

Mt. Edgecumbe alumni seek school management

Seeking to take unprecedented charge of their old campus, members of the Mt. Edgecumbe Alumni Association have called on the Alaska Board of Education to step aside as the governing body of Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka.

The association's position, which had already been presented privately to state education commissioner Jerry Covey, was laid out in an August 6 meeting of the state board of education in An-

chorage by alumni spokesman Gil Truitt of Sitka. Truitt is a former teacher and administrator at the school, which for many years as a federally-funded and operated boarding school for Natives and now is a state-operated boarding school for students of any race. Natives still make up the majority of the student body.

Truitt said long-standing concerns about lax administration and disrespect for Native students and

their educational challenges prompted the association stance.

"I've been there long enough to see what goes on when we have a weak superintendent," Truitt said.

A position paper provided by the association outlined some of the problems that have attracted alumni attention.

Truitt outlined six points proposed by the association to remedy these concerns, many focusing on recruitment of a new director following the recent departure of Laurence Rocheleau:

1. That the new superintendent should be familiar with boarding school operations, including academics, housing and food service.

"None of these can receive priority over the other or the school is going to suffer," Truitt said.

2. The new superintendent must respect and be familiar with Na-

tives, respect Native culture and demonstrate fairness to Natives. Truitt stressed that this recommendation was at the heart of alumni concerns. While teaching and preserving Native culture is not the school's mission, he said, respecting cultural values, aspirations and attributes is essential for the school to achieve academic goals.

3. Administration of the school should emphasize Native and local hire, though he said alumni were not seeking to replace current staff members.

"Those of us in Sitka are really tired of people from Arkansas and Montana coming up and getting jobs when there are qualified local people being passed over," Truitt said.

4. School administration should provide adequate discipline for students to maintain morale.

5. An interim superintendent should be appointed to set the stage for a proper executive search.

6. The alumni association seeks to become the governing and policy-making body for the school, a move that Truitt said would take special legislation.

Kotzebue Sen. Al Adams, an Edgecumbe grad, has indicated his staff is preparing draft legislation to make the association Edgecumbe's policy-making body.

While board members had little, if any, response, Covey promised to involve the alumni in the process of selecting a new, permanent superintendent. While he made no commitments regarding a state position on alumni takeover of school administration, he said an interim school superintendent would soon be appointed.