

25 Natives Work at Alyeska's Franklin Bluffs Camp

FRANKLIN BLUFFS —

Twenty-five Natives are now employed at Alyeska's Franklin Bluffs pipeline construction camp located just 34 miles south of the oil fields at Prudhoe Bay. Nine of these men are participating in the Native-Hire training program through the Fairbanks-based Burgess Construction Co.

According to Vernon Kugeruk, Native Training Representative, all are working out well and fit into the camp life just fine.

"I, and their supervisors are proud of them and pleased with their work," Kugeruk said.

During a recent visit by the press to the remote camp, those participants who were not resting up for their next shift or on duty at the time were introduced to the group.

When questioned, most

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NATIVE PIPELINE TRAINEES — Vernon Kugeruk, Native trainee representative at the Burgess Construction Co. Franklin Bluffs camp on the North Slope, is explaining the training procedures. With him, left to right are: Edison Williams, Charles Pitka, and Gordon Williams. The non-Natives are not identified.

— Photo by DON ALDER

Franklin Bluffs

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seemed satisfied with conditions and the training received, but some were anxious to move on to journeyman status.

No complaints were expressed, although at least one voiced objection to a frequent change in supervisors.

"You just get used to one boss, and then you get a new one," he said.

Non-Native workers at the camp generally expressed a "no complaints" attitude toward the trainees, stating that "They work, like everybody else here."

Six trainees are in the Teamsters program. They are Charles Pitka of Beaver, and Phillip Bergman, Warner Bergman, Paul Koyukuk, Edison Williams and Gordon Williams, all of Allakaket.

The three Labor trainees are Bellarmine Alvanna of Nome, Dale Paul, Tanacross, and William Field, Noorvik.

There is one Operator apprentice, Jim Kubanyi of Fairbanks.

Most of the trainees have been at the camp about five weeks.

Management personnel indicated that there has been some turnover in the Native trainees, with some leaving and not returning without any stated reason.

Charles Pitka of Beaver, a Teamster trainee, said he had been at camp about five weeks. He will have two weeks off in October to vacation at home. When asked if he would be returning, he said yes.

Kugeruk said the number of Natives at camp was not up to the figure that they hoped to have. With approximately 350 men and women in residence, at least 10% or more of that figure should be Natives.

The Alaska-hire rule does not seem to be fully followed at Franklin Bluffs camp, as several workers interviewed indicated they were from the lower states.

Some of these were in specialized fields, but many were laborers. It would require deeper investigation to determine if this hiring practice was one of necessity or negligence.

Never before has such an opportunity to work and learn a trade while being paid a solid wage been available to the Alaskan Native, and participation should be helped and encouraged to the fullest extent.