



PHOTO BY BILL HESS

Seven and eight-year-old campers at the NANA Region's "spirit camp," Sivuniigvik, compete boys against girls in a bit of Eskimo football. They fought each other to a draw, 0-0. For story and photos, see pages 7-9.

## Spirit Camp teaches young Inupiaq values

By Bill Hess

Tundra Times

"Who can tell me the Inupiaq name for raven?" Reggie Joule asks loudly so his voice can be heard over the engine of the boat. Several young campers spout out the name of the black birds flying and landing in the spruce off the riverbank. A short while earlier, they had a chance to try out the Inupiaq name for a porcupine, after a sharp-eyed girl spotted one hiding high in the branches of a

spruce.

The campers are all seven and eight-year-olds, the first group to venture to Camp Sivuniigvik, also known as the "spirit camp." The camp, located in Arctic tundra, wetlands, and forest some two boat hours east of Kotzebue, is run by the NANA Regional Corporation and serves young people from throughout the area.

This session, exactly half of the 24 young campers are from Kotzebue, and the other half

from the villages.

They have come to do what young people do at camps everywhere: swim, hike, canoe, make friends, shoot a bow and arrow, and have a good time. But there is more to it than that.

John Schaeffer, president of NANA, explains as he sits at a table in a large room in the modern building which NANA recently had constructed at the remote site. On the wall behind him is a poster detailing the Inupiaq Iitqusiat values,

the values of respect for man and nature and hard work which have sustained the Inupiaq for millenia.

Sivuniigvik is more than a place to have fun, Schaeffer says. "It's a place to learn the traditional skills and values," he explains. The children in the boat are not just joy-riding, when they reach their destination, they will learn how to set a fish net, and afterwards, the proper way to handle different fish; they will

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Luke Sampson and his young son, Conan, search for a proper place to teach campers how to set a fish net. Sampson helps run Sivuniigvik.



PHOTOS BY BILL HESS

Bruce Davis and Carrie Morgan set the net (left) and afterward handle their first catch, a pike. When the campers below tried out a rod and reel, the only thing they managed to catch was each other.

## 'Greater responsibility,' reason for camp

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know which fish can be grabbed by the mouth or gills, and which ones are likely to remove a finger if handled that way.

Later, they will learn how to cut fish and dry them. They will also get some hands-on practice with rifles. Courtesy and respect for each other and the wildlife about them will be emphasized.

Normally, there are Elders stationed full time at Sivuniigvik, but they are all gathered

together at a special planning meeting in Kotzebue this time.

Yet Reggie Joule, Luke Sampson and his wife Esther and the different young camp counselors have also received instruction in the values of Inupiaq Ilitqusiak, and can teach them as well.

A camp such as this, where money is spent but not earned seems by most American standards a strange thing for a profit-making corporation to be running. "Essentially, our board has decided we have a greater responsibility to our shareholders than just making profits," Schaeffer explains. "We have the responsibility to our shareholders to help them develop the whole person."

Non-shareholders of the region are equally welcome at Sivuniigvik but it is the Inupiaq values which are stressed. "We don't feel this is taking away from anything," Schaeffer explains. "Most non-Natives don't have the identity problem our people do. There is a real need for a more positive identity."

If Sivuniigvik and other projects are successful at helping to create this positive identity, Schaeffer sees other benefits.

"Our efforts in the spirit program have a lot to do with 1991," Schaeffer notes the year when shares and lands in the Alaska Native Lands Settlement Act corporations are scheduled by law to become

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# Spirit camp seeks to counteract 1991

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alienable, or subject to taxes will sell. If you do, then you and sale to non-Natives. won't sell. Of course, we're

"The difference is whether not naive enough to believe you feel Native enough about we'll be totally successful. your land. If you don't, then We're working like all the other chances are when someone corporations to find other offers you a lot of money, you solutions to 1991."



Reggie Joule lectures campers on the Inupiaq Ilitqusiak values.



Cooperation is one of the values stressed at Sivunivik. A couple of campers and counselor (the one they call the professor) try a little cooperation with a heavy load.



Some of the girl campers pose for a picture while some of the boys do a bit of clowning.





Oobis Hannah drives the boat a short distance with some instruction from Joule.



Randall Cleveland from Selawik practices a little body heat conservation during swimming lessons. With all the boating done in the North, the swimming lessons could prove to be most valuable.



New friends enjoy each others company during a late evening return from the fish nets.



Joule and Sampson teach proper gun safety and shooting techniques as young campers try their skill at target shooting (above). At left, Joule gets a friendly wave from the camp as he passes by in the big boat after gathering drinking water from the middle of the river. Besides the tents which the campers stay in, there is a modern building with a cafeteria and a large activity room and other space, and several cabins for the Elders who usually stay at the camp, and for other staff people and guests.

PHOTOS BY BILL HESS