

88-49-57

Mary Jane Brower

Moses Wassillie, moderator

Series: Potlatch series

1976

Moses Wassillie said the second annual Alaska Federation of Natives Youth Conference was a time for youth from all over Alaska to get together and talk about Native education. They also had elections for the youth council. Mary Jane Brower was elected president. She said when she was small and her family lived at Lost River. When she started first grade she had to be separated from her family. She felt bad about it but they knew it had to be done. She tried to stay brave. She stayed with an aunt. She learned a lot of superstition. She was sent away to be educated in white man's way. She learned the old ways too from her old auntie. She talks about Teller. In her second year of school her dad had to teach her by himself. She said he was a good teacher. She used to draw all the time and her father always encouraged her to draw. The first drawings she ever saw were by her Uncle Wilber Wallach. He was well known as an artist. When she was growing up her parents divorced so she lived with her grandmother who was a midwife and healer. She learned a lot of her Eskimo side from her grandmother. Her uncle was taking care of her one day and showed her how to draw. After second grade they started living in Nome. They also lived in Anchorage. She talked about experiencing prejudice. She was teased at school, but wanted to learn. She was sickly when she was young. When she went to Wrangell her health improved. When she was eight she became blind and deaf for a while.

Song

Mary Jane Brower said she graduated from Mt. Edgecumbe in 1969. She talked about her various activities in high school. She used to write comedy plays. She signed up for the University of Alaska. She said she really wanted to be a nurse but was not a B average student so she wasn't accepted into nursing school. She wanted to be a midwife. When she returned home she worked as a nurse's aide. She learned a lot of things from the nurses. She read a lot of medical books. She said a lot of doctors in Barrow were interns right out of school. She diagnosed herself with mastitis. She talked about her two children. She was married to Ronald Brower. She attended college in Anchorage and was a foster mom for children from Barrow who were students in Anchorage. She believes that Natives can get training in their own home. She said it is an honor to work for her people. She taught special education students. Some of the students were hard of hearing. She said it was hard to learn when she was young because she had hearing and vision problems.

Song by Lee Hazelwood.

Mary Jane Brower reads some of her poetry: Lost River, I dreamt of dried meat, My land, Winters, Eskimo blood, Eskimo, This ulu, My children, and others.