

Nome Elders conference theme is Survival

By Mary Alexander

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The Sixth Annual Bering Straits Elders Conference will be held from Monday, Feb. 20 through Friday Feb. 24 in Nome. The theme of the 1984 conference is "Inuit: Survival As a People."

The Elders Conference is being coordinated by the twelve members of the Kawerak Elders Advisory Board with assistance from Kawerak's Eskimo Heritage Program. The Board Members are Myrtle Booshu, Pete Curran, Frank Ellanna, Minnie Fagerstrom, Clarence Irrigoo, Job Kokochuruk, Alfred Mazonna, Aloysius Pikonganna, Margaret Seeganna, Willie Senungetuk and Lucille and Nick Wongittilin.

Hans-Pavia Rosing, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference has accepted an invitation to address the Elders Conference.

Among the issues to be discussed during the daily sessions at the Mini Convention Center are 1991, oil development, individual control of money and lifestyle and most importantly, the improved local control of village IRA Councils, city councils and village corporations through the careful selection of village leadership.

Conference organizers feel that the main objective of this conference will be to form Elders Councils in all of the Bering Straits villages. By forming Elders Councils the Elders will be able to give direct input into the decision making and policies of their village and consequently the region and state.

The heads of the City and IRA Councils and Village Corporations are being invited to attend and participate at the Elders Conference. The village leaders will give a history of

their respective organizations, update on current issues, discuss future plans and explain how the village Elders' knowledge can be utilized in the process...

In addition, the village City Councils, IRA's and corporations are asked to work together with their Elders to select Elders to attend the February conference. Some guidelines for selection are:

- Select Elders who are willing to share their knowledge, past history and culture; who are ready to talk, share and preserve information for future generations.

- Select Elders who are most interested in forming an Elders Council in their villages. Elders who will spread the information they learn to others. Elders who will organize their local Elders Committees and take part in the decision and policy making within their own village.

- Select Elders who don't drink. (If they do drink, or don't attend the meetings, we will

again expect them to pay their own way back.)

As in the past, various dancers from throughout the region will perform nightly at the Nome Armory. The entertainers are asked to attend all of the daily sessions and help with the work during the conference.

For those who are unable to attend the Elders Conference in person, the Rural Alaska Television Network will air a 30-minute program every evening, statewide. The program will feature highlights of the daily events at the conference recorded on video tape by the Eskimo Heritage Program.

Kawerak has received a \$25,000 grant from SOHIO to cover the costs of the transportation and food. Additional funding from the Alaska State Council on the Arts will pay for the dancer's transportation. How-

ever, additional monies and donations are still needed. The village organizations are being asked for financial support. In addition, the herders are being asked for gifts of meat.

On Feb. 24 a potlatch will be held to conclude the Conference. People are asked to bring Eskimo food, especially reindeer and muktuk.

We realize we are asking for a lot of help in many ways from all the villages. However, the same spirit that enabled the Inuit to survive as a people will also make the Sixth Annual Bering Straits Elders Conference a success. That spirit is the Eskimo way of sharing and caring.

Please contact Mary Alexander, Karen Nguyen, or Walter Analook at 443-5231 by Feb. 10, we need to know about donations of money for Elders' fares, or food. QUYAANNA!!!