

Chenega hopes to rebuild this summer

From Our Anchorage Bureau

"We are moving back to Chenega Bay."

With these words, Pat Kay summed up the feelings of the former residents of the earthquake-devastated village of Chenega. Kay is a paralegal with the North Pacific Rim Native Corporation which has assisted the Chenegans through months of frustrating organizational problems.

The task of organizing more than sixty people living in

Anchorage, Cordova and Taitilek into a political and economic unit that would be recognized by doubtful bureaucrats has been difficult. However, at a two day meeting in Cordova last week, the group solemnly unanimously, reaffirmed their desire to rebuild a village on the shores of Crab Bay.

Besides taking the ritual vote, the group took several pragmatic steps toward re-establishing a new community. One of those steps was a decision to ask the

state to change the name of Crab Bay to Chenega Bay.

Nick Kompkoff, Sr., president of the Chenega Corp., told the Tundra Times in December that his people hoped to begin building this summer.

According to Kay, that still may be possible. At last week's meeting, the people prepared papers which puts them on a waiting list for housing assistance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. If the group obtains advance funding upon approval of those applications, foundations could indeed be laid this summer.

Cliff Black, executive director of North Pacific Rim, said of the Cordova gathering, "I would say its the best meeting we've had down there. The desire to move back was obvious."

In other action taken by the Chenegans:

-Funds obtained under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act will pay for one quarter of Kay's time to be devoted solely to Chenega problems;

-The group requested that the Governor's Office of Energy and Power sponsor a study of the feasibility of using hydro-electric power in the new village.

-The Chenegans were informed that they were a "number one priority" to receive interim conveyance under the land claims act. This is crucial, because state and federal agencies have withheld valuable assistance from the village because it did not yet exist in a physical sense. The Chenega Corporation filed a selection application for land surrounding the Crab Bay site.

-Bids are being taken for a soil survey of the new village site an important step before breaking ground.

Kay emphasized the importance of the meeting, stating it was the first time many of the group felt that they were "really participating" in planning the

village.

Another meeting will be held later this month in Cordova to prepare a layout of the new village.