

A Community Effort

**By Bob Koweluk
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The members of the Northwest Alaska community of Kotzebue are getting ready for the second annual Northwest Trade Fair which will be held on July 4-8, 1980. Eskimos will be arriving from as far away as Canada to attend the fair and others will come from the villages from Barrow to Nome to meet relatives, old friends, and to take part in the fair's activities.

I would like to be in Kotzebue to see old friends meet again after being away for a while and to listen to their talk about their experiences which happened throughout the year. I would like to listen to the elders speaking of the past, with their insight of what happened, why, and to look into the future pondering life, and the changes they have experienced. I would like to see the younger generation slow their pace of life to listen to the elders talk these things which have happened, to also ponder why they happened, examine alternative solutions, logical consequences and look into the future.

I would like to see the youngsters listen and take part in these talks and for a change, when they leave, have learned a part of their heritage which will not be found in school text books. The elders hold our past in their memories of what happened, of legends, of past leaders, of our laws, our religion, the way of life; the roles of each person in a family, in a hunting crew, or in the community. The elders know all the traditional lifestyle skills such as how to predict the weather, animal migrations, and seasonal changes with accuracy, which more and more youngsters could not hope to reach.

The elders have noticed these things long before anyone thought preserving our culture became an issue. They say the young have to survive, change and adapt to the new situations and to be successful. It is living in two cultures which is taking its toll on the youngsters. But with more and more youngsters succeeding and striking a balance in which they choose to live in one or both cultures is good to see. I see the trade fair as a change for us to meet in our old fashioned ways, to mix the new with the old, to compete in a spirit of friendship, and to share in all of our experiences. I think with many, it will be a chance to see first hand those, who in their own way are succeeding and to have a little fun too.

The elders can talk about these matters while attending the events. There will be a mixture of the old and the new activities this year. A baby beauty contest. The 4th of July celebration; Miss Kotzebue contest; fashion shows for parkas, mittens, mukluks, beadwork, baskets, football games and photography are some of the newer activities planned. From the older activities comes competition which uses the survival skills of our peoples come spear throwing, fish cutting, seal skinning, foot races, wrestling, high kick, stick pull, neck pull and there will even be rifle shoots and a muktuk eating contests!

I love to eat muktuk and would like to be there to meet friends, talk with elders, people my age and to the youngsters to share experiences which have happened in our lifetime and to be there with happy peoples.

I wish this year's trade fair to be a success and while I hassel with car traffic, long shopping lines and breathe four air here in Anchorage, I hope you all who plan to go to the fair have more fun than I do!