

Making a splash for Nunavut

Rankin's senior swimmer brings home three medals

by Darrell Greer Northern News Services

Picture (Left): Nunavut's Fred O'Brien, right, took gold in the 50m breaststroke while Alberta's Mark Sandilands took silver at the 2004 Canada Senior Games in Whitehorse

Nunavut has made its mark in a national swimming pool, thanks to the efforts of a Kivalliq water hound. Fred O'Brien, 61, of Rankin Inlet loves to swim, and that love of the water led him to three medals while representing Nunavut at the 2004 Canada Senior Games in Whitehorse,

Yukon, this past month O'Brien earned gold in the 50m breaststroke, silver in the 100m breaststroke and bronze in the 50m freestyle. This Year marked O'Brien's third appearance at the games. having represented the Yukon in 1998 in Medicine Hat, Alta., and in 2002 in Summerside, PEI.

his year's Games, however, were a unique experience for O'Brien. "Being the only Nunavut athlete at the Games, I was all alone in the parade followed by about 400 from Ontario," says O'Brien.

"They were happy to have Nunavut represented and I was warmly received by everyone there."

Unique training

O'Brien's aquatic resume has taken a decided twist since he moved to Rankin in 2003. His first year in Nunavut saw the senior medal winner keep up his training in the waters off of Rankin, Coral Harbour, Repulse Bay and Sanikiluaq. This year colder temperatures made his training even more challenging. "I swam once in Chesterfield Inlet and a couple of times in Rankin, which provided some unforeseen benefits. "I found 48 golf balls while swimming in Rankin, so I turned them over to local golfer Harry Towtongie."

Fire still Burns

O'Brien says he would like to see traditional Inuit sports demonstrated at the 2006 Games from Sept. 27 to Sept. 1 in Portage la Prairie Man.

He says Nunavumniut might be quite surprised by the level of competition at the Games. "The competitive fire still burns inside the athletes at the Games, I can tell you that. "There's a lot of camaraderie among the participants, but it's serious business once the events begin. "There's also a tremendous sense of pride among the athletes for the province or territory they're

