

WEIO celebrates Native Heritage

Amidst pilot strikes, museumless funding and Native unrest on the pipeline perhaps its a good thing we have something a little brighter to look forward to in the near future. The World Eskimo Indian Olympics, an annual event held the latter part of July, brings together athletes from all over Alaska and other northern area to join in the fun and compete for awards and recognition.

More important than the athletic competitions, however, is the strong Native unity established when representatives from all of Alaska's Native groups gather in the Patty Gymnasium at the University of Alaska campus in Fairbanks. For years the Olympics have been a gathering of family and friends. A place to see old buddies and meet new ones. With all the hassles of the rat race left in the background the to often hidden smile on the face of our Native people is brought out in full view. Young and old alike join in the fun and games of their celebrated culture.

A new highlight was added to the 1976 Olympics last year with the establishment of the Howard Rock Memorial Trophy, an award to be given annually to the athlete who demonstrates the highest standards of sportsmanship and quality of performance. The award was established in memorium of Howard Rock, editor, publisher and founder of the Tundra Times. 1976 recipient of the award was Reggie Joule, an Eskimo from Kotzebue.

Other events are the ear pull, indian stick pull, men's blanket toss, seal skinning, baby contest, knuckle hop, parka contest, four man carry, ear weight contest, fish cutting, men's greased pole walk, women's two foot high kick, women's greased pole walk, men's two foot high kick, men's one foot high kick, queen contest, women's blanket toss, sewing demonstration, muktuk eating, race of the torch, and dancing.

A new event to be added to the list this year will be the Over 60 beauty contest.

All the fun at the Olympics begins on July 28, at the Patty Gymnasium, U of A, Fairbanks, and continues for two days following. Make plans to attend this years festivities and join in the fun. Help celebrate the Alaska Native Heritage.