



Longyearbyen women, left, toss stimulating rubbery items to a nearly all-male audience after singing a hungry-for-men finale during the annual cultural exchange show Saturday in Barentsburg. It's unknown how many Russian listeners got sensual satisfaction from the gummi fish. At top right, drummer Erik Eggenfellner, guitarist Hilmar Iversen and singer Laila Vidmar form the youth core of a rocked-out rendition of "Here Comes the Sun." At bottom right, six members of Polarleik perform a traditional Norwegian folk dance near the end of the show. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.

Rousing the Russians

It's women and children first as a boatful of Longyearbyen residents brings cultural life to Barentsburg

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The final act was in full swing and much of the audience was talking among themselves, creating the kind of hum reminiscent of a restaurant with live music. But in this case appetites were whetted strictly for what was on stage.

A nearly all-male audience packed the renovated theater in Barentsburg on Saturday to watch about 50 visitors from Longyearbyen perform the annual cultural exchange show. Residents of the Russian mining community will return the favor with a show at 6 p.m. June 8 at Kulturhuset.

The Barentsburg crowd expressed proper

appreciation for a variety of acts including teenage singers and solo instrumentalists, a ukulele ensemble, and a traditional Norwegian folk dance group. But the group most clearly waiting for was the one whose members stomped their boots through the theater before taking the stage.

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Boom era for the big anti-chill

Interest in UNIS at all-time high as numerous climate change projects breakthrough in 2012

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Shrinking ice means a growing interest in the breakthrough discoveries students are making at The University Centre in Svalbard, according to its annual report for the past year.

A total of 1,487 people applied to UNIS in 2012, an increase of 21 percent from 2011. Those enrolled helped unveil mysterious such

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GRIET SCHELDAMAN / UNIS
UNIS researcher Faezeh Nick, right, and professor Doug Benn deploy a crevasse-monitoring unit on Tunabreen in August of 2012.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Copy Editor

Brennan Purtzer

Principal of principles

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Mailing address

Icepeople
Vei 210 -2- 13
Longyearbyen, Svalbard
9170
Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38
U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

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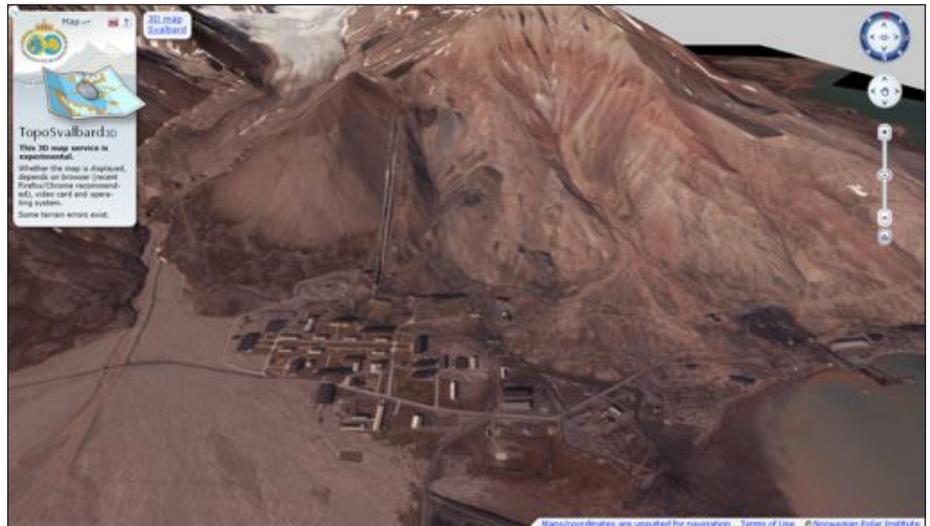
Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Getting high on the government's dime



NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

A virtual flight over the abandoned Russian mining settlement of Pyramiden is depicted in the Norwegian Polar Institute's updated TopoSvalbard website at toposvalbard.npolar.no/index.html. The update implements 3D dynamic mapping with controls for magnification and movement, and expands the number of landscape photos to 1,300 compared to the 100 previously available. The new map is still in the experimental stages and may not work properly with all browsers.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Monday was the application deadline for perhaps Norway's most-famous summer internship and **more than 300 people worldwide are seeking to stand guard against polar bears for three weeks while the Svalbard's governor's office conducts a culture heritage project in Hornsund.** The governor usually recruits locally, but decided this time to go global for whatever reason (they were actually vague about this; it's not our usual lack of comprehension). The announcement went viral for weeks and, while most of the coverage was in a "look at the weirdos" and/or "for those with a death wish" tone, we actually find the application total surprisingly low rather than surprising high. The governor's office is now plowing through the applications for the internship that begins July 8, which makes us wonder: Will the number of man-hours they spend doing that exceed the number of hours the intern works? ... The lucky intern will undoubtedly have plenty of "how I spent my summer" essays written for him/her by the global media, but there's a decent chance another visitor performing summer guard duty will snag the biggest headlines. **A Russian Coast Guard vessel will be patrolling the waters off Svalbard this summer starting June 5,** according to *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. Detention of Russian trawlers suspected of illegal activities by the Norwegian Coast Guard has been a major dispute between the countries in recent years, with some Russian politicians urging trawler crews to arm themselves and fire at Norwegians trying to board the fishing vessels. Russian authorities say they believe the presence of their Coast Guard vessels, which will have inspectors from the Federal Fisheries Agency aboard, will result in fewer detentions. "As long as the FSB and the Fish-



NORWEGIAN COAST GUARD

What – me worry? Russian trawlers will have countrymen sticking up for them if those bullies from the Norwegian Coast Guard try taking their lunch money again this summer.

eries Agency are there, Russian vessels will have no big problems. If they don't break the rules, of course," said Konstantin Drevetnyak, head of the Barents and White Sea branch of the Fisheries Agency, according to the Russian newspaper. The article asserts Norway is trying to squeeze Russian fishing vessels out of the 200-mile zone around Svalbard, and Russia and Norway have different interpretations of the rules in the zone. Making the long-running good/bad neighbor thing more intriguing is **the Norwegian Parliament's Arctic Parliamentary Committee is meeting in Svalbard when the Russians begin their patrols. Also, the Russians from Barentsburg perform their annual culture exchange show in Longyearbyen the day after the patrols begin ...** Speaking of the cultural exchange, we only managed to get a ride home from the one in Barentsburg to write about it by adhering to the long-running verbal agreement that **"what happens on the boat, stays on the boat."** But there are a couple of oddities we can point out: all of the youths were sent home by helicopter before the post-show banquet and not a drop of vodka was consumed during the entire visit.



JUNI VAARDAL-LUNDE / UNIS



UNIS



JACOB ABERMANN / UNIS

A polar bear, top left, inspects instruments on the sea ice left behind by UNIS staff and students who hurried aboard a nearby research vessel as the animal approached in October of 2012. At top right, researcher Anna Vader deploys sediment trap in Adventfjorden in May of 2012. At bottom, students in a "Snow and Ice Processes" class get a field briefing despite harsh weather in March of 2012.

Melting ice means hot times for UNIS

UNIVERSITY, from page 1

as the origins on the polar bear, changing prey of marine life in the warming waters and how to safely store CO2 in an underground facility that took major steps toward completion.

"After nineteen years, the world's northernmost institution for higher education and research is maturing into a leading international centre for Arctic studies and world-leading research – which has been the long term goal for UNIS," Director Ole Arve Misund writes in the report's introduction.

"The field-based educational concept proves its unique attractiveness and the Norwegian government keeps increasing the funding, allowing us to expand our programs."

A total of 467 students from 23 countries took courses at UNIS in 2012. Norwegians represented 47 percent of the students. Among foreign students, the United Kingdom and Germany had the most with 20 percent each, followed by Denmark and Sweden with 10 percent each, and Russia and the Netherlands with nine percent.

"A student survey was implemented in the autumn semester of 2012, which showed that the students have a high level of satisfaction at

UNIS and on Svalbard," the report notes. "Potential areas of improvement were also identified, especially concerning the coordination of guest lecturers, in order to ensure a minimum of overlapping and a clear recurrent theme in the course."

Research projects highlighted in the report include:

- New DNA studies indicating polar bears evolved into a distinct species about five million years ago as "climate changes and mating with the brown bear over millions of years has formed ... the species we know today."

- Discovering cod and haddock are migrating further north in the Arctic waters due to warming, posing a potential threat to other marine life as traditional vegetation and prey become more scarce.

- Drilling three new wells for the carbon-capture storage facility in Adventdalen, which operators say now only needs approval from the Norwegian government before operating. The facility, expected to be able to store 1.2 million tons of liquid CO2 for 20 to 30 years, is being hailed as a potential global model.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Resolving Sjøområdet chaos a priority, new manager says

Bringing order to a chaotic seaside area strewn with illegal structures, junked cars, boats and debris – which officials have complained about but not acted upon – will be a priority, according to Longyearbyen's new city manager. "There is some wild building and wild use of the area, and I've realized that this is an inflammatory topic," Lars Ole Saugnes said during a Bydrift board meeting May 21. The Sjøområdet area, which is not zoned for residential use, has nonetheless long been a site for homes and other buildings in addition to being a dumping ground. Discussions of rezoning and imposing fees for things such as boathouse storage have proven controversial, but city officials have said action is needed to deal with numerous issues including blight and fire hazards.

Cruise industry fights further limits on trips to Lågøya

Cruise industry officials are fighting a proposal to close Lågøya during the summer as part of a revised management plan for east Svalbard. The plan already bans traffic on the west side of the island during the wildlife breeding season from May 15 to Aug. 15, but Norway's Directorate of Nature Management is seeking to extend the ban to the entire island. Frigg Jørgensen, administrative director of Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, is asking the Ministry of the Environment to exclude the northern part of the island from the ban. "(It) has particularly rich bird life, it is often a walrus haul-out site and there are graves and monuments at the site," he states in a letter to the ministry. The revised plan is scheduled to take effect Jan. 1.

Longyearbyen man faces rare local domestic assault trial

A Longyearbyen man accused of assaulting his girlfriend in February is scheduled to face a local two-day trial in June after declining to admit guilt and pay an 18,000-kroner fine imposed by Svalbard's governor. The man, who did not seriously injure the woman, faces a 21,600-kroner fine and court costs if convicted during the rare local hearing.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

| Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|---|---|
| Partly cloudy. S winds to 39 km/h. High 3C (-2C wind chill), low 0C (-3C wind chill). | Rain/snow SE winds to 18 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill). | Cloudy. SW winds to 25 km/h. High 2C (-1C wind chill), low 0C (-4C wind chill). | Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 18 km/h. High 3C (-1C wind chill), low -1C (-5C wind chill). |
| 24-hour daylight | 24-hour daylight | 24-hour daylight | 24-hour daylight |
| Extended forecast: Sunday, rain/snow, 3C (-1C), 2C (-2C), light 24:00h; Monday, rain/snow, 3C (1C), 2C (-2C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 1C (-3C), 1C (-4C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, 3C (0C), 0C (-3C), light 24:00h | | | |
| Data provided by storm.no | | | |



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Visitors from Longyearbyen set up instruments on the stage of Barentsburg's renovated theater for Saturday's cultural exchange show. The Russian mining town, which has experienced a large population drop and major economic struggles during the past 15 years, is rebuilding and restoring many of its facilities ranging from its coal mine to its hotel in an effort to become a significant tourism and science community. Similar work is underway in Pyramiden and other nearby Arctic settlements.

Russians get the boot – and love it

EXCHANGE, from page 1

"Tundradundrene!" a Barentsburg worker shouted from a work site with a thumbs up just before the show, apparently the only word in Norwegian or English he clearly understood.

The magic word is the name of an a cappella group of about a dozen women, who capped a short set of honey-toned harmonies by opening umbrellas and belting out "It's Raining Men (Hallelujah)." While none of the individual chats among the Russian men were intelligible, a few louder shouts of affection/appreciation in that other "universal language" (English) reached the intended ears.

Highlighting women during the show was a goal since it's the 100-year anniversary of their right to vote in Norway, plus "we have strong women in the Arctic," said Ståle Hortman, Longyearbyen School's cultural leader and the organizer of the performance. He said there was also a new effort to bring younger performers and smaller groups, leaving behind things like Longyearbyen's big band that, while popular, took up much of the limited space on the boat used to transport most of the artists.

"You have to reduce every ensemble and I don't think they will be at their best," he said.

The ongoing audience feedback is one of

the things performers said they find endearing about being on the neighboring town's stage. A more intimate theater and community than many see regularly in Longyearbyen also heighten the experience.

"It's smaller (and) it's more open," said Åsne Hansteen, 14, who performed two songs on piano during the show.

At the same time, engaging in a one-night-stand is easier for some performers than an audience they have a lasting relationship with.

"It's a bit different. They don't know us," said Vilde Markussen, 14, who sang to one of Hansteen's piano tunes. Which makes performing easier because "when I have family there it's scary."

But the Russians also showed they could appreciate more than just the female visitors, offering some of their heaviest applause for a rocked-out youths' take on the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun" where the male drummer and floor-diving guitarist provided some of the show's most dramatic stage theatrics.

"I just think I'm in a room and nobody's there, and it's cool," said Erik Eggenfellner, 11, after his kit-straining drum workout.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.



Amile Henriksen, left at microphone, performs a sound check in the Barentsburg theater a few hours before Saturday's cultural exchange show. At right, Stein Karstensen, a member of the traditional Norwegian dance group Polarleik, gets a lesson from Lena Romanenko, leader of a traditional Russian dance group, during the post-show banquet in the mess hall. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.

What's up

May 29

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Hangover, Part III," U.S. comedy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

May 30-June 2

Mountaineering festival, featuring a four-day excursion to Trygghamna and Protektorfjellet. Details at www.toppturfestivalen.no.

May 30

6 p.m.: Photo presentation of Priest Olav Tysnes and his family's life in Svalbard during the early 1960s by Guttorm and Ragnhild Tysnes. Svalbard Church.

June 1

10 a.m.: Spitsbergen Marathon. Includes full and half marathons, and a 3K race for youths under 15 years old. Begins at Svalbardhallen. Details and registration at <http://svalbardturn.no>.

June 2

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Hangover, Part III," U.S. comedy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Lady in Paris," Belgian/Estonian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 3

11 a.m.: Environmental and Industrial Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

June 4

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

June 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Fast and Furious 6," U.S. action. ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 8

6 p.m.: Culture exchange from Barentsburg. Kulturhuset.

June 10

Longyear Day, featuring city-oriented stories, music and tours at various spots.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- 194-kilo halibut caught in Barents Sea
- Plants sprout after centuries in glaciers
- EU greenhouse gasses hit new low
- Using Arctic plants to colonize Mars?