

Native control is key in Kodiak

by Mike Rostad

Leaders representing Kodiak Island villages and Native corporations were advised, at the second annual tribal government workshop, to decide what concessions they're willing to make in hastening local economic growth.

Internationally known attorney, Russel Barsh, the keynote speaker at the workshop, stressed that local governments need to establish themselves so they can determine the direction their communities will take.

He urged communities to determine their own social, economic and political institutions as well as their relationship with other governments. "Self determination" was the theme that resounded during the two day workshop which took place in the village of Old Harbor and was sponsored by the Kodiak Area Native Association.

When communities agree to a partnership with outside developers, said Barsh, there's a trade-off; you have to pay somewhere along the way.

Giving a lesson in economics, Barsh pointed out that "If communities have so few resources that they can't produce



Old Harbor tribal manager Frank Peterson addresses group as Frank Carson, left, and Russel Barsh listen.

surpluses... then no amount of external investment is going to solve anything. You must have potential surplus to build investments," he said.

In many cases, continued Barsh, "Whatever you do to make a community more attractive to capitalists, it becomes less

attractive to you."

Aesthetic beauty, high health and safety standards, and other qualities which constitute human happiness - real income - that can't be measured in dollars - are sacrificed, to some degree, for economic growth, said Barsh.

Photo by Mike Rostad
A South Dakota community bargained with health standards in order to attract an industry which threatened radioactive damage, Barsh noted. "The people in that town glow in the dark, because there's so much radioactivity," joked Barsh. "The ticking of a

gieger counter is the sound of jobs."

Barsh encouraged Native communities to "get the most investment for the least accommodation. You make the trade-off decisions instead of other governments deciding" for you, he said.

He cautioned tribal leaders to beware of "fly by night" developers who propose to set up a business with a "half formed idea." These developers often get the communities to do the feasibility studies which they should do themselves, Barsh said.

Communities should check out the references of potential partner developers to determine their financial stability (or instability) and reputation, advised Barsh.

"When you feel you're dealing with a reasonable company, decide what the project will do to the community," said Barsh. "How will it affect the population, economy" social services, and other factors?

"Make sure they're (the developers) under your political control" and that they "know what rules and regulations they must abide by," said Barsh.

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Native teachers would help children

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He encouraged Native leaders to look to others sources, besides government/agencies, in getting funds to help stimulate the local economy.

Barsh recommended people to keep their hands out of tribal coffers when developing social service programs such as child welfare.

He suggested that, for now, volunteerism be relied on as much as possible and that surpluses be used to develop the economy.

Criticizing the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act for not setting apart marine zones for Natives, Barsh urged leaders to "close up waters" surrounding the villages.

With outside competition for local marine resources intensifying, said Barsh, it's important that villages prepare maps and management plans to present to Congress.

"Show you can do a good job for managing the resource." He noted that former President Jimmy Carter signed a bill which "says in no event may a people

be deprived of its subsistence."

Representatives from KANA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs also spoke at the meeting.

Elaine Loomis-Evans, KANA social worker, discussed the Indian Child Welfare Act and how it applies to the tribal government. She pointed out the Act gives tribal councils the right to make decisions about the removal of Native children from their homes and their placement in foster care.

Loomis-Evans said her department is trying to recruit foster parents in the villages. She noted that the intent of the ICWA is to place Native children in a home that is as culturally and ethnically close to their own homes as possible.

Placing Native children in non-Native environments has threatened the transmission of the Native culture, said Loomis-Evans. Barsh called this situation "ethnocide," the killing of a culture.

Another example of severe threats to the Native cultures was given by KANA education direc-

tor, Diedre Bailey. She said that the lack of self esteem is "one dilemma that has plagued Native people."

The "key to self esteem is valuing traditions," Bailey continued. An appreciation of their culture should be a vital part of Native students' education; it's not an accessory-something to be added, but it should be the foundation of their education, stressed Bailey.

"Native children should be taught by Native teachers," she added. "Native children need to learn communication and technology without sacrificing their own culture."

Bailey encouraged Natives to get involved in the education of their children. "You have some excellent teachers in the villages. Support those who have your interests at heart."

"In my opinion," she concluded, "your elders are your richest resources."

The changing relationship between tribal governments and the BIA was another key issue at the workshop. The BIA is looked upon as a support service, these

days, rather than a regulatory agency, which determines the kind of government a village will come under.

Dave Henrickson of the BIA, told the group, "I can give technical assistance. But you have to run that government. You have to put those boots on and start walking. Motivation has to come from within," he said.

Gordon L. Pullar, KANA president, said, "Each village needs to decide for itself what it wants to be."

Barsh reported that although President Ronald Reagan's Commission on Indian Reservation Economics has recommended that the BIA change from "regulatory" to "assistance," it fails to "call for the repeal of federal legislation which requires the 'feds' to govern" tribal communities.

In essence, the Commissioner is saying, "let's not be paternalistic, but let's not repeal laws which require us to be paternalistic," said Barsh.

He likes the idea of the Com-

mission's recommendation that federal block grants to tribal communities be general enough so that the individual villages could decide for themselves what projects the money will be spent on.

The workshop was also attended by Nancy Yaw Davis, an anthropologist from Anchorage, who has been studying the changes occurring in Kodiak Island and Alaska peninsula villages during the past 20 years.

In the 1980's, said Davis, the villages "are becoming more organized as tribal governments are changing their relationship with other government agencies," including KANA.

At the beginning of the workshop, which took place January 2 and 3, Old Harbor mayor Sven Haakanson, Sr., and city council member, George Inga, Sr., welcomed the delegates. Visitors were served elaborate meals which consisted of dishes prepared by villagers and served by Alfred and Marie Hansen, who also prepared some of the food.