

Winners All

Welcome to the 1982 World Eskimo-Indian Olympics.!

Whether you are sitting in the UAF auditorium watching these games or sitting at home listening to them and watching them on television, we welcome you to this annual re-affirmation of the strength of our traditions.

You will watch and hear about the athletes who jump the highest, pull the hardest or carry the heaviest weight.

But these games are more than just the names of the first-place winners.

The truth of the matter and the important thing about the Olympic games is that everyone who participates, everyone who watches, everyone who helps out, is a winner because they have participated in an event which reaffirms their cultural heritage.

The games serve to highlight Native cultural values and give the spotlight to excellence in traditional athletic events and everyday skills. A skill as invaluable as fish cutting or seal skinning may not be considered very glamorous by outsiders but to the Native peoples of Alaska it is a necessary part of our lives and one which should be sustained and supported.

The sewing contest in which three ladies sat for hours patiently stitching beautiful mukluks is another part of our lives which should be spotlighted and shown to the world.

Once again this year many villages sent large dance groups to the games to provide one of the most spectacular and moving parts of the games. Those dance groups had members as young as 3 years and as old as 105 and offered each participant the chance to learn from their experiences and from their elders.

The experience of participating in an event which allows us to meet with peoples of other villages, tribes and cultures is one which can only strengthen us and make us wiser.

Participating in an event which reaffirms our cultural traditions and values is good for young and old.

And allowing the public to participate in and watch an event which highlights our cultural values is a good way to protect our culture by showing outsiders the traditional values of friendship, of friendly and helpful competition and of respecting our heritage.

It seems that all too many outside athletic events nowadays are turning into games of loud and profane talk and jealousy instead of friendly competition among people who are interested in advancing good sportsmanlike values.

The games allow our young people to see that our outstanding athletes, the likes of Reggie Joule, Lady Larrick, Joe Towarek, Joshua Oupik, Greg Nottstein, Carol Stille, are not human roosters crowing about their prowess and victories but are soft spoken, modest, dignified and serious people who are worth emulating.

The Native games also provide another good example of the values of the Native peoples of Alaska when it is told that all but one of the people who worked so hard to put on such a wonderful and well-organized event was a volunteer. That in itself is something that should be applauded.

So, there is no one winner in these games. We are all winners for having competed in, worked with or watched the games.