

# As Audit Goes On AFN-JOM Gears for '76

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**ANCHORAGE** — While Interior Department auditors continue what Alaska Federation of Natives-Johnson-O'Malley program workers say is a routine survey of that federal contract, the office staff is gearing up for fiscal year 1976 programs and summer programs to be held with money left over from fiscal year 1975.

The Interior surveyors expect to be finished checking out the program late this week or next. They would not comment on the nature of their findings so far when contacted by the Tundra Times but JOM Director, Frank Berry, indicated that he expected the supplemental education program to come away without any major problems.

"This team will probably point out some of our early mistakes," Berry said. "But I think we're

(Continued on Page 6)

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(Continued from Page 1)

getting things under control now and any assistance they provide by showing us problem areas of the past will just make the program better."

Quechan, Inc., a Kenai-based consultant corporation named after a California Indian tribe and headed by Jerry Black, formerly of that tribe, helped AFN identify problems in administering the program during fiscal years 1974 and '75 — the first years AFN administered the prime contract.

In its report published last November, Quechan pointed out early mistakes and identified necessary steps for making the program function better.

"On the one hand we mentioned the negative side of past administration of the program," explained Neil Hutchens, supervisor for Quechan at JOM, "but on the other hand, I don't think AFN did so bad for the size of the state and the number of programs administered. My own feeling is that BIA limitations meant they couldn't give on-going technical assistance to AFN in the first years."

Now that past problems have been identified, BIA has recognized the need for more assistance, according to Hutchens, who says that the increase in JOM funds to AFN, from \$1.4 million in 1974 to \$5.6 million in 1975, is

an indication of BIA's faith in present administration of the statewide program.

AFN administered 25 subcontracts in 1974 and 42 in 1975. The contracts covered 25 projects the first year and increased to 66 projects the second. Evaluator staff was increased from two to four to serve the sub-contractors.

"I think this is a significant part of the whole effort toward Native self-determination," added Lance Coz, a Quechan worker who recently came up from Arizona to assist. "Our company is particularly concerned with helping Native organizations gain more control over the programs they administer. There now seems to be interest in having fewer sub-contracts administered from this office and establishing regional sub-units which deal directly with the village sub-contractors."

Coz says in this manner, AFN could deal with FIA, whereas if each region had to deal with BIA directly, the federal agency would probably then become a bottleneck for the program.

"I've seen other Indian programs that took five years to get as far as this one has to this point," Coz added. "This will be the first year that the local parent committees will have full veto power over programs which will be placed into their communities. This is an improvement over the past, where in some cases they served only as paper figures ... of course we'll still give them as much assistance as we can."

None of the five people who are no longer with the program since Berry took over as director were fired, according to information recently made available to the Tundra Times. One person reportedly didn't return to work for a couple of days, but when

that person did return they did so to resign, and the resignation was accepted.

Berry and representatives of Quechan also agree that the disappearance of files from the office was probably due to poor organization of the office from the start rather than any intentional effort to remove them.

"We just had an inadequate reporting system and a lack of follow-up on the files," Berry explained. "With the assistance from Quechan we have become more organized and many of the evaluators are becoming more aware of how to run things."

Berry said that many of the sub-contractors are beginning to show their appreciation for improvements in administration of the program. An application format has been developed to

assist potential sub-contractors in the step-by-step development of local JOM programs. The evaluators are also becoming more competent, providing more complete information to AFN on local projects.

"I think everyone who has been with the program any length of time has had some difficulty keeping things nailed down," Coz added. "But things are running much smoother now and we expect next year to be very

successful."

AFN-JOM has received an estimated 75 project proposals for 1976 after distributing some 150 applications. Processing of the proposals will be done April 14-22 with the Johnson-O'Malley Review Committee expected to be here April 18-22 to consider the proposals.

Efforts are also being made by the JOM office to accept some late proposals because they were sent out late.