

Increasingly Complex Affairs

FAIRBANKS — After a year of assessing the higher education needs of Alaska Natives, the University of Alaska's special, long-range program to help them learn to manage their increasingly complex affairs is now turning to the development of training programs.

The Alaska Native Human Resources Development Program is financed by a \$681,461 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which is to be allocated over a five-year period.

"The number one-felt need of the Native regional people is for business training programs in relation to the Alaska Native Land Claims Act," says Dr. Lou Jacquot, a Tlingit Indian and executive director of the program. "They want their own people in the regional corporation administrative slots."

During the first year of the program, a number of demonstrated projects were developed with the idea of increasing interaction between the regions and institutions of higher learning in the state. It was hoped that by bringing the two groups together, both would learn to work and develop mutually beneficial programs in the future.

Jacquot and Lisa Rudd of Anchorage, an employee of the Alaska Native Foundation and the program's liaison with the Alaska Native community, made the contacts with the Native regions and with certain leaders and faculty in the state's institutions of higher learning. One of their findings: the community colleges are more flexible and willing to adapt to the regional needs than are the larger campuses.

Through their efforts, the development program also became known to large numbers of business and professional people around the state.

The objective of the demonstration projects, most of which were of a "one-shot" nature, was to have the regional Native Corporations define and demonstrate a "need," design a program to fit their special circumstances and then to use university resources to meet the "need."

Among projects implemented during the year:

- Two university instructors conducted a bookkeeping workshop at Nome for village corporation leaders. The workshop was designed at Nome and participants were contacted through the Bering Straits Native Corporation.

- The services of an Anchorage accountant were obtained by the Koniag, Inc. regional Native corporation (Kodiak) and Kodiak Community College for a locally-designed workshop on accounting procedures and government management.

- A native land claims workshop involving some 30 persons — 15 teachers of land claims courses and 15 people from various native communities — was held in Anchorage.

- A model program to develop Alaska native management skills was arranged with the assistance of Ahtna, Inc. (Copper River Area Native Corporation) and Alaska Methodist University.

- A joint venture of the development program, Kuskokwim Community College, Calista Corporation and Yupiktak Bista, a nonprofit corporation, resulted in the development of a proposal for an associate of arts degree program in land and management. This program was instituted at the Bethel college in September.

- A workshop to enable women administrators and execu-

tive assistants in the regional corporations to upgrade their office management skills, with university credit offered, was held at the University of Alaska's Senior College at Anchorage, under sponsorship of the development program, the university and Alaska Federation of Natives.

The development program staff also looked beyond Alaska for ideas that might be implemented in the state to attain program objectives. Of particular interest to Jacquot is the University of Saskatchewan's Indian Cultural College at Saskatoon.

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, worried about their cultural survival, persuaded the university and provincial legislature this past spring that the only answer, for them, was the establishment of a fully-funded and accredited Indian cultural college attached to the university.

The development program is emphasizing training now but in the long run it must also be concerned with native culture — "the whole gamut of what makes a people a people," says Jacquot. "For example, I want to see a flowering, a modernization, of native art. Totem poles are static. They don't represent a living society."

As the program staff members turn to the state's institutions of higher learning for the development of training programs for natives, they will be bound by one particular guideline established by the program's Policy Council: only training programs endorsed by natives will be considered.

To meet the special needs of Alaska's natives, there must be new patterns in curriculum development. Experimental and innovative efforts are called for, says Jacquot. For example, short, intensive courses would be more practical for natives than the traditional semester courses.

Alaska's professional and business community must also be intensively explored and utilized as a training ground. Intern programs in land management and/or financial management should be developed in the year ahead, he says.

The seven-member Policy Council, comprised of native leaders and university administrators,

provides direction for the development program and its staff. Dr. James Matthews, director of the university's Cooperative Extension Service, is overall program director.

University representatives on the council are Dr. Don M. Dafoe, the institution's executive vice president; Dr. Frank Darnell, director of the Center for Northern Educational Research; and Victor Fischer, director of the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research.

The native representatives are Fred Bigjim, an Eskimo and assistant professor at Alaska Methodist University; Mitch Demientieff, Athabaskan, past president of the Tanana Chiefs Conference;

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Roger Lang, Tlingit, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives; and Emil Notti, Athabascan, president of the Alaska Native Foundation. Notti replaced original council member Larry Merculieff who resigned because of his increasing responsibilities with the Aleut Corporation.

The development program's goals in the year ahead pose a challenge for the state's institutions of higher learning, as its staff points out in their first fiscal year report.

"... The thrust of the future should be that of changing the reactive powers of the institutions so that they can provide new services or revise old ones to meet the realities of the present. Certainly a university is inherently and by nature conservative and hidebound; but it is also supposed to be on the 'cutting edge' of knowledge.

"In Alaska, today, there are more opportunities to provide relevant, innovative services and to devise novel curricular models than anywhere else in the nation. For nowhere else do we find 77,000 people with common bonds who demonstrate so many needs..."