

## Eaton restores confidence

# CEDC goal: Improving economic well-being

by Julie Petro

for the Tundra Times

When Perry Eaton took over as the president and chief executive officer of the Community Enterprise Development Corp. in 1981, funding for the federal agency had been cut drastically.

There was some question as to whether the organization would survive.

With support from the board of directors, Eaton reorganized the company, reduced the staff in the headquarters office in Anchorage from 40 to seven employees and cleaned up the loan portfolio to turn the company around.

In the process, he restored confidence in CEDC's ability to be effective in rural Alaska. The goal of improving the economic well-being of rural Alaskans continues to be a reality.

Today, CEDC has more than \$60 million dollars in annual revenue and employs about 500 people throughout the state. Its operating profit and dues from 170 member organizations allow CEDC to be self sufficient.

Investments include 21 Alaska Commercial Co. stores throughout rural Alaska. Members range from Alaska Native regional and village corporations to traditional Native

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—Perry Eaton

village councils.

Eaton, 43, was born in Kodiak. Part Aleut, his family is from Ouzinkie, near Kodiak. Eaton's father, Hank, was on the original Alaska Federation of Natives Board of Directors.

Eaton's family moved back and forth between Kodiak and Washington state while he was growing up. During the summers, Eaton was a purse seiner with his father near Kodiak.

In 1964, Eaton graduated from Mount Rainier High School in Washington. He became a machinist for Boeing Aircraft Corp. in 1965, where he worked for three years, eventually attaining journeyman status.

While working, Eaton also attended college to study business administration.

In 1968, Eaton decided to change professions and went to work for Seattle First National Bank as a loan of-

ficer. Then, in 1971, Eaton returned to Alaska to work as an assistant vice president of First National Bank of Anchorage.

In 1974, Eaton became involved in village management programs as the executive vice president of the Alaska Native Foundation. While he enjoyed the extensive village travel, it was hard for him to "just spend money."

Tired of philanthropy, Eaton returned to Kodiak to spend the summer of 1976 as a skiff man on a purse seiner. Afterwards, he joined United Bank Alaska as a vice president. Responsibilities included all marketing functions, research, planning and public relations.

In 1981, Eaton decided to make another career change and took the challenge of heading CEDC. One of the two men he has the most respect for, Byron Mallot of Juneau, was the first chairman back in 1968. Eaton



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said the other man he regards highly is John Schaeffer, commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

"I started with a two-year commitment (to CEDC) and am still here after six years," Eaton said. "I'll continue as long as it's challenging."

Eaton and his wife, Ardene, will celebrate their 23rd anniversary this year. They have two children, Brent, a third-year engineering student at San Diego State, and Kimberly, a sophomore at Service High School.