

WEIO celebrates 25 years of history, tradition

The 1985 annual World Eskimo-Indian Olympic games are scheduled for July 31-Aug. 3 at the Big Dipper Ice Arena in Fairbanks. The celebration of 25 years of games will begin with the annual race of the torch this year. Although this year participants will observe the quarter century anniversary of the games, the events themselves are hundreds of years old.

The first Eskimo-Indian Olympics was held in Fairbanks at Griffin Park in 1959 when Edith Tegoseak lit the seal oil lamp initiating the first Eskimo-Indian Olympics. The World Eskimo-Indian Olympics has been held in August ever since.

Some of the events seen will be the knuckle-Hop, which is the most grueling sport during the four-day event. This is when the athletes propel themselves forward by hopping on their curled fists. The technique imitates the movement of a seal as it pushes itself along dry ground with its flippers. Rules require a straight back and stomach about six inches off the floor. At the signal, athletes bounce down the hardwood gymnasium floor until they can't go any further.

Although it is the most punishing sport of the olympics,

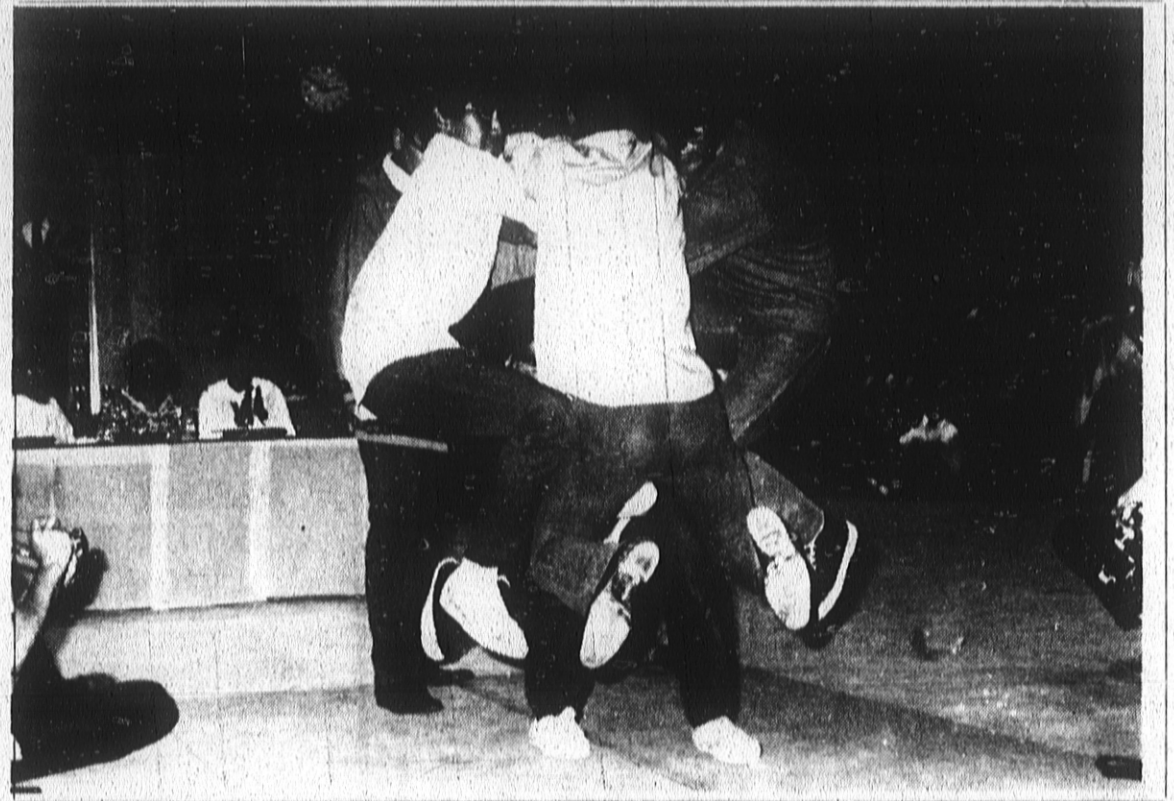
the knuckle hop is the last event of the games.

Other Native sports that are included are the greased pole walk, the ear-pulling contest, the four-man carry, the two-foot high kick and the blanket toss.

As the name implies, the greased pole walk involves contestants trying to walk down a six-inch diameter peeled log that's been smeared with cooking grease. The winner is the person who can walk down the raised log the farthest. A talent that came in handy for early Indians who used logs like bridges to cross Alaska's many streams.

The ear-pulling contest puts two men sitting opposite one another, a loop of twine strung from one man's ear to his opponent's. The object is to pull back until someone gives in. Stubborn contestants can walk away with cut or torn ears. The four-man carry is a weight lifting contest, Native style. Four men, weighing a total of 600 pounds, cling to the front, back and sides of the competitor. With his excess baggage, the man will walk as far as he can.

The most glamorous event during the games is the two-foot highkick, a sport that combines a



A demonstration of the 4-man carry.

Tundra Times photo

gymnast's agility with a high diver's precision. The object is for contestant's to kick a ruff of caribou fur suspended over their heads. The difficult part is doing it with both feet at the same time.

Of all the events, the blanket

toss of Nalakatuk, as it is called by Natives, is the biggest crowd pleaser. An Eskimo version of the trampoline, 40 people hold onto rope handles attached to a large caribou hide blanket and in a "heave-ho" fashion, rocket the

blanket rider into the air.

This is only a small portion of the events held at the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics; we encourage you to come out and join us in supporting the 1985 athletes.