

Black explains AFN/HRC

Editor's Note: This letter is an answer to one published last week regarding the effectiveness of the Human Resources Division of the Alaska Federation of Natives, now headed by Cliff Black. For other news on the AFN Human Resources Committee (HRC), see story this issue.

Bobby Schaeffer
Mauneluk Association
P.O. Box 256
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752

Dear Bobby:

Thank you for your impressions and for taking the time to write me and bring them to my attention. It was most certainly taken in the spirit you stated.

I will attempt to answer your addressed issues in the order you addressed them.

Your opening statement was the most disturbing of all your comments. You stated that you had not heard from us for about a year. I have been here six months, but within those six months I have sent out over thirty pieces of correspondence to all regional non-profit corporations. The correspondence has been sent to the president of Mauneluk, Mr. Dennis Tiepelman, but you can be assured that your regional non-profit corporation has been sent considerable correspondence during the past six months. If there is a problem with mail at your end, please inform us and we will correct our mailing list.

Your point about the working relationship between the president of ANF, Inc., and myself was also disturbing. Mr. Mallott has been most cooperative and has done all he could to make our relationship a good one. I have done the same. I feel our working relationship is solid and the memoranda between our respective offices will bear that out. I am sorry you were unaware of that major point. It is another reason for an AFN newsletter (or an insert into the Tundra Times) so that all of our people understand our good relationship.

The role of AFN has changed to some degree, but the need for advocacy is most certainly still here. The regional non-profit corporations have clearly directed that the role of their central organization will be technical assistance and advocacy. If you have suggestions as to what you see as our future role, please feel free to make us aware of your desires. In that regard, the role, or more explicitly, the goals and objectives are on the agenda of our June meeting, presently scheduled for the 13th, 14th and 15th in Fairbanks. You are most welcome as is anyone else who may wish to attend.

The fact that many regional non-profit corporations are much larger than the AFN points up a couple large points. The regions are in many instances much more prepared to

deal with many issues that arise. They have larger staffs and more funds to develop position papers and carry them to the point of delivering testimony. The fact that many times these developed positions are accepted by the entire AFN-HRC and delivered as our position, speaks to the recognition of the capability of the regional corporations. It seems that this might make the AFN less necessary, but I don't think that this is the case. The need for a unified voice is still here and it has been shown clearly that a single region cannot carry the weight of the statewide organization. It must also be remembered that this statewide body is only an extension of the collective regional profit corporations. The strength is not here it is there within you and those around you.

Your point about the need for more advocacy from my office. I agree. Since we agree, maybe we can convince the AFN-HRC to fund this office in the same manner as the profit corporations fund President Mallott's office. If this was to happen, I would be very happy and would feel that I would be doing what I thought I would be able to do when I took this position. About 2/3 of my time is spent on programs, as I function in the same manner as the regional non-profit directors do—operating programs. It makes it quite difficult to address the advocacy needs. This is not new to this position. However, with the movement of programs out to the regions where they belong, AFN has a lower level of funding, as the only place the non-profit section, or HRC, gets its funds is through indirect from programs. If this were changed, it would free up this position for full time advocacy and enable us to impact many more decisions than we are presently

impacting. Thank you for bringing this point up, it has worried me also.

Your statewide issues relative to the State of Alaska were well taken. Item 1, the CETA regulations, is an issue that the non-profits have been dealing with for quite some time. While in Juneau the AFN-HRC met with the Bush Caucus. One of the topics we brought up was the need for the State to recognize the indirect state of the various non-profit organizations. They are aware of our needs and will attempt to do something about them.

In regards to Federal CETA programs where the non-profits get the bulk of their funding, we are working with other states in the development of a National position. During the recent months, I was requested by the CETA Prime Sponsors to present testimony to Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Poverty and Migratory Labor. I went to Washington, D.C. and presented, along with other National Native leaders, our collective testimony. We are addressing the problems. The CETA Prime Sponsors have shown the way that much of our testimony should be developed and presented in the future. They are the experts in manpower and know the problems: they should develop the position papers and present them to the AFN-HRC for support and then they should go with the leadership to present the united position to the State and Federal legislators.

Item 2, the Food Stamp Program, has not worked in rural Alaska. It has not been on our priority list, but it will be brought up in the future. If you have information that we could use, please forward it to us, as our information is quite skimpy.

Item 3, Coastal Zone Management, has been on our Agenda and we have passed by resolution, language to improve our position regarding subsistence and water rights. We will continue on this one.

Item 4, the haul road, is a monumental problem. The people who will be most impacted by a decision to open the haul road, oppose it. But big money and those with a development bent will back its opening and general usage. It will take the efforts of all of us to impact this decision. We must all individually write our legislators and the administration and then collectively address the problems on a regional basis, and finally on a statewide basis.

Item 5, the Permanent Fund, has not been addressed by the non-profit corporations. I have personally testified at the hearings and feel that a significant amount should be used for care of the elderly, and a portion used for small business development throughout Alaska, as well

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as other needed programs.

Item 6, Education, is an area of constant concern. We have been successful in passing bond issues to cover many new high schools, but much needs to be done. The Commissioner of Education, Marshall Lind, has appointed me to the Teachers Certification Task Force and we have been addressing a broad spectrum of problems, regulations, needed changes, and para-professional involvement. Hopefully, we will come up with more acceptable systems in that area.

Item 7, the need for a State Energy Policy. We all agree on that point and it will come about. It may take fires like your letter, under the appropriate administration positions, before anything is actually developed that is effective, but it won't happen unless we all let our legislators and administrators know our feelings. This item will be on our next agenda.

Item 8, Subsistence, is a topic that has been on our agenda at all levels; from Coastal Zone

Management to D-2, to Fish & Game regulations. It will continue to be an agenda item on a constant basis, as it is an issue that will not be resolved in our lifetime.

Your Federal issues are real and are being addressed at all of our AFN-HRC meetings. For instance:

Item 1, BIA Reorganization, has caused us to address ourselves to the Asst. Sec. for Indian Affairs, Forrest Gerard, on numerous occasions. We have met with the Area Director also, on that point. We fully expect both to live up to their promises, and we will keep the pressure on to see that they do keep their word.

Item 2, P.L. 93-638 and 94-437, is another item that has been on our agenda on a constant basis. The new Self-determination laws are good and to a significant degree allow us to move toward the time when we will see true direction of our own destiny. The laws are not perfect and we have addressed

that and requested changes. We will continue to suggest and request changes that will make the task of the regional non-profit corporations easier.

Item 3, the Indian Child Welfare Act, has been addressed by Dr. Ted Mala, our Special Assistant for Health Affairs, and he has asked that hearings be held in Alaska to thoroughly cover the impacting points in the legislation. We have worked on this and Dr. Mala will be meeting next week with Congressman Young's Assistant Art Kennedy on this proposed legislation. Our reading from Indian organizations in the lower forty-eight has been that it is a good law and needs only minor changes. We feel a little stronger than that.

The Alaska Federation of Natives is here because you and many like you are there and in all of our villages across our State. We are here because you are there: that is our in-house slogan. We are an extension of you and attempt to meet your needs. We hope that your letter has not been construed by our people that AFN is not doing its job, because it is. Both on the profit and non-profit sides, it is still carrying its weight. Mauneluk has been missed at our recent meetings and it is my hope that you or your President will attend and

assist us in meeting these challenges. We need the help of all Alaskan Natives to do our job.

The regional non-profits decided during our meeting in Juneau, not to form up a new and separate corporation to address non-profit needs. The non-profits gave up a stronger sense of autonomy for continued unity and it is their hope that the profit corporations will give up a measure of control in favor of unity. It is this kind of give and take that is now being recognized and felt by the profit

corporations and the non-profit corporations. With these expressions toward unity, we will never weaken.

Again my thanks for your letter and please recognize also that these expressions are meant in an informational and fellowship sense and we look forward to your assistance in the future

Sincerely,
Clifford A. Black
Executive Vice President
Human Resources