

# Programs aim to change Native hiring disparity

By Linda Lord-Jenkins

Tundra Times

Alaska Natives comprise more than 17 percent of the Alaska population, 11 percent of the private work force but fill only 4.3 percent of the jobs available in the state executive branch according to state statistics.

Such bleak numbers last month prompted the Alaska Native Brotherhood to level a severe blast of criticism at Gov. Bill Sheffield who in turn issued the decree that state equal opportunity hiring would improve for Alaska Natives as well as other minorities and women.

According to Barry Best, the state Equal Employment Opportunity officer, Alaska Native men fill only 3.5 percent of permanent jobs, 13.1 percent of permanent part-time jobs, and 4.6 percent of seasonal jobs.

Alaska Native women fill 5.1 percent of permanent full-time jobs, 10 percent of permanent part-time jobs and 4.6 percent of seasonal jobs.

According to Frank Ray who is head of the Department of Administration's Personnel office, the goal has been set to bring state employment of Natives and minorities in line with the private sector hiring practices.

Best says that private sector employment shows that Alaska Natives fill 11 percent of private jobs.

The main thrust of the administration's hiring goal is increasing the number of Alaska Natives listed on the state hiring Register.

In order to get a state job, people must be listed on one of the more than 1,300 state registers for such jobs. Applicants for jobs are listed on an applicant list which ranks them in order of desirability.

Under one former procedure, a supervisor would consider applicants from the top five applicants on the list to be hired. Now, says Ray, if a job classification opens up, the state determines how many Alaska Natives are employed in comparable jobs in private industry and then, if that ratio doesn't exist in the state job, a minority, woman or Alaska Native will be hired.

The procedure calls for supervisors to "go down" the register to find minority applicants to fill that job if there aren't any in the top five.

According to Ray, Alaska Natives don't have a preference over other minorities such as blacks or women in the hiring pool. He contends, however, that the biggest problem in hiring Natives is they don't apply on the state register.

That situation is the crux of one EEO complaint filed by

(Continued on Page Ten)

# 'Not enough Natives on state register'

(Continued from Page One)

an Anchorage man, Paul Blank, who has been working in the Health and Social Services office as a temporary worker. Blank said he sought a permanent full-time job but was discouraged from applying. When he did apply, the job was given to a black woman. Blank, an Aleut, was concerned that the register is not open to Natives and Natives are being turned aside in favor of women and other minorities.

His case is being considered by the state Equal Rights Commission.

Answering criticism that many registers are not open all the time, Ray said that the register for clerical jobs is always open. He said that other registers for non-clerical jobs are opened as needed.

The Sheffield recruiting push doesn't mean that the state register will be automatically opened when a job opening occurs if the register has enough minorities on it, said Ray.

"The first point to stress is we cannot hire people unless they are on the list."

Despite the push, Best said that the overall state goal of hiring 11 percent Alaska Natives is the one which will be aimed at in the villages where criticism is levelled that outside non-Natives are brought in to work in state jobs serving mostly Natives.

To do otherwise, he said, would mean that in urban areas where Natives are outnumbered by whites, fewer Natives could be hired.

Local supervisors have dis-

cretion to hire exclusively Native people and a job often can be written in the villages to include Native language preference.

A two- to three-month goal time is being included in this thrust, said Ray, and state departments will be required to re-

port to the EEO office on the gender and ethnic background of all applicants, finalists for jobs and hirees.