

# King Island Dancers to present polar bear dance

The King Island Dancers will pay respect to Native elders and show the respect they have for the animals who provide for them, at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention when they will perform the Polar Bear Dance.

Paul Tiulana, leader of the King Island Dancers who last year performed the historic Wolf Dance for the first time in 50 years, said that the dancers chose to perform the Polar Bear dance for AFN this

year.

The dancers had been asked to perform the Wolf Dance which was last performed in the 1930s but was banned by Bureau of Indian Affairs officials.

The dancers brought the Wolf Dance back with much help from village elders but Tiulana said "They chose to respect the legend of the dance and story and only have it once this year. In order to have  
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# Dancers to honor Elders, animals

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the Wolf Dance, you have got to have a reason," and Tiulana said the dancers felt there wasn't sufficient reason for a second presentation.

Instead, the dancers will honor the Elders and also show how they respect the animals taken by hunters and perform the polar bear dance.

The dance will be for two hunters, John Pollock of Shishmaref and Gabriel Muktooyuk of Cape Douglas who killed polar bears this season.

The dance hasn't been performed for the past six years because no polar bears had been killed, said Tiulana.

In the ceremony of the dance and the ritual following the kill of a polar bear, everyone involved in the hunt gets a share of the bear.

The hunter also takes the bear skull and puts it on a seal skin and gives it to the

oldest man in the clubhouse. "That's your share," said Tiulana.

The hunter's share is cut up and put in a pot and cooked while an elder in the village tells the story of the hunt. The story may go on past the sharing of the polar bear meat.

Meanwhile, the hunter has cut a hole in the ice and puts the skin in the hole to be cleaned out by the salt water. "Then the kids. . . I remember we played with the skin until it was all cleaned out. We might slide on the ice with it," he said.

After about a week a big potlatch is held and the hunter gives walrus meat and Eskimo icecream, "sometimes three flavors mostly to old folks who need the meat."

When the dance starts the bear skull is placed behind the drummers. The people put a small amount of water in the mouth of the skull and "say 'here you might be thirsty,' to

the spirit of the bear," said Tiulana.

The song sung during the dance is more than 300 years old says Tiulana. He was asked to write a new song for John Pollock but he laughs and shakes his head. "Maybe I won't make one. It's too hard. I didn't make them when I was young. They come by accident."

Tiulana said that his grandchildren will dance with Pollock during the dance because they are his "teasing nephews." "If they dance with him during the dance he will respect them."

The King Island dancers will present the Polar Bear Dance on Oct. 21 in the Anchorage Sheraton Hotel.