

JOURNEY FROM THE SOUTH TO THE NORTH

Representing Namibian Conservancies in Alaska

By Alfred Sibongo

On the 27 September 2005 I left my home, Mabula village on the Chobe floodplain to begin a trip to Alaska in America. It was a big dream for a person like me from the remote grassroots level in Caprivi. I started my journey on an aeroplane in Victoria Falls. The flight was delayed because the barboon were on the runway. It was a long trip flying from Victoria Falls to Johannesburg, across Africa, the Mediterranean sea and the mountain range called the Alps to Amsterdam. From there we flew over the Atlantic ocean to Minneapolis our first point of entry in the United States of America and finally across Canada to Alaska, not far from the north pole. It was amazing to be so high above the clouds crossing the world.

Arriving in Anchorage on 28 I was met by Mr. Art Davidson and his wife Anna who are indigenous Alaskan people called Yupic (otherwise known as Eskimos) whose ancestors have survived the cold and icy north for hundred of years. They accommodated me a wooden house in the mountains where they live, outside Anchorage. It was interesting being in a place that looked so different to home. Another fascinating thing I experienced while there is the big time difference between Namibia and America. When it was day time in Alaska for us, my family and friends back home in Namibia were sleeping at night.

On 30 September I participated in the 8th World Wildness Congress to present a poster about Kasika Conservancy, the community owned wildlife area which I manage. The session I presented in was about Tourism and Community Protected Areas. I shared my experience with a multitude of people from all around the world. They asked me lots of questions about the conservancy and I explained to them about Kasika Conservancy, our community wildlife area which is aproved by the ministry of Environment and Tourism in Namibia and has species like elephants, buffaloes, hippos, crocodile and many others.

After the congress I took a trip to Seward, a very interesting tourism town on the Alaskan coast. I took a boat cruise in a fjord (sea channel) where I saw some sea lions, Dhals's porpoise, sea otters and a bald eagle which is the American National bird. I also saw one of the wonders of the world, a glacier which is a frozen river which starts about 5 kilometers from the mountains to the sea and which is amazing as scientists say this river moves only about 30 centimeters every year.

After the tour I went with some friends to the mountains to see some snow. We walked up the mountain which was completely covered in snow. All of these events including seeing the snow were all interesting events to me because it meant before you can go up the mountains you have to put on very warm clothing.

In conclusion of this story about nature and travel I would like to convey my message to all nature lovers because the experience I have from my trip has given me a light on nature that if we do not conserve our resources no one will do it for us .I am a free man, every person who wants to share this experience too you are most welcome.

Happy Man
Alfred Sibongo