

TCC jacket is a hit in Yakutsk

by Howard Luke
for the Tundra Times

All my life I've wanted to work with people, no matter if they are red, white, black or yellow. We're all one people; that's just the way it is.

I've traveled to a lot of places, through the United States and other countries. I never once dreamed I'd get to go to Russia. But now I've done it. I'll probably go back one day.

After talking and sharing with them, they made me feel real good. I was treated better by them than any other place I've gone. We agreed on so many things, peace and caring for each other. They want me to come back and share some more.

The Russians first had the fish wheel, but over the years they stopped using it, and they lost the

knowledge of making and using it. When I showed them pictures of my fish wheel, they were excited and wanted to get that knowledge back.

I talked about the herbs from the plants and trees. They have the same kind we do and they really wanted to know everything about how to pick them, make food and medicine. They were glad I hadn't lost the old way of using these things.

When we arrived they had a big crowd to greet us. They gave flowers and sang for us. It was beautiful. They did the same thing when we left.

As we were leaving one man wanted my Tanana Chiefs jacket. He didn't say it, but I could tell the way he kept looking at it. So I took it off and gave it to him. He was so excited. He took off his jacket, gave it to me and took off in the crowd to show his friends.

I put on his jacket, and oh no. There in the pocket were his keys, billfold and glasses. I didn't know what to do, there were so many people around.

Finally, I ran him down. He sure was happy to get his things back. But he was even more proud of his new jacket. I'd like to invite some of them over when I dedicate my new meeting hall at Bear Child Gaaleey'a Camp over on my property.

Some of the Russians that visited Fairbanks came over to my cabin and they saw the meeting hall under construction. They said it made them feel at home. It was a good experience. We need to do more of it.

Howard Luke was one of the participants who traveled from Fairbanks to the Soviet Union. He is an elder from the Doyon Region.