

RurAl CAP issues "Annual Report"

By PHIL SMITH
Executive Director

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Alaska Federation of Natives for their continuing commitment to involve as many rural people in the process of developing overall priorities.

The AFN Convention has come to symbolize the vigor, the integrity, the purpose, and the wisdom of Alaska's Native people. The Conventions serve to underscore the urgency of the

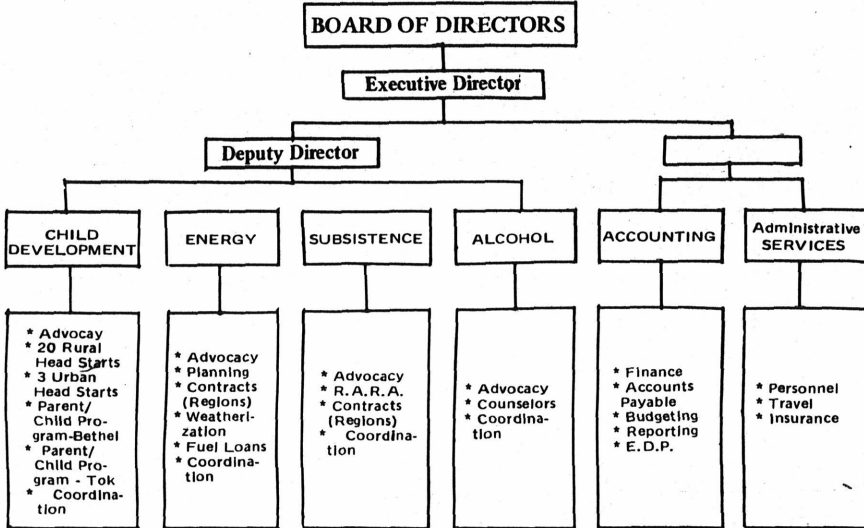
many issues affecting Native people in Alaska; in addition, they serve to reinforce the commitment of Native people to devise their own solutions to their own problems.

It is with this sense of respect and mutual support that Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAlCAP) has conducted its activities during the past year. It is my hope that this report will likewise serve to strengthen the ties that bind the

many activities of RurAl CAP with the overriding concerns of the Alaska Federation of Natives:

Administration and Organization

During the past year, following a "retreat" in Homer in the summer of 1978 and subsequent action by the Board of Directors, RurAl CAP established the following organizational structure:



As is the case with most non-profits, RurAlCAP's survival depends upon its ability to acquire State, Federal and Private grants and contracts. During the past program year, we've administered funds somewhat in excess of 4 million dollars, allocated throughout the Administrative and Programmatic structure shown above. Each of the program departments listed above is responsible for a degree of "Service Delivery" (such as Head Start, Alcohol Counseling, Weatherization, etc.), Community organization (accomplished through sponsoring and participating in meetings of regional non-profit corporations and other groups), and Advocacy.

To accomplish these purposes, contracts were let with 10 of the regional non-profit corporations, primarily in the area of Subsistence Advocacy. Additionally, Head Start Programs served 22 villages (and six Anchorage centers), the Parent-Child Program served six villages in the Bethel area, 273 homes in 15 villages (in the Calista and Bering Straits regions) were weatherized, communities in three regions were served by the Alcoholism Counselor Program, and almost 40 villages received emergency fuel loans.

Major personnel changes have been minimal, although Deputy Director George Irvin left during the summer to assume the Presidency of Kuskokwim Community College in Bethel. Bob Lohr has been selected to serve in his place. Also, Norman Cohen came on board in April to direct the Subsistence Department, replacing George Allen.

ISSUES

SUBSISTENCE remains a major priority of RurAl CAP, as well as of AFN and many regional organizations. Although success has not yet been accomplished in National Interest Lands (d-2) Legislation, it is anticipated that some satisfactory resolution to the d-2 problem will be found in the not too distant future. RurAl CAP had the privilege of assisting more than 20 Native Alaskans to travel to Washington, D.C. in May to make their views known to the U.S. House of Representatives. This trip was coordinated with AFN, Regional Non-Profits, etc. in order to maximize the impact of the points of view of the village people. The version of HR 39 ("Udall/Anderson") which passed the U.S. House contained virtually all of the important subsistence language being sought by the Native community.

Additionally, RurAl CAP has funded subsistence programs in the Kaverak region (primarily for the purpose of establishing the Eskimo Walrus Commission), the AVCP region (Nunam Kitlusi's funding), the Bristol Bay region (for regional organizing), the Kodiak area (to support the Kodiak Island Subsistence Resource Council), and within the Doyon region (the Koyukon Development Corporation). This level of grass-roots involvement in the subsistence issue is paying off, as attested to by the reaction of those who feel threatened by changes in status quo!

ENERGY is an issue which is only beginning to achieve the recognition it deserves. The rapidly escalating costs of heating fuel, gasoline, diesel oil, and o-

ther petroleum products in villages is having a profound impact on the fragile cash/subsistence economic mix which exists in most villages. It is our belief that, unless some appropriate action is taken during the coming session of the Legislature, we may well face critical problems in many villages during this coming winter and beyond. The survival of villages is at stake.

Therefore, we began a process of advocacy in January by conducting workshops throughout the State to identify the many village energy problems and to tentatively recommend solutions to both the State and Federal Governments. That process was furthered at the March Citizens' Participation Conference, was reinforced by the conferences sponsored by the Alaska Native Foundation under contract from the Legislative Interim Committee on Rural Energy (chaired by Senator Frank Ferguson), and is steadily gaining momentum. In order to deal with the overall problem, we view in it three stages (all of which must be dealt with at the same time). These include, 1), the immediate crisis experienced by villages as they run out of fuel; 2) the "mid-term" solutions that must be found to hold down the costs of fuel products and electricity in villages until; 3) a "long-range" solution is found. The long-term solution will most probably be an application of alternative and appropriate energy technologies in the villages.

It is truly ironic that the most energy-rich State in the Union should have the most energy-

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poor residents. The beginnings that were made during the past year to deal with this vitally important issue will be reinforced during the coming Legislative Session and beyond.

Child Development issues centered primarily on obtaining adequate funding for the Parent-Child and Head Start Programs throughout the State. With the creation of five new Head Start grantees by the Federal Government, we accepted the opportunity to broaden the "coalition of concern" surrounding children's issues. The Alaska Head Start Association was created in March and its first successful advocacy effort was to obtain a 50 % increase in the Governor's budget request for Head Start (from \$400,000 to \$600,000). This was a perfect example of both cooperative and coordinated advocacy on issues of importance to rural Alaska.

Issues which have a direct bearing on the health and well being of rural Alaskan children are also being addressed. The Community Health Foundation, a nationwide consulting firm, has been retained to do a complete examination of the dental services delivery system in rural Alaska and to recommend changes. We are anticipating that the final report will be available near the end of December; following which we will circulate the results throughout the State for further recommendations prior to being presented to policy-makers.

In addition to the dental problem, we've successfully concluded the Otitis Media demonstration project in the AVCP region. This project provided for direct treatment of the disease as well as a comprehensive analysis of the Health Delivery system which has not heretofore dealt effectively with this debilitating early childhood disease. Legislative support has been found and the project has been "spun-off" to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation for further implementation.

Finally, this is the "International Year of the Child." The theme of AFN's 1979 Convention recognizes this fact. In a September Conference, early childhood specialists came together with child advocates from all over Alaska in a three-day conference. Raising the consciousness of the larger public to the needs of Alaska's children will be an ongoing effort, however. RurAl CAP will continue to involve itself in that effort.

ALCOHOLISM is an issue that is still too much with us. Although some success was obtained in increasing funding for alcoholism education programs from the Legislature during the last session, it is hard to find a clear commitment within State

Government to attack the problem. Just as counselors say that an alcoholic individual must face up to his own problem before anything substantive can be done about it, so must the State recognize that alcoholism is the single most important health problem in the State. When that commitment is made, it is our belief that the cultural strength of village people can be tapped and will provide the ultimate solution to the problem.

The RurAl CAP alcoholism department maintains three counselors (in Copper Center, Iliamna, and St. Paul). These are local Native people who are responsible to their communities for guidance and direction. An extensive training program is underway at this time and it is hoped that the program will prove to bureaucrats and "professionals" elsewhere that it is entirely possible (indeed most appropriate) that the most effective counselling of Native people is accomplished by Native Counselors.

CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION

Underscoring all of the above activities is the ongoing commitment of RurAl CAP to the process of citizens' participation in the development of policies which will affect their lives. Toward that end, we continue to sponsor annual "Citizens' Participation Conferences," held in Juneau during the Legislative session. Beyond that, citizens' participation is provided through funding for individuals and organizations to meet and discuss the issues, for travel costs to convey village concerns to decision-makers, etc.

A small book has been prepared outlining the 1979 Citizens' Participation process and it is available to any convention delegate upon request.

CONCLUSION

Obviously, a few short paragraphs cannot adequately explain the total activities of an organization as large and diverse as RurAl CAP. However, it is my hope that these comments have assisted you to understand both the activities of RurAl CAP as well as the process that is followed to implement those activities. As we look to the future, I see a closer bond developing between AFN, ANF, Alaska Legal Services, RurAl CAP, CEDC, and other organizations whose primary constituency consists of Alaska Native people. It has been a privilege for RurAl CAP to have been a part of that coalition during the past year.

With best wishes for yet another successful AFN Convention, I remain,

Sincerely,

Phil Smith
Executive Director