

Chugach Alaska selects advisory board

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Fear and speculation regarding the future of the Native Corporations because of recent bankruptcy and teetering leadership is present in many shareholder's minds with 1991 as the year of final judgement.

But Chugach Alaska Corporation, one of the smaller Native regional corporations with 1,900 shareholders has taken a major step in assuring itself of a sound future.

The first Native regional corporation to do this, Chugach Alaska Corporation, last month selected an advisory committee to give advice to the Board of Directors regarding business ventures.

Professionals in their own fields represented within the new advisory committee are members from the state, business administrators, bankers, developers, and resource managers. Each member will volunteer a year of service on the advisory committee. Marchell Espe, Director of Chugach Alaska Corporation shared some of the advantages she foresees from the new program.

"Their views of problems can

get to the heart of the matter maybe more so than some of us who have been here a number of years," she said.

The new members will be able to give unbiased opinions and provide the board and managers in the corporation with another set of options. Because of their expertise in a variety of fields, they can also reassure the corporation in business ventures already started.

For example, Espe said that marketing in corporate owned fisheries needs turning around. The advisory board offered different areas to monitor closely. "Problems are being corrected and working out very well," she said.

One of the advisory board members, Bill Scott, retired managing partner for the international accounting firm Peat, Marwick, and Mitchell, said having an advisory committee is not a new concept. Other big businesses such as Alaska Airlines and Travel Center have advisory committees. But Native corporations and their problems are unique.

"Relatively few people, like Native leaders, have found themselves in this magnitude of

business such as Native Regional Corporations," he said. ANCSA did not give any time to learn what usually takes a large business years to accomplish. He felt his expertise as an accountant will help Chugach. There were some problems he anticipated.

"It's pretty easy to tell somebody how to do it; it's hard to be the person taking the advice," he said. But people within management have been receptive and cooperative.

Although it is not a solution for all problems, Espe felt the new advisory committee would provide a set of options the board could consider.

"We don't know if it's going to work for us. It's another alternative. We're not putting all our eggs in one basket."

Scott felt the same. "Just another view is valuable all by itself. Ask me in a year and I'll tell you if it was a good idea."