

U of A Canadian Eskimo Student Finds Nome Eskimo Food Is Same

The Eskimo village of Povungnituk is located on the eastern coast of Hudson Bay in northern Quebec. There, 20 year-old Joshua Sivuarapik often hunted caribou and carved soapstone. Joshua is now developing his skill in silvercraft at the University of Alaska.

He is one of six students enrolled in the Arts & Crafts Center at the University. The students spend at least five days each week learning their skills under the direction of Professor Ronald Sunungetuk, and take the course without credit.

In Povungnituk, Joshua worked solely with soapstone. His talent was recognized and he demonstrated soapstone carving during Expo-67, the 1967 World's Fair at Ontario. He didn't work in silver until he came to the U of A.

Although silvercraft requires more technical skill than soapstone, Joshua enjoys the work. "Working with silver is more fun than carving soapstone. For me, it is much easier," he said.

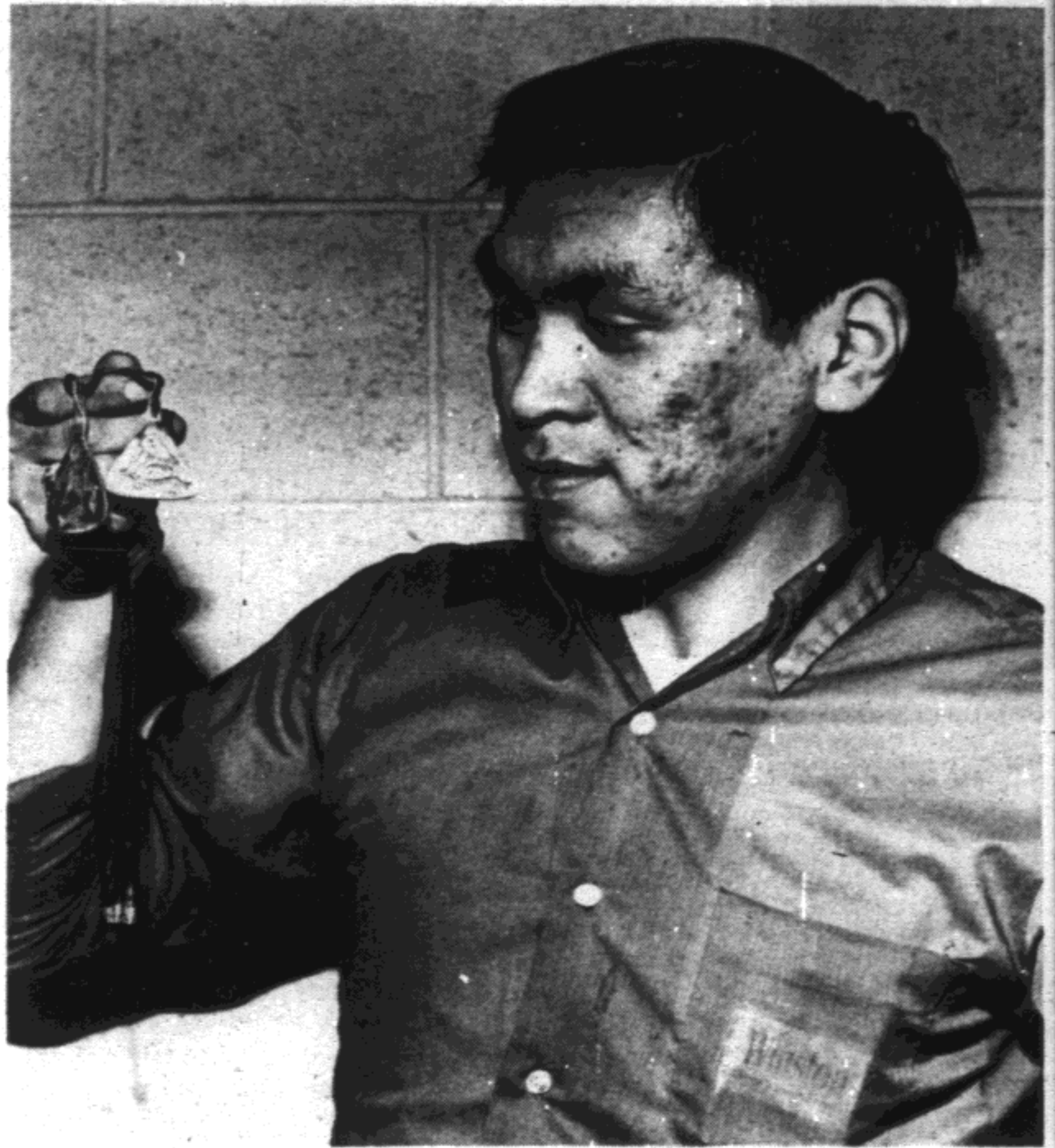
At the Arts & Crafts Center, Eskimo silversmiths take traditional designs and incorporate them with new and contemporary interpretations. Silvercraft is a creative and demanding skill.

Artist-craftsman Sivuarapik became interested in the native craft program after reading of it in Quebec.

"I saw Ron Sunungetuk's picture in the Beaver Book (guide to native arts and crafts) and read about the program. Then I decided to come," he said. "The administrator in my school in Canada arranged it for me."

Joshua finds life in Alaska similar to that of his home. "Alaska is not so different," he stated. "I went to Nome over Christmas vacation and we had the same Eskimo food."

Another similarity which Joshua noted was the replacement of the dog team by the snow machine. He explains that dog teams are almost non-existent among Canadian Eskimos today.



CANADIAN ESKIMO DISPLAY HANDIWORK—Joshua Sivuarapik, 20 year-old University of Alaska Freshman from Povungnituk, in northern Quebec, displays two silver pendants which he had made.
—THOMAS RICHARDS, JR. Photograph

"We don't use dog teams anymore, just Ski-doo's," he said. "Only a few people use dogs."

Young Sivuarapik recalls one nearly disastrous hunting trip on his snow-machine.

"One time I went hunting with a friend and my Ski-doo broke down. My hometown was 125 miles away. It took three days without food and water to walk home, and we got very thirsty. My friend was so tired, I had to leave him seven miles from Povungnituk. Somebody came back for him. That was

real close."

After he completes his studies at the University, Joshua would like to return to Quebec and work in silvercraft. The items which he has made out of silver include tie-tacs, cuff links, pins, pendants, and other jewelry.

Professor Ronald Sunungetuk, Director of the University's Arts & Crafts Center, is pleased with the work that Joshua is doing.

"He had the kind of dedication to this thing that is necessary. I think that he will do something worthwhile someday."