

Editorial—

A Good Beginning... An Important Step

In the event Congress casts the final vote to pass the native land claims legislation, and when the President signs it into law, there are clear indications that big amounts of money will be forthcoming to Alaska's native people. Once that money becomes available for use, there must be well qualified people in key points to help to administer it. There must also be pre-prepared plans in the use of it so that its initial impact will mean the most meaningful benefit.

Outside of having trusted advisors and technicians at the beginning, this is not going to be an easy task. At the present time we have, as yet, very, very few native persons who would be in the position to effectively handle them because of their highly technical nature. We have no people at the present time training for that specific purpose to meet the responsibilities. We do not know of anyone now who has any plans to train our talented people toward this goal. It is highly possible then, that we will not have any specifically trained personnel when the land claims monies are awarded.

With the presumption that this will be the fact, perhaps an attempt to get available money could be sought in ample amounts so an intensive and well meant technical

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training program can be initiated as soon as practicable. The money can be in the form of a loan with all the technicalities connected with it and which could, perhaps, be paid back from the interests of the banked award funds. Foundations should not be overlooked. Their help should be sought. But, at any rate, finest instructors could be assembled who would, and must, give personal attention to the trainees to help them delve deep into the intricacies of their chosen fields.

There will be urgent need for skilled managers, accountants, statisticians, corporate business oriented persons, program planners, personnel managers, program coordinators, and other well trained persons.

The training period should not be of token duration, but could be for the period of at least three years. Training should be intensive and thorough but not necessarily overpowering. Trainees should be picked for their known aptitudes and talents so these could be developed to the best degree possible.

Perhaps proven levels of ability, experience and high school diploma levels should be the starting points, picking those people who are more mature and who have good senses of responsibility. They could be family men or single persons. While training, the family units and singles should have adequate housing provided with enough provisions so they can live as normally as possible as any average person. They should not have to worry over economic needs while training. Also, provisions should not be over-generous.

The idea of the training program is posed so that the handling of land claims funds might be administered and initiated with the participation of close to enough key native technicians to help to administer the funding problems of programs, businesses, finances and other functions at the outset. A good start with good native participation will be of paramount importance. It must be solid or close to it.

In the meantime, our native college men and women must strive for greater achievements in school. They will be in demand, first on the seasoning basis for some time under more experienced administrators. In time, and according to their particular talents, they would be elevated into more responsible positions and be in key slots to help to perpetuate the continuing programs and services into the future.

Certainly, there will have to be technical advisors with reputable skills who are non-native at the beginning. These persons should be hired on a temporary basis or until the time when our own native technicians can handle the jobs proficiently. When the trainees, as proposed, finish their courses they could work under the hired technicians for orientation and seasoning. This particular experience should be of great value in the process of gaining needed proficiency.

We hope that our native leaders and their friends will give the proposal a serious consideration. If this could be started in the not too distant future, the gray area of limited effective participation by native people in the administration of programs at the outset, post land claims solution, might tend to work as a drawback. It could be viewed as incompetency on the technical level. Although our people are inherently patient, and would wait for years for our own trained people to do the jobs, the proposal could well speed up the processes of self-administered economies and business oriented lines of work that will arise out of the settlement of the Alaska native land claims.