Many were shipped to museums around the world, never to return.

The last recorded great "potlatch" of the Tlingit-Haida people was in 1904, in Sitka. After this date the potlatch tradition was discouraged in the belief that the potlatch ceremony was a pagan ritual.

As many as 2,000 visitors from Southeastern villages are expected in Kake this Sept. 30, Oct. 1 and 2, the three days planned for the main part of the festival. Kake is a small Tlingit village on the northwest coast of Kupreanof Island.

Brayton, former Alaska newsman and head of the Alaska State Community Action Program, has made several recent films on Alaska Native social problems and cultural events.