

# CSA hearings

"The Community Service Administration (CSA, formerly the Office of Economic Opportunity) needs to return to the basics, the things and concepts of OEO that worked in the past," said Gordon Jackson, president, Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP);

Jackson was testifying November 5 before a panel of community services administration officials in Boise, Idaho, in response to their invitation and questions of what should be the CSA priorities for the next three years and policies and programs which should be pursued.

"RurAL CAP's funding has remained the same for the past eight years and I would first urge an adequate increase," said Jackson. "I am aware of that amount because it is the same amount I worked with when I joined RurAL CAP in 1969 as a program developer. Because of inflation during those years, we had to cut back on a number of things that have been the backbone of the Community Action Program in Alaska. That includes the maintenance of a planning process that begins with needs assessment from the village, to regions, to RurAL CAP resulting in our responsiveness to priority needs and problems of the poor and disadvantaged in rural Alaska. The others include adequate training and technical assistance; maintenance of our career development plan that is responsible for the development of much leadership potential in Alaska's Native community; and revitalization of research and demonstration projects that are responsible in Alaska for the organization and spinoff by RurAL CAP of such fine organizations as the Community Enterprise Development Corporation, Alaska Village Electrification Cooperative, Alaska Native Commission on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and now the Subsistence Resource Council. I've been associated with the Community Action Program for eight years as an employee and board member," said Jackson. "It has been responsible for my career development and going back to the basics with adequate funding would insure that others will reap the benefits of this fine program."

"Alaska is unique," Jackson went on. "Our Community Action Program serves 586,000 square miles, the largest land area in the nation for a CAP. Most of our issues and problems equal that of the land mass. Our priority of them all, however, is the continuance of subsistence hunting and fishing for Alaska Natives. That way of life is a real one for most Alaska Natives living in rural Alaska. Its continuance received a number of devastating blows the past several months. First, a severe cutback in the taking of caribou, a primary source of protein for Alaska Eskimos. Secondly, the ban on the taking of bowhead whales in the Arctic. We had worked vigorously to continue thereby, continuing the existence of the Arctic Eskimo. In this case, however, the whale won and the humans lost."

"We once again urge the community Services Administration to hold a separate hearing in Alaska to view first hand the causes and conditions of poverty that exists in rural Alaska."

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Following Jackson's presentation, Bill Allison, deputy director, Community Services Administration in Washington, D.C., announced that CSA "was in fact, planning to hold a series of hearings in Alaska late in the year or early January."

"I was pleasantly surprised at how the hearings proceeded in Boise," said Jackson. "We had a horrible time securing information concerning the agenda and importance of the meeting. As a result it led to much speculation and anger. Right now I have no regrets that we were present and provided much valid testimony. Hopefully, when they come to Alaska even more valid testimony will be provided opening CSA's eyes even wider."