

# Medicaid Programs Under Fire ... 13th Regional...

(Continued from page 1)

Alaska statutes and deny equal protection under the law."

Carl Jack, Director of Health Affairs for the AFN, gave his testimony after extensive study of the new instruction manuals developed to guide the possible providers of health services in determining eligibility of recipients.

The instructions identify Native people as a special class of recipients under the General Relief Medical portion of the program, classifying them as ineligible on the basis of their implied eligibility for services from another resource — namely the U. S. Public Health Service, Native Health Service.

Jack claims this is "clearly a blatant attempt to shave a substantial amount of expense from the State's medical assistance programs by limitation of services to Native people."

"The Alaska Native," states the AFN, "has always sought and asserted his status and rights as a full citizen of the State of Alaska and the United States."

"His special status as a beneficiary of federal programs operated with funds appropriated specifically for services to Native Americans does nothing to abrogate his rights as a citizen of his state and his union. This is not an assertion we make lightly."

"We receive these special services because the Congress of the United States recognizes a solemn commitment to Native peoples based on the Constitution and numerous other legal precedents over the past two hundred years."

The AFN holds forth the legal position that the Indian Health program is one which is in addition to and not in place of other programs available to all other citizens.

"This position has been affirmed in litigation in several state courts in the South 48, when services available to all other citizens were denied to

Indian people."

The AFN points to several cases of "de facto discrimination" where Native people were denied services under the present state General Medical Relief program when they met all eligibility criteria except one — they were not white.

The AFN firmly states, "We will accept nothing less than full equality under all State-operated programs," and calls upon the legislature to adopt a realistic budget that will "provide equitable relief for all needy Alaskan citizens."

The AFN attacked other portions of the combined Medicaid and General Relief Medical Programs, calling attention to the unduly complicated paperwork procedures.

Many physicians, dentists, and pharmacists have expressed irritation with the present system, and may opt not to participate in providing services.

AFN feels this would work an undue hardship on recipients, especially in communities where many medical practices are not accepting new patients.

Even in the case of the providers who do elect to stay in the program, but are hostile toward it, AFN is concerned that their dissatisfaction and hostility may be transferred to the patient who "already suffers the social stigma which our society visits on 'welfare people.'"

AFN calls for strong measures to eliminate "unnecessary paper shuffling."

"We take strong exception to what seems to be a trend in state government to establish a whole new corps of bureaucrats overnight by administrative fiat."

A spokesman for the State denied that there was an excess of personnel to administer the new programs.

"As I see it, we don't have one more person than is needed. The fact is that there have been so many cases of welfare fraud, of people claiming benefits who NOT eligible, that there is no

way to eliminate the screening process."

The AFN recommendation includes large-scale automation of much of the data processing and a study of other state's programs where almost identical programs were started years ago without adding new field office staff.

Finally, the AFN asks that the State clarify payment for services by para-professionals.

There has been a growing trend to utilize nurse-practitioners or physician-assistants in Alaska's bush areas to bring health care to a large part of the State where on-the-spot care was not available.

Under Alaska law, these para-professionals are supervised by a licensed physician.

The AFN is concerned that under the present wording of the department's new manuals, these people may not be paid for services. This would mean a large setback in bush health care and a needless amount of flying-in of patients from the bush.

This parallels a common flaw in the present practice of denying General Relief Medical help to Natives and referring all Native people to the Public Health Hospital in Anchorage.

Countless numbers of people are flown from remote communities for treatment that could be accomplished closer to home.

Although abortion has been made routinely available for non-Native girls in Fairbanks, for example, a Native girl must be flown to Anchorage for the same operation. She is consequently removed from supportive family and friends and often suffers acute depression.

The Alaska Federation of Natives supports the standardization of eligibility requirements for all citizens and an overall look at administration policy so that the staff administering the programs act "NOT as gatekeepers and custodians of clients, but people who provide tangible assistance to improve the life and self-reliance of disadvantaged citizens."

choose to vote in favor of a 13th region.

Even if a majority of those living outside Alaska DO vote YES, only those persons will be enrolled in the 13th region, and other non-residents still have the option of enrolling back to Alaska and to one of the established 12 regions.

If a majority of Natives over the age of 18 residing outside of Alaska vote AGAINST a 13th region, there will be NO 13th region formed.

The vote is being taken on individual applications as people enroll from out of state. No one is going to know for certain whether a 13th region will be an entity until the roll is complete on December 18.

John Borbridge, president of one of the 12 Native regional corporations, SEALASKA, is concerned that the news release may confuse and mislead some persons residing outside of Alaska who have not yet registered and who do not fully understand the practical consequences of the choice they will have to make.

"The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Enrollment Office have maintained a position of

neutrality which in a sense has resulted in the fact that the public hasn't been sufficiently informed about the options."

"The national TV and radio ads simply state that wherever you are, enroll, and you will receive benefits. This isn't automatically true. If, for an example, you're a Tsimshian and you enroll back to Metlakatla, you may NOT receive any benefits."

(The Act now includes Tsimshian Indians not enrolled in the Metlakatla Indian Community)

"If however, you are Tsimshian and you list your residence as Seattle, the chances are that you will receive benefits. We need to outline the consequences: A. This is what is going to happen or B. This is what is going to happen."

"What happens if I live in San Francisco and enroll back to the place where I was born? Or what happens if I live in San Francisco and vote against the 13th region? Or what happens if I list San Francisco as my permanent home and vote FOR the 13th Region?"

There is nothing illegal about a group of non-resident Alaskans forming a corporation for their own purposes. Legally any three persons may form a corporation.

But there can be no legal 13th corporation formed under the terms of the Act until the final vote is certified on enrollment records

Sec. 7 (c) of the Act reads: "If a majority of all eligible Natives eighteen years of age or older who are not permanent residents of Alaska elect, pursuant to subsection 5(c) (pursuant to enrollment), to be enrolled in a thirteenth region for Natives who are non-residents of Alaska, the Secretary shall establish such a region for the benefits of Natives who elected to be enrolled therein, and they may establish a Regional Corporation pursuant to this Act."

The 13th Region can be created only by the desire of the people as they enroll and as officially recognized by the Secretary of the Interior. Until that time, number 13 remains in the uneasy shadow of doubt.

## Native Foods...

(Continued from page 1)

the kids want," said Frank Vonder Haar, Chief Sanitarian. "It's the end result of our efforts is to make it possible to serve Native foods in the schools, then this is a beginning. If nothing else, we're going to begin to gather some useful information."

The form will be designed by committee member, Laura Bergt, originally from Kotzebue and a former Native boarding student.

Athabaskan member Sally Hudson will gather samples of Native foods to be served at the coming Fairbanks Native Association potlatch, and Eskimo journalist, Emily Brown, offered to loan health officials her working notes on traditional ways of preparing Native foods.

After much lengthy discussions of food, the group finally dissolved its first meeting, just in time for lunch.

## Intercultural Guides...

(Continued from page 2)

All of our consultants will be paid their full fee as consultants, while ALASKAN INTERCULTURAL CONSULTANTS only acts the "go-between". The advantage of going through ALASKAN INTERCULTURAL CONSULTANTS is the fact that after years of experience in Alaska, its director can put you in contact with those particular individuals who can work on your specific needs.

The key to ALASKAN INTERCULTURAL CONSULTANTS ability is the background of its director. After more than ten years Alaskan residency, he has the following credentials:

- Formal Education — B.A. in Philosophy/Education  
Certified Teacher For Life in North Dakota  
Certified Secondary Teacher in Alaska  
Certified Counselor in Alaska  
Two Master's Degrees —  
History (Minnesota, 1958)  
Anthropology (Alaska, 1968)  
Ten full years of Graduate study in the Social Sciences  
Specialization in Far Eastern History, Culture-Personality, Modernization Processes, Social Problems, Culture Change.
- Alaskan Experience — Has resided at the following places in Alaska: Fairbanks, Minto, Nenana, St. Michael, Kaktovik  
Teacher, businessman, administrator  
Assistant Professor and Administrator for the University  
Assistant Administrator and Field Supervisor for VISTA Training Program.
- Contacts — Native leaders, businessmen, academicians, administrators, village leaders, and a multitude of agents working in socio-cultural change.

If you don't want to be tied into a large bureaucracy and long-term agreements, but want assistance on your problems HERE AND NOW and only pay for what is produced, then contact ALASKAN INTERCULTURAL CONSULTANTS. They don't have all the answers, but they can find people who know a lot of answers, and can provide imaginative alternatives for new situations.

Please write or call:

ALASKAN INTERCULTURAL CONSULTANTS  
Box 961, Auke Bay, Alaska 99821  
Tel. 789-9081

## Chief Harriet...

(Continued from page 1)

of the class, both academically and otherwise. The next year, she transformed to Anchorage West High School and lived with two sets of boarding home parents, one of which was Robert C. Erwin, Associate Justice to the Alaska Supreme Court.

In Anchorage, Hussy became involved with the work of the Alaska Federation of Natives and soon she began to feel the pull back to the village to help in the great work ahead.

She returned home and announced her intent to run for village council president, clearly stating her concern and her stand on all the issues that faced the village.

When elected she said, "I'm so happy! Now I'm involved!"

On the eve of her election, Hussy wrote a letter to Reva, her sister, another young woman who is "involved", working with the Alaska Native Health Board to upgrade health care for Alaska Native people.

Hussy wrote, "Every Chief wants advice. I want yours."

With a mutual respect for each other, the two sisters are understandably proud of their achievements, not for themselves but for the opportunity to improve the quality of life for the native people of Alaska.

Both before and after her election, Hussy has worked as a teacher's aide in the Shageluk Day School, but the people of her village no longer call her "Teach." Today she is "Chief."

## BLM Report Indicates...

(Continued from page 1)

In the early days of the United States, a massive survey program encouraged thorough training of surveyors, but as demands for surveys decreased, so did the number of schools offering survey studies. Only two universities in the U. S. presently offer a degree in surveying.

Jones said he is looking in state and outside for people to fill positions of temporary field assistants and professional surveyors. Inquiries on job opportunities in either field may be made to the personnel office of BLM, 555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, or by phone: 277-1561.

In-house training is also offered to BLM surveyors, to update them on new surveying techniques. Whatever their training, the job is immense. The State of Alaska alone is entitled to 104 million acres, to be selected within 25 years of statehood.

"We have about 20 million of that surveyed," said Jones.

"The Natives are entitled to 40 million acres and we don't have any of that surveyed on the ground. The Natives are also entitled to approximately 8,000 Native allotments which might be composed of four tracts per allotment, which

menas roughly 25,000 special surveys to put in."

When and where the surveys are done "depends a lot on when they are ready to go," Jones said. "If all the areas were ready to go at the same time, we still probably would distribute our survey program in all areas, because you couldn't show any one region favoritism over the other."

The Statehood Act provides for conditional sale or lease of lands that have been tentatively approved, in the interim period.

That means lands where the state filed application. The BLM reviewed it and determined there are no conflict of rights to the land then the tentative approval is given and the state may conditionally sell or lease the lands.

The state does not have fee title because it doesn't have patents in most cases, "but if tentative approval is proper, then the status of the land is pretty well cleared up," Jones said.

Meanwhile Jones acknowledges there are survey applications from one end of the state to the other and it will be a long time before some of these demands are met.