

HERITAGE EVENT PROGRAMS

Perhaps the most innovative and enthusiastically received of the museums many programs are the special Heritage Events. Their purpose is threefold; to honor both local and outside individuals, who had played significant roles early on in the past half century of Nunamiut history, to allow elders and returning guests to renew old friendships with people they had not seen for many decades, and would otherwise likely never have the opportunity to see again, and as a way to help bring history to life for the youth of the community by giving them the rare opportunity to actually meet and speak with people about whom they had only heard from their elders



Sig Wein steps off the plane to visit his old friends at Anaktuvuk
for the first time in many, many years

The inaugural event, in May of 1988, brought 84 year old Sigurd Wein, a well known and universally beloved pioneer Arctic bush pilot back to Anaktuvuk to be celebrated with presentations, and a feast and dance in honor of his many contributions. It was he who first made air contact with the Nunamiut in the spring of 1944 and subsequently played a central role in the establishment of their village where he helped inaugurate regular air and mail service, and arranged for seasonal schooling and periodic missionary support. The oldest among the community remembered him as a kind and generous man who helped them in many ways over the years, while other, younger people - now becoming elders themselves - fondly recall his arrivals in the 1940's and early 1950's and the sweets he always remembered to bring for them.

The second honoree was Dr. Helge Ingstad, who in November of 1988, returned for several days to be among his friends for the first time since April of 1950. Ingstad, who died at the age of 100 years in December of 2000, was a well known Norwegian author, explorer and adventurer who spent nearly a year living among the Nunamiut over the winter of 1949 - 50. Subsequently he published a book and traveled the world lecturing and showing his film and slides

about his experiences among this still nomadic people, thus bringing the little known people of Anaktuvuk to much wider attention around the world.



Helge Ingstad during his 1949-50 stay among the Nunamiut

In 1980 Ingstad had welcomed visiting Nunamiut into his home in Oslo Norway, generously providing them with copies of his book, film, tape recordings and still photographs for their hoped for museum. Now he returned, for what he and every one knew would be the final time, to see old friends, to visit the museum to which he had contributed and to witness how the community had changed and grown over the intervening years.

June of 1999 saw the most ambitious and successful of our Heritage Events: the 50th Anniversary celebration of the joining of the Killik River and Chandler Lake family

bands at Tulugak Lake in the Anaktuvuk Valley: the first, crucial step in a decade long process of shifting from their highly mobile nomadic life to settlement into a permanent village.



Tulugaq Lake, summer, 1949 with a number of the Killik and Chandler Lake people gathered together

First and foremost it was an opportunity for the community of Anaktuvuk to honor its own: the surviving elders who were part of the coming together of the bands, but also those villagers who had played later, important roles in the early formative years of the community such as the first mayor and council, the first health aid, native teachers and pioneer mask makers.

It was also conceived as an avenue to bring elders and youth together with a handful of

specially invited guests including teachers, missionaries, scientists, bush pilots, and other individuals who over the past 50 years had come to be regarded as special friends of the community. Villagers and visitors alike enjoyed three fun filled days of reminiscing, story telling, viewing slide shows and historic films, cookouts and dances, all of which culminated in a final day long gathering, picnic and memorial service, under unseasonably warm sunny skies at Tulugaq Lake - where the Killik and Chandler people had come together a half century before, and to remember those who had passed in the intervening years. It was a day that made history, for young and old alike.



The cross erected at Tulugaq that day in memory of those already gone

Other heritage events over the years have included the celebration of our 10th anniversary in 1996 and the formal unveiling of the 11,700 year old Mesa Site exhibit which our staff prepared in conjunction with the Bureau of land Management archaeologists who discovered and excavated the site.

Additional events will be planned and carried out as opportunities present themselves over the coming years.