



## Uelen Chukotka Dance Group during Qatnut 2013

### History

The Qatnut Trade Fair has been held every two years since 1996 (Qatnut means “bringing people together,” in Iñupiaq). Historically, the Fair was a time for different tribes from various regions to get together to barter and trade goods. It was also a time for celebration. Currently in Kotzebue, it is reported one of the only organized venues for Eskimo dance groups to perform. These performances are one of the most popular events at the fair.

Events and competitions include cloth fashion show, fur fashion show, blanket toss, kayak races, duck plucking contest, fish cutting contest, Eskimo dancing, food competition, arts and crafts competition, potluck, among other events. The Qatnut Trade Fair promotes cultural pride and cultural identity of the Inupiaq people of this region.

The Qatnut Trade Fair is not possible without the sponsorship, cooperation and teamwork of various agencies, which include: Maniilaq Association, NANA Regional Corporation, Native Village of Kotzebue, Kotzebue Elders Council, Northwest Arctic Borough, among others.

Qatnut is one of the oldest known celebrations of the Iñupiaq people in Northwest Alaska. This Trade Fair dates back hundreds of years as a favored gathering place for renewing friendships, dancing, playing native games, celebrating the Inupiaq lifestyle and bartering, as well as learning the latest techniques and experiences from each other.

The Trade Fair was originally held at Sisualik (Sheshalik), which is located on the north edge of Hothem Inlet in Kotzebue Sound. It was the largest regular concentration of people in the Eskimo world. The number of participants varied each year but anthropologists and Iñupiaq historians estimate the range of attendees between 1,500 to 3,000 people. The Fair or Qatnut lasted for several weeks at the end of July and beginning of August. The overriding activity was trading goods; however, it was also a time for fishing and hunting beluga whale, socializing, dancing, feasting, athletic competitions and other exhibitions.

People traveled from all over to attend the fair. Those Iñupiaq tribes or nations surrounding Kotzebue Sound made up the largest percentage of attendees. Large numbers of people also came from Point Hope, Wales and Shishmaref. A few boatloads attended the fair from the Bering Strait Islands and the Russia Far East. Starting in the late 19th century Koyukon Athabaskans participated in Qatnut as well.

### Sponsorship

We are pleased to announce that “Qatnut 2013” Was a huge success. The Northwest Arctic Native Trade Fair was held June 27<sup>th</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>. Without sponsorship this would not have been possible. The donations came from the following organizations. **The National Park Service, Kotzebue Electric Association, Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation, Brice Construction, Uutuku, Drakes Construction, NANA Regional Corporation, Nova Copper, Glenn Gray & Associates, Conoco, Maniilaq Association, Rotmans, Teck Alaska, Shell Oil Services, GCI, Bering Air, ERA Alaska, Northwest Arctic Borough and the Rasmussen Foundation.** Because of these contributions Qatnut 2013 has allowed the people of Northwest Alaska and surrounding communities to continue the efforts of revitalizing tradition in an event that brings people together to share, barter, dance and celebrate traditional cultures. Also, we would like to recognize the Planning Committee. The Planning committee consisted of people from many of the local organizations. Some of the committee members have been donating their time since the very first Qatnut in 1996.

Willie Goodwin	National Park Service	Elder Rep./ Russian Travel
Pearl Goodwin	Maniilaq Association	Air Travel/ Registration
Red Seeberger	NANA Regional Assoc.	Native Food Comp/ Regist.
Linda Joule	Northwest Arctic School	Dance Groups/ Registration
Craig McConnell	Northwest Arctic School	Housing/ School Facility
Mary Booth-Barger	Chukchi College	Ground Transportation
Stephanie Sampson	NAB- Student Rep.	Flyers & PSA
Paige McConnell	NAB- Student Rep	Flyers & PSA
Jeanne Marie Barr	Maniilaq Association	Publications & PSA
Chloe Naylor	Student	Publication & Photo's
Alysha Nanouk	NAB – Intern	Assistant
Clara McConnell	NAB- Intern	Assistant
Kim Franklin	Northwest Arctic Borough	Coordinator

## Arrival of Russian Dance Group

The Uelen Dance Group came to Kotzebue, thanks to the National Park Service and Northwest Arctic Borough on June 25, 2013. The Uelen Dance Group stayed at the BLM Bunk house and with a previous dance group member who now lives in Kotzebue Victoria Owens. On the evening of June 25 the Russian Dance Group was met by some of the Northern Lights Dancers, and a meet and greet was set up for the Russian Dance Group at Marcie Fairbanks house. Many of the Uelen dance group members have visited Kotzebue before some of the locals from Kotzebue have been to Russian. There are friendships that have been formed and even passed down from grandparents and other relatives.



Vika Owens from Kotzebue greeting the Uelen dance group to Kotzebue. Vika is originally from Russia and used to be part of the dance group. She has lived in Kotzebue for 12 years.



Alysha Owens of Kotzebue meeting her cousin Alexander Eynetegin from Russia

The Uelen dance group spent the week before Qatnut, performing, and engaging in many activities with the community. The Uelen dance group did a meet and great at the Northwest Heritage Center, sponsored by the National Park Service. The Uelen Dance Group and the Northern Lights Dancers danced and shared the history of their dances. Many stories were told about the relationships between the Russian Dance Group and Northern Lights Dancers when they have gathered in the past. The Russian Dance Group and the Northern Lights Dancers taught local men, women and children shared dances.



Uelen dance group and Northern Lights Dancers, teaching dances to community members at the National Park Service Heritage Center



*Richard Atoruk with the Northern Lights Dancers performing with Vladimir Memylneun*



*Wesley Goodwin a Northern Lights Dancer performing with Aleksey Vukvuchaivun*

Through the week the dancers were busy in many other areas, engaging with the community. The Uelen Dance group hosted many different classes around town. Some of the classes were held at Sulianich Art Gallery. Several of the women held sewing classes, there were carving classes, cooking classes and a drum making class.



*Stanislav Nuteventin teaching a Kotzebue Student Walter Gregg how to carve.*



*Roman Keynon showing his technique to Master Carver Enoch Evak and Student James Schaeffer.*

## A dance drum



*Russian Dance Group Drummers performing for Elders Qatnut 2013 Trade Fair.*

This year's theme was "SIVUTMUUTILAKPUT INUUNIALIQPUT ATAUTCHIKUN" "MOVING OUR LIVES FORWARD TOGETHER". On the first day of Qatnut we had 6 dance groups register. Noatak Dance Group, Kivalina Dance Group, Barrow Dance Group, Wainright Dance Group, Uelen Russian Dance Group and the Kotzebue Northern Light Dancers. Willie Goodwin our Elder representative opened up the Grand Entrance and welcome dance for Qatnut.

Other notable events included the messenger race. This event is a tradition that has been done for many years. Each dance group picks a dancer that enters in the messenger race. The first racer to make it to the marker and back wins. The winning dance group then picks the elder in their dance group or an elder from their community and grants them with the honor of lighting the seal oil lamp during the welcome ceremony. The 6 different dance groups danced each day and every evening and were judged in the dance competition. The dancing in the evening was all dance groups together and the audience was invited to dance as well. It was real exciting late in the evening the drummers from each dance group would put chairs in the center of the gym floor and all the drummers would drum at once. They would take turns drumming the dance groups different songs. Other notable events included the Arts and Crafts competition, Alexander Einetegin took 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Stanislav Nuteventin took 3<sup>rd</sup> in the carving category. Alexander Einetegin took first place in the jewelry competition. Valentina Kareva took 1<sup>st</sup> place for her fish soup and Irina Nitourgina took 2<sup>nd</sup> place for her seal meat dish. Irina Nitourgina took 3<sup>rd</sup> place for her berry dessert and Vladimir Memylneun took 1<sup>st</sup> place for his donuts. He was the only man that entered the food competition and everyone was surprised that he beat the best of the best with his donuts. The final highlight for the Russian Dance Group is Alexay Vukvuchaivan who came in second place for the best male performer.



*Uelen Dance Group dancing during Qatnut 2013 Trade Fair.*



*Uelen Dance Group dancing at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration at the Kotzebue Fairgrounds.*