

# Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Visits Dillingham

The Anchorage Chamber of Commerce recently completed its second trip to rural Alaska this past October by traveling to Dillingham and the five communities of King Salmon-Naknek, Manokotak, New Stuyahok, and Togiak.

The trip was organized through the Chamber's Alaska Rural Partnership Committee which is chaired by Janie Leask, NBA's Vice President for Community Development. The Chamber created this standing committee in the fall of 1993 because it recognized the critical role Anchorage plays as a business and service hub in our state and that it was in the interest of the Anchorage Chamber and its members to understand more about rural Alaska. The

committee organized its first trip in January of 1996 to Bethel and five surrounding villages.

Twenty-four urban business men and women traveled to Dillingham this past October. For many, it was their first trip to rural Alaska. The trip was coordinated with the help of the Dillingham Chamber, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, and Bristol Bay Native Association. Village hosts for the visit included Mayor Moses Toyukak of Manokotak, Wally Gust of New Stuyahok, Mayor Edwin Anderson of the Bristol Bay Borough, Peter Abraham of Togiak and Mayor David Bouker of Dillingham.

Participants spent a full day in Dillingham before dividing into four groups and flying out to the villages



*Anchorage Chamber of Commerce members discuss their impressions with the residents of Dillingham.*

(King Salmon-Naknek were included as one site.) They spent the night in the village, and met with community leaders, residents, and elders. They toured the community and school and had a chance to meet face-to-face with residents to discuss problems of mutual concern — education, economic development, local control, subsistence, social issues, law enforcement, and ways Anchorage could build a better relationship with rural communities.

"The trip was an overwhelming success," noted Janie Leask, NBA Vice President of Community Development. "These trips are helping to bridge a better understanding between urban and rural people. Once people have the opportunity to meet and talk face-to-face about issues important in their lives, it's amazing how quickly misperceptions are corrected and issues are better understood. A direct result of this trip was the Chamber's recent resolution which calls for a vote by the people on an amendment to the state constitution which, if approved, would authorize rural subsistence preference."

The Chamber is planning a third trip in the Spring of 1997 to Kotzebue ■



*Native elders listened to the impressions of their visitors.*