

# Some ABC's in education

BY RON INOUE

*Editor's Note: Thanks for your responses to this column. The "Alakanuk Native Youth Press" is the latest student newspaper to be added to our collection of papers.*

*Should you have any questions about the column, or suggestions for future topics, please write to me at the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701, or phone 479-7185.*

The political campaigning is over, and most citizens are relieved that the elections are completed. Now the successful candidates are looking forward to beginning or continuing their work for all of us. This is an excellent opportunity for students and teachers to study how government works as part of a civics, government, or contemporary issues class.

There are many kinds of successfully elected candidates who have just taken office within the past several months. At the local levels are Community School Committee members, city council, borough assembly, and district school boards; at the regional level are state representatives and senators, regional non-governmental corporation officials, etc. .

Students can review the candidates' positions on issues of importance to their geographic areas and watch the officials as they take their new positions. Over a period of time the voting records can be studied for trends and consistency; also, the elected representatives might be invited to attend a class to talk to the students about their responsibilities as elected representatives.

Perhaps students could take field trips to view the elected representatives in action. Whether at the local village council meeting regional corporation annual meetings, going to Juneau or Washington, D.C., the students could prepare for such a trip by studying the many aspects of governance.

One reliable source of information is the *Alaska Blue Book*, published by the State of Alaska every other year, and its supplement produced on the off year. The *Blue Book* is the best single source of information on elected state and local officials and is available from the State Library in Juneau.

Another source of information is the *Local Government Encyclopedia*, produced by the Department of Community and Regional Affairs, Division of Local Government Assistance in Anchorage. It is a handbook containing definitions of local government terms, procedures for basic city functions, and case studies covering common problems found in smaller cities.

Both the *Alaska Blue Book* and the *Local Government Encyclopedia*, are most likely available in your school or community library, or through your local city mayor. If they aren't it is important that you add these two items to your library collection if possible.

Ultimately, the best source of information are the men and women who serve as elected officials in your own community. Most of them would be delighted to talk with students about their responsibilities and what it is like to be an elected representative. The combination of the resource materials in the library and guest speakers from the community will strongly complement any political field trip the students may be able to make at a future date as well as providing excellent educational experiences in themselves.