

Paris conference reviews Arctic info

A groups of Alaskans recently traveled to Paris to attend a conference and discuss the status of resource information available on the Arctic in books, articles, news, films or information retrieval systems. Professor Jean Malaurie, well known French anthropologist, author, paleoclimatologist hosted the 5 day event at the Center for Northern Scientific Research (CNRS) to about 100 research workers and Arctic librarians. People from Scandinavia, Canada, Europe, and the Soviet Union submitted reports and films representing their latest research and findings on the Arctic.

Rachel Craig, vice president of Inupiat University came from Barrow to address the Congress and to request that all Institutions and librarians provide the Inupiat with current bibliographies and access to these materials. She cited the Elders Conferences held in Kotzebue and Barrow as "our way of preserving oral history and identity as a people."

Tony Vaska, subsistence coordinator from the Bethel region expressed concern that traditional Native perspectives and knowledge of their own environment was not considered academic from the Western point of view and emphasized that

veloped and respected by all Western institutions and universities in the future.

Mrs. Craig also addressed curators of Arctic Museums who were represented at the Congress. She added that Barrow will be constructing a museum next Spring and has begun an artifacts acquisition task force with the North Slope Borough Commission on History and Culture.

The University of Alaska Museum and Alaska State Museum will cooperate in this effort to make the Arctic a repository for Inuit artifacts to be studied by Inupiat. She said, "These artifacts are not just a curiosity to us. These are the materials and tools that our ancestors used in their survival in the harshest environment in the world. To retain a sense of identity with our past, it is essential that we have these artifacts to study from."

She along with the help of others will negotiate with museums for permanent acquisition and study of Inuit arti-

facts. Professor Silvio Zavatti, director of the Polar Geographical Institute in Italy was moved by this effort, and donated his entire collection to Inupiat University.

The last day of the Conference was devoted to the screening of Arctic films, Professor Jean Malaurie premiered his film, "Inuit, the Universal Cry of the Eskimo". This hour and a half film paints an anthropological fresco of today's Eskimos from the circumpolar region and how they have been afflicted by the encroaching institutions of white society, anything from Campbell's soup to punk rock. Malaurie's aim is to shock, and he does this very well.

This film is to be followed by a series of 5 one hour films produced for French television which goes into greater detail on Siberia, Canada, Greenland, and Alaska's Eskimos and their condition today as citizens of these respective countries and as circumpolar aboriginals. The Soviet films shown on the Arctic avoided showing their Eskimos as

much as possible, and instead showed films on natural wildlife, and one film about a day in the life of an island inhabited by seals.

A Soviet first was a film featuring a nuclear powered ice breaker cracking its way through Russian refrains all the way to the North Pole. This impressive achievement was heralded by the planting of the Soviet flag and a bouquet of fresh daisies followed by a ring-around-the-flag-pole promenade of the ship's crew and others who went along for the ride. Filmmaker Bo Boudart presented two Inupiat produced films, the first, "Inuit" which documents the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference, and the second called, "Hunger Knows No Law" about Spring whaling this year in Barrow.

Both were enthusiastically received and criticized as films whose refreshing approach was to see people speaking out for themselves rather than being examined. An excellent film was shown on the Saami, reindeer herders of northern Sweden.

The Saami's plight is that Sweden's government is rapidly taking away their land by clearcutting forests, building dams for hydroelectric power for the south, and expanding recreational areas. The film is a sensitive portrait of a people whose land rights are being ignored and whose entire culture of reindeer herding is in jeopardy because of this injustice.

Boudart recommended that an International Arctic film library be started in order that these and other films be seen by more people, especially to those living in northern communities. J.M. Arnold, director of CNRS Films endorsed this idea and has offered this center as a future depository for films on the Arctic.

(Author's Note: It was remarked by Vie Fisher, ISGER that the Tundra Times chronicled the history of the Alaska Native Land Claims Movement. One of the members of the Institute for Arctic Studies in Paris has undertaken a multi-year study of the Tundra Times.)