



The new sign completes the altogether new look at the Cook Inlet Native Association Building, 670 West Fireweed Lane (above). The building has a pleasing blue and light blue paint covering the exterior, while the interior has been renovated to house administration offices and the various human services offered at CINA. (Bottom right, left to right) Receptionist Ruth Hilty and dental assistants Sally Swetzof and Gloria Agibinik pose for a picture in one of CINA's three dental work areas complete with comfortable dental chairs, lights and tools.

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—Photos by Bob Koweluk

## **CINA renovation complete**



# CINA renovation complete

By BOB KOWELUK

Andrew and Alice Kalerak along with their three younger generations, untied the ribbon recently at the Cook Inlet Native Association's grand opening ceremonies of their newly renovated building on 670 West Fireweed Lane.

The building has a new look to it with a pleasing blue and light blue paint covering the outside of the building. The interior has been redone to facilitate the various human services offered at CINA and to house the CINA administration offices.

CINA considered a reservation under federal law, serves about 12,000 Native people living in the Cook Inlet Region. CINA was originally incorporated in

1964 to promote cultural heritage and pride among Natives and to provide for their physical social and economic well-being. Membership is based on residence rather than enrollment in a land claims corporation.

Cook Inlet Region, Inc. Community Relations Coordinator Lydia Hayes said that one of the real beauties of the project is that nearly half of the building contracts went to minority-owned businesses and contractors. She also said that 40 percent of the workers were from minorities.

Construction was funded with a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development plus a nearly equal amount from the CIRI. The newly renovated building

now houses nearly all the education, health, employment and community services under one roof for the Natives living in the Cook Inlet Regions. CINA currently contracts some \$9 million dollars from the federal and state governments for its human support services.

"CINA has helped many Alaska Natives become accustomed to the urban setting with its different cultural values," said Jake Lestenkof, CINA's Executive director. "Alaska Native people face monumental challenges as they come to understand two complex and different conflicting cultural systems."

To help Natives cope with the differences and change when moving from a village to the Anchorage area, CINA offers Natives services such as meeting them at the airport when they

fly into Anchorage from the bush.

Much of what CINA does is help Alaska Natives be who they are through cultural activities such as potlucks, senior citizens' gatherings, special projects such as building an umiak completed this summer and teaching native arts and crafts, that CINA attempts to bridge the gap between village and urban life.

CINA offers Natives health services which include free dental and medical services and includes a Wellness Center designed to encourage preventative care for teens and adults.

The Native Outreach Services Division works with individuals and families in family and stress related problems stemming from urban life. Outreach services provides counseling on child abuse/neglect, urban adjustment

and coordination of services with the Alaska Native Medical Center and the Public Health Office.

CINA provides employment counseling and training through their Adult Career Training Center which prepares low-income and unemployed people for entry-level employment.

The building at 670 West Fireweed Lane is owned by Cook Inlet Properties, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Cook Inlet Region, Inc. The building was completed following seven months of intensive effort to renovate the building to suit CINA's 150 employees there.

The project boosted the Anchorage economy when the construction industry was in a slump by providing work for 19 subcontractors. About half the project workers were hired through minority hire requirements CINA officials noted.