# U'MISTA CULTURAL CENTRE



NEWSLETTER
December 1981

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It's been some time since our last Newsletter and we thought our members would like to know what's been going at the Centre, so here are some items we hope will be of interest.

### SUMMER VISITORS

As you probably know, the MV ODESSA stopped regularly in Alert Bay, from the middle of May until the first week of September, when the ship's season ended abruptly because of engine problems. The word is that the ship is fully booked for next summer and will be calling here again. Kwakwala Arts and Crafts, which formerly handled the dance programme for the tour ships has now become part of U'mista and we looked after all the coordinating and paperwork through our office. This added quite a lot to our workload, but everyone seemed satisfied with the way things worked and we will continue in the same manner next summer.

Several small groups visited also - from the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the Madrona Exposition Centre in Nanaimo, the British Columbia Provincial Museum, five groups from the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the University of Ottawa. Ranging in size from 10 to 45 people, these groups got much more out of their visits than the ODESSA passengers, because the members of the smaller groups had had some introduction to our cultural area before arriving here. Many of them said that their visit here was the highlight of their trip, which included stops at the Cape Mudge and Campbell River Museums.

The combined total number of visitors from the ship and the other groups was over 1200, with additional numbers of people visiting on their own. Here are some of the comments visitors wrote in our guest book: "A well thought-out exhibit that has a great impact. It helped understand a lot of things."; "Best Indian exhibition I have seen."; "Bravo! It is so important for you - but also for us - that you found back your past. Very well displayed." (Monique Begin, Minister of Health and Welfare). Such positive comments from visitors make us feel that all the work which went into building the Centre was worth-while and that we all have reason for a great deal of pride in what we've accomplished.

As well as the tours, we offered a barbecued salmon lunch for ODESSA passengers and some of the museum groups, as a way of raising money to support the Centre. The help of Jessie Matilpi, Rita Speck, Peggy Svanvik and Sharon Whonnock were much appreciated. Agnes Cranmer produced batches of buns for each week's barbecue, which added to the meal. Thank you, Gwanti'lakw.

### ACQUISITIONS AND GIFTS

Representatives from the National Museums Corporation visited in May (finally!) and brought us a moon mask and frontlet for our collection. These are both fine early pieces, collected in this area many years ago and purchased at auction by the Corporation.

Early in the summer, we were offered a Dzunukwa mask. by a collector in Seattle. We have little money for purchase, but we were able to get funding from the Cultural Export and Import office of the National Museums Corporation. The mask, collected in Fort Rupert, in the early 1930's, is a fine addition to our collection.

A silver bracelet, early Hudson's Bay silverware and a halibut hook were donated by Doug Clarkson, in memory of his late wife, Tillie. We are grateful for Mr. Clarkson's generosity and are happy that he chose our Centre for these pieces.

Gifts of silkscreen prints by Wayne Alfred and Ross Hunt were presented by the artists. These will be framed and added to the exhibit in the Contemporary gallery. As well, a copy of the Bruce Alfred print, given away at the recent memorial potlatch of Harry Alfred and his family, has been donated by Marion Warner.

Lily Joliffe has given the Centre a copy of a Tony Hunt print, which was given away at a memorial potlatch for the late Johnny Hunt.

All of these gifts are much apprechated, adding a lot to our collections and showing real support for our Centre.

### DEVELOPING NATIVE MUSEUMS - SEMINAR

From November 5th to 7th, the U'mista Cultural Centre hosted a seminar attended by 45 people. Resource people included Greig Arnold, Director of the Makah Cultural Centre in Neah Bay; our architect, Henry Northern; Len Ham, our archaeologist; George MacDonald, Senior archaeologist from the National Museum of Man and several others who spoke to topics such as ethnobotany, the use of photography in exhibits and gift shops, setting up displays, etc. Everyone who attended felt that the Seminar was a real success and may lead to follow-up meetings of people with similar interests in developing Indian Museums in B.C.

### GIFT SHOP

Although our gift shop is not large, our sales during the summer season were encouraging and we have expanded our stock to include a number of books of interest to people in the area. As well, the last books in our Language series will be available next week. 1982 calendars are in stock and, like everything else, have gone up in price. These are \$4.50 each, with the usual 10% discount for members of the Society. Unfortunately, lack of time meant that we were not able to produce new photographs for the calendar, but plan to begin working early next summer on the 1983 calendar. We still have T-shirts, bas-

kets, silver and copper jewellry, as well as decals and tote bags, which have been very much in demand. We need volunteers to help us sew these bags after they have been silk-screened - anyone interested?

### THE MOVIE

As some of you may know, we are working on producing a film, based primarily on footage shot at our opening on November 1, 1980. Our film crew returned to Alert Bay late in August to shoot additional footage and editing is now taking place. Our curator spent two days in Chicago early, in October, to work on fitting translations of interviews in Kwakwala in the proper places. The film is shaping up to be as great as our earlier on. Chuck Olin, our director/producer plans to visit us soon with a cassette of the film in its present form, so that all of us will have a chance to contribute our comments and suggestions before final editing. We'll let you know when it's happening.

### PUBLICITY

There have been a number of articles published about our Centre, focussing on the opening on November 1, 1981. Artsmagazine, Western Living and Round-up articles are available in the Centre, for those who may want to read these. As well, a photo essay appeared in American Fabrics and Fashions, a magazine published in New York, with circulation in 67 countries, according to the publisher.

Also, there have been several newspaper stories. The following excerpt is from a column by Arthur Mayse, which appeared in the Victoria Colonist some months ago:

"Another calendar that cheers us is the fine example put out by the U'mista Cultural Society which sponsors Alert Bay's fine Kwakiutl museum.

This calendar is notable in that it offers a run-through of Indian names for the various months.

January is "Herring spawning time," February, "First oolichan time," March, "Everything sprouting time," and so through to November, which is "Dog salmon time," and finally to December, poetically named "Leaves fallen time."

A calendar like that is worth a place on anyone's wall. You can spend minutes just gazing at it. And, I repeat, we could use more calendars in which beauty drew from imagination."

### MEMBERSHIPS

Since our last newsletter, the following people have become members, or have renewed their memberships in the Society:

Margaret Sirois Butch Leslie Bob Neel T.D. Nelson Vera Cranmer Sharon Whonnock Hugh Prediger Lily Whonnock : Sharon Alfred Rita Speck Diana Lingholt Cyril Carpenter Christina Cook Nancy Blyth Betty Prangnell Elizabeth Weigold Flora Cook Cecilia Shaughnessy Alfred Cook, Sr., George Rasmussen Lily Joliffe.

Buntu Lalear
Richard E. Little
Helen Willie
Ethel Scow
Carole Farber
Janet Wasden
Svea Svanvik
Bruce Alfred
Rita Alfred
Sheldon Goldberg
Phil Nuytten
Anna Holbeck
Philip Ward
Malia Southard
Clare Tervo
Patsy Wilson
Emma Dick
Denise Cranmer
Bobby Joseph
Pauline Alfred

We thank all of them for their support and welcome our new members.

# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US!

On Sunday, November 1, 1981, we celebrated our first year by holding an Open House, which was advertised on CFNI radio and in the North Island Gazette. Our local members will remember that day was the beginning of a very busy week in Alert Bay, what with our Seminar, two potlatches and a basketball tournament, so we decided that our anniversary celebration had to be fairly modest. It turned out very well, with about 90 people spending most of the afternoon in the Centre, watching films, touring the exhibits and having refreshments which had been supplied by our members.

Looking back over the year, we get take pride in our accomplishments. The major project completed was the Language book series, which has been well-received not only locally, but across the country. We owe a great deal to Jay Powell and Vickie Jensen for their huge effort in producing the books. Nola Johnson and Anna Hollbeck were responsible for the fine illustrations. Without the help of our "dictionaries", Agnes Cranmer and Margaret Cook, we would not have been able to work - Gilakas'la. Our Secretary-Receptionist, Lorraine Hunt, turned out to be a first class proof-reader, a difficult job, but one she did very well. None of it would have been possible without the generous financial

support of the First Citizens' Fund, the Education Division of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Leon and Thea Koener Foundation, the Vancouver Foundation, the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation, the Multiculturalism Programme of the Secretary of State, School District 85 and more recently, the Indian Education, Special Programmes Branch of the Ministry of Education.

Because we only have a permanent staff of two, the curator and secretary-receptionist, handling the summer traffic would have been impossible without the help of volunteers. We especially thank Vickie Jensen and Densie Cranmer for manning (or should that be womanning?) the Gift Shop with great patience in sometimes difficult circumstances. Our Secretary-Treasurer, Patsy Wilson was on hand to help with tickets and other chores. Later in the season, Nancy Blyth became a volunteer and remains enthusiastic and helpful. During the summer, we also had the assistance of students employed under a Provincial Youth Employment Programme. For various periods from May to August, Terri Alfred, Bertha Isaac, Svea Svanvik, Donna Cranmer and Christina Cook worked with us, helping with general maintenance and the weekly barbecues, as well as learning something about their culture.

Just surviving this first year was a major accomplishment, especially the often-frantic busy days during the summer. We realize that some communities in the North Island are very anxious to encourage tourism, but, for ourselves, without additional staff and volunteers, we cannot provide satisfactory service to increased numbers of visitors.

### THE BIG HOUSE

Our biggest concern for this second year is the renovation and expansion of the Big House. With each potlatch held there, the building shows more and more its need for repair and lack of adequate space. More serious is the damage to the beams by carpenter ant infestation. We are asking CM Projects to provide us with a cost estimate for the work required and we will be looking for funding to cover these costs.

Locally, contributions to the cost of the project will come from the revenue gained from the dance tours offered to the passengers of the ODESSA and other tourists. After deducting the costs of providing transportation to visitors, payments to dancers and singers, the balance of the summer's earnings have been set aside for the renovations.

The Big House is an important facility for most of the people in our cultural area, as there are so few remaining big houses in which large potlatches can take place. Other than Gilford Island, Kingcome Inlet and Comox, none of our other communities have a big house. Ours is used, not only but local people, but by others from different tribes, who, we hope, will contribute to the renovation project. Like our graveyard, the Big House is not only for members of the Nimpkish Band, on whose land the building is located, but for all of the people in our language area.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

It's almost time for our Annual General Meeting, but with other demands on everyone's time right now, we will probably hold the meeting early in January. Notices will be sent, when a date is set, so check to see that your membership hasn't expired and plan to attend.

### EXHIBITS

In October, we received two travelling exhibits. "The Art of Nunstins", from the Queen Charlotte Islands Museum, featured the work of Tom Price, an early Haida artist. At about the same time, we mounted the Hunt Family Heritage exhibit, a collection of silkscreen prints and three carved pieces by Henry, Tony, Richard and Calvin Hunt. This exhibit came from the National Museum of Man's collection of contemporary pieces. In the new year, we have arranged for the loan of "Petroglyphs and Pictographs", an exhibit from the Provincial Museum.

As part of the June Sports celebrations, we would like to plan an exhibit of photographs of soccer teams from our area, dating from the earliest days to the present. If any one has photographs of any teams which could be loaned to us for copying, please get in touch with us soon.

Also, a longer range plan is to organize an exhibit of the history of commercial fishing in our area. Again, we need help with early photographs and also some advice in planning.

### BAZAAR

Through the generous consent of the Tisalagi'lakw School, we will be participating in the School Bazaar, being held on Sunday, December 13, at 2:00 p.m. in 'Namgis House gym. Please support your Society by donating to our crafts sale and Tangle Table and by doing some of your Christmas shopping at what looks like a great bazaar.

families a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.