

# Lack of Fish Theme of Poignant Film

By MARGIE BAUMAN  
SOUTH NAKNEK

"Ten years from now, I'll take my grandson to the museum and show him the Bristol Bay red sa'lmon," said Nick Gregory.

"I'll tell him see, those are the fish that used to be in Bristol Bay. There are no more fish."

The words of this veteran fisherman of Eskimo and Greek descent, have become the title of a film "there are no more fish," a poignant protest from the people of Southwest Alaska who have watched bitterly the "fishing" of the source of their livelihood from the waters of Bristol Bay.

Donald Nelson, of South Naknek, who produced the film in the village of the Bristol Bay region this summer with funds supplied by the Alaska Humanities Forum and the Bristol Bay Native Corp., plans to take the film to the Alaska Legislature in Juneau and to Washington D.C. to protest management of fishing resources.

First though, the film will be taken to all 29 villages of the Bristol Bay region, villages on whom the fishing season of 1973 has brought financial disaster once again.

The actual filming was done mostly at South Naknek, 100 miles southeast of Dillingham, fishing capital of Southwestern Alaska. The population of South Naknek swells from 150 up to over 2,000 during the



DONALD NIELSEN, of South Naknek, holds fishing nets outside his home and talks about the problems of a disastrous fishing season, compounded by head hunters coming through the area by the hundreds, simply for the trophies.

— Photo by MARGIE BAUMAN

# Film Cites Lack of Fish

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fishing season, as cannery workers pour in for jobs at canneries dotting Kvichak Bay, which empties into Bristol Bay. Thousands more cannery workers and fishermen from Alaska and other states descend on the Bristol Bay area each summer, much to the distress of area residents who simply can't get enough fish to make a living.

Foreign fishermen on the high seas are still the biggest problem, said Nielsen, after showing the 28 minute film at the village schoolhouse. High seas fishermen, from Japan, Russian and Korea fish without stopping during the summer season, while the fishermen of Bristol Bay are often forced to sit by, idle under state laws restricting them in efforts to conserve the number of fish.

At the Kokhanok fish camp, where they used to haul in thousands of fish, they get 20 fish on a good day now — 12 on an average day, the film notes.

To the fisherman who depends on Bristol Bay salmon for a livelihood, the loss of the fish has brought other problems as well.

Brown bears who also include fish in their diet are coming into the villages looking for food and have been harrassing villagers of Bristol Bay more than usual. They barge into smokehouses where the Eskimo, Aleut and Athabascan Indian residents of this area are drying fish and eat it up, then go on looking for more tasty morsels.

"The smokehouses really got it this year," said Nielsen's wife, Mary Jane. "Some women decided to wait and freeze fish until the bears went by, then smoke them."

One day this summer the Niensens left their home and saw three brown bears walking through the village. At least two bears per night, prior to the period of hibernation, is not usual, they said.

If fish is a dietary staple, so are moose, bear and caribou meat. Yet area residents are finding it harder and harder to find game, because of trophy hunters by the thousands, many of them from outside Alaska.

They call them headhunters hereabouts and they frankly hate them. The headhunters have become notorious for killing wild game, hacking off the heads and leaving the rest of the animal to rot. Native people who use every part of

the body for food, clothing or other needs are horrified.

"You hardly see any meat at the airport; all you see is horns," Nielson said. "I wonder how horn soup tastes."

At nearby King Salmon, the jump-off point for hundreds of headhunters, whom the state estimates spend thousands of dollars on these jaunts, hunters jammed the tiny airport the other day, en route home.

A Wien Alaska Airlines stewardess, watching two hunters from Florida board her plane, said she's seen hundreds like them. "They come up here with a lot of money and hunt for trophies. They hardly ever bring in the meat," she said. "They just make me sick."