

Some ABC's

in education

BY RON INOUE

Editor's note: Thanks for your letters and phone calls regarding this column. We've received responses from Tundra Times readers in Anchorage, Bethel and Copenhagen, Denmark. If you have questions about the column or suggestions for subjects to discuss, let me know by writing to me at the Center for Cross-cultural Studies (CXCS), University of Alaska-Fairbanks, 99701, or call (907) 479-7185.

The recently completed 17th annual summer "World Eskimo-Indian Olympics" brings to mind a number of ways to provide or enhance Alaska Native cultural heritage programs. The student-organized spring "Festival of Native Arts" at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, provides similar ideas. As increasing numbers of cultural heritage programs become part of the elementary and secondary schools' regular curriculum across the state, and as more nonprofit corporations and local community governments design programs for school-agers, the "Olympics" and "Festival of Native Arts" provide interesting ideas for programming to serve Native and non-Native students alike.

Attending events such as the "Olympics," "Festival" or similar regional activities like whaling festivals or urban potlatches requires significant planning. Field trips to observe those events are important and the students can use those occasions for educational purposes. Some ideas for student activities include:

- observing the significance and types of social interaction during such gatherings,

- keeping a diary or other written account of the various events with descriptions of how the events are played or performed so the information c

- events with descriptions of how the events are played or performed so the information can be shared with people at home,

- photographing the events and combining the pictures with written accounts for displays to show back home, in classes and in a community store or airport,

- comparing the similarities and differences in the ways groups from various geographic areas of the state dance, play a drum, wear special dress, etc., and

- discussing the traditional games and comparing them with the ones which are now played.

In conjunction with a field trip, other educational activities could be included. Consider visits to counterpart schools and classrooms, tours of places where your students may plan to work or continue their educations after high school graduation. The planning for a field trip is invaluable as a learning activity if the students are actively involved in parts of the planning decision-making process.

If your students aren't able to travel to one of these state-wide or regional events, they might be able to design or carry out a local version of the "Olympics" or "Festival" for the community. There could be storytelling, dancing, exhibits and demonstrations of handicrafts, food preparation and sales, athletic events and other activities which the students would organize.

If you are on an advisory committee or staff of a cultural heritage program for your school, non profit association, or community council, consider having your students prepare and/or attend events like the "World Eskimo-Indian Olympics" or "Festival of Native Arts." With your guidance in planning learning activities, the students will learn a lot and have many experiences to share with other students, their parents and the community.