

# *Workshops focus on rural museums, heritage centers*

JUNEAU—Three workshops focusing on the work of rural Alaskan museums and heritage centers were recently offered by the Alaska State Museum. Some 91 people from every region of the state, including St. Lawrence Island, attended the two-day sessions.

Grant writing, exhibition methods and conservation techniques, key problem areas of small museum management according to a recent poll, were the subjects covered at the sessions held in Fairbanks, Homer and Juneau. Four staff members of the Alaska State Museum in Juneau provided the expertise.

Funding for the workshops was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Museum Act, and \$10,500 was distributed to participants for stipends to partially cover travel and per diem expenses.

"The regional training workshops," says Dan Monroe, Deputy Chief Curator, "were a continuation of the State Museum's effort to give greater assistance to museums and cultural organizations statewide."

The 91 people who attended the three regional training sessions composed a wide sampling of interest and experience:

27 of the state's museums, historical societies and cultural centers were represented by full, part-time or volunteer staff members, 7 Native corporations or cultural groups sent participants to the workshops, and members of 8 art councils across the state attended.

The two-day workshops opened with an intensive short course in grantsmanship. Participants wrote sample applications and were taught the basic methods of proposal planning and preparation.

The workshop devoted a session to obtaining and displaying one of the Alaska State Museum's five traveling exhibits. Any community in Alaska is eligible for an exhibit of prints or photographs as long as an organization will sponsor it and exhibit it in a lockable public place.

Participants were handed the theoretical problem of hanging a traveling exhibit of 20 pieces, part of the "hands on" learning approach of the workshops.

More "hands on" experiences were offered during the short course on permanent exhibit methods. Students made signs with press-type letters, learned correct laminating techniques with rubber cement, and built some simple exhibit furniture.

The session was concluded with a slide show of good and bad techniques in permanent exhibits. Wrote Ginny Alexander of the Dinjii Zhuu Enjit Museum of Fort Yukon, "I was relieved

to see the examples of things not to do concerning exhibits. Although our exhibits are not the greatest in the world, I now know that they are not the worst!"

Controlling the environment of the museum as preventative conservation means controlling factors such as light (fluorescent lighting is very damaging to artifacts), humidity and temperature. Participants received handouts which identified the most common problems of conservation, methods of testing for them, and control devices for different categories of artifacts.

The Alaska State Museum plans to increase its statewide services to rural museums and heritage centers. Longer and more intensive workshops on community education grant writing, and other topics can be expected from the State Museum in the future.