

Voices from the past bring science, heritage together



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I have just returned from

a meeting in Anchorage where a whole day was spent discussing the frozen bodies found on

Levi Greist's land last summer. Apparently, this was quite big news in the world of anthro-

pology, and we even had a National TV News Service covering the event.

I have to admit that even for a layman (laywoman?) it was fascinating to listen to the gathered scientists explain how they studied the site and the remains and then used the information to add bits and pieces to our knowledge of the Inupiat culture prior to impact from the outside world. In many instances, the information confirmed what the Elders have told us and in some instances, entirely new knowledge was gained.

Perhaps as fascinating as the information presented, was the way it was obtained. It is truly unbelievable what the study of a single strand of hair or one tooth can tell about an entire lifestyle.

What was even more fascinating was for me to finally be at a meeting where no one dis-

cussed Reaganomics and/or federal and state budget cut-backs to human services. I didn't think that was possible anymore

The community of Barrow, especially our Elders, deserve a special bow for showing how science and community wishes can both be accommodated if they all respect each others' feelings and needs. This was frequently mentioned at the meeting as a very positive experience for all involved. Knowledge of the Inupiat culture was gained while proper respect and caring was shown for the remains of the ancestors that provided the knowledge.

It is hoped that this summer's study will provide even more information on the Inupiat heritage as well as another positive experience for both the scientists and community involved.