

Celebration follows successful bowhead hunt

by Morris Oviok

Point Hope Correspondent

Friends, relatives and visitors from outlying urban and rural areas came to celebrate the June 10-12th Whaling Festival at Point Hope. Successful Whaling Captain Luke Koonook Sr. and the crew caught the two whales this spring.

June 7-9th, relatives and the Pt. Hope Eskimo Dancers traveled to Kivalina to celebrate their whaling tradition. June 8th, the Episcopal Church of St. Thomas Mission celebrated the new ministry of Rev. Seymour Tuzrolyuke Sr. ordained as a Priest. Last June, he was ordained a deacon.

First day activity: Sunday Morning Service. In the afternoon, the boat was placed to the resting ground. There the people gathered and ate mikigaq (fermented whale meat). The people gathered early evening for the singspirational service held at the Episcopal church.

Second day activity: The captain and his wife Angeline distributed the sliced whale flippers (avarrags) to the elders, leaders, relatives, children and visitors. Angeline's parents, Laurie and Sarah Kingik, both helped with the distribution.

Third day activity: The women cooked outdoors at the feasting ground from early morning till late afternoon. While some men challenged the old-style horseshoe game, the



Whaling captain Luke Koonook (in front of flag) headed the Point Hope Whaling Festival.

blanket toss was prepared. There the old women shoved around to pick up gifts that were thrown from the toss. The gifts were to bring good luck to a young born and to

make him become a good hunter.

The moment of happiness began with the Eskimo (motion and common) dancing, which lasted the whole evening. The final meal of the festival was near the end of the celebration; frozen muktuk and whale meat. Visitors waited patiently for the delayed planes due to the fog. Finally some made it home after a week long stay at Point Hope.

Some residents were heading

back to their hunting campsites, while others were getting prepared for the Women Basketball games, the Annual Basketball Clinic, the Boy Scout Leadership Camp, the Northwest Trade Fair and the World Eskimo Olympics. The Alaska Native Review Commission, who also came here to be a part of the celebration, held a public meeting at the school library.

The elders and the middle-age residents gave concerns of the 1991 stock control, the natives born after 1971, discussed about

land and sovereignty. Much of the concern was the stock control (how we and our children will handle our shares), the natives who didn't get a chance to claim land, and the idea of postponing the 1991 deadline.

The whale hunt has always been a spiritual and emotional value, and the people gathered to share the strength of unity and celebrated the sharing of the whale flippers.



Koonook with members of his family and crew.



Koonook distributes muktuk.

Photos by Morris Oviok