

Change can be controlled

By Linda Lord-Jenkins

Tundra Times

Resource development will have a changing effect on families in Alaska's villages that can't be stopped but can be channeled if the villagers really work at it, according to a seminar on maintaining family and cultural values in the face of massive economic development.

The seminar was one of many presented at a symposium on Social, Economic, and Cultural Impacts of Natural Resource Development, held at the Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage last week.

The symposium was held to present ideas on conducting studies of the effect that resource development will have (Continued on Page Eleven)

Steps given to insure public comment

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on rural villages; to discuss off-setting bad impacts of the development and encouraging good effects; to develop a network of planners who conduct "socioeconomic impact statements" - the written comments of how development will affect villages; and to name problems common to all planners who make impact statements in villages.

John Schaeffer, president of the NANA Regional Corp., was one of several theme speakers for the symposium and told the planners that basically their work was going to be of little value because if a culture was strong, it would survive no matter what they did. If it was not strong, all the plans in the world would be of little help to that people.

Two representatives of the Committee for Indigenous Peoples' Survival presented a paper in the cultural survival portion of the symposium which told the planners that their work was invalid because they were working for development oriented companies and were not likely to ignore the wishes of the people who paid them.

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The seminar on preserving the family included Dennis Tiepelman, coordinator of the NANA Regions Inupiaq Ilitqusiat, the Inupiat Spirit Committee which is seeking to reinstitute the Inupiaq values in the NANA region; Michael Jeffrey, legal services lawyer for the North Slope and a candidate to become the first Superior Court Judge for Barrow; Steve Murdock, a rural

sociologist from Texas; and Leon Webber, from the Family Institute of Alaska.

Tiepelman told the group of about 10 participants that the NANA region is populated with people who have close family ties and therefore are of a like mind about many things.

He explained how the Inupiaq Ilitqusiat values are used as the basis of operating in the region and how the region discusses issues but, if angry disagreement arises that the NANA value of avoiding conflict is brought out.

Jeffrey explained how the North Slope Borough was organized to give the people of the North Slope political clout to make decisions on development that affects them.

Jeffrey told the group that the Borough used its power, in the form of planning and zoning restrictions, to keep oil drilling rigs off Cross Island which an oil company sought to use as a pad for an oil exploration rig.

Although the oil company had an oil lease for the area, the Borough had placed a strict zoning on the island which named it a preservation area and kept the development off.

Webber, who has worked with families in the Family Institute for years, said he was very pessimistic about the future of the family.

"I used to be Italian," he said. "I lived in an Italian household with grandparents and an uncle living downstairs. I spoke Italian until I was six. Then I went to school and moved away.

"Now when I return everything is changed."

Webber said the family will change no matter what people do and they must adapt to that change with alternatives. He suggested non-related people who act as families such as those that have become popular in places like Anchorage which has a large population of people with no other family there.

Roy Bowles, a sociologist from Harvard said that the question of "who wrestles control of the change," is important to cultural survival.

He said that groups that outline their values, such as the Inupiat Ilitqusiat, are very helpful in keeping families and cultures strong.

He also said that cultures and social structures that have survived have had elders who were in very firm control of their cultures' social structure yet also had contact with the outside world.

Jeffrey also presented a paper outlining how people who do socio-economic studies could be more responsive to the needs of villages.

His recommendations were:

- * Hold meetings *BEFORE* a project analysis begins to explain the proposed project with all villages;

- * Do a follow-up to those meetings with bilingual radio and television programs to discuss the plans. These programs should include the government information translated into Inupiaq and should include the comments of Native hunters discussing the issues they feel were most important;

- * Make sure that Environmental Impact Statement copies reach the villages in a

timely manner to insure that villagers can read them and consider them before a hearing is held on the EIS. This often has not happened in the past.

- * Include with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement a pamphlet which summarizes the important information and issues of the larger document.

- * Notify residents of upcoming meetings in as many ways possible and provide posters including information on time, place, exact location and date;

- * Coordinate the timing of the meeting with the village so as to not conflict with im-

portant village events such as church, hunting or fishing or sports activities which are very important in village life;

- * Provide a translator who will translate all activities to those present. Don't wait for people to ask a question before translating.

- * Whenever possible provide radio and television broadcasts of the hearings so people who might not be able to attend can share in it.

- * Continue the hearing as long as necessary and don't think that because people don't say something immediately that there is nothing

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Steps to insure comment

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to be said. "There might be long silences during the hearing which are actually a time of reflection, or a time for review and quiet discussion."

- * Have senior decision-makers attend the hearings instead of sending persons who don't have any real impact on the outcome.

- * Explain how the information is to be used so the people

know their comments are a part of the decision-making process.

- * Use a proper translation of the Inupiaq testimony. That translation should be done after the meeting without having to depend on a translator who is rushed because of the hearing format.

- * Let villagers know what response has been made to their comments.
