

Unafest presents rural food to Anchorage

By BOB KOWELUK
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A potluck dinner and art show and an impromptu Native dress review highlighted a get-together entitled Unafest '81 sponsored by the Cook Inlet Native Association last Friday and Saturday.

The potlatch featured black meat (dried seal meat) moose, smoked salmon, smoked and fried hooligan, seal oil and blubber, frozen shee fish, fry bread a bread and an assortment of salads and refreshments. About 75 people from all ages and backgrounds brought and shared the food.

The traditional fare was met with mixed reactions, much of them depending on the taster's experience with such food. One part-Native youngster's taste of seal oil and blubber ended with a grimace and a loud "yuk!" After spitting the blubber out on an empty plate and catching his breath, he declared "I will never try anything so horrible again," while a darker-skinned friend grinned and ate the blubber with a piece of black meat.

For some Natives living in the big cities, the potlucks and potlatches are their best chances to eat Native foods and to meet friends.

Some 25 to 40 students from the Anchorage area schools provided the art work in sculpture, graphics, beadwork and weaving. Joe Senungetuk, CINA education committee director who organized the art show said the show went pretty well, even with some difficulties.

"Students from Anchorage area schools provided the artwork," Senungetuk said. "It was difficult to disseminate information about the artwork to Native students in schools, maybe because this is the first urban

Native student artshow."

Judges for the show were Native artists Fred Anderson, Moe Wassilie and Joe Senungetuk. "We looked for originality, commitment to each student's art projects, skill and artistic expression. We tried to be fair to both the younger groups and the older group.

"First grader, Lawrence Whitfield, Jr., a student at the Northwood Elementary School, who won first place in the graphics category, showed a lot of talent that surpassed what was happening in the later grades. That was a very pleasant surprise to see that happening in young students." The design was titled "Hunting."

A fourth generation ivory carver, Larry Mayac, grandson of George Mayac who is Peter Mayac's grandson, won the grand prize with an ivory carving titled "Ivory Loon." "The ivory carving has scrimshaw, etchings into the ivory which are then painted with india ink. The 'Ivory Loon' has a black body, orange beak and red eyes, traditional colors and appears to be swimming," Senungetuk said. It is about four inches long and two inches in height. Larry Mayac is a ninth grader at Bartlett School in Anchorage.

Other sculptures were made of terracotta, a glazed or unglazed clay and soap stone. Themes portrayed were of sea mammal, and Native peoples. Graphics included block prints, water colors, linoleum cuts.

"We omitted the painting category because there were none submitted," Senungetuk said. "We attempted to give recognition to all who entered and give them our support and encouragement.

"I will recommend this student arts project for next year. I think it is a valuable project.



Artist Moses Wassilie and Unafest '81 coordinator Joe Senungetuk cut seal blubber for a somewhat adventurous observer as Jorene Heimer, an Eskimo who works for the Anchorage School district, tastes a taste. Seal blubber was only one of several traditional Native foods served at Unafest '81.

It is a handy way to get parents and their children together, to share their children's expression about our culture together and with others."

An impromptu Native dress fashion show was staged after the potluck dinner and announcement of the winners of the arts contest. Master of ceremonies, Liz Ritsch, curriculum development of the Alaska Native Heritage at the Saakaaya Day Care Center operated by CINA, "It was a spontaneous, impromptu show. Most of the people in the show came from the audience.

"There were some fashion show regulars like Wally Kalerak, 4-year-old son of Walter and Annie Kalerak and then there were volunteers like LuAnne Penatac, 10-year-old daughter of John and Geneva Penatac of Anchorage and Christina Hobson, two-and-a-half-year-old daughter of Dina Hobson, who had just gotten off an airplane from Nondalton that afternoon."

"We have spent so much time

on this project that we wrote lesson plans to help our students study the Alaska Natives by

their clothing. So it isn't just a fashion show, it's a teaching project too."