



For immediate release April 29, 2015

FOR MEDIA CONTACTS ONLY:

Amy Geiger
Director of Communications
(907) 459-3775
ageiger@explorefairbanks.com

Jerry Evans
Public Relations Manager
(907) 459-3779
jevans@explorefairbanks.com

Fairbanks, Alaska Hosts Annual World Eskimo-Indian Olympics

Fairbanks, Alaska (AK) – The Annual World Eskimo-Indian Olympic Games (WEIO) will take place at the Carlson Center in Fairbanks from July 15 through 18, 2015. A four-day series of traditional Alaska Native athletic competitions and dances, WEIO draws Native athletes and dancers from around the state, the United States, Canada and Greenland, as well as visitors, fans and media from around the globe.

The competitions at the Olympics not only provide entertainment, but give men and women the chance to test their strength, discipline and endurance—all qualities that are needed to survive in a northern rural environment. Competitive Games include high-kick, knuckle hop, ear pull, two-foot high kick and Eskimo stick pull.

Although the events themselves developed over many years, WEIO was created in 1961 in response to the rapidly spreading impact of western culture into rural areas. Two bush pilots, the late A.E. "Bud" Hagberg and Frank Whaley, witnessed the Native games and dances in their village travels. They grew concerned that the traditional events would be lost as western ways seeped into the villages, unless steps were taken to preserve them. They helped organize the first Olympics, which included a blanket toss, a seal-skinning contest, and a Miss Eskimo-Olympics Queen contest.

The event has since grown to over 50 games, with an ever-increasing number of athletes. For the competitors, WEIO is a chance to meet old friends and distant relatives, to entertain and be entertained, to challenge one another and to engage in friendly competition. For some competitors, it is the only tie to their heritage and a means of ensuring that their culture is celebrated.

WEIO is also a time to don parkas, moose hide dresses and vests, mukluks and moccasins to compete in parka and Indian dress contests, and to dance and tell stories through songs and motion. Dressed in kuspuks—traditional summer parkas—complete with feathered fans and drums, dancers perform throughout the four-day Olympics. WEIO gives visitors a chance to see unparalleled feats of endurance and agility. Spectators and participants will see new vendors and artists as they browse through booths of authentic Alaska Native crafts, and meet the people who carved, sewed, wove or beaded the items. WEIO provides visitors the rare chance to experience a culture alongside those who live within it.

To learn more about the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics visit weio.org. For more information on Fairbanks, you can request a free copy of the Fairbanks Visitors Guide and Winter Guide from Explore Fairbanks at 1-800-327-5774 or (907) 456-5774 or by writing to 101 Dunkel Street, Suite 111, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701. You can also order or view the guides online, see a full schedule of events and activities and watch the new video online at explorefairbanks.com.

##

About Explore Fairbanks

Explore Fairbanks is a non-profit marketing organization whose mission is to be an economic driver in the Fairbanks region by marketing to potential visitors and optimizing the visitor experience. Explore Fairbanks markets Fairbanks as a year-round destination by promoting local events, attractions and activities to independent travelers, group tour operators, travel agents, meeting planners and the media.