

ANICA holds board meeting

By JACK HAKKILA

The Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association (ANICA) held its regular annual board meeting in Seattle, Wash., April 11-13.

It was the first time that board members travelled outside of Alaska for the regular board meeting. Don Dorsey, General Manager of ANICA, Inc. explained, "We felt it would be advantageous to have the board members meet in Seattle where they could become familiar with our staff and procedures at their home work location."

One of the main problems facing ANICA in recent years has been high fuel costs an inflation. ANICA is isolating petroleum accounts in villages with such problems so that they will be able to use their membership deposits for stocking groceries and dry goods. As a result of the meeting, members can now return to their villages and explain some of the procedures used and what ANICA is.

ANICA was formed 31 years ago under the inspiration and guidance of Frank Degnan of Unalakleet. Degnan, who served in the territorial legislature and who has been instrumental in the establishment of Mount Edgecumbe and the state's Pioneer Homes, explained how he had helped found the corporation.

"I just make a speech, mess around, then I have to go out and organize the people and do it," Degnan said.

Degnan also was instrumental in early efforts to bring about land claims in Western Alaska. He relinquished the presidency of ANICA to Henry Deacon in 1974, but still remains on the board as first vice president.

Peoples' National Bank, which has been working closely with ANICA, Inc. for 25 years, hosted some of the board members during the meeting. At the bank, board members participated in arranging for \$250,000 of borrowing for the coming peak season. The money will be used for fuel and bulky items such as lumber which cannot be shipped by

air but are best shipped by barge and surface transportation during the summer.

At the Seattle Fur Exchange, board members were shown the facilities which handle a considerable volume of fur from member stores. Michael Dederer, manager of the exchange explained that, while Alaskan furs are a large part of the volume of business done by the exchange, during the last 20 to 30 years, western United States fur has come into its own. Prior to that time, the exchange, founded in 1897, handled Alaska fur only.

Lynx cats, found throughout the Western United States, have become an important item for the exchange during the past few years since leopards cannot be used for the fur trade anymore. The lynx cats have a spotted belly and can be used for this reason for the styles previously dependent on the spots of the leopards...ocelot, chinchilla and cheetah.

Today, over 60 percent of the fur traded on the Seattle Fur

Exchange comes from ranches. The exchange acts only on a commission, neither buying or selling furs. Firms such as ANICA, Inc., deposit their furs with the exchange where they are received, cleaned and placed into large lots for sale. Buyers from the principal fur-using nations of the world—England, France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Japan and Hong Kong—with some recent interest from South America and Australia attend the periodic auctions and bid on the furs. Each hour 150 to 175 lots are sold. Buyers must

be quick to keep up with their catalog as auctioneer Gary Dederer and his associates move along at a fast pace.

Cliff Weyiouanna of Shishmaref, Chairman of the Board of ANICA, Inc. summarized the meeting. "ANICA is a rapidly growing organization. We only hope it can continue to expand at recent rates. Sales have jumped from \$4 million five years ago to \$9 million this past year."

"The more volume ANICA does, the more variety of goods village stores can expect to have," Weyiouanna said.