

Gives Aid to Imuruk Basin Project

NOME—A special project to locate and preserve unique sites and monuments of a vanished civilization has been given a new lease on life through the Alaska Federation of Natives.

The project, described by Tundra Times April 21 as "A Special Historical and Cultural Inventory of Imuruk Basin", hinged on a legislation appropriation which fell through.

After a special meeting with members of the project advisory board, AFN was able to secure sufficient funds to underwrite the operation until July 1.

In addition, an Imuruk Basin Project Advisory Committee has been appointed by the Arctic Native Brotherhood with Barbara Trigg of Nome as chairman.

Serving with her are Martin Olson of Golovin, Dorothy Isabel of Teller, Peggy Fagerstrom

of Nome, Chuck Degnan of Unalakleet and Jerome Trigg, president of the brotherhood. Additional appointments will be made at a later date.

The project staff includes William Oquilluk, Myron Wheeler and Laurel Bland. New funding will enable them to photograph and describe some of the most important sites and

monuments in the basin such as ancient graves of legendary Eskimo heroes, long abandoned villages and camps.

Many of these places are in remote and hazardous locations and will require travel by small boat over little known rivers and lagoons, climbing steep mountain canyons and hiking many miles over rough tundra.



NALUKATUK—Laura Bergt is feeling right at home at Pt. Hope nalukatuk (blanket toss) during the recent whaling celebration at the ancient village. Four flags denote four whales caught by the Qaqmaqtuuq (northern faction of the village whalers) while the southern faction caught two whales. —Stu Rothman Photo

Whaling Celebration ...

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cut into large chunks and lowered into ten or twenty foot deep permafrost "deep freeze" pits. An ample portion is then cut up and cooked in many pots for the feast.

Whale meat, this reporter was surprised to learn, tastes very much like beef, but that should not be too unusual when you realize that the whale is a mammal, and is referred to by many as "the cow of the ocean."

Now, muktuk, the thick, rich, black layer near the blubber (fat), has a sort of fishy almond taste, and is very good. Watching a woman at work with her oloo (Eskimo knife), carving on a large roast of red meat, it is difficult to realize that it is not beef. We sampled some boiled whale heart, and it, too, tasted like beef heart.

One delicacy offered at the feast, and almost as interesting to watch being prepared as they were good to eat, were the Eskimo sourdough doughnuts. Not the sweet, cake-type doughnuts we are used to, but a thick chewy one loaded with flavor.

A woman would grab a handful of dough and, rolling it between their hands, in a manner of seconds formed a perfect doughnut. It was then dropped into a pan of boiling oil, and fished out with a stick minutes later, golden brown and delicious. We know, because we personally ate at least a dozen.

Blanket-tossing, first by the children and then by adults, went on for several hours following the feast. Wrapping up the evening was an outstanding display of the most superb Eskimo dancing we have ever seen.

Kugruk marked a catch of six whales at Point Hope this season, and the community celebrated the occasion in two large camps. The blanket-toss pictured on this page was in the camp of Capt. Joe Frankson, where four whales were taken.

This is shown by the four American flags flown from the flagpoles. The other camp a short distance away, where some of the other photographs were made, took two whales, under Capt. Amos Lane.

In 1970 only five whales were taken at Point Hope.

One of the groups that attended the feast originated here in Fairbanks. Organized by Laura Bergt, approximately two-dozen Fairbanksans and a few Anchorage friends piled into a chartered Interior Airways DC3, and headed North.

Fairbanksans on the trip were Marge Wright, Dorothy Purdue, Bonnie Babb, Dr. Bob and Patsy Willey, Dorothy Truran, Terry Tomczak, Mike Stackhouse, Bob Williams, Julie Klever, Claire Fejes, Art Bruhn, Ilene McLean, Tom Duncan, Fred Stone, Sandra Nelson, Lee Rothman, Laura Bergt and her four children, Mike, Karen, Debra, and Bryan, and myself. From Anchorage there were Dick and Shirley Woodrow and Richard Romer.

The trip proved so successful and all who went were so enthusiastic that Mrs. Bergt said that she would probably be planning a much larger group for next year.

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