

Mekoryuk: Translate Claims Act-

Folks Also Don't Want Restrictions on Off-Road Vehicles

By MARGIE BAUMAN

MEKORYUK, NUNIVAK IS. — In their Yupik Eskimo tongue, the people of Mekoryuk told it like it is — they oppose restriction of any kind that would prevent them from pursuing life as they know it.

Their resolution was presented February 28 at Mekoryuk to Gordon Watson, Director of the U.S. Bureau of Fish and Wildlife, and other government officials who came to ask their opinion on restrictive uses of off-road vehicles on restricted wildlife lands.

Nunivak Island won the dubious distinction of becoming a federal Wildlife Refuge when the federal government brought musk ox to the island to raise three years ago. Prior to that, the federal government also made another move that greatly affected the lives of the people on that island.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs built a school on the north side of the island because the weather was less hazardous to the building.

Although hunting and fishing is done on the south side of the island, the people settled at Mekoryuk, on the north side, to be near the school. In winter, hunters travel by snow machine to herd reindeer and gather other foods.

When asked by the government what they thought about restricting off-road vehicles on their island, the more than 200 residents of Mekoryuk were naturally vehement in their response.

The response in Yupik came naturally. "We didn't want to lose something in the translat-

ion," said a village spokesman.

"It's been more than a year since the Alaska Native Claims was passed. Still the people can't understand the act. We realized we had to get information second hand, since a lot of people on the island don't speak English and something is lost in the translation. The government

hasn't seen fit to translate the Act into the Yupik language," he said.

The residents of Mekoryuk, not wanting to lose anything in the translation either, said plainly in Yupik, that they wanted no restrictions on off-road vehicles on the two million acre island, their ancestral home.