

# U.N. organization considers arctic cultures

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Yet, Native are increasingly becoming more of a minority in the population of Alaska, even though they are still the majority in the areas in which they live. Thus, the political strength to influence policy is constantly being eroded.

Consideration is being given to development of local political entities organized under Alaska law, with broad municipal, home-rule powers. The North Slope Borough on the arctic slope of Alaska is an excellent example of the application of state law to effect local political self-determination.

The Borough has made great progress in achieving local control over the educational system, and to provide for development of vital community services and facilities, and to exercise control over economic activity through utilization of zoning authority. It has been thwarted in some respects in its efforts to win self-determination for its citizens and improve the quality of life, and to exercise constitutionally guaranteed powers. The state legislation has imposed limitations on the Borough's ability to tax the oil industry, a restriction without similar precedent in

state governmental history.

In response to concerns from villagers about protection of local cultures and lifestyles (including preservation of subsistence resources), the Borough has developed a comprehensive arctic coastal zone management plan to govern development in the area. It faces strong opposition from the oil industry, and potential defusion by state authorities.

Other efforts to minimize or contain the threats against Native organization of resource management entities. The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) is such an example. Efforts to halt the Inupiaq whaling culture and tradition have been motivated largely by international political and economic interest, and to a great extent by emotional reaction from the fringes of environmental and animal protectionist groups (who fail to recognize the human element as a valid link in the arctic ecosystem).

The AEWC has countered such activity through development of original and significant data about the status of the resource, and through imposition of self-regulation based upon the expertise of the leaders of the Inupiaq whaling culture.

A similar approach is being utilized by the Alaska Eskimo Walrus Commission. The Walrus Commission is advocating for application of management expertise of Natives after it has become apparent that other management approaches have failed. (The Pacific walrus is severely over-populated, threatening the well-being of that species as well as the entire ecosystem of the region.)

The state legislature has provided some funds for the activities of both the whaling and walrus commissions. Other similar approaches, recognizing local expert knowledge of the resource, are being developed for such resources as Bering Sea fisheries.

This will provide a very brief summary of circumstances which present threats to cultural survival of Native peoples in Alaska, and a brief description of efforts which are being expended to counter such threats.

Now I wish to address the question, presented in the background paper for this conference, with regard to identification of peoples who belong to indigenous "arctic cultures" in the United States (Background Paper by Sami Instituhtita for Unesco Expert Meeting on

Arctic Cultural Studies, Page 5, Section 3).

Clearly, the Inuit (Inupiaq, Yupik and Siberian Yupik) of Alaska may be considered an "arctic people." It is my recommendation that, for the purposes of any future deliberations, consultations, conference, and projects or programs related to Unesco's activity in arctic cultural studies, that the Alaska Inuit be considered as an arctic people.

It is my further recommendation that the rest of the Alaska Native population be considered as "culturally-related" with arctic peoples, and therefore eligible for inclusion in Unesco's activities related to arctic cultural studies. By the phrase, "the rest of the Alaska Native population," I mean to describe tribal groups other than Inuit to include Athabaskan and Tlingit and Haida and Tsimpshian Indian tribal groups, Eyak Indians and Chugach Eskimos, and Aleuts, and any other tribal group of Alaska recognized as "Alaska Native" by the United States.

I believe the description provided above is within the intent as expressed by the chief participants of the Unesco Expert Meeting on Arctic Cultural Studies held in Paris, France in August, 1978. The Final Report for those proceedings, Page 3, Section 8, makes provision for recognition of arctic cultures. The Final Report also recognizes that "Some of the 'Arctic' people live in sub-Arctic regions without losing the main traits of Arctic cultures, and they identify themselves as related to Arctic people with similarities in the field of cultures, languages and social system."

My recommendation, I believe, falls within the intent of that statement. It is also made in the absence of any legal definition issued by the United States, to the best of my knowledge, for "arctic peoples."

Specific recommendations with regard to the future direction

of projects undertaken from this effort, and to the theme of any such projects, and to the conduct and structure of such projects or activities, will be presented during the course of our deliberations during the conference.

One specific recommendation is for the issuance of an invitation to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) in the planning of future projects and activities which may be undertaken in the realm of arctic cultural studies by Unesco. There are several reasons why I believe the participation of this organization should be arranged.

First, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference is the first effort by arctic peoples themselves to organize to consider issues (including cultural development and preservation) which affect them. Secondly, the benefit of the expertise of the ICC would be valuable in contributing to any arctic cultural considerations undertaken under the Unesco "umbrella." Thirdly, the individuals and leaders who are among the recognized members of the ICC are principles in the circumpolar community and would be able to greatly assist with informing their populations of the arctic cultural studies effort and arranging their involvement.

In conclusion, I am encouraged by this attention to the problems of the arctic cultures. The external pressures on arctic peoples are enormous. This activity, utilizing the offices of Unesco, offers an opportunity for closer cooperation and communication among arctic peoples about cultural development, as well as discussion of common issues and problems.

The international community has a moral responsibility, if not a legal one, to allow arctic cultures to pursue their own cultural, economic and political development at their own schedule and to be left undisturbed in the enjoyment of their lifestyles.

## COMMENTS INVITED ON LEVEE COMPLETION

The Corps of Engineers' Alaska District Office is preparing a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement concerning the Tanana River levee in the Fairbanks flood control project.

The EIS will address several possible levee extension plans, one requiring crossing a river channel, and another not involving construction in the water.

Installation of groins (structures built out into the river to direct flow) also is considered in the flood and erosion control plan. One concept involves 13 groins, 2,000 to 6,000 feet long, at intervals along the levee. Another would require using 15 shorter groins plus two slough blockages.

In both levee extension and the use of groins, one alternative can be to not build at all. The EIS will address the impacts, good and bad, of all alternatives.

Persons and organizations desiring to comment on these aspects of completion of the flood control project should communicate with the District Office, Box 7002, Anchorage, 99510, by November 30.



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Copies of this Final Notice, which has been published in the Federal Register, are now available.

For more information and copies of the Final Notice, please contact:

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