

Alaska Natives targeted for massive budget cuts

by Jim Benedetto
Tundra Times Editor

The Reagan administration's budget request for fiscal year 1987 has been submitted to the Congress, and according to an analysis by the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), funding reductions in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) program services will unfairly single out Alaska Natives of all Indian groups across the nation.

"The intent of the Reagan Administration to target Alaska Native programs for budget cuts is evidenced by a separate column in BIA budget documents which specifically identifies cuts for Alaska Natives," wrote Tom Richards, Jr., Executive Vice President of AVCP, in a memorandum to Village Council Presidents, AVCP Executive Board Members and others. "No other Indian groups in the United States are singled out in the Administration's budget. Of total cuts proposed for FY-1987 in Indian programs and BIA Housing, Alaska Natives would absorb about one-third of the BIA's national reductions," wrote Richards.

Compared to the current year (FY-1986), some of the budget reductions for Alaska Natives in FY-1987 would include: Adult Education would suffer a 100 percent reduction, along with Agricultural Extension, Road Maintenance, Water Resources, College Scholarships would be reduced by 40 percent; Tribal Operations would be slashed by 35 percent; Social Services would be cut by 40 percent; Vocational Education would be reduced by 61 percent, and the list goes on.

In all, 15 general and trust programs, two Alaska programs, two management activities (at the tribal/agency level) and the Housing Improvement program identify specific reductions aimed at Alaska Natives.

Compared to the nationwide funding requests in the Reagan FY-1987, Alaska Natives are targeted for reductions in seven programs in which the Administration has requested an increase nationally. These programs are: college student scholarships, tribal operations, social services, training and technical assistance, wildlife and parks, and executive direction (agency superintendant operations).

Budget reductions will also be experienced by Alaska Natives in other programs which are not specifically

targeted for Alaska, including national programs in which services to all tribes will be cut. Alaska reductions amount to about 33.26 percent of na-

AVCP plans to testify in opposition to the funding reductions for Alaska Natives during the Senate oversight hearings on the BIA budget on

Delegation (Sens. Ted Stevens, Frank Murkowski, Congressman Don Young) and to the Chairman, Select Committee on Indian Affairs, United

tional reductions in which Alaska is targeted. Additionally, other programs serving Alaska Natives will experience reductions at the same level as other American Indian groups nationally.

February 18 in Washington, D.C. Village Councils, individuals affected by the cuts, and interested parties may comment by sending letters and telegrams to the Alaska Congressional

States Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510 and to the Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515.



photo by Jess Widby

The Greatland Traditional Dancers of Anchorage performed a snow dance for the upcoming Fur Rondy. The following day temperatures rose to 40 degrees and rain fell on Anchorage's snowless sled dog race trail.