

All-Alaska Weekly  
Box 970  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

# BIA chief fends (his) termination threat

By JEFFREY R. RICHARDSON  
Anchorage Bureau Chief

A closed, three and a half hour meeting last week may signal a productive new relationship between Alaska Natives and

the Juneau Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The AFN Human Resources Committee, bearing a long list of long-standing gripes, met with BIA Area Director Antioquia in

Anchorage to reopen communication closed by differing philosophies of Indian self-determination.

Judging by comments of committee members, the meet-

ing was a success. Clifford A. Black, executive director of the North Pacific Rim Native Corporation, commented the meeting resulted in a "hell of a lot better working relationship than

we had before."

One of the main differences between the committee and the BIA has been over procedures for Natives to take over and

(Continued on Page 12)

# BIA chief fends (his) threat

(Continued from Page 1)

manage federal programs for Native people. The committee, composed of representatives from Alaska's twelve regional non-profit Native corporations has held that regional associations were best equipped to contract for the programs. Antioquia has insisted that villages must be given more contracts to protect their self-determination rights.

What emerged from the meeting last week was an agreement to establish a means to work out such policy problems. Part of this mechanism will include a quarterly review by the BIA of its policies, with the participation of the Alaska Federation of Natives, and improved month-to-month communication between the BIA Area Office and the regions.

Bobby Schaeffer, of the Mauneluk Association, said the committee sought a better working arrangement with BIA because the Bureau had remained isolated instead of moving aggressively to encourage Indian self-determination and because of an "obvious lack of communication between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its constituency."

Schaeffer said the committee wanted Natives to be involved in the Bureau's policy-making processes "assure that the special relationship Native people have with the government is protected and carried out."

"I have a lot more comfortable feeling with it than when I first came here," he concluded.

The non-profit regional associations strongly advance the position that regional contract-

ing provides social services more effectively and at less administrative cost than contracting at a village level. However, Black pointed out, "None of us want to preclude their involvement or their ability to contract."

Antioquia has taken the position that the BIA cannot support regional contracting at the expense of villages. According to Black, no one on the committee could argue with Antioquia's prediction that federal funds funneled through the BIA may soon only be available to village IRA councils, the primary body recognized as a tribe by the Indian Self-Determination Act.

The meeting also resulted in the committee tabling a resolution calling for Antioquia's removal or transfer.