

Editorial

Atlanta frenzy doesn't dim WEIO spirit

While the eyes of the world turn to Atlanta, Alaskans celebrate an Olympic tradition at least as old.

It is time again for the World Eskimo and Indian Olympics in Fairbanks, a week-long contest of strength, timing, agility and mental fortitude. Comprised of a number of grueling events -- four-man carry, ear-pull, high kick, wrist-pull, and knuckle hop, to name a few -- the Native games were gathered under the WEIO banner in the 1960's and have been an important statewide focal point of cultural pride ever since.

But the origins of the Games stretch back into the mists of time. In villages, seasonal camps, at harvest celebrations and inter-tribal trading sites, the games helped build the skills and endurance necessary for arctic and sub-arctic survival.

It is difficult to over-estimate the positive impact that the WEIO games have had on hundreds of Alaska Native youths over the years. From scores of large and small villages and every major city, they have traveled to Fairbanks with every bit of the excitement of the athletes now gathered in Atlanta. They have come and competed. Some have won medals. All have been enriched in spirit, pride and self-esteem and life-long memories. Many have assumed important roles of leadership at home and elsewhere in Alaska.

An activity that produces this kind of benefit deserves our continuing support.

We salute the World Eskimo and Indian Olympics and the athletes whose determination inspires us all. Good luck!