

# Calista: We don't own Tundra Drums stock

by Jeffrey R. Richardson  
for the Tundra Times

Rumors that Calista Corp. provided funds to finance the purchase of Bethel-based *Tundra Drums* have been denied by a corporate spokesman.

According to Matthew Nicolai, president of Calista Business Investment Corp. — CalBIC: "Calista Corp. doesn't own any stock in *Tundra Drums*, period."

Nicolai acknowledged that "CalBIC assisted Alaska Newspapers Inc. in locating funds for the *Tundra Drums* purchase."

Calista Business Investment Corp. is a subsidiary of Calista Corp.

*Tundra Drums*, a regional tabloid newspaper chiefly serving the communities of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, was founded 16 years ago by Rosemary Porter.

Porter sold the paper to Edgar Blatchford earlier this summer. Blatchford owns Alaska Newspapers Inc., a holding company which now owns both the *Drums* and the *Seward Phoenix Log*, which Blatchford has edited and published for a number of years.

Blatchford is also chairman of Chugach Alaska Corp. and a former Republican candidate for both the state

House and state Senate from the Seward area.

Blatchford, on vacation in the Orient for three weeks, could not be reached for comment on the question of Calista involvement in his purchase of the *Tundra Drums*. Annette Shacklett, general manager of the *Seward Phoenix Log*, said she was "aware" of CalBIC, but refused to comment on

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the company's connection to Blatchford's purchase of *Tundra Drums*.

In Bethel, acting managing editor of the newspaper, James MacPherson, shed no light on the Calista financing rumors, but insisted that the issue of ownership or financial control of the paper had no bearing on the ability of *Tundra Drums* to operate independently.

"It doesn't make any difference in our focus on coverage of the Delta as to who owns the paper," MacPherson said.

According to Nicolai and other sources who declined identification, sensitivity about Calista's involvement in the purchase of the *Tundra Drums* has been heightened by the hard ball of an election year.

Calista is often at political odds with advocates of village sovereignty in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region. Sovereignty forces are generally supporting Democrat Tony Knowles in the gubernatorial race and have apparently characterized Calista as opposing Knowles.

Though he declined to discuss details of CalBIC's involvement in the *Tundra Drums* sale, saying such disclosure would be more appropriate from Blatchford, Nicolai stressed that the regional coproration had not purchased an interest in the paper. And he said Calista is not anti-Knowles.

"Calista Corp. has not invested one penny to Edgar Blatchford. Calista hasn't ever loaned him money, no."

*Tundra Drums* founder Porter said Blatchford had promised her the paper would remain editorially independent.

"I take him at his word," Porter said. She stressed her certainty that there was not any "Calista shareholder money" involved in the newspaper deal.