

Elmer Pitka Petitions for Membership of His Corp. in CEDC

Mr. Elman Pitka, President of the Board of the Innuvit Co-op of Beaver, Alaska, was in Anchorage for the 1974 annual membership meeting of the Community Enterprise Development Corporation of Alaska (CEDC) held on December 12, 1974.

This was the first corporate meeting that Mr. Pitka has ever attended. He petitioned for membership in CEDC on behalf of the Innuvit Co-op. Upon approval, he participated by voting on by-law changes, ratifying actions and setting policy for the corporation for the upcoming year.

Innuvit Co-op is a cooperative retail operation located in Beaver on the Yukon River, 110 miles north of Fairbanks. It opened this September; the 100 residents set up this organization when the former Beaver Trading Post, the

only store in the community, announced its planned closure in the fall.

Mr. Jack Van Hatten had operated the store for 30 years.

The "Innuvit" (Eskimo for People) Co-op was designed to benefit its members. It was the first business to be established and owned by themselves. The residents raised \$3,000 in equity through membership shares. They made decisions on the kind of goods and services to be provided, many technical questions on the operation and how it should be developed in the future.

Mr. Pitka stated that the store was a positive influence on the community because of the "experience in setting up and running the venture. Everyone in the community has learned." Mr. Pitka is a life time resident of the community. He is a trapper and has a part time job as mail carrier. He is on the village council of Beaver.

While the facility is modest, the store offers a wide variety of goods at low prices. The old structure was remodeled to provide a more efficient utilization of space. New gondola shelves and a check stand were installed. Because there is no electricity available, the store is



INNUVIT CO-OP BEAVER, ALASKA

lighted by coleman lantern and heat is from a wood stove.

Innuvit Co-op employs two residents. Mr. Herman Joseph is the manager and Mr. Leo Edwards is the clerk. They were trained in retail management and

accounting as part of the technical assistance offered by CEDC.

The business was financed by CEDC and a loan from the Beaver Kwit'chin Corporation, which is the village corporation. Doyon Limited was also instrumental in

getting the project organized.

CEDC is a nonprofit corporation that has financial, technical and training assistance to develop and support business enterprises in low income areas of rural Alaska. These businesses must be broadly owned and have a positive economic impact on the community or region from which it operates.