

RurAL CAP supports Berger recommendations

The Board of Directors of the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAL CAP) confirmed their support for recommendations contained in the report written by Thomas Berger, *Village Journey*, in action taken at their regular quarterly meeting in Anchorage yesterday. The endorsement of the full Board came on the heels of a statement of support issued by Executive Committee members when the report was first released last month.

Village Journey documents the two-year series of visits by Justice Berger to over 60 communities throughout Alaska, to listen to what village people think about Native land and government issues. He found that they fear the loss of their land and subsistence way of life. The RurAL CAP Board gave particular emphasis to their support for Berger's recommendations on the issue of subsistence.

Board President, Gordon Jackson, stated, "The bitter debate this summer shows that we can no longer rely solely on Alaska state laws and ANILCA to protect our traditional way of life. We need to let people in urban areas of the state know more about the role that subsistence plays in the lives of village people." Jackson continued, "Once

that's more clearly understood, support for the recommendations in the Berger report will become widespread."

As part of an educational effort, the Board also voted to provide support for a series of radio programs, to be based on roundtable discussions on subsistence which were held by Justice Berger in the process of compiling his report. "This will give the general public an opportunity to hear first-hand how Native people feel about the place of subsistence in their cultural heritage, and in their lives today," Jackson said.

In another action, the Board took a stand opposing food stamp legislation which was recently passed by the U.S. Senate. The bill, which is scheduled to go before the House next week, requires that any money received under the Federal government's Low-Income Housing Energy Assistance Program be counted as income in determining eligibility for food stamps. Jackson stated, "This means that because it's cold in Alaska, and a greater portion of our family budget goes toward paying heating costs, some people will no longer qualify for the food stamp program. I'm confident that Congressman Young will realize that Alaskans will be unfairly penalized by a bill of this type."