

Call number: 00-00-178-01 PT.4

Eskimo Olympics, 1972 (KUAC) Interview with Billy Killbear, James Nageak. Description of seal skinning contest, no music.

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Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master and circulation copies on CD.

The interviewer (sounds like Paul Quist) asks Billy Killbear what games he participates in. Billy says he participates in anything they have up here except for high kicking because it is too hard for his bottomsides and back. He plays ear pulling and muktuk eating. He won muktuk eating contest at 26 seconds.

Billy played knuckle hop yesterday. The hop is done balanced on the toes and knuckles in a push-up position. If your body or feet drag against the floor you are disqualified. He made 45' the other day but in the last hour his brother came and made 70'5". Billy says his brother is lighter, competitive, and knows how to do the hop. (See 00-00-178 PT 2)

Billy says he and his brothers don't practice together now because they are all scattered now.

Billy does not remember when he first started playing the knuckle hop; he guesses around 1954. He is 33 years old now. Billy did not practice the knuckle hop with his brothers when he was a child; was raised up by a different family from Bethel. He is proud of being able to speak 6 or 7 different dialects of Eskimo.

When he was a teenager he did not practice the knuckle hop. He first did the knuckle hop in the Eskimo Olympics last year. He came in second to his brother (Gordon?). Billy is hoping to lose weight and beat his brother's record next year.

The tape cuts out. Quist speaks to James Nageak. James says a new game, the swing kick, was played last night. They put a belt around both legs and around the neck and then the participant swings up and tries to kick a suspended target. A guy from Inuvik won that even at about 52". There were about 12 contestants in the swing kick including James. James went up to 48". He says that it is similar to a game played in Barrow which is done without the belt. James says the belt makes it easier. A man from Inuvik demonstrated how it was done. James thinks perhaps, then, the game is from Inuvik.

There was also a blanket toss last night. Just three men competed due to time constraints. The men were from Kotzebue, Inuvik, and Barrow. The blanket tore before the second man got on so there was some hesitation to throw the man up really high. Billy was one of the people who was holding the blanket. Billy says they wanted some people with experience holding the blanket because of possibilities

of injuries and the person falling outside of the blanket. Billy said there were a few times where the blanket holders had to move with the man. Billy says that all the people holding the blanket must all pull outwards at the same time to keep the blanket taut and not sagging. If people pull tight on one side and people on the other side are kind of loose then the blanket tips to the side and people get thrown off to the side. The blanket did not have supporting ropes like in Barrow. It was simply a walrus-hide blanket made with split skins and with ropes around the edge to hold on to. The blanket had been kept where it was too dry so it was dry and brittle. That is why it tore.

James says he understands that the blanket toss was traditionally used for spotting whales out at sea. James says that the blankets are old retired skin coverings for umiaks. The blanket toss is now used to celebrate successful spring whaling during the whale festival. The people who catch the whale are responsible for having the blanket toss. Anyone can be tossed on the blanket.

James describes the ear pull contest. About 8 participated. James participated but he was booted out on the first try. Mickey Gordon from Inuvik pulled the string harder than James. On the last try a man from Barrow and Mickey Gordon from Inuvik competed. The man from Barrow won and the man from Inuvik cut his ear badly. James describes that a loop of string is looped around the ears of both contestants. On a signal the contestants gradually tighten the string until one of the men quits from the pain.

There was also a stick pull. A couple of men grab opposite ends of a greased stick and pull. Whichever man has the tighter grip.

The seal skinning contest was also held yesterday. The tape cuts out.

The interview is continued on 00-00-178-01 PT 3.