

# JOE UPICKSOUN TO HEAD ASRC

## First Formal Slope Organization Launches Operation

By MARGIE BAUMAN

BARROW — Joseph Upicksoun, the outspoken Inupiat Eskimo leader from the North Slope, was elected Saturday as the first president of the Arctic Slope Regional Corp.

The election of one of the chief architects of the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act came in the aftermath of an all-night first annual meeting of the regional Native corporation representing eight Eskimo villages north of the Arctic Circle.

Eddie Hopson Sr., was elected first vice president; with regional land chief Jacob Adams as second vice president and North Slope Borough Mayor Eben Hopson, third vice president. Nelson Ahvakanna was elected corporate secretary and Oliver Leavitt, treasurer.

Upicksoun, weary after the 12-hour meeting in the multipurpose room of the local schoolhouse, said he was pleased with the outcome.

"We are independent, autonomous and are practicing self-determination for our own Inupiat people within the boundaries of the Arctic Slope Region," Upicksoun wrote in his message as interim president of the corporation in the ASRC's first stockholders' report. "With your participation we will succeed in all our endeavors."

Participation the ASRC got plenty of, as some 500 of the Slope's 3,913 stockholders packed into the schoolhouse for the start of the meeting Friday night. With the sun low in the sky over Barrow and the temperature at about 15 below zero, stockholders representing all eight villages took their seats in preparation for the long night ahead.

Before the business at hand commenced, however, they paused to give a standing ovation to one of Arctic Slope's most prominent stockholders — Tundra Times editor Howard Rock, who flew in from Fairbanks for the meeting.

At the request of a number of those present, the meeting was conducted almost entirely in Inupiat, from start to finish — much to the chagrin of a stockholder from Anchorage who complained that she was being discriminated against because she spoke only English. "How would they feel if the shoe were on the other foot," she argued.

The majority of stockholders, however, were quite pleased with that move — as evidenced by the number of older stockholders who gave the meeting their rapt attention through the

night.

A major point of contention at the meeting was the procedure used by the corporation in the solicitation of proxy votes. The election was challenged by several persons, but by the time results were counted and the new 15-member board chosen, both sides appeared satisfied.

Elected at-large to the regional corporation board were Eddie Hopson Sr., Jacob Adams and Nelson Ahvakana. Representatives for the Barrow area were Upicksoun, Leavitt, Arnold Brower, Eben Hopson, and Thomas Brower Sr. Other representatives from the villages were Dempsey Bodfish, Wainwright; John Oktollik Sr., Point Hope; Danny Hugo, Anaktuvuk Pass; Herman Rexford, Kaktovik; David Brower Sr., Nuiqsut; Willie Tukrook, Point Lay; and Joseph K. Akpik, Atkasook.

Except for Barrow and the at-large seats, the candidates for the board were unopposed.

After several lengthy reports on land selection and subsidiaries of the regional corporation, the polls opened at 3:15 a.m. Saturday.

When the results were in it

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NO EMPTY SEATS — Looking for front row seats, but finding most of the chairs full, some stockholders opted for the floor. At far right,

Wainwright artisan Weir Negovanna, well-known for his whalebone carvings, tapes the meeting on a cassette tape recorder.

# Upicksoun Heads . . .

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was apparent that the stockholders wanted to see some changes, but also that most recognized the accomplishments of the interim board.

In addition to the regional corporation, the last year has produced the birth of Inupiat Builders Inc., a special company organized for the specific purpose of home and commercial construction in the Arctic.

To date the corporation has constructed eight private homes in Kaktovik, eight homes at Anaktuvuk Pass and has another 30 homes under construction at the village of Nuiqsut, with additional plans completed to construct a larger school facility and commercial buildings. Ten new homes are also scheduled for Pt. Lay, with four commercial structures and a school

plant.

In addition, Tundra Tours Inc. has been incorporated as a subsidiary of the regional corporation, with the initial intent of building and operating a hotel and restaurant complex in Barrow.

The new hotel-restaurant will be a joint venture of Tundra Tours Inc. and the Ukpeagvik Inupiat Village Corp., with the eventual total cost of the project set at \$1,450,000.

Of all the regional Native corporations, the Arctic Slope has faced some of the roughest in-house bouts. The general venting of feelings and exchange of ideas at this first annual meeting however, appeared to serve as a healing factor and give a greater sense of unity to the Slope peoples. \*