

Part Twenty-one of serial: Regional corporations organize and begin to function

(Ed. Note: This is the twenty-first in a series of excerpts from the Alaska Native Land Claims book. It is the hope of the Tundra Times and Alaska Native Foundation that the publication of the series will further the understanding and implementation of all parties involved and affected by the claims Settlement Act. The book was released by the ANF in 1976 and was also made possible by a Ford Foundation grant. Robert D. Arnold edited the text. Authors include: Janet Archibald; Margie Bauman; Nancy Yaw Davis; Robert A. Frederick; Paul Gaskin; John Havelock; Gary Holthaus; Chris McNeil; Thomas Richards, Jr.; Howard Rock and Rosita Worl.)

Within the state, the Bureau of Indian Affairs had contracted with the regional corporations to carry out enrollment. To reach Natives outside Alaska, advertising in newspapers, magazines and on television was widely employed, and those responding to the notices were furnished information packages. Because the regulations governing enrollment were complicated, many applications were slow in being returned or were marred by errors. Adding to the difficulty of enrollment were uncertainties of interpretation such as, for instance, the meaning of "permanent residence."

Even after the roll was certified, adjustments were being made to it on the basis of errors or challenges to eligibility. There were 800 to 1,000 Natives who learned of the requirement to enroll after the deadline had passed, so their applications were rejected and they did not become enrolled.

At the same time enrollment was proceeding, there was the 29-page law to be learned and dozens of pages of regulations to be studied (and, as will be noted later, perhaps resisted). Education and training sessions were sponsored by Native organizations throughout the state. Regions and villages had begun thinking of the fast-approaching need to select land even as they moved to form their corporations.

Chapter 24 Regional business corporations

About the same time enrollment was launched, each of the 12 Native associations named in the settlement act had chosen five persons to establish business corporations along association boundaries. They accomplished their work speedily, a year ahead of the deadline. Once incorporated, interim officers and boards of directors had been chosen to serve until completion of enrollment allowed the first stockholders' meetings to be held.

With advance payments from the Alaska Native Fund (the special account in the U.S. Treasury) the regional corporations had begun to function by mid-1972. They had hired persons and organizations to assist villages within their regions to become incorporated and to begin planning for lands that villages would select. They had employed geologists and other specialists to aid them in identifying the natural resources of lands they might select. And they had engaged attorneys to analyze regulations proposed by the U. S. Department of the Interior to implement the act, to file appeals for persons whose enrollments had been rejected, and to advise them on a wide range of legal issues.

Adult Natives not residing in Alaska had voted upon enrolling whether they desired a 13th corporation. Based upon the Department of the Interior's finding that a majority had rejected it — the nonresident Natives who had sought to enroll to it had become at-large stockholders in one or another of the 12 Alaska corporations. A court was later to reverse the finding.

With the September 1974 distribution from the Alaska Native Fund, the 12 regional corporations had received almost \$209 million as first payments of funds due Alaska Natives under the settlement act, and had disbursed several millions of dollars to individuals and villages consistent with the act. Remaining funds (along with most of the village funds) were invested in a variety of ways or were being used for the continuing costs of administering the settlement.

Including all nonresident Natives, the regional corporations range in size from Ahtna, Inc., with almost 1,100 stockholders, to Sealaska Corporation, with nearly 16,500 stockholders. In terms of land area within their boundaries, the corporations range from Koniag, Inc., with about 7,300 square miles to Doyon, Limited, with more than 200,000 square miles.

Figure 5
THE 12 REGIONAL CORPORATIONS

	Number of Stockholders (9-14-74)	Stockholders residing in region (8-28-74)	Total population within region (1970)	Number of village corporations
Ahtna, Inc.	1,092	495	1,332	8
The Aleut Corporation	3,353	1,667	7,694	12
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	3,906	2,886	3,266	8
Bering Straits Native Corporation	6,916	4,638	5,749	16
Bristol Bay Native Corporation	5,517	3,596	4,995	29
Calista Corporation	13,441	11,561	12,617	56
Chugach Natives, Inc.	2,099	1,062	6,286	5
Cook Inlet Region, Inc.	6,243	4,181	145,072	6
Doyon, Limited	9,221	6,683	57,354	34
Koniag, Inc., Regional Native Corporation	3,340	1,958	9,409	9
NANA Regional Native Corporation	4,905	3,643	4,043	11
Sealaska Corporation	16,493	9,529	42,565	9
Totals	76,526	51,899	300,382	203

Sources: Enrollment data: Enrollment Office.
U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.
Population: U. S. Bureau of the Census.

Note: Figures subject to change upon formation of the 13th regional corporation.

In the portrayal of the 12 corporations which follows and the accompanying chart (Figure 5), the number of stockholders includes those who might become members of the 13th corporation once established. The accompanying maps show generalized land status before village and regional selections were made.



THE AHTNA REGION

Smallest of the regional corporations in number of stockholders is Ahtna, Inc. — a name derived from the group of Athabascans historically occupying the area. About half of its nearly 1,100 stockholders live within its region. The total population of the nearly 28,000-square-mile area is only about 1,300 persons.

Ahtna's stockholders chose Robert Marshall, a regional supervisor for highway maintenance, as its first president. The corporation's office is in Copper Center, the largest community of the region.

Several of the state's highways cross the region and all of Ahtna's eight villages are on the road system. Three of the villages lie along the pipeline route.

The region is a high inland plateau, ringed by rugged mountains, and experiences colder winter temperatures and higher summer temperatures than the nearby coastal regions.



THE ALEUT REGION

The Aleut Corporation embraces an area of about 11,000 square miles extending southwestward from the Alaska mainland for more than one thousand miles. Apart from the lower Alaska Peninsula, all of its lands are islands — the Pribilofs, Unalaska, Umnak and others.

The corporation has more than 3,300 stockholders, about half of whom live in the 12 villages within the corporation boundaries. With 549 stockholders, the Tanadgusix Corporation (Our Land) at St. Paul is the largest village corporation.

Following the Aleut Corporation's first stockholders' meeting, its board of directors chose Carl Moses as its president. Moses, a businessman in Unalaska and former state legislator, replaced Mike Swetozof, who had been interim president. The corporation office is in Anchorage.

The largest Native communities in the region are St. Paul, Sand Point, King Cove and Unalaska. Fishing and seafood processing, harvest of the Pribilof Island fur seals, government, and some cattle grazing are the principal economic activities of the region. In addition there are two large military stations (Adak and Shemya) which together account for about half of the region's population of 7,700 persons.

The region is volcanic in origin and is one of the world's most active seismic zones. The climate is relatively mild, but it is often rainy and windy.



THE ARCTIC SLOPE REGION

The Arctic Slope Regional Corporation is the only one of the 12 whose boundaries are the same as those of a regional government, in this case, the North Slope Borough. Barrow, the most northern community in the state, is the location for the offices of the borough and the corporation. In addition to Barrow, seven other villages have incorporated pursuant to the settlement.

There are about 3,900 stockholders in the corporation, more than two-thirds of whom live in the region and over half of whom live in Barrow. A major spokesman in the Arctic Slope's case for a settlement based on lands lost, Joe Upicksoun, was elected first president of the corporation.

The region's more than 84,000 square miles make it second to Doyon, Ltd., in total land area. All of the region is north of the Arctic Circle. Winters are cold and windy and summers are cool. Precipitation is light. The region is underlain with permafrost which is estimated in some places to be 1,300 feet thick.

Before oil and pipeline construction began, the total population of the region was about 3,500 persons, but there were at least three times that number in 1974. The oil reserves at famed Prudhoe Bay are estimated to be the largest in the United States.



THE BERING STRAITS REGION

Nome, the city made famous by the gold rush, is the location of the office of the Bering Straits Native Corporation. Its first president is Jerome Trigg, former president of the Arctic Native Brotherhood and an early organizer for Native land rights.

This corporation has more than 6,900 stockholders. About half of them live either in Nome or one of the 16 other villages in the region. The remainder live outside the region's nearly 23,000 square miles. With 2,060 stockholders, Sitsnasuk Native Corporation in Nome is the largest village corporation.

About 800 Eskimos of Gambell and Savoonga and 250 of Elim are not members of the corporation, since their villages chose to accept title to St. Lawrence Island and Elim, respectively, in place of money and lesser land entitlements under the act.

Principal employment in the region is to be found in Nome, where government and service industries predominate. There is some mining in the region. Food gathering activities are important in the economy of the smaller villages.

Three of the region's villages are connected by roads. There is no deep-water port anywhere along its coast.

Winter temperatures are low; summers are relatively warm. Precipitation is light. Permafrost is continuous over the area.



THE BRISTOL BAY REGION

The Bristol Bay Native Corporation has about 5,500 stockholders, of whom about 3,300 live in one or another of the 29 villages within the region. Total population in the 40,000-square-mile region is about 5,000.

Dillingham, which, with 925 stockholders, is the largest of the village corporations in the region; is the location of the regional corporation's office. A member of the original board of directors of AFN, Harvey Samuelsen, was elected president at the first stockholders' meeting. Its 35-member board of directors is the largest board of any of the regional corporations.

Two villages — Naknek and South Naknek — are within the Bristol Bay Borough, a small regional government.

Barred by mountains from the rest of the state, this region faces the salmon-rich Bristol Bay and Bering Sea. Since the 1880's, the economy of the area has been based upon catching and processing of salmon. There is much subsistence hunting, fishing, and food gathering. Sport fishermen also contribute to the economy of the region.

Precipitation varies within the region from 20 to 160 inches a year. Summer temperatures are moderate; minimum winter temperatures are often below zero.



THE CALISTA REGION

With an enrollment of almost 13,500, most of whom live in southwest Alaska, Calista Corporation has the largest number of resident stockholders. And, with 56 villages within its boundaries, Calista assists and guides a larger number of village corporations than any other regional corporation.

In Yupik Eskimo, Calista means "the worker" or "one who works."

Former State Senator Ray Christiansen, who was interim president of the corporation, was named chairman of the board of directors following the first stockholders' meeting.

The main office of the corporation is in Anchorage. A second office is in Bethel, the principal community within the region. The largest village corporation is the Bethel Native Corporation with 1,725 stockholders.

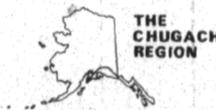
There are almost 56,000 square miles within Calista boundaries, but a total population of only about 13,000 persons.

Only two of the region's villages are joined by a road. Two major rivers, the Yukon and Kuskokwim, flow through the area to the Bering Sea.

Most of the villagers of the region depend principally upon fishing, hunting, and food gathering for subsistence.

Winter temperatures are low and summer temperatures relatively high. Precipitation is generally light. Most of the region is underlain with permafrost.

(Editor's Note: Martin Moore, former state representative from Emmonak was selected as president of Calista late in 1976.)



THE CHUGACH REGION

Chugach Natives, Inc. has about 2,100 stockholders, about half of whom live within the boundaries of the region. Five villages have incorporated to participate in the settlement. The largest is Eyak Corporation with 323 stockholders.

The corporation's office is located outside the region — in Anchorage. One of the early proponents of winning recognition for aboriginal rights to land, Cecil Barnes, was elected first president of the corporation.

The word "Chugach" is reportedly a corruption of "Chug-uk," the Sugcestun Aleut word for "hurry-up."

The region is almost 15,000 square miles in area, more than half of which is part of the Chugach National Forest. Although forests of Sitka spruce and western hemlock cover much of the area, there has been little commercial use of the timber. High oil and gas potential exists on the narrow coastal plain and on the outer continental shelf of Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.

Fishing and tourism are important to the economy of the region, but activities related to the trans-Alaska pipeline are of increasing importance. Since Valdez is the pipeline terminus, extensive construction of tanks and related facilities was taking place in 1975.

The total population of the area is about 7,000 persons, most of whom live in Valdez and Cordova.

The climate is generally mild with most areas having moderately heavy precipitation.



THE COOK INLET REGION

Cook Inlet Region, Inc. is the only regional corporation whose stockholders are, for the most part, residents of a highly developed urban area. Most of its nearly 6,500 stockholders live within the region and the largest number of them live in the Anchorage area.

In 1975 the board of directors chose Roy M. Huhndorf, of Anchorage as its president. Huhndorf (of Eskimo descent but born in Nulato) followed Ralph (Andy) Johnson of Anchorage and George Miller of Kenai in the position.

Within the nearly 38,000 square miles of the region live about 150,000 people, nearly half of the state's total population. The region reaches from Seldovia, one of the six villages in the region, almost to Mt. McKinley National Park in the north.

The village of Tyonek, the only community on the west side of Cook Inlet, has the largest number of stockholders (303) of any of the region's six village corporations.

The only oil and gas wells now in production in the state are located on the Kenai Peninsula and in Cook Inlet. The state's principal agricultural area, the Matanuska Valley, is also within the region. Government, transportation, and commercial enterprises are major employers.

There are four boroughs in the region, and all villages are located within one or another of the boroughs.

Precipitation is light. Except for the northern parts, winters are moderately cold, and summers are warm.

Next week — the rest of the regions, and the village corporations . . .

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