

Paralegals get training

Participants in the paralegal program for communities on Alaska's North Slope recently completed a four-day training session at Barrow. This session was sponsored by the CETA Manpower Program of the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Barrow office of Alaska Legal Services Corporation.

Successful participants were paralegals, Homer Bodfish (Wainwright), Hazel Oktolik (Point Hope), Willie Tukrook (Point Lay) and Raymond Neakok Sr. (Barrow). The session was taught by Stephen Conn and Peter Ring, Professors at the University of Alaska Criminal Justice Center at Anchorage. They were assisted by attorney Greg O'Leary, an expert on Native allotment law, and attorneys, Michael I. Jeffery and Hohn M. Holmes of the Barrow office of Alaska Legal Services.

The session was introduced with a brief discussion on the current developments in the Beaufort Sea offshore drilling issue by Barrow attorney, Michael I. Jeffery. Then using techniques learned from teaching training sessions for magistrates and urban paralegals in Alaska, Stephen Conn and Peter Ring discussed interviewing techniques with the paralegals, and Barrow paralegal, Raymond Neakok, demonstrated a typical case interview in Inupiaq Eskimo

for them. Following interviews with North Slope Magistrate Charlotte Brower, and North Slope Corrections Counsellor Carol Morris, all the participants received a detailed discussion on ways to deliver the best possible judicial services to remote Arctic villages.

The use of part-time magistrates in each village or the organization of village conciliation boards was also discussed. In addition, the great need for having a set of the Alaska Statutes in each village was mentioned, since the statutes not only give the latest laws passed by the Alaska Legislature, but also summaries of court decisions interpreting these laws. On the North Slope, only Barrow residents have access to Alaska Statutes at this time.

Native allotment law, taught by Greg O'Leary of Anchorage, was a major topic of the training session. O'Leary recently left Alaska Legal Services in Anchorage, where he spent two years specializing in Native allotment cases. He discussed in detail the process used by the Bureau of Land Management in making decisions about Native allotments and the appeal rights that people have if they feel the decisions were incorrect. The new hearing requirements for allotment decisions that are now in effect after the

PENCE cases, decided last year in the Federal appeals court, were also discussed as the paralegals began preparing for the village hearings about allotment cases that may be underway later this year.

Professor Conn discussed the Indian Child Welfare Act during the session. This act became effective May 8, 1979, and gives major new approaches for Native American people interested in making sure that the children of the community remain inside their own culture. Professor Ring helped the paralegals go through existing Alaska adoption and custody laws to see the ways they will be changed by this new federal legislation, and the possibility that villages or regional groups in Alaska can now set up tribal courts or administrative boards to take jurisdiction over many child welfare cases.

Additional activities during the training session included a visit to the law library at the court house in Barrow in order for the paralegals to become familiar with how to use the statutes and regulations located there and also a visit to the Barrow Senior Citizens Center to talk to the village elders about the availability of legal services to them. The elders were especially interested in having wills written.