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Ice has starring role in climate change film

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MARQUETTE - What started out as a historical work turned out to be more about the science and environmental future of the Great Lakes.

The local premiere for the film "PROJECT: ICE" took place this week, with private screenings held at the Marquette Cinema Thomas Theatre Group in Marquette Township.

"PROJECT: ICE" is a feature-length documentary that brings to light the story of the Great Lakes through the crystalline lens of ice.

Article Photos

The persistent cover of ice on Lake Superior last is the st...

Since the Great Lakes contains a staggering 20 percent of the world's fresh water (with Lake Superior itself holding 10 percent of the planet's non-salted water), it stands to reason it produces a lot of ice.

That is, if the current trends that show a change in climate don't continue.

Director William Kleinert told the audience at Monday's screening the film was in production and post-production for 27 months.

What resulted was a film that shows the beauty and power of Great Lakes ice, and how past and modern culture deals with the frozen water.

More than 250 archival images are used in the film, he said.

"It was a labor of love," Kleinert said, "and it was something that started out to be a historical piece."

Ice-breaking, in fact, was to be the original focus.

However, after filming began, it became apparent science had to be a bigger part of the work, Kleinert said.

"Then we finally got into production starting in early 2011, as we went out and starting doing interviews with people, you can see that climate change and global warming kept coming up over and over and over and over from people in all different walks of life, and some point it was like, it just sort of hit me between the eyes, that this really is the important story that we have to tell here," Kleinert said.

The crew was passionate about the history as well, but wanted to tell the climate change story in a personal way, he said.

Although it's difficult to relate to the issue as it happens in the remote polar regions, the Great Lakes story is unfolding in the heartland of North America, which is home to 40 million Americans and Canadians, Kleinert said.

Anyone who experienced the frigid 2013-14 winter in the Upper Peninsula, though, might question whether climate change is occurring. However, Kleinert said what has to be looked at are long-term trends that lead to diminishing ice cover.

The trends show it's happening, he pointed out.

"The trend is unmistakable, indisputable," Kleinert said.

The Superior Watershed Partnership hosted the screenings.

"'PROJECT: ICE'" is both a beautiful film and a powerful documentary that shows the countless benefits of a healthy Great Lakes ecosystem and the growing environmental impacts of climate change on the Great Lakes region,' said Carl Lindquist, SWP executive director, in a news release.

"Bill is passionate about the Great Lakes," Lindquist said at the Monday local premiere. "As you see in this movie, it comes across."

History makes up a sizable part of the film, but Kleinert also touches on current culture, such as snowmobiling from Mackinac Island to the Michigan mainland, ice fishing and pond hockey.

Interviewed in the film were three notable Marquette people: Bill Thompson of Down Wind Sports; former city commissioner, mayor pro tem and maritime historian Fred Stonehouse; and photo historian Jack Deo.

Thompson gets fun and adventure out of Great Lakes ice, the proof of which was that he is shown ice climbing in the movie.

"When you're climbing," Thompson said, "you're forgetting about everything else. I just think it's a neat experience."

Deo, a local expert on Great Lakes photography, made note of the beautiful formations created when lighthouses are taken over by ice and resemble popsicles.

Yet another image in the movie showed ice broken up so it looked like sheets of glass on top of each other.

"Ice is beautiful," Deo said. "For painters and photographers, if you don't use it, you're wasting half of your year."

From a scientific standpoint, lake ice, according to the movie, also creates a stable environment that promotes successful fish spawning. In fact, ice is one of the first indicators of environmental change, pointed out in the movie as being caused by the use of energy by an ever-increasing worldwide population.

Regardless of whether dramatic climatic change occurs in some people's lifetimes, the Great Lakes - Lake Superior in particular for the local population - already has a great effect on people.

"It has a remarkable impact on our lives," Stonehouse said, "because it's what we are."

Public showings of "PROJECT: ICE" will take place this spring (check the SWP's website at www.superiorwatersheds.org for details). For more information about the film, visit www.ProjectIceMovie.com.

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