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A symposium at Albaola in Spain about the Basque whaleboat in October 2023

On 16 th and 17 th of October 2023 a symposium was held in the museum and shipyard Albaola in Pasaia in the Basque Country of Spain. The title of the symposium was “The Basque whaleboat at the origin of industrial whaling.” The symposium was a part of the BASQUE project that received a grant from Creative Europe earlier in the year to support the development of the Basque Center in Djúpavík and events that connect the nations, Basques and Icelanders. There were 12 speakers on the symposium, local and international, 2 online speakers (Denmark and Canada) and 3 institutional representatives. Archaeologist Bjarni F. Einarsson was at the symposium with a presentation on the search for the Basque whaling ships that perished in Reykjarfjörður in September 1615 and fish oil production in Iceland. Ásdís Thoroddsen had a lecture about the Icelandic clinker boat and showed her film Súðbyrðingur – Saga báts. Others who spoke at the forum on behalf of Iceland were Ólafur J. Engilbertsson, chairman of the Basque Association, Héðinn Birnir Ásbjörnsson, chairman of the Basque Center, and Alex Tyas, project manager at the University Center of the Westfjords. On the part of Albaola speakers were Xabier Agote, director of Albaola, Xabier Alberdi, director of the Basque Maritime Museum, filmmaker Ander Arrese, historian Álvaro Aragón Ruano, underwater archaeologist Beñat Egiluz Miranda, and ethnologist Maurizio Boriello, an ethnologist and boat-building instructor from Italy. Other foreign scholars who participated were paleontologist Toby Jones from Great Britain, anthropologist Brad Loewen from Canada and linguist Peter Bakker from Denmark. Teo Alberro Bilbao, Mayor of Pasaia, and Maria José Bilbao, Iceland’s Consul in the Basque Country, also addressed the forum. Two Icelandic boat builders, Hafliði Aðalsteinsson and Einar Jóhann Lárusson, took a course at Albaola in making a Basque whaleboat, so-called “txalupa”, which is currently in building and will be on display at the Basque Center in Djúpavík.

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