

Media Advisory, sixteen Eskimo students visit UCSD on June 14

June 14, 1990

MEDIA ADVISORY/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

EVENT: Sixteen Eskimo students from a village 19 miles south of the Arctic Circle, none of whom have ever dined in a restaurant, visited a shopping mall or spent much time outside their remote community, will visit UCSD today on the first leg of a California tour. The students, in grades eight through 12, live in a village of 145 persons (Deering, Alaska) where temperatures reach 40 to 60 degrees below zero. Through most of the year they can only be reached by air or sled, and during the summer only by water. In addition to visiting the UCSD campus today, tours of Sea World, the San Diego Zoo and Disneyland are on the visitors' agenda. Accompanying the students are the school's principal and a teacher, Lou and Marylooe Matheson.

DATE/TIME: THURSDAY, June 14, 11:30 a.m.

PLACE: Career Services Building, Multi-purpose room (opposite Price Center north entrance)

PROGRAM: At this point in their schedule, the students will hold a panel discussion with UCSD students but could be interviewed before or after the half-hour discussion. Prior to this 11:30 a.m. meeting they will make a tour of the campus, and afterwards visit the Price Center Bookstore and have lunch at Revelle cafeteria with UCSD students. A second option for photos and interviews would be 2:30 p.m., when the group will tour Scripps Institution of Oceanography pier and aquarium-museum.

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June 5, 1990

ESKIMO STUDENTS TO TOUR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Their village is 19 miles south of the Arctic Circle, where temperatures can reach 40 degrees to 60 degrees below zero. Throughout most of the year they can only be reached by air or sled, and only by water during the summer. Considering their location, it is not surprising that the young people of Deering, Alaska, have spent very little time outside their remote community.

That's about to change, however, because of an upcoming trip planned by Marylooe Matheson, an instructor at the village's only school. "These are great kids," Marylooe exclaimed, "and I just decided we should do something for them." The trip will be the first time the students have ever left Alaska. "They need to know what's out there," she said.

The student tour group will be visiting several universities, including UC San Diego, UC Los Angeles, Northrop University, and, upon their return home, the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. "Our students get panicky when the school year closes, because they have so many questions about what to do with their lives." Marylooe is quick to point out that there are few job prospects in their village of 145 people. She hopes this trip will expose the students to the many opportunities that are within reach outside their village.

Twenty-two students in grades eight through twelve will make the trip to Southern California. Their first stop will be San Diego, where they will stay from Tuesday, June 12 through Friday, June 15. In addition to touring the UCSD campus (scheduled for Thursday, June 4), the students plan to visit Sea World, the San Diego Zoo, and take a harbor cruise. A dinner at the downtown Spaghetti Factory also is planned.

The group will leave for Anaheim on Friday, June 15, where they plan to visit Northrop University and, at the students' request, Disneyland. From there they will tour the UCLA campus, with eagerly awaited side trips to Universal Studios and Mann's Chinese Theatre. "We let the students choose the places we would visit," Marylooe said. On Monday, June 18, the group will return to Alaska, where they will visit the state's university in Fairbanks.

According to Lou Matheson, principal of Deering School and Marylooe's husband, the school has never had a college graduate. "I feel the primary reason for this is not the lack of education," he said, "but the lack of exposure to life outside the village." Both he and his wife feel their students are well-prepared for pursuing a college education. Indeed, they proudly point out that the school's overall GPA is 2.98.

The school has 45 students, all of whom have spent their entire lives in the village without ever leaving Alaska. In fact, these students have never dined in a restaurant or visited a shopping mall, and their school does not have indoor plumbing (drinking water is sometimes collected by cutting ice and melting it). In anticipation of the culture shock that may lie ahead, Marylooe has provided orientation sessions to prepare her students for their trip.

Round-trip air transportation for the group totaled almost \$1,000 a piece, making the idea unaffordable for most students. However, Marylooe was able to collect nearly \$33,000 through private fund-raising to help finance the trip. Pledges came from attorneys, architects, doctors, administrators, business executives -- anyone who was willing and able to contribute.

"I was one of those kids who couldn't afford it, too," Marylooe recalls. From her earlier travels, she knew San Diego would be a good place to begin their tour. For one, her students are fascinated with California's beaches. "In Deering, our students don't get to use the beaches like they see on television. And La Jolla is just a beautiful place."

While sightseeing is not the purpose of the trip, it will be an exciting activity for the group. "Our responsibility is educating the students and encouraging the continuation of their educations," said Principal Matheson. This trip is earmarked to do both.

Deering, Alaska, is a remote Eskimo community of approximately 145 people. It is located about 19 miles south of the Arctic Circle on the northern side of the Seward Peninsula on the Kotzebue Sound.

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