

It takes interest from board, superintendent to keep some classes

Dear Editor:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to tell you a little bit about my class. First of all, it is a class in traditional, Northern Northwest Coast Indian Art. The "Northern" means it is the heart of three nations: Tsimpshian, Haida, and Tlingit.

Generally speaking, the art has two parts: 1) Two-dimensional for flat design painting and carving and 2) Sculpture combined with flat design work.

All wood-carving tools are made right here in the classroom by the students. The carving tools consist of crooked or hook knives, an adz, and small gouge. The metal comes from used bandsaw blades from the sawmill and car leaf springs. Tools are made using a small gas forge,

metal grinders, and an anvil. Each student makes a complete set of tools.

Woods used in the carving are red and yellow cedar, alder, and yew wood.

The class is run like an apprenticeship and each student proceeds at his or her own pace. Each student starts out by learning and drawing the elements of two-dimensional or flat design. The next step is learning to form and connect the elements into birds and animals of the student's original design.

All of the designs are then painted using Indian colors of red-black and blue-green. Tool-making is next, then flat-carving, followed by sculpture or three-dimensional carving.

Over the years students have turned out many fine carvings which include:

spoons, rattles, canoes, paddles, carved cedar panels, small totem poles, and human and animal masks. The student carvings are some of the finest in Alaska.

The class was started in 1974. I was hired to teach the class by Mr. Dale Lunsford, who was then school superintendent. The class had its share of ups and downs and I was about ready to look for a new occupation. Then, the late Mr. Larrae Rocheleau and Mr. Walt Clark took over as superintendent and high school, respectively. They were very much interested in art and culture of the Tsimpshian, and my class. Rocheleau and Clark somehow managed to obtain for me teacher

certification, when, in itself, was a very great incentive to keep on teaching! So I did, and here I am.

We have a new superintendent, Dr. Bob Pratt, and a new high school principal, Mr. Dave Dirksen.

Northern northwest coast Indian art, along with being a great art, is also a very lucrative vocation for Indian students. Dr. Pratt, Mr. Dirksen, and the Metlakatla Board of Education are behind the class 100%.

Thank you for your interest in my program.

*Jack Hudson
Metlakatla, AK*