

88-49-116

Carol Drake is interviewed by Jeff Kennedy about the upcoming Eskimo World Olympics;
Interview with Jens Lyberth

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Fairbanks, Alaska

Series: Potlatch series

1977

Carol Drake said the Eskimo World Olympics would be held July 28, 29, and 30th at the Patty Gym on the campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She talked about prices of tickets. She said this is the 16th annual World Eskimo Olympics. She talked about the history of the Olympics. For centuries Native peoples of the Arctic have gathered intermittently in small villages to compete in cultural games requiring strength, speed and endurance. They were popular with the people providing a reason to stay in shape and for friendly competition. In 1961 the games became organized on a statewide basis with the prompting of Wien Airlines which feared that the Native games would be forgotten with the rapid influx of non-Native cultures. The first year in Fairbanks the competing teams came from Barrow, Unalakleet, Tanana, Fort Yukon and Noorvik. A large crowd showed up to cheer them on. The events became a community celebration promoted by the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce. In 1970 the Tundra times took over the sponsorship and Native attendance and participation broke all previous records. The insignia for the renamed World Eskimo Indian Olympics is an arctic polar bear on ice with six interwoven rings on his back representing the six major Eskimo and Indian tribes in Alaska – Eskimos, Aleuts, Tsimshian, Tlingit, Haida, and Athabascans. The rings are linked to demonstrate the brotherhood brought on by the friendly competition. John Heffle, Sr., is the chairman of the Olympics, Buzz Fitzpatrick, vice-chairman, Fred Baker, program director, Carol Drake, secretary, Daphne Gustafson, treasurer, and board members are Olive Anderson, Eva Heffle, and Dick Regan. Regional representatives are Linda and Reggie Jewel, James Itta and Fred Titus. She listed the chairpersons. The masters of ceremony are Chris Anderson and Al Grant. There are 28 contestants from Canada. She talked about the different games. The race for the torch will be the first night. The Native sewing contest will run all three nights. The two foot high kick, the greased pole, the queen contestant's introduction, the one foot high kick, the Indian dance competition, the women's blanket toss, and the muktuk eating contest will be Thursday night. On Friday queen interviews, the Eskimo dance competition, the two-foot high kick finals, men's blanket toss, and the seal skinning contest will take place. The queen will be crowned on Friday night. On Saturday the Queen and her court will be introduced, the baby contest, the Eskimo Indian Olympics 50 plus contest, the arm pull, the ear weight contest, performance by the Indian and Eskimo winning teams, the knuckle hop, the muskrat skinning or the fish cutting contest, and the award of the Howard Rock memorial trophy to the outstanding athlete of the games.

Song by Judy Collins

Jeff Kennedy said Jens Lyberth from Greenland ran the logistics of the recent Inuit Circumpolar Conference. Jeff Kennedy asked if closing the conferences to other races was an expression of hostility toward other races. Jens Lyberth said they expressed that they would not be hostile to other races. They were expressing union to the world. They have survived without wars or hostility to anybody in this world. They are not hostile, they are the people of the north. They have been and are polite. Trying to survive is hard enough. They are polite, nice people. They have shared with the white man and they have been misunderstood. The white man is a hostile individual who is determined to have everything go in his way. By getting together they have been expressing to the world that the time has come to teach the world that we all have to share. They can share and be united. Diversity and unity can go together. The Inuit have been able to do that for thousands of years. The whites have never been able to do that. He said he is not saying that they are the perfect people. They are working towards northern hemisphere unity. They are showing the people of the world that it is possible and it is. Jeff Kennedy said Jens Lyberth comments on the missionaries who came north to convert the people. Lyberth said they didn't ask -- if only the missionaries had just asked from the beginning what kind of belief they had. The Inuit of the world were more spiritually awakened than the white man. Today across the Arctic the people are divided in the name of God. He said there is one God for the whole world and you do not divide anyone in the name of God. He said he would talk about spirituality. The Inuit of the world have been spiritually awakened. Spirituality has always been the individual. The individual has the responsibility of his own spirituality. Jeff Kennedy said Greenland, northern Canada, the United States as well as other places have provided welfare services and other services to Native people. Jens Lyberth comments about the services provided to the Natives. Lyberth said societies won't work unless the individuals within the society are part of it. He described a well-working society. He said when the hunter becomes lazy the family goes hungry. Then the society starts to help the family. The hunter would be excluded from the help from the society, but not the family. That is how societies worked in his parent's time, but not today. He talked about the government agencies providing services for the Native peoples and why that isn't such a good thing. Jeff Kennedy said Lyberth talked about the newly found wealth for Eskimo people. Lyberth said too much materialism without understanding what the materialism is not a good thing for anyone. Jeff said would you like to have your color television with your kayak. Lyberth said yes if he can understand them both. He said you have to be able to get something out of them. He said he would use the television to become educated. He said television is one of the greatest things to happen, but society is misusing it. It destroys people. Lyberth said he doesn't know anything about automobiles. He uses airplanes a lot. He trusts the people that are using it. He said technology has gone so far that you need the plane, phone and radio, but you have to understand them before you use them.

Inuit |z Greenland |v Interviews.