

Holy Cross honors Elders with song, potlatch

Each year the village of Holy Cross takes one day out of the year to pay tribute to their Elders. This year the doors opened at 6:00 p.m. on October 28, 1983 at the Holy Cross Community Hall for the 3rd Annual Elder's Day festivities. There were 23 honored guests of Holy Cross:

John Paul, Sr.; John Sims, Sr.; James F. Walker; David Walker; Ralph Walker; Robt. Walker, Sr.; Pete Turner; Harry Turner, Sr.; Walter Whitley, Sr.; Nick Demientieff; Edward Richards, Sr.; Jim Johnson; Joe Demientieff; Maurice Newman; Genevieve Newman; Margaret Demientieff; Francis Demientieff; Margaret Richards; Irene Newman; Betty Johnson; Anne Frank; Anne Whitley; Nellie Demientieff.

Once the honored guests were seated, Madeline Solomon of Galena recited the "Our Father" in Athabascan Indian, then the potlatch began. Such foods as moose roasts and stews, ham, macaroni and potato salads, tossed salads, mixed vegetables, Indian ice cream, pies, cakes . . . and much more were served.

After eating, the Holy Cross school students showed their appreciation and gratitude by performing for the Elders. The kindergarten and first grade classes sang the "Tea Kettle Song," then passed out Mountain Tea to each Elder.

The third and fourth grade classes sang the "Blueberry Song" in Ingalik and the "Who Are You" song in Yupik, then passed out letters and pictures they made for each Elder. Grades five through junior high played flutes and sang the song "Peace Must Be Your Goal," then passed out letters to each Elder they personally honored.

The honored guests were asked to be seated in a circle, for distribution of gifts that the City of Holy Cross sponsored, with donations from Doyon, Limited. Such things as blankets, scarves, gloves, socks, combs, fish strips, crackers, cigarettes, were distributed amongst them, plus a blanket, fish strips and crackers.

Speeches of gratitude were made from the honored guests, then the invited guest made their speeches. They were:

Madeline Solomon, Galena; Tassie Saunders, Nulato; Romeo and Edna Stickman, Nulato; Bergman and Thecla Esmailka, Nulato; Tony Vasaka, Bethel; Kay Wallis, Juneau.

The main topics expressed were alcohol and drug abuse, youth education and 1991.

The upriver Indian guests then danced for the Elders with Alden Walker, Jr. (1-year-old Holy Cross resident) joining in. Also, Axiena Peters played her accordion and Romeo Stickman played his harmonica.

Live music began with Victor Rock, Sr. of Shageluk playing the fiddle and Bergman Esmailka of Nulato accompanying with the guitar. Many dances were played, with Hamilton E. Hamilton, Sr. calling for the square dances. The foot stomping and hand clapping music lasted until 3:30 a.m.