

# Rural Honors Institute graduates 37

By Pamela Herman

Thirty-seven high school students from rural Alaskan villages were honored on June 30 at the first graduation ceremony for the Rural Alaska Honors Institute, an intensive college-orientation program started this year at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

Proud and exhausted from five weeks of classes, field trips, campus orientation, and several hours of daily homework and library assignments, the graduates earned the praise of Commencement speaker Nelson Angapak, Vice-President of Calista, Inc., and UAF Chancellor Patrick J. O'Rourke.

The Honors Institute was born two years ago as a response to the need of rural communities for more professionally-trained college graduates schooled to deal with technical and managerial problems without sacrificing a local perspective on policy-making.

In a series of meetings between the University administration, staff of Alaska Native Programs at UAF, and repre-

sentatives of the Alaska Federation of Natives and Native legislators, a comprehensive program was conceived which recruits rural high school students in their junior year and will follow them through to college graduation.

Forty-three students arrived at the UAF campus May 30 to begin a concentrated introduction to college work. These students were recruited from the NANA, Doyon, Calista and Bering Straits regions for the programs first year. Next year, recruitment will be conducted statewide.

Students participated in a four-day orientation program which began with a welcoming ceremony featuring Bering Straits, NANA, and Doyon executives Charlie Johnson, John Schaeffer, and Morris Thompson, and UAF Native Programs Director Dennis Demmert, who headed the project.

Two days were devoted to goal-setting and values clarification sessions with Doyon shareholder Darlene Romer, a former participant in ANF's

Alaska Native Leadership Program.

They then plunged into a four-week academic program which focused on a course on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, taught by Bering Straits shareholder Paul Ongtooguk, who teaches at Kotzebue High School.

The curriculum included courses in College Learning Skills and Logic, Library Skills, and electives in professional areas such as Business Administration and Natural Resource Management, taught by University faculty. Courses in computer literacy were taught by Doyon shareholder Will Mayo of The Computer Center in Fairbanks.

Students also were tutored in math and writing skills and in team research projects related to village economic development, lead by visiting teachers from rural high schools.

The students lived in a college dorm staffed by UAF graduates and undergraduates and spent much of their out-of-class time grappling with heavy reading assignments and

research papers, studying for exams, and preparing for their team project oral presentations.

The work loads and stress levels experienced by students were intended to prepare them for the heavy demands of college. Group recreation, physical education, and field trips provided some relief from the concentration on academics—including such events as early morning running, dances, river floats and a feast of Native food brought by the students from home.

Thirteen of the students whose work in the program and previous high school records showed exceptional promise were selected by the faculty to graduate with honors. As Chancellor O'Rourke explained at graduation, these students are now eligible for early acceptance to UAF if they choose to apply — this means that they can enter their senior year in high school, knowing that they have already been accepted as UAF freshmen for the following year.

All students from the Hon-

ors Institute who choose to attend UAF will be eligible to continue in the Rural Honors program, minoring in Alaska Native Studies and working in summer internships with their regional or village corporations through their college years.

All of the participating students will also be able to participate in the senior-year follow-up program now being planned by Honors Institute staff to continue improving their preparation for college before they arrive.

The Rural Alaska Honors Institute was designed to help rural students whose retention in college in the past has been affected by inadequate preparation, difficulties in adjusting to the urban environment of college, and failure of the traditional college curriculum to reflect the educational and professional needs of the Native community.

The program staff hoped to build on real strengths that rural Native students have which offer some compensating advantages — a high level

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**FIRST GRADUATES OF RURAL ALASKA HONORS INSTITUTE**  
l. to r., front row: Karen John, Janice Gologergen, Sandra Karmun, Pearl Arey, Lena Williams, Guy Adams; second row: Jerry Giffin, Sandra Erlich (Valedictorian), Rebecca Damian, James Changsak, Cecelia Solomon, Janice Rookok, Olga John, Malinda Maher; third row: Merle Apassingok, Janice Westlake, Senka Paul, Mary Patrick,

Moses Harpak, Emily Brower, Louisa Jacobs, Pauline Sheppard, Patrick Lake, Keith Wells, Theresa Joseph, William Carlo; back row: Bruve Barr, Herman George, Maynard Morris, Patrick Housler (Valedictorian), Karen Takumjenak, Gloria Turner, Betty Sheldon, Willie Smith, Eddie Gavin.

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of intelligence and an eagerness to learn, willingness to work hard to make up deficiencies in their basic skills, and most of all a strong sense of sharing, mutual support, and devotion to the needs of their people which are a product of a village upbringing.

Graduating with honors on June 30 were: Pearl Arey of Noatak, Merle Apassingok of Gambell, Emily Brower of Barrow, William Carlo of Tanana, James Changsak of Russian Mission, Sandra Erlich (Co-Valedictorian) of Kotze-

bue, Eddie Gavin of Buckland, Janice Gologergen of Savoonga, Patrick Housler (Co-Valedictorian) of Russian Mission, Malinda Maher of Northway, Karen Takumjenak of Lower Kalskag, Gloria Turner of Holy Cross, and Janice Westlake of Kiana.

Other graduates were: Guy Adams of Kotzebue, Bruce Barr of Deering, Rebecca Damian of Alakanuk, Herman George of Stevens Village, Jerry Giffin of Elim, Moses Harpak of Mountain Village, Louise Jacobs of Nunapitchuk, Karen John of Newtok,

Olga John of Crooked Creek, Teresa Joseph of Pilot Station, Sandra Karmun of Deering, Patrick Lake of Hooper Bay, George Maxie of Napaskiak, Maynard Morris of Kotzebue, Mary Patrick of Tununak, Senka Paul of Kwethluk, Sherry Pilot of Galena, Janice Rook-

ok of Savoonga, Betty Sheldon of Noorvik, Pauline Sheppard of Mountain Village, Willie Smith of Kiana, Cecelia Solomon of Kaltag, Keith Wells of Noorvik, and Lena Williams of Akiak.

Also participating were Jesse Chikigak of Alakanuk, Edward

George of Akiachuk, Shirley Hensley of Kotzebue, Michael James of Alakanuk, and Anthony Redfox of Emmonak.

Visiting teachers from rural school districts were: Carlton Kuhns, Principal at Akiak, Bill Chalmers of Akiak, Deanna Cole of Stony River, and Greg Owens of St. Mary's Mission.