

Printing, GOV (GOV sponsored)

From: McBride, Rhonda (GOV)
Sent: Wednesday, January 09, 2008 6:14 AM
To: Perry, Kristina Y (GOV)
Subject: Bethel Trip Prep

**BETHEL TRIP
JANUARY 10, 2008
SCHEDULE**

***Traveling with Governor Palin:
Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan
Labor Commissioner Click Bishop
Todd Palin***

8:30am. Depart Anchorage, Signature Hangar.
(Signature East: 243-4328)

9:45am-10:00am. Arrive Bethel. Civil Air Patrol Hangar.

10:10am Visit Alaska State Troopers Headquarters
(543-2294)

10:30am-11:30am KYUK Call-in Radio show
(Contact: Angela Denning Barnes, News Director. 543-0225.)

**11:45am -12:15pm Visit Bethel Regional High School Students
during lunch**
(Contact: Jan Vanasse, Principal. 543-3957.)

12:30pm -12:50 Visit Bethel Police Station.
(Contact: Andre Achee, Acting Police Chief. 543-3781)

**1:00pm-2:00pm Luncheon co-hosted by the Yukon Kuskokwim
Health Corporation and the Association of Village Council
Presidents. YKHC Administrative Headquarters.**
(Contact: Gene Peltola, YKHC CEO. 543-6000)

2:15pm Depart Bethel in King Air.

ROSTON 01299

6/17/2009

Bethel

When the Moravian missionaries were looking for a place on the Kuskokwim, they settled on a spot that the Natives called "Place of Many Fish Caches."

Despite a shaman's warning, they settled on the side of the river that has since been subject to erosion.

Some in Bethel jokingly point to this as the beginning of the town's rather difficult history.

Outsiders often wonder why Bethel seems to have so many troubles.

Part of the problem is that the town has a small core of permanent residents. Most of the Yup'ik population doesn't regard Bethel as home. Their loyalties often lie with other villages in the region, where they or their parents are from.

Many of the non-Natives are transient -- state or federal workers who generally stayed about two years. As Bethel grew and more conveniences came, the outsiders began to stay in Bethel longer -- between five and ten years. In the 1990's, there were signs that this longevity helped the community work through its growing pains.

But then came 9-11 and the high energy costs -- perhaps the biggest drag on the economy in Bethel. For several years now, gas has been well over four dollars a gallon. On average, people pay about \$400 a month to heat their homes -- and more than \$200 each month for water and sewer. Electricity is twice what families pay in Anchorage. High energy has also driven up the costs of groceries and other goods.

It's always been expensive to live in the Bush. But the sustained high cost of fuel has caused the community to reach a breaking point.

A number of longtime families have left Bethel. During the best of times, workforce expertise is hard to come by. And now, with the high cost of fuel, the town is losing ground at a faster rate.

Most jobs in Bethel, to be done well, take a lot of knowledge about the unique environment and culture -- so it hurts to lose experienced workers. Also, the higher cost of living in the Bush makes it difficult to attract quality workers. The

ROSTON 01300

6/17/2009

cost of living has definitely made it hard for the town to recruit and keep police officers.

Alcohol is another drag on the economy. The more the economy struggles, the bigger the alcohol problem gets.

Villagers in the region have a love-hate relationship with Bethel. While the city provides vital services like medical care and is a base for regional government, it also the place where many come to drink – since most villages in the region are dry. Bethel winds up carrying the burdens of alcoholism for the entire region.

One important message for the Governor to deliver : the importance of unity in hard times -- that these challenges are an opportunity for people to work together -- to find ways to be more supportive of the Bethel Police Department -- and to rededicate themselves to battling the evils of alcohol and drugs.

A few years ago, the city council recently shot down plans for an alcohol distribution center, to better control the flow of alcohol -- despite support from the State Troopers and health organizations. (FYI. Bethel is a damp community. It's legal to possess it, but it must be imported from outside Bethel. It's not legal to buy or sell it.)

Bethel plays an important role in our state. Many state and municipal workers across Alaska cut their teeth in Bethel. The harsh environment and cultural challenges demand creativity.

ROSTON 01301

6/17/2009

KYUK RADIO CALL IN SHOW

KYUK. The "Yuk" in the call letters means "person" – so KYUK is literally the "people's" station.

YOUR HOST. John Active is well known in the region as a writer and story teller. His pieces about berry picking and subsistence have been aired on National Public Radio. When John was a young man, Chief Eddie Hoffman, known in those days as "The Chief of Everything," pulled him into his pick-up truck and drove him to a brand new radio station, set up in a remodeled house and told him, "You're gonna do the news for the Eskimos." John set about announcing the news in Yup'ik, translating stories written in English on the fly. It's truly a skill to do what John does. Less than fifty people in the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta have this ability, if that.

FORMAT. John Active will interview you and translate what you say to KYUK's Yup'ik listeners. He will also take phone calls, and translate the questions into English and Yup'ik. To help John out, pause frequently to allow him time to translate. Say a sentence. Then stop. All too often, guests talk at length and it gets very hard for the translator to keep up. If there's frequent alternation between Yup'ik and English, it's surprising how well the show flows – and the bilingual format is actually enjoyable. For the guest, this is usually a great experience, because the translation gives you time to think.

SLAVIC (slaw-vick). The Russian Orthodox Christmas holiday began on Monday, January 7th. It's seven days of festivities marked by feasting and singing. Each day, a few homes in a community host the festivities. Carolers appear with a spinning star, just as the three wise men followed the star of Bethlehem. Just as the stable where Jesus was born was humble, so is the celebration. The carolers are fed and given small gifts like towels and pocket knives. You might start off by wishing KYUK's Russian Orthodox listeners a happy holiday. And ask John Active about some of his favorite Slavic traditions.

WALT MONEGAN. You might have fun talking about Walt Monegan's experiences as a KYUK volunteer. During the daytime, he worked for the city of Bethel, delivering water by truck. But at night, he was spinning discs on the radio. (Now I understand why Walt is such a great communicator. And to think, he owes it all to KYUK.)

OF NOTE. On Thursdays, elder Peter Jacob hosts a popular talk show on KYUK, all in Yup'ik. Jacob and his callers talk about everything from river safety to problems with young people. Last year, Jacob was recognized by AFN as "Elder of the Year" for his work on the radio. Sadly, his son died over the holidays. He was found frozen to death on the Brown Slough on the outskirts of Bethel. Foul play doesn't appear to be a factor, so this death is likely alcohol related.

KYUK TALKSHOW ISSUES

ALCOHOL. This is the elephant in the room. Rural Alaska's silent epidemic that screams for action. The more partners the better.

ROSTON 01302

6/17/2009

- Bethel Police Department Crisis.
- Walt Monegan can talk about law enforcement efforts to stem the flow of illegal alcohol into the region.
- Dept. of Corrections met with about 50 people in Monday to deal with Bethel's inebriate problem. Commissioner Joe Schmidt is working to incorporate a sleep-off center in the prison expansion project. An exciting example of teamwork. Different agencies are collaborating on staffing the center.
- Funding in the budget to combat drinking among young people

ENERGY. You might encourage callers to tell you how the high cost of fuel is affecting them. Fuel is brought to Bethel via barge – and then shipped upriver in smaller barges. The further the deliveries, the higher the costs. Some communities on the Kuskokwim and the Yukon are paying between \$5.00 and \$6.00 a gallon. In recent winters, a few villages have run out of fuel and have had to fly it in – driving the costs even higher.

AN OPPORTUNITY. While the high costs of fuel bring great hardship, they can also be a rallying point – to bring out the best in everyone. In Southeast Alaska, Native communities have formed a coalition working on energy issues. Their dream: to develop hydro and tidal energy. They'd also like to see an intertie to British Columbia – so they can sell their excess power to the energy hungry Lower 48.

As we speak on this call-in show, dozens of tribal leaders are meeting at an alternative energy conference in Bethel – to look at the potential of wind. It's exciting to see the savings communities like Toksook Bay have netted, since wind generators were installed. Fuel use has been cut by 20 percent.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUND. These projects take a lot of partners – from village governments to village corporations – to the Denali Commission. The state of Alaska is also going to be a bigger player. 250 million is in the Governor's budget to help communities develop new sources of energy and cut costs.

STATE BUDGET SURPLUS. It's a sad irony that high oil prices have enriched the state but are impoverishing its citizens. So we must use our surplus wisely – as a means to help communities become less dependent on oil and develop new sources of energy. Power Cost Equalization and Municipal Revenue Sharing can offer some short term relief, but we must use this opportunity to invest in the future.

AGIA. ACES. An important component of these projects is to make energy available to Alaskans. We need to muster that traditional Alaskan spirit – to overcome obstacles – to pioneer new approaches to old problems. One idea: to take our natural gas and ship propane to villages on the Yukon River.

STATE -TRIBAL RELATIONSHIPS. Never at a time in our history do we need to work together. While Rural Alaska is being pounded by high energy, many coastal

ROSTON 01303

6/17/2009

communities are being hit with erosion – threatening life and property. We have a lot of work to do – and like Alaskans do, when times are hard, we band together.

Since more than 200 Alaska villages were designated as tribes, there has been ongoing debate about tribal jurisdiction. But according to Paul Lyle, the AG's lead attorney on tribal issues, no administration, since the official designation, has denied the existence of tribes. The problem remains: how to work together. Lyle says the Rural Justice Commission explored ways that the state and tribes can share power – rather than fight over jurisdiction. But this is easier said than done. Unlike the tribes, the state is subject to liability when it comes to funding programs. It cannot enter into relationships that expose the state to liability.

KWETHLUK. An exciting example of how a community has come together. Kwethluk has seven law enforcement officers that are funded by the tribe and the city – including a state-funded VPSO. This spring Kwethluk will have a new public safety building. The tribe and the city governments pooled federal community block grant money to build this facility – which will also house a regional search and rescue equipment. (FYI. There is a delay in opening the building. Just as the building was about to open, there was a power outage in the village – and no one realized that the heat would not automatically come on – that it had to be manually turned on. As a result the pipes froze, and it may not be until spring before they can be thawed out and repaired.)

ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD.

- **HOOPER BAY.** Craig Campbell will present 49 discharge certificates for Territorial Guard Members that helped defend the country during World War II. It's also a salute to 20 soldiers and their families. These Guard members recently returned from a year-long deployment in Kuwait and Iraq.
- The state has authorized full funding and appropriated state funds for the Bethel Army National Guard Readiness Center project a few years ago. The project is the #1 priority for Alaska in the Department of Defense Five Year Development Plan. Land has been cleared and prepared for construction. Major General Craig Campbell says the missing component is federal funding. It will require strong Congressional support.
- An opportunity to talk about your trip last year to the Middle East where you saw many from the Bethel region in service to their country.

LONGEVITY BONUS. Frank Murkowski's decision to cut the Longevity Bonus hit Rural Alaska hard. Although other programs were developed to meet the need, there still is angst about the change. Due to language and cultural barriers, there is a lack of understanding about why the Longevity Bonus wasn't restored. Expect questions on this.

ROSTON 01304

6/17/2009

ROSTON 01305

6/17/2009

ALSO OF NOTE:

BETHEL REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL. The principal Jan Vanasse will probably want to talk with you about the school's need for a cafeteria. There used to be one in the district office, which was once used as a dormitory when Bethel had a boarding school for village students. The space is now being utilized by the Junior R.O.T.C. program. Students now eat lunch in a hallway in front of the gymnasium. JROTC students manage the lunch program and serve food from the gym's concession stand.

LUNCHEON TOPICS.

- AVCP President Myron Naneng will want to talk with you about the need for additional VPSO's and Headstart funding, which the state partially funds. Also wants to see more villages participate in state programs.
- YKHC's CEO Gene Peltola may talk with you about funding for the Bethel Prematernal Home which was not in the budget.

###

Rhonda McBride
Rural Affairs Advisor
Office of the Governor
Atwood Building, Suite 1700
550 West 7th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Tel: (907) 269-7451
E-Mail: Rhonda.McBride@alaska.gov

ROSTON 01306

6/17/2009