

Now, maybe they'll listen

We applaud the perseverance with which the North Slope Borough has pursued the truth in investigating the unusually high rate of cancer among residents of Point Hope (see story, page one). While some seem to have dismissed local concerns as hysterical, the Inupiat of this traditional whaling village have had to live both the loss of loved ones and fear of the unknown as they recalled the 1950s, when government scientists brought radioactive material into the area.

Dr. Ron Bowerman, the Borough's epidemiologist, acknowledges his new study raises more questions than it answers, but he is also quick to say that attributing the cancer rate to lifestyle factors such as smoking and diet were not altogether unreasonable. Now, employing an accepted study approach, he has concluded that residence in Pt. Hope is the only factor common to cancer victims.

While we agree that great care must be taken in interpreting Bowerman's findings, we feel they cry out for further investigation. We know the Borough will continue its support for such efforts, but we also call on state and federal health officials to look at this tragic issue in the new light shed by Bowerman's efforts. Perhaps it is time for public health officials outside the Borough to join in the search for truth in a more cooperative spirit, instead of dismissing local health concerns out of hand.