

BIA SEWAGE SOURS MEKORYUK

Nunivak Is. Eskimos Charge Local BIA of Polluting Environment

Ecology is a matter of concern throughout the United States, and nowhere are people more concerned than in the tiny village of Mekoryuk, an Eskimo settlement on Nunivak Island in the Bering Sea.

In Mekoryuk, the pollution problem is sewage - raw sewage dumped in the Bay by the Bureau of Indian Affairs - from its school and teacher's homes.

Resolutions and other administrative actions have been to no avail.

So, this month when spring breakup began to reveal the odorous sewage deposit area in the partially frozen bay, Mekoryuk residents staged a two day protest against this B. I. A. practice.

In temperature of 19 below zero, Eskimo residents of all ages stood outside with placards proclaiming their protest. "This is our playground" they wrote. "Our fish eat sewage".

Indeed, the BIA dumps its

untreated sewage into the bay - about 100 feet in front of the village. The noxious wastes have melted the ice and snow on the bay in an area where small children play and snow machines travel. Villagers fear their children could break through the ice and drown, or a snow machine could fall through. Of the 200 villagers, 98 are school children. So, a sign has been posted above the pit. "Sewage Pit - DANGER- Keep Away". The 200 villagers of Mekoryuk, whose view from the village is normally a beautiful panorama of sea, hills and bay now look out towards the ocean to see a giant, ugly sign proclaiming this danger.

Ocean tides on Mekoryuk Bay carry water swiftly pass the village and far up the Mekoryuk river. Due to the tidal action, any debris tends to remain in the bay - instead of being washed out to sea.

There, the contaminated particles infect the shell fish, fish and other marine life which the villagers use for food. To proclaim this, older members of the community demonstrated carrying dry fish, bullheads, tomcods,



DEMONSTRATORS—Residents of the tiny village of Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island recently demonstrated against the Bureau of Indian Affairs for that agency's practice of dumping sewage

on Mekoryuk Bay in front of the village. Folks of all ages demonstrated. The oldest one was 60 year old Grandma Excelia.

Sewage...

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seaweed and their hunting paraphernalia to show their dependence on the sea.

For two years, sewage has been a dangerous, noxious presence to the people of Mekoryuk with the full knowledge of the BIA. Sewage treatment would cost money, and the villagers feel that this situation will only be corrected "if they have to." The dumping area is used not by the villagers themselves, but by the BIA school and teachers' homes.

The Mekoryuk Youth Club, Advisory School Board and City Council who organized the demonstration, hope it change. If not, the village will look for legal redress.

Already, a petition signed by 85 concerned citizens of Mekoryuk has been sent to Secretary of the Interior Rogers C.B. Morton demanding the situation be changed.

Two resolutions introduced this year, received no word. However, when informed of the demonstration BIA Assistant Plant Manager Chandilier in Be-

thel was heard to say "we thought that would happen."

According to the villagers of Mekoryuk "We cannot lose, but have everything to gain."