

Inuvik Folks Enjoyed EIO

By LOIS KEATING

Oct. 15—First of all, I want to say that all of us who went over to Fairbanks for the Eskimo-Indian Olympics had a great time, and for many it was a chance to see old friends and visit with relatives, some not seen for many years.

At the beginning of August there was an Inuit Women's Conference held in Pangnirtung in the Eastern Arctic, with delegates from each Eskimo community in the Northwest Territories. Then, in the middle of August, there was a Native Women's Conference held in Ottawa.

Reports from both conferences indicated that the women greatly appreciated the opportunity to get together and talk about things that were of importance to them. For some, it was the first trip out of their settlements, and a chance to hear about how people live in other places. Similar conferences are planned for the future.

There were 116 beluga whales taken this summer in the Beaufort Sea-Mackenzie Delta area. The people at the whaling camps came back with lots of muktuk and dry fish.

COPE (The Committee for Original People's Entitlement) and ITC (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada) had hoped to get a land

freeze put on the area around Tuktoyaktuk, to protect the land and waters from further exploration activities until such time as the Native land claims are settled.

However, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development rejected their request. But they have not given up and are still pressuring to get some sort of protection for the area.

At the end of August the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. and the Metis Association held a joint meeting at Fort Norman. At this assembly they declared "to themselves and the world the right to be recognized as a nation." They are calling themselves the "Dene Nation"—"Dene" meaning "the people."

This declaration sparked all sorts of fireworks from Ottawa and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The minister of the department, Judd Buchanan, said that a separate nation within Canada could not be tolerated.

It is somewhat unclear why there was such an uproar about the Dene Nation when, not so long ago, ITC announced that the Inuit people would like to form a territory called "Nunavut." No one seemed to get terribly upset about that.

In September I went to Sachs Harbor for two weeks, on a sort of holiday. It was the first time I have been there when I wasn't in a hurry, so I had time for leisurely visits.

I even skinned and fleshed a seal (I must confess it took me all day while two other women did 11 of them! Maybe next time it won't take me so long). I really hoped I would see a polar bear, but I had to be satisfied only with seeing

fresh tracks.

About 20 Indian families from Fort Good Hope have again taken advantage of the territory's Outpost Camp Program, and have gone into the bush for the winter. Under the same program, about eight families from the Tuk area have gone to North Star Harbor on Cape Bathurst.

Recently we lost two more old-timers in this area—Abraham Alexie from Fort McPherson and Edward Kikoak from Tuktoyaktuk.