

# 13TH REG. PROSPECTS FADING

## Most of Non-Resident Natives May Enroll in Regional Corporations

By THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.

SEATTLE — Alaska Natives residing in Washington State will most likely elect to join regional corporations based in Native areas in Alaska rather than form a thirteenth regional corporation under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, according to the president of the Washington Chapter of Natives.

Rachel Craig, AFN Washington president, said that most of the five thousand Natives living in the state favor enrollment in corporations based in areas of Alaska where they were born or where they have strong family ties.

Mrs. Craig, a Kotzebue-born woman who heads the largest Native association outside of Alaska, said, "I think most (non-resident Natives) will enroll in Alaska. Most of the people I know have been enrolling back home."

In spite of a massive campaign by a small group of Seattle lawyers, financed largely by the corporate banking division of the Seattle First National Bank, a thorough, but low-budgeted, newsletter printed by AFN Washington provided simple guidelines which encouraged Alaska Natives in the state to enroll more knowledgeably and with a better understanding of available options.

The information provided Washington area Alaska Natives

by the state chapter, Mrs. Craig noted, drew a sharp contrast from the barrage of confusing literature disseminated by the new Alaska Federation of Native International organization and the Washington office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Proponents of the thirteenth regional corporation misled outside Natives, she said.

"A lot of people out here have been told that, since they live out here, they have to enroll with the thirteenth," noted Mrs. Craig. And, she added, information coming out of Washington, D.C., has been provided with the use of legal language and is often beyond the comprehension of most people outside the legal profession. "Everything should have been explained more simply," Mrs. Craig said.

The Native leader, who has decided to enroll in the Northwest Alaska Regional Native Corporation, criticized the majority of Native corporations in Alaska for not giving greater attention to the problems of non-resident Natives. Only two cor-

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porations, from the Aleut and Northwest regions, have representatives in Washington State.

"More of us would have belonged to the regional corporations if we were informed of how they were functioning. If we realized that these corporations were obligated to keep us informed and were accepting this responsibility, we would have enrolled more knowledgeably," she stated.

Many of her members, especially younger members and Native students, have expressed a desire to return to Alaska and contribute to regional development. "Many young people here are gearing their education to jobs that will be in demand in the villages, especially in the areas of education, business management, and law.

"They hope there will be job opportunities available so that they could go home. There are many of us who want to come home," Mrs. Craig added.

The decision of many non-resident Natives to reject the thirteenth corporation concept, she noted, is based on inadequacies in the land claims legis-

lation.

When asked her organization was pleased with those portions of the act which deal with non-resident Natives, Mrs. Craig remarked, "No. Otherwise, the thirteenth organization concept would not be as inadequate as it is. Fortunately, the way it turned out, some of us are just glad that there is a provision that will allow us to be affiliated with our home regions. And those of us who feel this way are a majority."

Questioned about dissension in the ranks of AFN Washington, which at times may make it difficult to distinguish a clear majority on meaty issues, Mrs. Craig admitted to having difficulty at times in leading the organization due to frequent infighting. This primarily is attributed to diverse tribal affiliations and a membership originating from a variety of areas of Alaska.

AFN Washington is not as poorly situated as the controversial Alaska Federation of Natives International. The organization is currently being sued by Frederick Paul, a Seattle attorney who was a founding member, of AFNI and who represented the Arctic Slope Native Association prior to his dismissal by that group.

Paul, who performed legal services for AFNI during the creation of Esk-Ind-Al, the alleged thirteenth corporation, is suing for payment. Reportedly, AFNI did not have sufficient funds to pay Paul after borrowing heavily from the Seattle First National Bank.

AFNI's incorporators for Esk-Ind-Al are also being challenged by a large group of non-resident Natives on the grounds that eligible non-residents were not informed of any impending election of incorporators and that these incorporators were hand-picked by a small group of AFNI officers.

AFN Washington has selected a second group of incorporators, by vote of a vastly larger group of non-resident Natives, to form the thirteenth corporation in the event it is formed.

One of the reasons Mrs. Craig elected to enroll in Alaska, and decided against participation in the thirteenth corporation, she said, is that it would be extremely difficult for such an organization, whose only asset would be cash, to remain in honest hands and allow open participation of stockholders in the corporation.