

# Villagers call for unified effort on subsistence vote

By Ceceile Kay Richter

Special to the Tundra Times

April Fool's Day was no time for jokes for 75 rural villagers gathered in Juneau that day for the conclusion of the Village Participation Conference. Participants, who came to Juneau from 45 villages statewide, targeted subsistence, alcoholism and drug Sponsored by RurAl Cap, with funding from the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs Juneau Area Office, this was planned as the first of three annual conferences to identify local strategies for resolving village problems.

## SUBSISTENCE RIGHTS

Participants were united in identifying maintaining the existing Alaska State Subsistence Law as the paramount concern of rural Alaskans. The right of rural Alaskans to priority in the use of wild renewable resources for direct personal

and family consumption is threatened by a statewide initiative which will be on the November ballot to repeal the State's subsistence law.

"No emotion or financial abuse, education, energy, and health and safety as problems which needed more than just village resources.

After a day of training in governmental processes and a second day for resolution-drafting in workshops, the Conference plenary session passed 32 resolutions reflecting village prime concerns. resource should be spared in voting NO on this important issue." "Not only is there a great threat to the nutritional well-being of rural Alaskans existing in this initiative, our spiritual well-being is threatened." "Subsistence fits into our culture." "I need my seal meat to feel good."

These were some of the comments of the villagers.

As noted in one resolution written in appreciation of the work of state and national conservation groups, "Alaska is in a crisis situation: the potential repeal of the State subsistence law."

The rural strategy to protect subsistence rights was outlined in a series of resolutions unanimously passed in the general session:

- \* Unify support at the village level.
- \* Work closely with other advocacy groups to continue to exchange and obtain information and to solicit their assistance.
- \* Write to urban newspapers informing their readers of what life is like in villages.
- \* Ask the Alaska House Resources Committee to cate-

gorize this issue as a top priority and request information frequently from this Committee.

\* Donate money to the Alaska Federation of Natives "Alaskans for Sensible Fish and Game Management" mass-media campaign.

\* Register to vote and vote against the repeal of the law.

\* Petition urban mayors for their assistance in obtaining the support and votes of members of their community against the subsistence repeal initiative.

Two subsistence resolutions were addressed to the Governor. In one he was formally thanked for his public opposition to 35 controversial proposed subsistence regulations of the State Fish and Game

Department. In the other the Governor was requested to publicly support the subsistence priority law because of his ability to influence people who are not well-informed. Hammond has done some of that.

In a resolution addressed to Alaska mayors of small cities and village councils, it was noted that "the participants in this Conference have all agreed that rural Alaskans in their daily activities and in crisis have always worked together and shared together to sustain and support themselves, their families, their children, their elders and their friends — in short, their total community."

"Now, therefore, be it resolved by the rural Alaskan participants to the Village (Continued on Page Six)



# Education, health, energy bring resolutions

(Continued from Page One)

Participation Conference that they urgently request and petition you, the duly-elected and recognized leader in your community, to do all in your power to assist in informing each and every person in your community of the importance of defeating the Subsistence Law repeal initiative and to assist in registering each and every eligible voter in your community."

In one other resolution sponsored by the subsistence workshop and passed at the Conference, the village delegates demanded that the governor and the state Legislature maintain the federally-assisted Coastal Zone Management Program. This year's state Legislature has not committed itself yet to providing its share of funds for this program.

## ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE

In another series of resolutions, Conference participants declared abuse of alcohol and other drugs to be Alaska's number one public health problem and came out in support of several bills presently before the Alaska State Legislature. These were:

- \* HB 111 (SB 71), which authorizes an advisory vote at the November general election on whether to raise the legal drinking age to 21.

- \* HB 574 (HB 117, SB 117), which shortens hours for sale of alcoholic beverages.

- \* HB 666, the State operating budget, which funds alcohol and drug prevention and treatment programs and for long-term continuation of community prevention, education and treatment programs.

- \* HB 838, increased taxes on beverage alcohol.

- \* SB 833, licensing of individuals for purchase of alcoholic beverages.

In the last related resolution, the Conference participants sought restoration of federal funds to the Indian Health Service for continuation of the Mt. Edgecumbe Alcoholism Treatment Center and the Community Health Representatives Program.

## EDUCATION

The Education Workshop, which included 15 conference participants, brought to the session four resolutions, which were passed, as well as a list of additional problems for local discussion and planning. The resolutions:

- \* Supported Hammond's position that the federal government maintain and government maintain and continue its responsibility to the 37 federally-operated day schools.

- \* Requested that the Legislature maintain previous funding levels for educational programs that are proposed to be cut.

- \* Requested that the state Legislature supplement Bureau of Indian Affairs funding to schools in Akiachak, Akiak, and Chevak,

which are currently operated by the tribal governing body under contract to the BIA. This resolution additionally requested that the state recognize IRA and traditional councils as having the capacity to contract for the delivery of educational programs provided by the State of Alaska.

- \* Supported SB 95 which equalizes village representation of villages on State REAA school boards.

On March 31 workshop participants testified before the Senate Health, Education and Social Services (Hess) Committee on SB 95. The Hess Committee was told that at present local school boards are regional and do not adequately represent individual villages. All villages with REAA schools should have equal representation on REAA School Boards and at least half of all board meetings should be held in the villages, the workshop participants testified.

Additional problems identified by the education workshop for future consideration included culturally relevant curriculum development and training, expanding preschool programs, discipline in the schools, vocational and counseling programs, relevant teacher training programs, adult vocational and General Education Diploma programs, and funding for dormitories at the University of Alaska - Anchorage.

## ENERGY

Village Participation Confer-

ees, knowing firsthand the high energy costs and the adverse climatic conditions in the state, passed a series of resolutions calling for continuation and expansion of residential energy conservation programs and "bulk fuel storage grant and loan programs to villages."

Passage was urged of SB 608, which would provide \$14 million for residential energy conservation and weatherization programs, and \$1.2 million for grants for energy planning and education, and of SB 665 which would provide a \$1.5 million appropriation for weatherization programs for low-income Alaskans. With respect to energy education programs, the Conferees recommended that some of the funding be earmarked for production of bilingual television programs produced in rural areas.

Resolutions also recommended continuation of the home energy audit program but urged that the \$300 grant per residence for energy conservation materials be adjusted upwards for rural residences to provide for the cost of transportation. According to statements at the energy workshop, 52 percent of the residential materials grant in rural areas goes to pay for transportation of materials thereby reducing the benefit of the grant by an equal percentage.

The fact that federally and state-subsidized housing construction programs result in energy-inefficient homes was deplored in another resolution. That resolution went on to

request that the Alaska State Legislature and Alaska U.S. Congressional Delegations propose home-building standards for rural Alaska that are area-specific, adequate, and energy efficient. Local approval of housing designs, local hire of construction crews, and more training for housing inspectors were also recommended

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

The broadest range of concerns came from the Health and Safety Workshop. Problems considered by the workshop included village water and sewer systems, fire protection, flooding and erosion, and health-care delivery systems. The workshop introduced five resolutions on these subjects which were passed by the plenary session.

State assumption of the Indian Health Service program providing village water and sewer systems that was discontinued by the federal government this year was urged (HB 840). In floor discussion, the insensibility of the federal government building new houses while discontinuing the program that would have provided them with water and sewage systems was mentioned.

Another resolution described the inability of villages to obtain Corps of Engineers studies and funding for seawalls and harbors and requested such measures in villages which needed them. A third resolution requested that the state facilitate training programs in fire safety and fire prevention and disperse information to each village.

On the health side, Conferees called for supporting the concept of SB 708 which provides for travel costs in medical emergencies. Presently, medical evacuations are only funded in life and death situations.

A ruptured appendix is not considered a life and death situation.

