

NANA mergers progressing

By MARGIE BAUMAN
K O T Z E B U E — N A N A
stockholders have approved by a
68% margin plans to merge 10 of
village land claims corporations

in the area with NANA Regional
Corporation.

The plan of merger goes now
to the Secretary of Interior for
approval and then to Alaska

Commissioner of Commerce and
Natural Resources Tony Motley.

NANA's staff expressed
optimism that the merger would
become effective by the end of

April, so that the new
23-member board can begin
meeting in May.

The new board will include
representatives of Akuliuk

Incorporated, Buckland
Nunachiak Corporation, Deering
Ipnatchiak Corporation,
Ivisaapaagmeut Inc., Katyaak

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Corp., Kivalina, Sinuakmeut Corporation, Koovukmeut Inc., Noatak, Napaaktukmeut Corporation, Putoo Corporation and NANA.

Board members of the Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation in Kotzebue had voted previously not to let their stockholders vote on merger. Each village corporation board had the option of allowing their stockholders to vote as a village on merger.

The two-hour special meeting on merger went smoothly in the packed gymnasium of the Kotzebue School, concluding in about two hours. Participants then adjourned to the school cafeteria for a feast of Eskimo and Hawaiian foods.

Plans for the merger began well over a year ago, in an effort to avoid costly repetition of services and insure financial stability of all corporations in the region founded under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Extensive studies had shown that odds were slim for small village corporations succeeding, because cost of operation was bound to eat up most land claims payments of a basis of population.

In total 72.8% of the people holding NANA Class A stock and 60.8% of those holding Class B stock voted in favor of merger. The 10 villages in favor of merger also had strong margins.

The day of meetings and festivities began with snowmachine and dog sled races and reindeer pulling sleds across frozen Kotzebue Sound, under clear skies with the temperature at about 20 below zero. The chill dampened nobody's spirits however.

The merger meeting date had been preceeded by the quarterly meeting of the Friends Church at Kotzebue and some folks were saying that entire villages were emptied because everyone wanted to be there.

After the merger meeting, well over 1,000 people feasted on a variety of Eskimo delicacies ranging from duck soup to agutook (Eskimo ice cream) in several flavors. There were also macadamia nuts, pineapple, papaya, banana chips and poi—gifts from Hawaiian visitors seeking their own land claims settlement.

Native leaders from Canada and Greenland, just back from a meeting at Barrow, also attended, as did U.S. Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska; State Sen. Frank Ferguson, D-Kotzebue; State Rep. Brenda Iita, D-Barrow and Alaska Commissioner of Commerce and Economic Development Tony Motley.