

Film shows real life in the villages to city students and visa versa

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Alaskan school children will soon get a taste of what it's like to live in a small Yupik village called Tununak.

Filmmakers Ed Isenson and Michael Kruzan were in Tununak recently and captured on film moments of everyday life at Tununak. The two have already completed filming three other children's films which are all part of a series called "Home in Alaska."

Each film revolves around the life of a child or several children. The films are being paid for and produced for the Department of Education's Instructional Television Network (LEARN/Alaska) which is scheduled to begin broadcasting in September.

The three other films in the Alaska Production Film Studios Inc. are, "Luke's Anchorage," which focuses on an Anchorage boy who plays hockey. The second one is "Hoonah Buddies," which is about two boys in Hoonah who are crabbing. The third is about a Petersburg girl who's trying to set up a secret club. It's called "Erica's Petersburg."

The central theme in "Agnes's Tununak" is the girl, Agnes, who is trying out for the cheerleading squad.

The film opens with the wind blowing as someone tries to walk against it. Later you see Agnes answering a question in her Bureau of Indian Affairs school classroom.

But the highlight of the film comes when she's outside in the snow and the wind practicing her cheerleading routines in gloves and a parka. In the background the rest of the children are playing basketball in the snow.

One scene shows Agnes reading in English, another at home talking in Yupik on the Citizen's Band (CB) radio. The narrator comments "Agnes speaks two languages. She's bilingual."

The film even lightly touches on subsistence. The beginning of the film describes the community of Tununak. It says most of the village people hunt and fish in the village. Then the narrator says, "This is called subsistence." The statement seems to be an oversimplified statement but tries to show urban children like those in Anchorage the meaning of subsistence.

Although the film is obviously for the elementary school grades, it touches upon crucial Alaskan issues that a teacher may not find time to talk about.

In the end, Agnes is back in school. The teacher is announcing the five winning cheerleaders out of 16 tryouts. Agnes's name wasn't called but it didn't seem to matter. With the other children she runs out of the classroom to play in the snow.

One of the producers said, "We were trying to pick children who were representative of the community and who could add sparkle." The producers said they let the child/children they were filming design the story. "All were very realistic situations that kids find themselves in."

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