

Report on Status of Alaska Natives Calls For Action

A report issued by the Alaska Federation of Natives on Jan. 20 provides an analysis of the health and social crisis occurring in rural Alaska and calls for action by Native leaders and state and federal officials.

"While there are many reports that have been written to document various aspects of problems existing in rural Alaska, none have been able to give Native leaders and policy-makers the perspective they need to understand how these problems are inter-related," said President Janie Leask.

"The AFN Report on the Status of

Alaska Natives: A Call For Action" synthesizes existing data on Native health; demographics; the constraints on economic growth in rural Alaska; the role of the public sector economy in villages and the quality of Native education (see related story p. 3).

It shows that despite improvements in health, educational opportunity, standard of living and access to government services, an increasing number of Alaska Natives face grave risks and declining opportunities.

"The underlying causes of the social crisis facing Alaska Natives are so com-

plex that it is not reasonable to expect, for example, that effective solutions for health problems can be found without understanding their relationship to other events occurring within the villages," Leask said.

The report has been submitted to Native leaders throughout the state, Alaska's Congressional delegation, the Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, Senator Daniel Inouye, and Governor Cowper. According to Alan Parker, Chief of Staff for the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, the report will be the subject

of hearings this spring in both Washington, D.C. and Alaska. The D.C. hearing has been set for March 10th.

"This is the first major status report that has been written on Alaska Natives in more than ten years," said Leask. "The data are sufficiently stark that it is no exaggeration to state that absent timely and dramatic action, the prognosis for positive change is poor."

"Our challenge is to neither despair, nor believe we can muddle through these problems doing business as usual," Leask said, "The report is a call for action."