

# In support of subsistence whaling

Washington - Two top federal officials have endorsed Alaskan Eskimo whalers' right to continue their subsistence whaling activities.

Department of the Interior Under Secretary James A. Joseph said Monday that both he and Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus "strongly support 'he subsistence hunting rights of Alaska Eskimos and other indigenous people."

"That position has been repeatedly made clear in the context of the subsistence bowhead hunt and the In-

terior Department has consistently been the Natives' staunchest ally in the fight to guarantee and protect their subsistence whaling activities," Joseph said.

The U.S. Department of Justice is conducting an investigation into alleged violations of quotas set to limit the Eskimos' take of the endangered bowhead whales.

"We do not believe that the choice is between the eradication of a wild species, the whale, which would be lamentable; or in the disappearance of a vital culture - the Alaska Eski-

mos' - which would be a tragedy," Joseph said.

"We believe the challenge, indeed the only sensible course, is to ensure the survival of both the species and the culture which relies to a great extent on a reasonable harvest of whales, he said.

"Just what the harvest ought to be, however, is the

question which underlies the present dispute," Joseph noted. He pointed out that Eskimo Whalers dispute government scientists' estimates of the size of bowhead population.

"Our interest is in answering these questions once and for all and to the satisfaction of all concerned. We believe that the only conceivable way of accomplishing this is to involve the Native community in the work

and to contract as much of the work as possible to the community."

Joseph said the Department of the Interior "cannot condone or support whaling outside the internationally established quotas for the bowhead whale" but added that "we stand ready to work with the Eskimo whalers in any way possible to achieve a balance between the biological needs of the species and the cultural and subsistence needs of the Eskimo people."