

Tlingit film wins prestigious awards, airs on PBS

Juneau-based filmmaker Larry Goldin has won several national awards for his film "The Land is Ours," including the prestigious Best Feature Documentary Film Award from the American Indian Film Festival. The show also won the coveted CINE Golden Eagle Award.

The one-hour historical documentary won for its dramatic portrayal of the Tlingit and Haida civil rights and land claims movement of the 1920's.

It has also won the Merit Award from the Chicago International Film Festival and the Bronze Award from the Columbus Film Festival. It bested American and Canadian submissions for screening in the Northwest Film Festival in Portland, Ore.

Set in the spectacular scenery of southeast Alaska's mystical old-growth forest and sparkling fjords, *The Land is Ours* takes us into the Natives' aboriginal past to see the interplay between their environment, mythology and totemic clan system.

Time lapse photography and special effects capture the timeless mythological world. We encounter the powerful bear and soaring eagle, revered clan emblems; the wondrous salmon that returns miraculously each summer to replenish the Natives' larder and spirits.

The Tlingits and Haidas once ruled the Pacific Northwest coast, trading and warring from Alaska all the way to California. The unbelievable bounty of salmon

and other natural foods made them wealthy. It supported their complex societies and monumental art; their cultures that valued trade, prestige and competition. Outstanding historical photographs recreate this aboriginal world and later eras of wrenching changes.

Nineteenth century Russian colonists could only establish a shaky toe-hold among the formidable Tlingits and Haidas, so they sold their forts and trading posts to the United States in 1867.

America brought epidemics that killed half the Natives, gun boats that bombarded their villages and salmon canneries that nearly wiped out the precious salmon. They also brought Christian missionaries who gave Natives modern education to cope with the new American world and taught them their traditions were "sinful."

The Land is Ours tells how Tlingits and Haidas marshaled their cultural strengths and new skill to launch America's first "civil rights movement"

in the 1920's; how a young Native attorney sparked a political campaign to challenge the all-powerful canned salmon industry; how he prosecuted landmark civil rights cases and faced a vindictive white power elite. William Paul Sr. was a brilliant and aggressive Tlingit attorney and the first Native Territorial legislator.

Amidst conflicting demands and cultures, the very strengths that made him a

heroic legal warrior, offended the traditional views of many of his own people and cost him their love. In the end he proved his own undoing, even as he helped launch a land claims suit that changed Alaska forever.

The Land is Ours is also the story of everyday heroes: of Nettie Jones, an unassuming Native mother who suffered a bitter school integration case because she simply wanted her daughter treated like White children. It is the story of William Paul's mother, Tillie who risked jail and ruin to vote on the day she knew officials would challenge Native citizenship. It is also the story of hun-

dreds who worked thanklessly year in and year out to register Native voters and raise money for their decades-long land claims suit.

Some Alaskans featured in the film are Rosita Worl, Tlingit anthropologist; Steve Haycox, University of Alaska history professor; John Borbridge former president of Sealaska Corporation and the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes; and Bob Price, historian and lawyer specializing in Native American law.

Anchorage viewers can see the film on KAKM-TV at 10 p.m. Jan. 14, when it also airs nationwide on PBS.