

Native educators set legislative goals

Position papers on education issues due for action

BY NANCY HARVEY

Bush legislators have given the newly formed Alaska Native Education Association "carte blanche" on their list of priorities and vowed continued support of education issues before the State Legislature.

Meeting April 1-3 in Juneau, educators told members of the Bush Caucus that historically education has either been denied Native people or it has not been relevant to their needs and concerns.

"We believe that problems which have arisen because of racial backgrounds cannot now be corrected without again recognizing there are indeed differences in the quality and character of education we find in schools today," ANEA President Dennis Demmert said in a letter to rural legislators.

The three-day Juneau meeting, attended by all ANEA board members, produced a list of immediate concerns of the Association—which included: qualification and certification of teachers; development of school boards into effective policy making units; student non-academic needs (such as hot lunches and child abuse and neglect); availability of information to the public regarding educational issues; and the implementation of affirmative action programs.

Other action taken by the association included a number of housekeeping issues necessary in the formation of a non-profit organization. ANEA also endorsed the reappointment of Gordon Jackson to the Postsecondary Education Commission, and nominated Jackson for membership on the Department of Education Review Task Force.

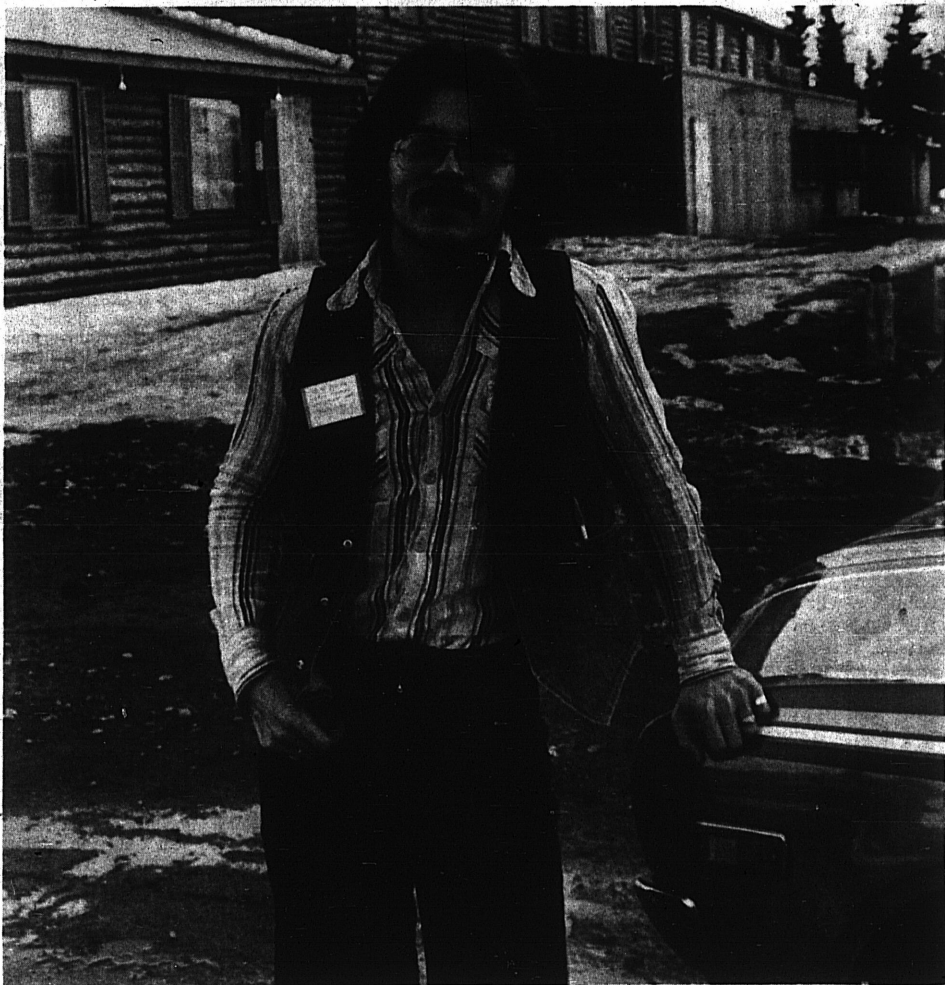
Recognizing the conspicuous absence of representation from over 50 Bethel area villages on its board of directors, Demmert invited Bethel resident Tony Vaska to attend all future ANEA meetings. Vaska attended the Juneau meeting as a representative of the 56 villages in the Association of Village Council Presidents region.

ANEA board members also voted support for efforts of the Alaska Native Foundation's Center for Equality of Opportunity in Schooling to maintain a separate Center for Alaska. (See story on page 14).

For longer-range activities, the board created nine task forces of ANEA members to study, analyze and provide information on educational issues.

Demmert will chair a task force studying teaching practices. Flore Lekanof will chair a task force studying policy-making units, such as school boards, the

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Why is Bob Breen, of Tanacross, smiling? Probably because the Tok Forum on the Impact of the Natural Gas Pipeline convened over the weekend and produced some good ideas. See "I feel obligated to help out," Page 9.

● Native educators

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State Board of Education and the Board of Regents. Edward Thomas will chair a legislative task force. Edna Lamebull will chair a task force on educational program planning and evaluation. Patsy Amadt will chair a task force on curriculum. Jenny Alowa will chair a task force on community and parent involvement in education. Gordon Jackson will chair a task force on internal development of the Alaska Native Education Association and Joe Kahklen, Sr. will chair a task force on the professional development and employment of Native people in education.

Demmert reported that each member of ANEA will be requested to work on a task force. After a period of study and analysis, ANEA plans to circulate position papers on various issues in education.

"We think that an informed public is the most effective advocate for quality education," said Demmert, "and we'd like to provide usable information that people can understand."

The next meeting of the ANEA board will take place in Sitka on May 18-19 in conjunction with the centennial celebration of Sheldon Jackson College.

DENNIS DEMMERT, president of the Alaska Native Education Association, gestures during Juneau meeting. Nancy Harvey Photo.

