

Dispute shouldn't divide Inupiat

The year of 1982 is one which will be remembered on the North Slope as one of strife, disagreement, argument and dissension in the community. It also will be remembered as a year — at least in Barrow — in which no whales were taken.

It will be impossible to measure the total effect of these factors on Barrow — the largest Eskimo village on the North Slope and the center of much strife about the entire whale hunt quota.

With the unsuccessful hunt, there undoubtedly will be suffering. The lack of whale meat and blubber will cause numerous nutritional and lifestyle problems.

And in the midst of these events a serious disagreement about whaling has erupted between two important factions of the community — the whaling captains of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, and the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, the tribal government.

One thing that both agree upon is that neither likes the quota that limits what once used to be a right of the Inupiat. But while one group has decided to abide by the quota, the other has decided against that agreement.

On the one hand, the AEWC has committed itself to complying with the quota despite the admitted hardship that that adherence will cause.

On the other hand the ICAS has taken what many would call a radical stand and declared that no whaling quota will be adhered to despite earlier agreements. And one representative of the ICAS has called the president of the United States a "white fascist pig."

It is a pity that it took words with a shock value to cause someone to place the dilemma of the Inupiat on front pages across the state.

If a seasoned and experienced whaling captain says 'we need to be able to hunt more whales,' that's back page news. However, if someone says 'we need to be able to take more whales, *you fascist pig*,' that's front page news.

They are both saying essentially the same thing for the same reason.

It is unfortunate that in this day and age people and governments seem to listen only if inflammatory words are used.

We can understand the frustrations and hurt that the entire community has felt which have led to the "radical" stand of the few. After all, it shows that the two sides are both seeking the same end — continuation of the cultural and nutritional needs of their people.

But we can't help but wonder if such inflammatory utterances will have the desired effects of increasing or eliminating the quota. Could it not, rather, prove to be more harmful to the community?

We fear that the greatest detriment could be the pitting of brother against brother and neighbor against neighbor.

And, as people on both sides admit openly — that is not the Inupiat way.