

# The way Tanana, Alaska celebrates Independence

By Anjoll Guthrie

We all get together and have a great old time on the 4th of July. People from everywhere come to Tanana, mostly from the Bush.

At noon we start the games and the races. We start the races in front of the mission house, which has a great big lawn. The races and games are for all ages.

Some of the funnest competitions are the tea making contest. You have to have a partner and a

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boat. You start on the river bank. When they say go, you race down to the boat and go across the river, get some wood, bring the wood back to the finish line, make a fire and pot of tea. The first pot to boil

wins. Then the elders try each of the teas and the best tasting one wins also.

We also have boat races that go from Tanana to Rampart and back. The winner receives a lot of

money.

The men and women run a 16-mile run. They also get a lot of money. They go from our town to this old abandoned Air Force base and back. We really don't care about the money. It is just to have some fun.

Also on the lawn there are a lot of concession stands, booths, fire works, and people who sell a lot of their goods that they have gath-

ered over the winter.

The women cook all day, preparing for a potlatch at the com-

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munity hall. After the games are over, the community goes to the community hall to eat.

A potlatch is a gathering of people to have a feast for celebrations, holidays and deaths. Everyone brings a dish of food. They make huge pots and tubs of soup, so that everyone in the town gets some food.

After all the eating is over, the elders get up, give speeches and give a little advice to the younger generation.

Soon after the elders are done with the speeches, the older people give prizes to the people who won the games and races. Most of the

time it is money. They get money from fund raisers and donations. The town helps raise money all the ways we can so we can have Fourth of July.

As soon as the prize giving is over, the Indian dancing and singing starts. We all get in a circle and dance.

Soon after that, we have huge fireworks, provided by the Native Council. The night has just begun. Then comes the all-night dance. Live band, fireworks going all night. It's so beautiful. We all sit outside and watch the fireworks.

*Anjoli Guthrie is a journalist from Tanana.*