

North Slope training simultaneous translators

By BOB KOWELUK

Tundra Times Reporter

For many years now there have been people frustrated because of the language barrier between the Native and English languages.

That barrier after nearly 100 years of contact has become less of a problem with some people of both races learning each other's languages with varying degrees of interest and success.

There was a need for translators from one Native language to another and a need for people fluent in two or more native languages in the past when Native groups warred, traded or and lived in peace with each other.

Today a third language which has become accepted by all Native groups, the English language.

There are still elders who say they do not understand or

speak a word of English. There are more Natives who understand or speak the language well enough to survive. And yet, there are many more who could comprehend ideas, thoughts and processes if only these were presented to them in their Native language.

In Barrow next week and the following week, there will be a workshop for interested North Slope residents in simultaneous translations from Inupiaq to English and vice versa.

Aimo Nookiguak, an Inuktituk Eskimo from Canada will be presenting the workshop on simultaneous translations, sponsored by the Inupiat language Commission of the North Slope Borough.

"Community people involved in the schools or people who have been called upon to act as translators during public hearings will attend these meetings," Edna MacClean, of the University

of Alaska Native Language Center said. "There has been a need for translators and there have been one or two people trained but they are not enough translators to work full time during public meetings so they work until they are exhausted."

The Inupiaq language commission hopes to train at least 13 people living in the North Slope Borough to become proficient in simultaneous translations from Inupiaq to English and vice versa.

"This is mainly to fill the needs of the community," Mrs.

MacClean said. "It is a community project involving the North Slope Borough, the school district and other local organizations."

There have been translation projects established in Canada for several years. There is a permanent translation project being established in Quebec according to Mrs. MacClean. "We want to use their expertise, because the Canadians have been doing simultaneous translations for quite a number of years. They know what equipment is needed and how much time is

needed to coordinate while you're listening in one language and translating it to another language."

In Canada, Eskimo translations are done from Inuktituk to English and one dialect to another or vice versa. Translations from Inuktituk to French and vice versa are also done on occasion, Mrs. MacClean said.

Simultaneous translations are used in public hearings and meetings in Canada.

Inuktituk is also used in Canadian radio broadcasts.