

# International arctic conference proposed

Natives of arctic regions of seven countries, meeting earlier this month at a United Nations Environmental, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conference in Norway, have recommended that the United Nations sponsor an international conference on arctic cultures in 1983.

The participants included a Chukchi Native from the Soviet Union (author Yuri Rytkheu), an Inuit from Greenland (Dr. Robert Petersen of the Inuit Institute), a Sami from Sweden (Dr. Louise Backman of the University of Stockholm), a Sami from Norway (Alf Isak Keskitalo of the Sami Institute), an Inupiat from Alaska (Tundra Times publisher Thomas Richards, Jr.) and Lev Miroshnikov of the UNESCO Division of Cultural Studies in Paris, France.

The participants, selected by each member nation of the United Nations having regions in the arctic, were charged with providing recommendations to the Director General of UNESCO for the direction of arctic cultural studies undertaken by that organization. The Director General of UNESCO was authorized to undertake arctic cultural studies by a resolution adopted by the 19th session of the General Conference of UNESCO.

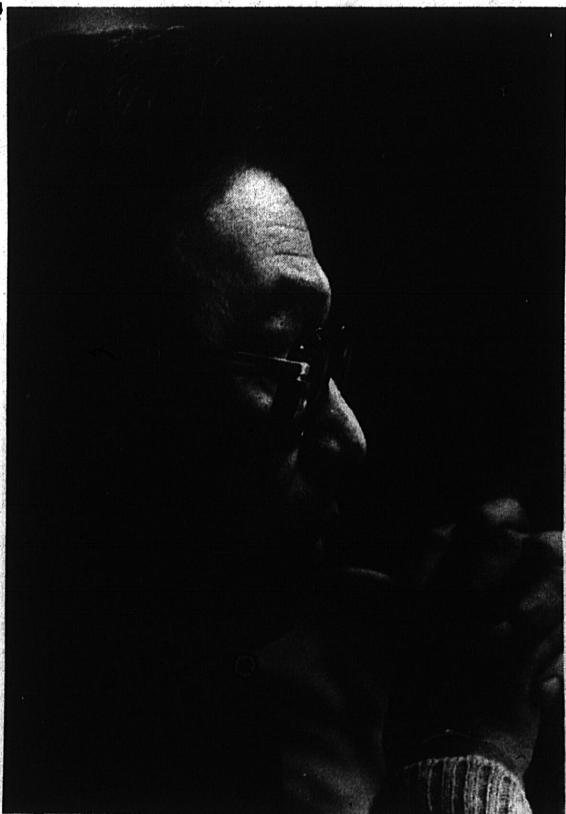
A primary recommendation of the participants was that a major, international conference be organized under UN sponsorship for 1983 with the following theme: "Arctic Peoples means of protection and developing their cultures under changing economic, technological, environmental, cultural, political and administrative conditions."

The participants to the "Unesco Expert Meeting on Arctic Cultural Studies" in Kautokeino, Norway in early October further recommended that serious consideration be given by the international community to problems created by strong external pressures on arctic cultures and lifestyles.

It was recommended that one organization or institution in each nation be given the responsibility of developing papers to provide the basis of discussion at the 1983 conference, and for identifying issues related to survival and development of indigenous arctic cultures. Such papers would be published by UNESCO in advance of the 1983 conference. In a letter sent this week to the Secretary General of Unesco and the U.S. Commission on Unesco, the participant from the United States recommended that the Alaska Humanities Forum be the organization in the U.S. to develop and present a paper or papers on issues facing indigenous arctic peoples of Alaska.

Apart from review and discussion of papers, it was also recommended that the 1983 conference also include a film festival on subjects about arctic cultural groups, as well as an international conference of Native elders from arctic cultural groups, and a section for a conference among youth of arctic cultural peoples.

Consideration was given to the feasibility of founding an association of indigenous peoples for the study and promotion of arctic studies. After lengthy discussion, it was agreed that, should such an association be formed, it ought to be carefully organized with the benefit of the expertise and experience of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) and the Sami Council.



Chukchi author Yuri Rytkheu, Soviet Union

**Photos by Andy Klamser**