

University wants to own last dog team

Only one team of sled dogs remains in Barrow, Alaska -- one team, where once sleds pulled by dogs were the only means of transportation and every family owned such a team. That one remaining team is a good team, and it is for sale by its owner, Charley Popson.

Just one potential buyer has been found for the team -- Inupiat University of the Arctic, the little university on the North Slope which was started by Eskimos and is governed by Eskimos -- and that buyer hasn't yet been able to come with the \$14,500 estimated as required to purchase the team and equipment and to provide for the team's feeding, training, and handling for the first year. Now, Inupiat University is launching a campaign to obtain the needed funds through contributions.

Why is Inupiat University going to so much trouble over a dog team when it is apparent that is the last local vestige of a completely obsolete form of transportation? It is because Inupiat University, the only Eskimo University in the world, believes that dog sledding is one part of a traditional culture that should be, indeed must be preserved for the benefit of this and future generations.

The little Eskimo University wants to provide courses in dog selection, care, and training; harness and sled construction and maintenance; driving a dog sled; and related activities. While dog sleds may never again be the survival necessity they once were, they can be used in recreation and sports, as well as providing an emergency transportation system. There is, for example, considerable general interest in dog sled racing, as evidenced by the Fur Rendezvous races and the fantastic Iditarod race.

As the rodeo has become an important competitive sport among high schools and colleges of the Southwest states, so in the Arctic and sub-Arctic nothing would be more natural than dog sled competition. Local interest suggests that it could soon be a very popular sport among both participants and spectators.

Revival of the arts and skills

dog sledding is just one part of a grant plan envisioned by Inupiat University of the Arctic for preservation and strengthening of traditional aspects of Inupiat culture. Titled "Inupiat

Renaissance," the plan calls for development of a large complex (the Inupiat Center for Information, Culture, and Language -- ICICL) which is to incorporate a library and learning

area, a museum and other exhibit areas, research facilities, and a cultural center similar to the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii -- except that this one would be concerned with the

various cultures of the Inuit or Inupiat peoples in the circum-polar regions of Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Russia (Big Diomed Island, and the United States (northern Alaska).