

Problem, answer

A problem faced by Alaska Natives and one answer to that problem appeared before the Alaska Federation of Natives Board of Directors last week.

The problem is one of not enough experienced people in leadership positions in the Alaska Native Community. That point was brought home with a jolt when Dennis Tiepelman, the AFN lobbyist in Washington D.C. resigned to return to Kotzebue.

His reasons were in part personal but he also was being sought by the NANA Regional Corp. to head the Inupiat Spirit Committee. Tiepelman's name also has been mentioned in some quarters as a possible head for the Kotzebue Community College and was in the back of some minds to replace Roger Lang as the president of the Alaska Native Foundation.

This speaks well of Tiepelman's talents but also shows the need for more and more experienced Native leaders.

It has long been a problem voiced in many areas that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act benefited more white people in terms of jobs than it did Alaska Natives. The top positions in many Native Regional corporations are filled by non-Native paid help because Alaska Natives still are getting needed training to fill those jobs.

But, this situation is getting better all the time because of increased education and the passage of time which brings training.

One reason this situation is being solved is because of the Alaska Native Leadership program which selects Alaska Natives from around the state and gives them the information tools they need to take their rightful place in the state.

The program has 17 members in it now and they spend time meeting with people who are considered leaders, people who have had experience dealing in the political, economic, public service, and business worlds that Alaska Natives need experience in.

The participants get skills in speaking, debating and analyzing the problems they will face and many have gone on to become an important and inspirational part of their communities.

The people in the program now are: Martha Ramoth-Davis, Selawik; Harry Boone, Golovin; John Evan, Tununak; Jake Wells, Noorvik; Mary Dalton, Sitka; Ted Panamarioff, Ouzinki; Carolyn Hoseth, Dillingham; Dixie Dayo, Manley Hot Springs; Paul Theodore, Knik; Debbie Lee, Aniak; Jeanette Carter, Nome; Evelyn Pootoogooluk, Shismaref; Ellie Stickman, Nulato; Louise Keller, Nome; Judy Ramos, Yakutat; Paul Agangalook, Gambell, and Cheryl Anderson, Hydaburg.

They are working hard to make the lives of their friends, relatives and peoples better and they deserve all the support and help we can give.