

# ***Seal Oil Lamps Not Ivory But Soapstone or Talc***

We inadvertantly wrote last week in our banner story of the Eskimo Olympics of 1976 that seal oil lamps were made from "ivory."

The three lamps lit by native women in front of the stage were made of soapstone or talc.

Soapstone for centuries past has been the traditional material for fashioning lamps since it was easy to carve. The lamps, as the stories were told, were made in the Canadian north where the soapstone was plentiful.

The finished products were traded by the Canadian Eskimos to the Eskimos in the west. These were used mostly to heat the sod igloos of the Alaskan Eskimos. One lamp was usually sufficient to heat a small sod igloo.

(It has been told that the Kalgees (large igloos or community gathering places) were heated by as many as three large soapstone lamps.

Such manner of heating was used by the oldtime Eskimos when they still used the tunnel system of entrances to the igloos. This meant that persons entered the igloo through a rather long tunnel type of entranceway, rather low and narrow, into the igloo and through a manhole in the front end of the dwelling.

The tunnel system was discouraged by the early missionaries at which time ground level entrance was initiated. It was noted that the sod igloos were not as warm when this was done.

The tunnel system of entry into the igloo was developed by the Eskimos a long time ago and which solved the heating principal for their time and which allowed very little heat to warm the well insulated sod igloo.

Cooking was done in the hallway, or tunnel, in a small side compartment where women built fires. The smoke escaped through an opening on the roof of the compartment.