

Inuit throat singers keep tradition alive

■ *El Rey to host music, silent movie 'Nanook' and discussion*

BY AURELIO SANCHEZ
Journal Staff Writer

Lois Suluk Locke can remember when the church tried to ban Inuit throat singing, and now she's doing her part to help preserve the tradition.

"I'm very happy it didn't get lost and that no one forgot our Inuit culture and history," she said.

Suluk Locke will be a featured performer, along with internationally noted musician and composer Brent Michael Davids, during a panel discussion and screening of the movie "Nanook of the North" at El Rey Theater.

Suluk Locke said she began throat singing in about 2005.

"I always had a passion for Inuit culture and history, and so I learned how to throat sing from a friend," she said. "I liked the sound and I liked that it gave me a sense of self identification."

Suluk Locke is from Arviat, Nunavut, in the Canadian arctic on the western shore of Hudson Bay. Arviat means the place of the bowhead whale.

She said she does a style of throat singing that "has been a form of entertainment and competition for we don't know how long."

Suluk Locke said she asked her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, and all three said they remembered throat singing, but didn't know its origins.

"It is slowly disappearing because hardly any girls or women are learning how to do it," she said.

She describes her style of throat singing as two women facing each other, mimicking the sounds of the elements or animals. Once a rhythm is established, it becomes a competition.



Inuit throat singer Lois Suluk Locke, right, is shown with her singing partner, Maria Illungiyok. Suluk Locke will perform at El Rey Theater and the Santa Fe Indian Market.

If you go

WHAT: "Nanook of the North": Movie, Music and Discussion

WHEN: 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 18

WHERE: El Rey Theater, 622 W. Central

HOW MUCH: \$10 suggested donation

Throat singing is a form of chant, resonating from the throat, stomach or lungs, Suluk Locke said.

"There is usually a leader and a follower, and the two will try to keep singing longer than her partner, and the one who stops first is considered the loser," she said. "It always ends up in laughter."

She also will perform at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Sunday,

Aug. 22, on the Santa Fe Plaza stage during the Santa Fe Indian Market.

Davids also will perform at the El Rey event. He is an American composer and flutist and a member of the Stockbridge Mohican nation of American Indians. He has composed for Zeitgeist, the Kronos Quartet, Joffrey Ballet, the National Symphony Orchestra and Chanticleer.

"Nanook of the North" is a 1922 silent documentary film by Robert J. Flaherty, which depicted the struggles of Inuk Nanook and his family in the Canadian arctic. Flaherty shot the film near Inukjuak, on Hudson Bay in Arctic Quebec, Canada.

The event is sponsored by the theater, Puccini Productions, Bronitsky and Associates, the Holocaust and Intolerance Museum of New Mexico and the Santa Fe Opera.