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David Frankson

Moses Wassillie, moderator

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Series: Potlatch series

David Frankson of Pt. Hope talks about the Nalukatuq Whaling Festival. David Frankson said since long ago before the whites got here every time they caught a whale during whaling season they had a whaling festival. The elders prepared everything. When they caught a whale there was a certain way to divide it. When even one whale was caught they had a whaling festival in June when the ground was dry and free from snow. When they put up their boats on the ground the first day they would serve whale meat. They prepared soured whale meat. That was all they did on the first day.

Music from the Pt. Hope dancers

David Frankson said the next day they brought their boats to where they belong. In Pt. Hope there are two groups for whale hunting. All the Pt. Hope people belong to one of the groups. He said this year one group celebrated eleven whales. They found one dead whale. They saved some of the ribs for Fourth of July. The tail is about six feet long. It is saved for Thanksgiving feast. This year six captains caught a whale. They killed eight whales this year. They put out eight flags. That means this is a place of celebration. First they give away the flippers. The part right toward the point is served first. Everybody is given soured meat. Muktuk is mixed with it. Right after they give away the flippers and soured whale the captain who kills his first whale is put up in the blanket toss.

Singing at the whale festival at Pt. Hope

David Frankson talked about the third day of the whale festival. He said they bring all kinds of food. They cook all day in each place at the same time. They cook the heart, intestines, stomach, kidneys, muktuk, and whale tongue. Everybody is fed. It is a big feast. They may cook on a stove or on a fire. They set up the boats to make a shelter. That is a place for the men. All the men come who belong to that group. The ladies cooks and eat in a different shelter. When the festival is ending the first captain's boat has the skin cut out of the boat and it is divided for the elders. It is used to make the soles of mukluks. The captain wants to give away presents. In the old days when a couple has a baby boy they give away presents to the elders. So when the little boy grows up he'll be a good hunter.

Singing at the whale festival at Pt. Hope

David Frankson said they had a blanket toss. The people who caught a whale danced. He talked about cutting the whale and getting oil on the clothes. You have to dance to get all of the grease out of you. It is a short dance. After that they moved to the hall and have a long dance. They have motion dances and common dances when everyone can dance. Last night they ended the dance about 1:30 in the morning.

Singing at the whale festival at Pt. Hope.

David Frankson talked about jaw bones. He said they now use snow machines to bring them up but in the past they used dog teams. Some people when they have big jaws they brought them to have them put on their graves as a marker. In the older days in the spring they brought up one jaw bone and the other one they gave away. The person who wants it will bring it up to his place and let it dry and clean it. Afterwards they cut it and use it for sled runners. The cold storage is dug out in the ground and covered with thick sod. It is kept frozen. Now there aren't too many of them. Beach erosion on the north side is washing them out.

Singing from Pt. Hope people