

N.W.T. Eskimos—

977 Enrollment Forms Delivered

By LOIS KEATING
Inuvik Correspondent

INUVIK, N.W.T. — We've been having warmer weather at long last. When the temperature dropped to 48 below on March 16, I was about to give up hope that spring would ever be in sight.

However, the snow is now beginning to melt during the day — but it freezes again at night. With the disappearance of the snow, the town is beginning to look incredibly dirty. All kinds of things, long buried under the white stuff, are now making an appearance.

It is also quite evident that considerable damage has been done to the wooden sidewalks, presumably by graders clearing the streets. Huge puddles are appearing everywhere, and I constantly have to make hurried retreats to avoid being covered with mud by passing vehicles.

It's not really dark now at 11:00 p.m. Although I have spent quite a few years above the 60th parallel, this is the first spring for me above the Arctic Circle — and it seems strange to have it light so late, and yet to still be wearing a parka. Planes and helicopters are able to fly for long hours now, and soon they will be busy around the clock.

On March 28th, Nellie Cournoyea and Neta Raddi from C.O.P.E. (Committee for Original People's Entitlement) flew over to Anchorage to personally deliver the Alaska land claims enrollment forms from the Northwest Territories. A few applications had previously been sent in individually, but this last batch consisted of 977 names which were turned over to the enrollment office.

Canadian natives are also working hard for a land claims settlement. C.O.P.E., as the regional organization, together with the I.T.C. (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada), have been gathering data to support their claims. Much criteria is being developed to avoid many problems presently being encountered in Alaska, such as land selection and definition of water.

April 7-8 was a big weekend in Inuvik — besides the N.W.T. Badminton Tournament which was held here, the Anne Murray Show came to town. They were sponsored by CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company) and put on two performances — one in the afternoon for children and another in the evening for adults.

The auditorium of S.A.M.S. School was packed and after the evening show, the fellows in the band volunteered to play for a dance. The hall was quickly cleared, and we were treated to what was probably the best music ever to come to Inuvik.

Northern Games officials have been busy planning this year's games, to be held the weekend of August 3, 4, and 5. This is the first time that Northern Games will take place after the Eskimo Olympics. The local people hope that a number of participants from Alaska will attend.

Billy Day and the Mackenzie Delta Drum Dancers left last weekend for Montreal where they are putting on a number of performances. They are joining other native dance groups from all over Canada who have gone to Montreal to help support the Indian and Eskimo people of James Bay in northern Quebec, who are fighting to save their land from destruction by the proposed James Bay Hydro Project.

The Drum Dancers from Inuvik are well known in Fairbanks, as they have often attended the Eskimo Olympics, and in 1971 won the Eskimo dance competition. I visited with them the night before they left — it was so good to see them again, as I had worked with them last year in Whitehorse when they came down for the 1972 Arctic Winter Games. This group of older people have done so much to help preserve the dances of this area.