

# Peter Merryman — 'Model' Construction Sub-Contractor

Peter Merryman may well be the first of a new breed of small business construction contractors.

The Human Resources Development Department of Cook Inlet Native Association (CINA) have used Merryman as a model for a program they hope to launch under the Private Sector Initiative Program of CETA Title 7.

"Basically we saw the potential in developing a construction effort in the Cook Inlet region through a program where we take Alaskan Natives and train them to become small construction contractors," said Mike Syzmanski, Human Resources Department Manager at CINA.

How Merryman fit in was he had all the basic construction skills plus a proven track record but lacked some business management techniques.

Enter Dave Kincaid, an Anchorage construction management consultant, who was working on the Cook Inlet Housing Authority's Seldovia elderly housing project.

He recommended Merryman, who had worked with him on a number of other construction projects, as being a likely candidate for such an intern program.

From that point, Cheryl Argetsinger, Director of CINA's Adult Career Training Program became involved. She observed and documented the working mentor/apprentice relationship between Kincaid and Merryman.

What she envisions for the proposed program is on-the-job training with a brief in-class session for the more academic information on how to do job estimates, time management, acquiring tools, or dealing with federal or local agencies.

Merryman has been very encouraged with the program — which has gotten him work — and has his sub-contractors license and is working on his contractors license as a result of being pointed in this direction,

he said.

The 40-year-old Merryman of Tyonek has been in the construction trade on and off for the past eight years. A "jack of all trades," as he bills himself, he did all the finish carpentry on the Housing Authority's 18-unit housing project in Seldovia as well as construction on the modular housing units which were barged over to the Housing

Authority's Tyonek project.

Kincaid, who hired Merryman and who also acted as a field supervisor to Merryman on the Seldovia project, is very much involved in this construction management concept, an idea he made into a business for the past 13 years.

The concept is "designed around working with small sub-contractors," Kincaid says. This

concept was tested for the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department on the Seldovia project, Kincaid said.

Basically, a construction management consultant firm oversees the project and design supervision as well as cost accounting, yet is not affiliated with any one contractor or architect.

This is how Merryman became involved as a small subcontractor and what gave CINA the idea to incorporate it into a program.

"It's developing the human resources of Alaska — people with the skills are there — we just need to find them and put them in the program," Syzmanski says.

He feels that if this "intern"

or apprentice type program could be used on a major project — such as the gas pipeline — that when the "project is done, the worker would leave with more than a jelly roll — he's have a new skill for the future."

Ms. Argetsinger, after monitoring the success of Merryman's situation says, "I think it's a good program — it's something we could do very easily," since the bulk of the program is on-the-job while the classroom aspect would only require a few months effort.

For Merryman, he's launched in a new direction and for CINA, the potential for a new program that could train a number of Natives to be contractors.