

88-49-108

Nuchalawoyya celebration in 1972

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Series: Potlatch series

Recorded in 1972 and broadcast in 1977

Roger and Karen McPherson, recorders

Karen McPherson explains the history of Nuchalawoyya. It has been a gathering place for Native groups since people lived along the rivers. Up to 20,000 people would gather. Karen McPherson reads Hudson Stuck. Hudson Stuck wrote about the confluence of the Yukon and Tanana and the gathering of people to barter furs and commodities. It was the great rendezvous of the people of the Interior. She read Robert Marshall. He wrote: as many as 600 people gathered at one time. He explained what was traded and how they celebrated. Even after a trading post was established at Tanana the celebration continued. Then for a time the gathering was forgotten. In 1962 Jay Howard of Montana began Nuchalawoyya once again. The games, competition and dancing still take place. [recording of singing]

An unidentified person talked about the army post that was near Tanana. He talked about the trading post that was located in Tanana and some of the things that were sold there. He said people would come from Tanacross in birch bark canoes to come to the trading post.

Karen McPherson introduces Glenn Butler. This is the second year that he has organized Nuchalawoyya. Karen McPherson asked what kind of activities take place during the celebration. Butler talked about the different things including dancing and a potlatch. They have bingo games all winter to support the event. They ask around for donations of food. They had caribou soup and moose head soup. He explained the meaning of Nuchalawoyya and when it was started again in recent time. He has been helping with the celebration for four or five years. He talked about their community hall. He thought over one hundred people came into town for the celebration.

An unidentified woman talked about dancing at the celebration.

An unidentified person talked about when the celebration was started up again. They used to have a meeting every four years at the confluence of the rivers. He talked about the fish camp on the river. His mother said they would have 20,000 people gathered together. The people had different dialects and would hold different meetings. They would discuss their hunting grounds. The Native chiefs used to come. The people would come from all the rivers and creeks. He talked about how the people would come in together in their birch bark canoes. They would shoot off their guns and then come ashore and dance. [recording of dance music]

An unidentified person describes the different foods which are prepared for potlatch. He talked about how he prepares moose head soup. He was asked to be the cook. He has been cooking for potlatch for about ten years.

[recording of dance music]

An unidentified person gathers people for "the old man's race" at Nuchalawoyya. An unidentified man talked about participating in the races as a child. He was first in the race and won ten dollars. He won the other races that day, too.

[recording of dance music]

Karen McPherson said the people that were heard on this tape were Glenn Butler, Alice Thompson, the Stevens Village dancers, the Tanana Village dancers, Alfred Starr, George Edwin and the people of Tanana.