

Native Housing Emphasized at Bethel Meeting

Resources of several state and federal agencies are committed to providing better housing and associated benefits for Native villages, the Association of Village Presidents of the Bethel area was told at its recent annual meeting in Bethel.

The meeting was attended by the presidents of about 30 village councils. The group elected Axel Johnson of Emmonak to succeed Peter Carter of Eek as president. Forty village councils are represented in the association.

Tolbert E. Elliott, executive director of the Alaska State Housing Authority told the Native leaders existing programs and proposed legislation were aimed at improving village conditions. He cited Senator E. L. Bartlett's proposed housing and community facilities bill as a specific, key effort toward this goal. The bill calls for \$10 million to finance adequate housing which Alaska Natives could afford.

The director explained plans to coordinate various programs to tie in with the proposed housing effort. It is contemplated that through Governor Egan's Office the Economic Opportunity Program would be brought into play in the actual work of building homes and facilities, Elliott said.

The Work Experience Program for adult villagers and the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Youth Experience Programs could all be used in the overall effort, he pointed out. Jobs and training would both be provided at the time the needed facilities are being built.

This concerted approach to provid-

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ing major housing program called for in Senator Bartlett's bill, is the outgrowth of the housing experiment at Grayling.

The Grayling experiment, now nearing completion, entailed the relocation and rebuilding of the old village of Holiakachuk. The building of the new village was guided by the Alaska State Housing Authority.

Funded by a demonstration grant from the Housing and Home Finance Agency, it sought to find the best way to build better housing and villages.

Elliott said ASHA is working toward village housing solutions with Senator Bartlett, Sen. Ernest Gruening, Gov. William A. Egan, and U.S. Rep. Ralph J. Rivers. Officials of several agencies testified at Senate hearings on the proposed housing bill, agreeing that the vast improvement is needed for the health and welfare of Alaska villages. Those testifying in addition to Elliott were representatives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Public Housing Administration.

The Alaska Congressional delegation believes both houses of Congress will act upon the proposed Alaska housing bill before March. If the bill passes, building under the program could probably begin before next fall.

State and federal officials attending the Bethel meeting in addition to Elliott were Robert Bennett, Alaska area director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); Roy Peratrovich, tribal affairs officer, BIA; John Gordon, Bethel area representative of the BIA; John C. Cates, director of rural development the

State of Alaska, Willard Bowman, executive director of the Alaska Human Rights Commission; John T. Shively, a Vista Volunteer under the Office of Economic Opportunity; and Virgil Severns, district agriculture agent for the remote areas for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Alaska Cooperating Extension Service.