

Siberia and Alaska dream of reunion

by Dr. Ted Mala

for the *Thundra Times*

All of us have dreams, some of which come true and others which will always remain just that: A dream. Since I was a little boy I could remember my Eskimo father talking about Siberia. He went there as a young man to film part of the movie "Eskimo" and never forgot it since that time.

For some people Siberia represents a mythological land which we have only seen through eyes of storytellers. And yet it calls us like the voice of an ancient siren.

It was that voice that led me to their land. It is just as beautiful as we had imagined. And very big. In fact, Siberia is one and a half times the size of the whole United States. And with a population of more than 35 million people, it too is young and very much the "Last Frontier." And yet that last frontier had not talked to its neighbor frontier for more than 30 years until the historical events of Nov. 4, which marked the beginning of the process of getting to know one another again.

Three Siberians from the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR came to Alaska to visit the land and the people and to take home a message of how serious Alaska is about a reunion with our western neighbor.

Dr. Yuri P. Nikitin, deputy chairman of the presidium of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Medical Sciences; Dr. Vladimir I. Davidenko, chief scientific secretary for the Siberian Institute of Clinical and Experimental Medicine; and well

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known Antarctic explorer and Mr. Eugene N. Starkov, chief of foreign relations for the Siberian Academy all came to Alaska to meet our people and sign the first formal agreement between our lands.

In the following parts, I shall carry you, the Siberians and myself into Barrow, Kotzebue, Buckland and Nome to share the experiences of what we saw and how we felt. For me it was undoubtably one of the most moving moments of my life to hear the stories of our elders about Siberia and what this exchange means to them.

The logic for it all is based on the premise that we have studied ourselves for quite a while now without any major results other than knowing our needs better and better.

But what about the answers? Why are we spending millions of dollars to find out what we already know? Doesn't it make more sense to start talking to the millions and millions of people who share the North with us?

So why not create an Institute for Circumpolar Health that would bring together concerned people from all the circumpolar countries including Canada, the USSR, Scandinavia and Greenland to work on all of the problems we share in common. They include: nutrition, cold adaption, alcoholism, special diseases found in population, cabin fever, suicide,

depression, sports medicine, cancer, accidents and others.

Not only is the Siberian Medical Program an opportunity to share answers but also to get to know one another and the ultimate goal: To show the world how the United States and the Soviet Union can get along

together for peace once we are given the chance to let ordinary people meet other ordinary people.

Ordinary people working with other ordinary people to heal one another: That's what this is all about.

Editor's Note: This is the first of a five-part series by Dr. Ted Mala.
