

Students ask support for Edgecumbe

By BILL HESS

Tundra Times

Two students of Mount Edgecumbe High School in Sitka attended the Alaska Federation of Natives convention to again voice their opposition to plans which would shut down the Alaska Native boarding school at the end of this academic year.

"We know we must fight to keep our school open be-

cause we know that it provides the education we need and that most all alternatives that would be available to us do not meet our needs," spoke Eleanor Weedman, president of the Student Council, and a senior at Mount Edgecumbe.

"The student body does not feel that there is any way that the students' needs can be met if Mount Edgecumbe closes at

the end of the 1983 school year. This does not allow enough time to provide acceptable opportunities."

Weedman praised village schools as being essential for many students, but said there are still "an abundant number" whose needs can not be met in Bush schools, and who prefer to attend Mount Edgecumbe.

"I was talking with a girl

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Students cite advantages of Mt. Edgecumbe

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from my home town who wasn't offered a math class because most of the freshman class didn't want a math class," Weedman explained. "A situation like this shouldn't occur. Fortunately, she was able to attend Mt. Edgecumbe this year as a sophomore, but next year, this essential alternative would not be available to her."

Weedman said that when she was attending school in her hometown, she was faced with "a classroom which consisted of three subjects. In one part of the room Yup'ik was being taught; in the other part two other subjects were being taught by one teacher. . . . such situations don't help students to develop their fullest potential."

Weedman also contends that most teachers in the villages do not stay long. "Because of this, they do not adjust to the students or conditions of the villages and get to know and understand the students as well. This makes it very difficult for students' needs to be met! Because many of the teachers at Mt. Edgecumbe do remain for a long period of time, this is an advantage for they learn how to understand and work with the

students."

Discipline is also lax in many village schools, Weedman said. "Attendance is not strictly enforced . . . at Mt. Edgecumbe, there is a strict policy that requires all students to be on time and attend all classes unless it is unavoidable. In the village high schools, students have a tendency to goof off and sometimes even listen to loud music during school. There is very little homework assigned and few outside responsibilities related to school. There are also very few recreational activities that keep the students involved and from being bored."

The result, said Weedman, is a drug and alcohol problem that is severe. "No answer exists in the villages for this problem. After the students are forced back into the village high schools, this problem will become even more serious."

Weedman also praised Edgecumbe for its role in bringing Alaskan Natives from widely separated areas of the state together.

"Living and working together helps us to gain the understanding and feeling of unity that we will need so much to enable us to adjust to situations that we will encounter as we take our place

as citizens and future leaders of the state."

Leah Thompson, a sophomore and class secretary, also pleaded for the continuation of Mount Edgecumbe. "I would like to describe a village high school using the one in Bettles Field (Thompson's home village) as an example. It consists of two small rooms. Now, I'm talking about grades 1 through 12 crowded together in two small rooms. One room contains grades 1-5 with one teacher; the other room contains grades 6-12 and has two teachers. . . . the room is divided in half with a few desks and a chalkboard, and the students and teachers are constantly being bothered by the noise coming

from the other side of the room.

"How can the teachers teach, and how can students learn, in an environment like that?"

High school, said Thompson. "Is your time to either make it or break it . . . college is my goal, and I know whatever happens to me in high school will determine if I go to college or not. Going to school in my hometown would not prepare me for college, because at home, I didn't have the wide range of subjects that would help me later on."

AFN delegates passed a resolution which re-affirms AFN's opposition to closing the Mt. Edgecumbe school because the closure goes contrary to the

Bureau of Indian Affairs' responsibility to provide adequate education to Indian Alaska Native students.

In other education-related matters, AFN passed resolutions which:

- * Asked the Congressional delegation to support the maintenance of the present level of funding for the Indian Education Act funding and the Johnson O'Malley education supplement program grants:

- * Asks the congressional delegation to oppose the proposed 35 percent reduction in the Budget of the Indian Education Act for 1983 and asks them to maintain the IEA funding at 1982 level.