

Shageluk fights to establish pre-school

Whether the people of Shageluk get help or not, they are determined to have a pre-school this year. Unfortunately the going is proving to be rather rough. Joy Hamilton, the city clerk, called the Tundra Times last week to say how inspired she had been by the story of the struggles of the Tuluksak people to start up their own pre-school, even though their attempts to get state funding had proved futile.

"We felt good that some other villages are taking steps of self-determination," said

Hamilton. Like the people of Tuluksak, Hamilton said the villagers of Shageluk noticed that other villages nearby had received funding for pre-school and Head Start programs, but they had not.

The villagers began their quest to have a pre-school or Head Start program established in their community in the early 1970's. The community grade school was run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, did not have a kindergarten, and could not start a pre-school.

The local state school was

for high school age students only. Federal regulations called for a minimum of 12 students before it could help out, and Shageluk had only seven, Hamilton said. Doing a little "juggling," they came up with 10, but still could not get help.

Still, the community applied for funds from the state to build a pre-school and they got them. Consequently, said Hamilton, they constructed a nice log building.

Encouraged by this, they again contacted the Head Start people, told them they now

had a building, so could they help out? "They got angry with us," Hamilton related. "They said, 'who are you to go and get a building and call it Head Start?'"

The villagers then decided they would somehow fund it themselves. They got an unexpected and lucky break, Hamilton said, when the school district accidentally sent in some \$600 worth of pre-school materials. Additionally, the village sent for toys and other learning supplies.

Fall is coming and Shage-

luk is ready to give its pre-schoolers some education, but one problem still remains: no teacher. Hamilton noted that the village has advertised in many places, but no one seems to want to come out into the Iditarod area and teach.

They are offering \$10 an hour and free rent. Some of the young women of the community are already lined up as aides. "I would think it would be a perfect job," said Hamilton. "A really exciting job."