

Call number: 00-00-178-04 PT 2

Eskimo Olympics, 1972 (KUAC) Interviews and Dances

Summary created by: Summer Dougherty

Date(s) of creation of summary: 2/13/2013

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

Isaac Pescoya interviews Tom Drake(?) of Nome, the chairman of the Eskimo Olympics. The chairman says the interviews got off to a hectic start the first night and waiting for the arrival of the people from Inuvik delayed the activities. Other than that, the chairman thinks the Olympics have been going well.

Three new games have been introduced this year. Two, the swing kick and the bench reach, have already been held, the third, drop the bomb, is on the agenda for this evening.

For the swing kick, a contestant is tied under his knees and looped around the back of his neck. He then balances himself on his hands and swings forward to kick a target. The person who can kick the highest wins the event.

For the bench reach, a contestant kneels on the edge of a bench while a spotter either sits on his legs or holds him firmly. The contestant then reaches as far forward as he can and then must come back into a kneeling position on the bench.

For drop the bomb, one man holds each of the limbs of a fifth man in a spread eagle position. The four men lift the fifth into the air and walk with him as long as the fifth man holds himself rigidly. When he sags, they stop walking. Whoever is carried the furthest distance wins.

The new games were introduced in Inuvik.

Thursday night about 1,500 people attended the Olympics, last night about 22,000 and tonight 25 - 26,000 attendees are hoped for.

The contestants come from all over, including Inuvik, Barrow, NW Territories, Point Hope, Bethel, Minto, Nome, Kotzebue, and Fairbanks.

This is the 12th year for the Eskimo Olympics. It was originated in 1961 by Wein Airlines who wanted to help preserve the Native games. They thought a good way to do this would be annual games in Fairbanks where representatives from Alaskan villages would be sent.

The chairman explains how Tundra Times became responsible for the Olympics. The chamber of commerce, which inherited the games from Wein Airlines, felt that Native people should be in charge of the games. Because Tundra Times is operated by a Native man, Howard Rock, the chamber of commerce felt that Tundra Times was an appropriate choice.

In the three years since Tundra Times has been in charge, the Olympics has grown in popularity, attendance has always been good. They have always managed to break even or even make a few dollars. All proceeds go to Tundra Times which helps the paper continue to publish Native news.

The chairman predicts that the event will grow to such a large extent that at least two full time individuals will be needed to coordinate the activities. The Olympics this year have been worked on for 3 and a half months and it has been very hectic. The chairman thinks the regional corporations will eventually hold athletic competitions in their own regions and send their best athletes to compete in the Eskimo Olympics.

The Olympics has always been held in Fairbanks and the chairman hopes it will stay that way. However if Tundra Times is forced to move to Anchorage, the Olympics will have to be held there. The chairman doubts this will happen.

The chairman thinks tourists and local residents and the athletes that compete really enjoy coming to Fairbanks for the friendly competition. The chairman hasn't ever seen tempers flare over wins or losses. The chairman thinks this spirit of friendly competition will carry into the future.

The chairman thinks someone should start work and coordination of the Olympics six months before they start. Someone needs to travel to the areas that are sending contestants to find out who the contestants will be and to ensure that the contestants are going to be present for the opening of the Olympics.

In order to prepare, in April there was a meeting of the board of directors of Tundra Times. Tundra Times laid the groundwork of what needed to be done to organize the Olympics for the coming year. Other committees were formed to be in charge of selecting the judges, selecting the referees, in charge of the fish cutting contest, the queen contest, a trophy committee, etc.

The tape cuts out.

A woman, Louis Keating(?) from Whitehorse, says it is interesting to see the differences between groups in the western arctic and the single contestants in the eastern arctic.

The woman says that in Inuvik there are also jigging contests and a "Good Woman" contest. In the good woman contest each woman competes in several tasks including skinning seal, bannock baking, fire building and tea boiling, muskrat skinning, and the bead or fur work on the costumes they are wearing which they have made themselves. The woman that gets the greatest number of aggregate points wins.

The woman would like to see a wider variety of games in the Eskimo Olympic in Fairbanks. Last year there were more dance groups than this year. The woman enjoyed the dancing last year and would like to see more dancing. She would also like to see more Indian participation.

The interview ends.

Isaac Pescoya interviews some Inuvik athletes. One of the men says the games done in Fairbanks are like the ones they play in Inuvik. They enjoy the games. The man himself participated in blanket toss. Others from Inuvik participated in high kick and swing kink. The other man participated in swing kick, double foot high kick and the four man carry.

One of the guys says he enjoys the games here as well as the games in Inuvik. The one thing that differs is the single foot high kick. In Inuvik, he explains that you run and jump with two feet, kick with one foot and land with the foot that you kicked with. The man says he thinks that Alaskans here have more weight on one side than the other side.

This is one man's second year participating in the Olympics and the other man's third year. They both compete frequently in Inuvik.

The interview ends.

A woman from Point Barrow says she has been enjoying the Olympics for many years. She says the games played here are similar to the games played in Barrow. In Barrow the games are played every night from Christmas to New Year.

A man, Pete Chowaluk(?) says he hopes the games will continue many, many years to come. He has been participating in the Olympics for eight years already.

The tape ends.