

Siberian researchers welcomed in NSB

By Dr. Ted Mala
for the Tundra Times

The State Troopers telephoned Fairbanks Memorial Hospital where I was with the Siberians to tell me to call Anchorage as soon as possible. Security Aviation which was to fly us to Barrow in their Cessna Citation Jet called to ask if we still wanted to go to Barrow. I said that of course I wanted to try and get into Barrow and they replied that they would be sending their plane to pick us up shortly and would try and make a few passes into Barrow in hopes that the weather might clear long enough for us to get in. It was either that or off to Kotzebue which was clear and open for air traffic.

Fortunately the weather cooperated and we landed with the wind chill factor of -70 degrees meeting us. The North Slope Borough Police Department met us and we rode into town in two police vans. Once at the Top of the World Hotel, we had enough time to drop our gear and head out to the UIC-NARL labs where North Slope Borough George Ahmaogak met us and seated us in the main hall with 150 local important Borough leaders all of whom had some interest in opening the door into Siberia.

Not only was it the most elegant meal I have ever eaten in the arctic — Beef Wellington, no less — but what made the evening for all of us was the incredible speech made by Mayor Ahmaogak on behalf of the people he represents. I only wish that I could report his presentation word for word.

Essentially he pledged the full support of the NSB Department of Health and Social Services as well as the NSB Higher Learning Education Center. The NSB residents want to get involved in public health and research efforts and the arrival of Siberians into Barrow and UIC/NARL would be greatly welcomed. Also mentioned was the concern they have over the Bowhead Whale and its population count as vital to the indigenous populations of the north.

Cultural exchanges were suggested as a future area of exploration. Medical problems that were suggested for study included: alcohol and drug abuse problems; nutrition; genetic related problems; mental and physical

health as well as developmental concerns.

Studying the adaptations of northerners might be of great use to others coming to the north. This is important because it could also contribute to the good feelings and morale of the people of the north. And that is something we can all pass on to our children.

Also of special mention were Dr. Bob Harcharek, Cindy Young, Marie Adams and Nate Olemaun, Mayor of the City of Barrow. That evening we went to the multi-purpose room for one of those famous Barrow eskimo dances. There were many invitational dances but the most moving for me was when we were asked to dance with Tom Brower, Sr. who told us story after story of his whaling and trading days in and around Siberia and how his dream of seeing Siberia was now coming true.

The Siberians not only were taken by the incredible hospitality of the NSB residents, but because committed to building the UIC/NARL labs into our future plans. The Siberians thought it a terrible shame that this world class lab should be somewhat abandoned and under-utilized. We could not agree more.

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



From left: Drs. Nikitin, Starkov, Mala and Mayor George Ahmaogak.