



Spontaneous Spirit

An inspiring and impromptu offer to participate in the Centennial 'doings' took place in Nome this past weekend.

At a board of directors meeting of the King Island Eskimos' new Arts and Crafts Association, (proper name is more inclusive: Arctic Eskimos A & C A) women of the little transplanted community sat quietly along the wall, observing only. When the men were reminded of the Centennial art contest and its approaching deadline for entries, Mrs. Ursula El-lana asked for permission to speak.

"Why couldn't the women of the village prepare an exhibit for the Centennial of hunting, cutting, sewing and other things we have always used?" she wanted to know. A suggestion that such an exhibit be sent to Fairbanks for the Exhibit Site met with a firm negative. "No," she said, with the other women indicating their agreement. "Let's keep it here."

The offer was a small gesture in the whole scheme of things, but it represented the first unsolicited proposal from a Native community. Purchase of Alaska naturally does not have the same meaning for those whose forbears began the population here and who themselves have always lived here. But its significance cannot be overlooked.

It was as though a spark from Ursula's bright eyes danced into the center of the modest community building.

The men, whose association plans have been moving slowly for a number of reasons, including fear of failure of one more project, responded with willingness to prepare a place for the exhibit.

When we left, the women were talking earnestly among themselves of what they could do and how the children could join in the preparation.