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John Sackett and the Nulato dancers; Simon Pilot speaks at the Festival of Native Arts in March 1976 in Fairbanks, Alaska with translation by Eliza Jones

Jeff Kennedy, interviewer

Series: Potlatch series

1977

Jeff Kennedy said this program is a continuation of recordings from the Festival of Native Arts from March 1976 in Fairbanks, Alaska. This program will cover Athabaskan culture.

John Sackett said he would be moderating the introduction to the Nulato dancers. All of the students are from Nulato High School. As part of their curriculum they learn singing, dancing and speaking the Athabaskan language. He believes that this is the first time that the Nulato songs and dances have been performed outside of the town of Nulato. He said the songs that they sing in the general Nulato area are songs that are made by the local people for particular people that have died. In their honor they make a song for them. They are sung at potlatches and at the stick dances. He introduces the dancers: Karen Esmailka, Martina Itata, Josephine Alexie, Chris Anmountain, Francine Esmailka, Michael Stickman, Franklin George, Victor Alexie, Jr., Norman George, Martha Nicolai, Julia Stanley, Shirley Peter, Shirley Patsy, Karen Nicolai, Janie Esmailka, Elsie Semaken, and Georgey George. He introduced the backup people: Pauldine Carlo, Pauline Peter, Rika Esmailka, Minnie Robertson, Lowanna Sommers, and Florence Keith. Sackett said the first song that the students are going to sing is "UDL" which was made for Mrs. Chief Esmailka after she passed away in Nulato. The words to the song have changed slightly through the years.

Nulato dancers perform. John Sackett introduces the next song, Unana or Good bye my sonny. He describes the background for the song. The next song was made by Emily Esmailka for her son who died in the Tanana Hospital.

Simon Pilot is translated by Eliza Jones. Simon Pilot speaks. Eliza Jones said this time of year they would do not tell stories. They usually tell stories when it is the fall and it is getting dark. [Simon speaks over Eliza as she is translating] Simon says they had a dog. His name was Ti ah. Simon speaks. Eliza said the dog would hide food for his grandmother. He would give it to the grandmother when the grandfather wasn't watching. The grandmother told her husband that she dreamed about her brother last night. After her husband left the house her younger and older brother came to her. They asked her what was the matter with her since she didn't look very healthy. She said her husband was starving her and the dog was saving her by giving her food. The brothers told her to go out to the cache and get some food.

Announcement

John Sackett said the students will perform a more modern song titled Indian rock and roll.

Simon Pilot is translated by Eliza Jones. Simon speaks. Eliza said up where the river forks is a brown bear had a fish trap and was catching a lot of fish. Down in the village everyone was starving. The one who always comes to the rescue, the raven said he was going to go out to where the rivers forked. The bear had a lot of fish. The raven went up to the bear. The bear had a wife and baby. The raven told the bear that down below in the village the people were catching a lot of fish. The bear asked how the fish passed when he had the river dammed up. The raven said there must be a hole someplace in the dam. The raven pretended to be plugging up holes but he was actually picking up rocks from the dam and letting the fish go through. They went back to the bear's house. The raven told the brown bear to change spears with him. Raven threw the baby down on the ground. He then flew away.

Song by Fannie Carol, Ellie Stickman and Julia, Martha and Karen Nicolai.

Jeff Kennedy said the upcoming Festival of Native Arts will be March 14-18, 1977 on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus.