

Den Nena Henash - Our Land Speaks
Ut Kah neek - Informing and Reporting
Yupit Qanlautciat - The Way Eskimos Talk
Unangan Tunukun - The Aleuts Speak
Inupiat Paitot - People's Heritage

Youth deserve praise after convention

To the editor:

I attended the adult portion of the Alaska Federation of Natives convention this year and had the opportunity to go to the opening ceremonies of the AFN Youth Conference.

I was impressed with this large group of lovely young Alaska Native youth and felt very proud of them.

I was even more proud of the youth on the final day of the convention, when I looked at the resolutions that the youth had developed in that short time.

The depth and breadth of the issues they covered was enormous. The youth had tackled such weighty issues as domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, AIDS, environmental concerns and subsistence.

I was thrilled when all the youth resolutions were passed in the final session of the conference.

I now feel the need to pass this information on to co-workers, other professionals and others who may be interested, because these young people deserve some positive feedback, and

they need the support of us adults when they ask for such things as information about AIDS and condom machines in their schools and village-based counseling services.

One group I recently shared this information about the youth conference with was the Alaska Area Child Protection Team.

This is a group of about 16 individuals from agencies all around the state and their primary goal is advocating for children and families.

The team members shared my enthusiasm for the work the youth did at the conference and have asked me to pass on their congratulations.

To each and every youth who attended the conference, we wholeheartedly appreciate your work, energy and commitment to a healthy future.

Your families and communities should be very proud of you — we are! We wish you and your loved ones a very happy New Year.

Vonni Carole, co-chair
Alaska Area Child Protection Team

Oil should not cost the lives of youth

To the editor:

On a scale from one to 10, the United States is well below the bottom in leading the world to a responsible energy program.

Energy programs scrapped during the Reagan-Bush years, and policies that have led to a kid-gloves approach to the atrocities in the Mid-East, plus the "Let's make a deal" attitude on the hostage situation in Iran have led to the Iraq of today and the present situation of complete disregard for civil and national rights.

Panama, a year ago, and now Iraq — what a way to celebrate the advent of Christ or to ring in the New Year. American "diplomacy," what a message to send to the world during a time of reaffirmation and peace.

I believe war is too great a price for our youth to pay with their lives for oil.

President George Bush, we read your lips. This was to be a kinder, gentler America — where are those words hiding now?

Ralph Guthrie
Sitka

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Views on Sealaska shareholder dividends

To Sealaska shareholders:

Many of your readers may be a little mystified by the recent public attention Sealaska Corporation has received because of a small group of vocal shareholders who want theirs now.

I would like to offer some observations as someone from the inside who is also a student of the views of the rest of the Alaskan community.

About two weeks ago, I met a co-worker in the halls of Sealaska Plaza who had been fielding 20-40 phone calls per day herself regarding the petition requesting a large distribution from Sealaska Corporation.

"After speaking to some of the angry shareholders, I sometimes don't know how I can go on," she said.

I said, "We are fortunate that we can rely on our faith." I was referring to our religious faith, which is also the faith of our elders.

The culture of the Natives of our region had the central element of balance. The whole Nation was divided into two complementary groups, the Eagles and the Ravens.

Social interaction was governed by a complex set of statements and actions by one tribe, and appropriate responses from the opposite tribe.

Today, as we manage a complex business corporation like Sealaska Corporation, we find that the Native values that brought us here are still applicable to corporate life.

What we have seen recently is the Sealaska Board of Directors seeking to find a balanced response to all of our shareholders.

One small group of shareholders has attained a high profile in the news media and has expressed more than anything a sense of frustration with Sealaska, and I contend with the many institutions that affect their lives.

I look past the nasty rumors and vitriol which has appeared in print and in the broadcast media and try to find the genuine concern that our shareholders in that particular group have. There are real human problems driving many of them.

At the same time, our shareholder surveys have shown several times that there is a deep well of shareholder support for Sealaska, and a strongly held sense of pride in what Sealaska represents.

The Sealaska Board of Directors has

always been responsive to shareholder concerns, and this case is no different. At the same time, we have also operated with a long-term commitment to the success of this corporation and all that it represents to our people.

The disagreement I have seen is between those who have a long-term perspective on Sealaska, and those who have pressing, day to day, economic needs.

I believe that both have valid arguments. I believe a balance response is called for.

Sealaska's long-term perspective is partly business and partly cultural. We have to manage Sealaska so it's there for our children and grandchildren, and long-term management of a business corporation is in some respects pretty straightforward.

From a cultural perspective, our Board and Management see Sealaska as a major economic force in the Native community, which is playing a part in the history of Alaska Natives that began at the turn of the century with the first efforts to pursue land claims and justice for our people whose land was stolen. This is our cultural long-term perspective.

Sealaska would be mistaken if we felt we could ignore genuine

shareholder concerns. Your readers would be mistaken if they felt Sealaska was in some sort of trouble.

My own feeling is that the relationship between Sealaska and our shareholders has been strengthened by this entire matter.

Over the past three weeks, we have had our finger on the pulse of our shareholders. We have heard from our detractors, and now we are hearing from our supporters.

Our investment manager, a young, educated shareholder with investment expertise explains this way: When our elders went to fish camp to put up fish for the winter, they never caught all the fish.

They took what they needed, and let the rest go upstream so that there would be returns next year and every year for future generations.

That's the way Sealaska operates, distributing what is responsible to meet today's need, and leaving the rest to grow so that tomorrow our children may also get returns.

Sincerely,
Ross V Soboleff
Director of Corporate
Communications
Sealaska Corp.
Juneau

Writer says dividends should have been more

To Byron Mallott and Marlene Johnson:

I have received and read your mailing of Nov. 21, 1990. I hope that you will give this letter as much attention as I have given yours.

Since receiving your mailing, I have also read the article in the Anchorage newspaper, regarding your subsequent decision to disburse a different amount to shareholders, yet, I am writing to address both your letter and the newspaper article.

Yes, I am aware of the petition being circulated regarding the dividend distribution of \$4,000 per 100 shares. I noted that you referred to this as a large amount of money.

Now, I find it odd that people with your income from the corporation should consider \$4,000 as large amounts of money.

If, in fact, you consider \$4,000 as so large, I suggest we cut your salaries, commissions, fees and bonuses to a total of \$4,000 per year.

After all, if that is such a large amount you should have no problem at all surviving on it, since you expect us to do so, on far less, each year for the past 20 years.

It intrigues me that a corporation that I hear touted as the largest Native corporation could do so poorly, that it pays the pitiful dividends it has paid all these years.

I further question why any bonuses

be paid to anyone when the profits seem to be so poor that you cannot pay decent dividends.

No bonuses should be paid unless you have managed to do a superb job and if you did that, we shareholders would be receiving superb dividends.

A great many corporations would terminate executives and officers for the performance we have seen in this corporation, yet instead you receive bonuses.

This is ludicrous at best. It is once again an example of how to rob the Natives. It is time for this to stop. It is time to boot the bums out.

Your letter said you had authorized a Christmas distribution of \$100 per 100 shares for this December. I thought that was rather diplomatic of you, until I read further. The part that says 'this distribution is an advance on the current year's expected earnings'. Big deal.

Does this board of directors get its training in diplomacy and fairness by attending 'The Saddam Hussein School of Business Ethics'? It certainly sounds like it to a lot of shareholders.

The only large dividend of any kind that I have witnessed over the past 20 years is large amounts of hot wind from this corporation. You know, empty promises, bad investments, wait until the future. Always it is in the future with this corporation.

I am 63 years old, and have already

been cheated for 20 years by this corporation, just how much future do you think I have left now?

It is long past time for the shareholders to receive the bonus if any is paid, not the directors, executives, or officers.

This past year was one of our biggest dividends in 20 years. Even if I was highly optimistic — and after 20 years of this I am not — it would still take me approximately 10 years to receive \$4,000 in dividends.

At 63 that may be just too damned long. Then you say it could adversely affect the corporation. So, what would that really mean? Would you have to trim the fat off the already far too fat cats running this joke of a corporation?

If so, then maybe we had better do that immediately. Let's get \$10,000 dividends for those over 50 especially if it would mean having to get rid of the current leaders of this corporation.

The point is, we have been robbed enough. The younger shareholders might see real and adequate compensation, but those of us over 50 will never be compensated for what we have lost.

A large distribution at this point would certainly help though. Two thousand just isn't enough. First our lands and cultures were taken from us, and I could go on for pages about what other ways have been used to cheat

and rob us. Now our own corporation is doing the same thing to us. When is enough, enough?

You have taken too much and given too little. I not only support a one time distribution of \$4,000. I will call and visit every other shareholder I know and advise them to do the same.

I also support 'cleaning house' in this corporation, and I mean by that, terminating all of the current directors, executives and officers.

All your record has shown us is poverty; we need honest, interested, intelligent people in this corporation, and to date none of you have shown us any of those qualities.

It is a crime to cheat people. It should be a crime to lie. It should be a crime to take and never give. It should be a crime to take money from the poor, and God doesn't like these actions either. We don't deserve this.

This entire situation is an outrage and an insult to us, the people, the shareholders, the very people this corporation is supposed to be all about. This corporation and its management is one of the biggest disappointments of my life.

You bet, I support this petition for the large one time distribution. You bet, I support getting rid of the hierarchy of this corporation.

I've seen too much bad, and don't want to spend my advanced years seeing more of the same.

Sincerely,
Halvor C. Engelstad
Wasilla

Writer shares facts about AIDS/HIV

To the editor:

I understand that there is a connection between HIV/AIDS and drinking and using.

Given our current medical technology, HIV/AIDS is a full spectrum fatal disease. If you contract it, you will die from it.

Transmittable by someone who is infected and doesn't know they are is due to the fact that the disease takes up to ten years to show any symptoms.

It is transmitted through the sharing of needles and transfusions of infected blood, although the latter has been virtually eliminated through thorough

testing in hospitals and blood banks.

It can also be transmitted through the placenta of an infected mother to an unborn child and it can be transmitted through a mother's milk when she is breast feeding her infant.

The inside of the vagina, the anus and the head of the penis are comprised of mucous membranes. Exposing these areas to ejaculate, secretions from these areas or blood (such as menstrual flow) from an infected person is extremely high risk behavior.

The only exception seems to be the mucous membranes of the mouth.

However, if there are mouth sores

or bleeding gums, infection can easily pass from an infected person to their partner.

The transmission of HIV/AIDS is facilitated by the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol because such behavior impairs judgement.

In other words, a person under the influence may be more likely to perform a high risk act with someone else, thereby increasing the risk of infection.

Sincerely,
Edger F. Soren
Grant Director
United Crow Band
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