



Kathleen Carlo and John Kailukiak trading feathers. photo by Jean Flanagan Carlo

by Rose Atuk Fosdick
For the Tundra Times

You could feel the high energy level in the air when you walked into the Native Art Center on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus during "Maskmakers Studio '86", a symposium sponsored by the Institute of Alaska Native Arts. For six days during the last week of March, 15 maskmakers worked together creating masks. In one corner of the studio Harvey Pootoogooluk sanded a whale shoulder blade; at another table Edna Davis Jackson sculpted green clay in preparation for a handmade paper mold, and in another corner Joe Senungetuk chiseled a black walnut mask.

During the six-day symposium the maskmakers went through numerous board feet of mahogney, driftwood, cedar, birch, walnut, cherry, maple, basswood, a whale shoulder blade, hubcaps, and about five pounds of coffee. From the first morning through the last evening, the maskmakers made the most of their time. Dust hung in the air with constant use of the band-saw, planer and sander; wood chips fell to the floor from chisels, adzes and chainsaw.

The following 15 maskmakers were invited to the symposium: Larry Ahvakana, Fred Anderson, Sylvester Ayek, Lawrence Beck, Kathleen Carlo, Jim Grant, Jack Hudson, Nathan Jackson, Edna Davis Jackson, John Kailukiak, Harvey Pootoogooluk, Charley Post, Jim

Schoppert, Joseph Senungetuk and Richard Seeganna. Native Art Center students attending the University of Alaska on spring break were also invited to participate: Glenda Lindley, Rebecca Etukeok Johnson and Tanis Hinsley. The symposium had representation from six Alaska Native cultures: Tlingit, Tsimshian, Aleut, Inupiaq, Yupik and Athabascan. They each have inherited traditions for style, materials and purposes for masks. So each brought different ideas and techniques and very willingly shared their knowledge and skills.

In the past masks have been used for dances and ceremonies. Early masks were made from cedar, birch and cottonwood trees and driftwood from beaches. Today some masks are still made from dances or have ceremonial use but for the most part, masks made for dances or have ceremonial use but for the most part, masks made today are expressions of individual artists' statements whether cultural, personal or political. Masks are made to be included in exhibitions, as commissions for museums or for purchase by collectors. Today the range of material for masks has expanded to include foreign woods, metal and found objects.

By the end of the symposium 12 masks were complete and many more were very nearly done. Each of the participants of the gathering will be producing masks for an upcoming exhibition to open in Fairbanks in July. The exhibition will be dedicated to deceased maskmakers including Sam



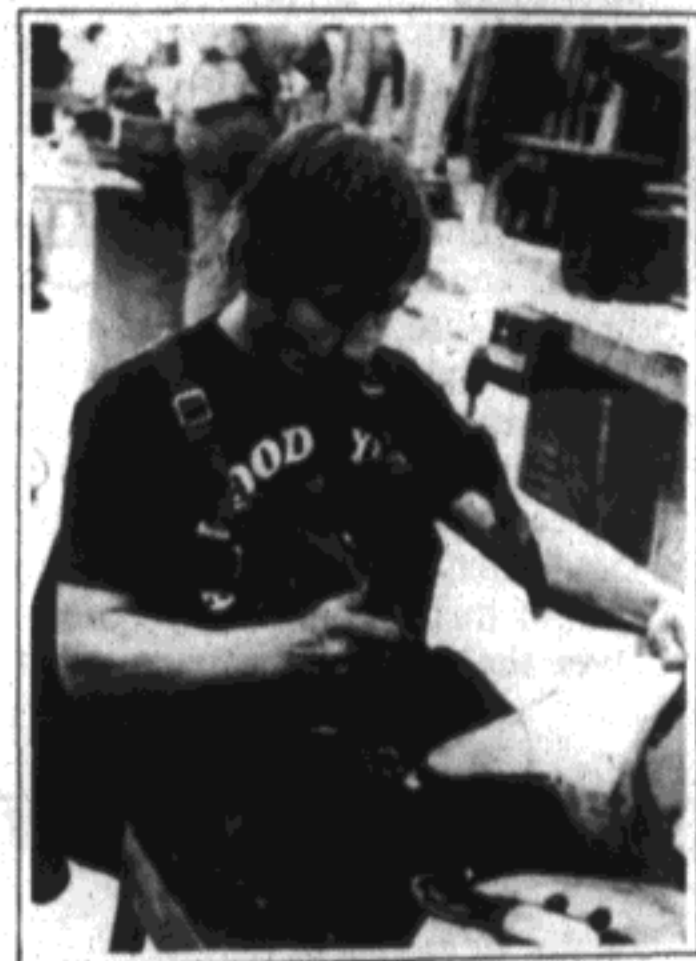
Masks were hung on the wall as they were completed joining a mask made by a 10-year-old student in Kathleen Carlo's artist residency. From top: "Art is a one-eared madman" by Jim Schoppert; "Wolf eating dinner" by 10-year-old Marianne of Crooked Creek; Mask by Larry Ahvakana; Mask by John Kailukiak. photo by Rose Atuk Fosdick

Fox and Henry Bighead. Both Yupik artists had participated in a 1980 maskmaking workshop and exhibition "Alaskameut '80", also sponsored by the Institute of Alaska Native Arts. The exhibition of masks will travel statewide.

The public had a preview of the upcoming exhibition during two receptions held to honor the maskmakers, the first at the Artworks, a local gallery, and the other during an Institute-sponsored slide lecture at the Civic Center Gallery at Alaskaland, the location for the exhibition "Alaskameut '86" to open in July.

The maskmakers left the symposium at the week's end, returning home to Washington State, Anchorage, Metlakatla, Ketchikan, Kake, Toksook Bay, Shishmaref, Tununak and Nome. They expressed their appreciation for having been provided the opportunity to work together, to share ideas, techniques and enthusiasms for their mutual interests.

Maskmakers Studio '86 was co-sponsored by the Institute of Alaska Native Arts and the Native Arts Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and was supported in part by



Nathan Jackson photo by Rose Atuk Fosdick



Harvey Pootoogooluk working on whale bone.

photo by Rose Atuk Fosdick

Maskmakers' Studio '86



Jack Hudson (left) and Larry Ahvakana discuss Jack's Tsimshian mas.

photo by Jean Flanagan Carlo