

A Unique Idea—

Robt. Willard Proposes Model Village Approach

Robert Willard, Project Director for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, informed the Tundra Times last week of a proposal to solve the problems confronting Alaska rural villages.

Willard, who has served as the First Chairman of the Juneau Citizens' Committee for Model Cities, calls the concept the "Model Villages" approach. The program, he said, is a direct result of his experience with the Juneau project.

Willard envisions a multi-agency approach in selecting these "model villages" and solving the more pressing problems of housing, poor health, lack of industry, and the lack of job opportunities.

In a letter to Senator Ted Stevens office, Willard singled out the village of Angoon as an example of how his proposal would function.

"As an example, using my hometown which I know most about," he said, "the community needs are all public works projects, i.e., a dock is needed, as are the following: road improvements, adequate sewage, a grid-iron, recreation areas, electrification, a clinic, schools and a library."

Willard stated, "If Angoon were to be selected as a 'model village,' then it should be coordinated to create perpetual and meaningful employment and training during this development."

The key to using this type of approach, Willard said, is citizen participation. The villagers would identify their own problems and come up with their own solutions. Any technical assistance required would be provided by

agencies involved in the project Willard stated.

A consultant would study the problems and the proposed solutions. "He returns to his office and draws a comprehensive plan for the community that will take five years to complete," Willard said.

To finance such an inter-agency effort, Willard advocated joint public funding. He recommended full implementation of the Native Housing Act as was initiated by the late Senator E.L. Bartlett.

He also recommended that Congress consider appropriating an additional \$9 million as an amendment to this housing act.

Willard outlined the benefits of his proposal. "The rationale," he said, "is that it has not only perpetuated income on a meaningful basis over five years, it has been an orderly development for needed and meaningful improvements that are imminently needed anyway."

"The greater benefit gained, however," Willard stated, "is that the individuals have learned work habits that would and could be useful to list if he should move to an urban area where he will have to take employment to live."

Willard added, "He may have learned a skill, and he has overcome the feeling of dejection by living off of welfare checks."

He suggested that if 50 villages were selected in a model village program, a tremendous impact would result. Such a program, Willard concluded, would tie in beautifully with the proposed Kennedy-Stevens Safe Water Facilities Bill, Native Housing, as well as Federal or State public works projects.