

88-49-96

The Hoonah dancers with commentary from Elaine Ramos at the Festival of Native Arts held in Fairbanks, Alaska in March 1976

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

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.

Elaine Ramos [?] speaks in Tlingit. She said she wishes everyone can understand Tlingit because she can express herself so much better in Tlingit. She also wishes she could speak Yupik, Inupiat, Aleut and Athabaskan. She welcomed the Alaska Natives to the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus. In the Tlingit tradition what they were taught respect for their guests. When the canoes and invited guests began to reach the shores the people who invited them would be on the shores to welcome their invited guests. They honored them in respect. They brought out the best food and the best clothing. They had large fires in their huge community houses. They knew what kind of wood to use. They made every effort to find a tree that would welcome their invited guests. She said in this week long demonstration of Native culture of the Inupiat, the Yupik, the Athabaskans, the Tlingit, the Haida and the Tsimshian is a valuable contribution to the state of Alaska. Today the preservation of the culture of the Alaska Native people is critical. At this time in the critical history of Alaska when the impact on Alaska will be so great that the Alaska Natives will be outnumbered each day. As each day goes by the Alaska Natives are outnumbered and their culture, language and way of life begins to suffer. For many generations their culture has been passed from generation to generation by the word of mouth therefore the Alaska Native language is very important. Preservations of the Alaska Native languages are now critical. If the languages die with the elders the passage of their precious heritage also dies. The dances, legends, and art will die. The contribution of each participant that came here has been a valuable documentation of one of the richest cultures of our nation.

Indian songs by the Hoonah dancers are introduced and explained including songs about ravens.

Elaine Ramos said thank you to the people of Hoonah. She said the lady making the introductions of the songs was Catherine Mills. The dance instructor for the group is Sandy Brown Hanlon. She said just six years ago it was not popular to do any dances of the Native cultures or to speak the language. In 1970 while she was at Sheldon Jackson College they had their first Tlingit language workshop. The two brightest students were Catherine Mills and Sandy Brown Hanlon who now teach. She said their youngest dancer was nine years old. When they started teaching the language and culture this child was only two years old. She said the singing and dancing by the children is a tremendous expansion in the revival of the culture.