

WEIO athletes, dancers to attend world Olympics

By Linda Lord—Jenkins
Tundra Times

Forty-three Eskimo dancers and athletes from the World Eskimo Indian Olympics will demonstrate traditional Eskimo dancing and Native games at the World Olympics in Los Angeles California, this summer. The presentation will be known "Heartbeats of Alaska: Native Games and Dance."

The news that the group would be travelling to California was made last week in Fairbanks by the Mike Irwin, president of the WEIO.

Present at the announcement were Olive Anderson who has worked with the Olympics since they began more than 20 years ago, and board members David Chanar, Fred Baker, and Poldine Carlo, who maintains the Seal oil lamp during the olympic events. He said work had been under way for almost a year to get Alaska's premier Native athletes to Los Angeles.

The work culminated in an agreement between the WEIO, and two private business organizations — the Alaska Airlines and Atlantic Richfield Corp., (ARCO) for funding and travel for the group.

The Wainwright dancers will present their traditional dances as representative of Eskimo dancing. A variety of athletes will demonstrate their skills at the Olympic villages on the University of California Los Angeles and University of Southern California campuses.

The entire group will perform

as part of the Olympic Arts International Festival of Masks at Pan Pacific Park and will make appearances at the Los Angeles Museum of Science and Industry, the ARCO Plaza and the ABC Entertainment Center.

The WEIO organizers hope that the group members will return in time to participate in the annual WEIO competition which should be held in Fairbanks.

There is currently a question about the final schedule for the WEIO in Fairbanks because of problems with the gymnasium floor at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks Patty Gymnasium which houses the Olympics.

Athletes now scheduled to make the trip are Robert Aiken, Jr. Barrow; Louise Charles, Bethel; Reggie Joule, Kotzebue; Lady Laraux Basket, Bethel; Homer Lord, Fairbanks; Leslie Nashookpuk, Pt. Hope; Greg Nothstine, Anchorage; Joshua Okpik, Barrow; Carol Pickett, Fairbanks; William Roland, Bethel; J.T. Sherman, Nome; Ike Towerak, Unalakleet; Paula White Anchorage; Henry Wilson, Kotzebue, and Rodney Worl, Anchorage.

The names of many athletes are familiar to the public because they are athletes who have competed and established records for years.

Members of the Wainwright dance troupe include Rossman Peetook, Billy Nashoalook, Gladys Nashoalook, Helen Peetook,

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WEIO demonstration set

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David Kagak, Kay Francis, Leo Panik, Beverly Panik, Lizzy Aguvluk, David Panik, Mary Ahnaogak, Isabelle Aguvluk, Hannah Matoonealook, Weir Negovanna, Mattie Bodfish, Tom Annayoc, Teddy Segevan, McRidge Nayikak, Merrill Nashaolook, and Jimmy Kagak.

The dancers will perform dances such as the Walrus Dance which has never been performed outside Wainwright.

King Island Dance leader Paul Tiulana is making dance masks especially for the occasion, according to the WEIO.

In order to make the trip, the WEIO will have to raise \$75,000 in private contributions from sources other than ARCO and Alaska Airlines. The Airline company will provide the air passage, a more difficult task than might be imagined because of the heavy air travel into Southern California during the Olympics.

ARCO is providing funding for other needs but WEIO needs volunteer donations, said Irwin. He said that the group is approaching each Native Regional Corporation in the state to see if the corporation will donate 50 cents per shareholder to the WEIO.

Irwin said that NANA Regional Corp., last week pledged \$2,500 which is roughly 50 cents per shareholder, to the cause. Joule is a NANA Director.

The Olympic trip is the culmination of a dream that Reggie has had for years, said Irwin.

Reggie said that he thinks the World Eskimo Indian Olympics and now the trip to the World Olympics are a good way of getting "our kids to get the feel of who they are and where they come from. And it gives an understanding by those who are not Native for those who are."

"We continue to need to know more about each other's background," he said.

Joule and Irwin smiled ruefully when asked about the process through which the Los Angeles Olympians were chosen.

The selection process was long and difficult but the group members were chosen on their character and Native qualities as well as athletic excellence.

Joule, who has been and Olympian for years and who now works with youngsters of the NANA Region in the Inupiat Iitluisiat program, said "In general history of our games and in terms of our lifestyle, the things that go into the events display the qualities needed to survive over the years.

"The games became a way of preparing our younger kids for that. They are also still relevant today."

Vicki Lord Irwin, executive director of the Olympics, said "I hope the L.A. Production and dance will be a calling card to come to the state and the WEIO as a uniquely Alaskan experience."

Now that the announcement has been made the fund raising and other work begins.

The Wainwright dancers are making their coordinated kuspiks and gloves and mukluks, said Irwin. They need to raise money so the athletes can have coordinated athletic clothing such as sweat shirts and sweat pants.

But, he said, WEIO wants to clothe the entire troupe in some form of coordinated traditional dress as representative of the Alaska Native clothing.

And the workers who put on the annual WEIO in Fairbanks each year need more help to put on the mass production. Anyone in Fairbanks or the surrounding area is invited to call the WEIO if they want to help out.

The event which brings thousands of athletes, friends and relatives as well as spectators to Fairbanks every summer, needs many people to help it go smoothly.



Mike Irwin, World Eskimo Indian Olympics president announces that the WEIO athletes and dancers are planning to go to the World Olympics. He is accompanied (left to right) by Alaska Airlines vice-president Bill MacKay, Reggie Joule, WEIO vice-president, Vicki Lord Irwin, WEIO executive director, and Hank Rosenthal, of Atlantic Richfield Co.

Any one who wants to contribute to the Olympians trip to Fairbanks or to the WEIO itself, should send their donations -- of any size -- to the WEIO, P.O. Box 2433, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99707.