



Several members of the board of directors gather in front of a portrait of Harry Johns, Sr. in the CEDC board room. (Left to right) Orie Williams, Bob Bulmer, Jerry Loboff, Richard Romer (Chairman), Douglas MacArther, Fred Elvsaa and Gene Peltola.

CEDC board sees urgency in their mission

There is a feeling of urgency amongst the board of directors of Community Enterprise Development Corporation. There is a clear recognition that their mission is truly important, that without thriving, locally owned and operated enterprises, village life can be difficult, especially for young people who all too often turn to alcohol or violence when they don't have productive jobs and responsibilities.

Board Chairman Richard Romer feels CEDC's most important recent achievement has been the establishment of the Native Hire Program. "This creates opportunities for us to develop our human resources, which are our most important assets," he says. He looks forward to helping CEDC become more effective on the local level, creating partnerships with communities.

Gene Peltola, board member from Bethel, is pleased with the newly established administrative infrastructure and competent personnel, but feels the need "to build up more emphasis on direct services to our membership."

Weaver Ivanoff of Unalakleet believes that CEDC has greatly assisted the fishermen of western Alaska with its boat loan program and wants to encourage similar programs that help develop local resources through using the natural talents of the people.

Myrna Torgamsen, board member from Wrangell, is pleased with recent CEDC projects involving village tourism and the Bethel Marina. At the same time, she is impatient, wanting more business ventures in other rural areas, especially her region of Southeast Alaska.

Frank Stein of Kotzebue sees the coming year as a time of planning for the future, both short and long term. He feels the importance of continuing to provide a strong financial base for administering CEDC programs. But his interest goes beyond the bottom line.

"By showing we care, we will also be able to provide good and sound leadership," he says.

Robert Martin, Sr., board member from Juneau, sees CEDC as a pattern for other groups, both private and government, which are trying to improve the economic welfare of rural communities. "CEDC has succeeded in becoming self-endowed," he observes.

Lydia Robart of Port Graham sees CEDC as a role model for village and regional corporations because it has been successful in developing economies in the rural areas themselves. She is proud of the

Howard Rock Scholarship Fund, reactivated by funding from the Bush Development Fund program, and she is impressed with the way Frontier Expeditors has improved the shipment of wholesale items to the small village stores in rural Alaska.

Orie Williams of Nenana, currently working in Bethel, says he has found it personally rewarding to see the rural business start-ups and the new jobs and careers for rural Alaskans fostered by CEDC.

"One accomplishment not to be taken lightly," he adds, "is the mere survival of CEDC. Now, the need is as great as it was twenty years ago, perhaps even greater with the cut in government programs. Now the pressure on CEDC to give more assistance to its membership has surfaced with a loud growl. It's timely and appropriate to steer our programs in the direction of better serving our members and potential members."



CEDC began by reaching out to villages throughout Alaska to help start co-op stores and other enterprises to make Alaskans self-sufficient.



photo by Mark Skok

The unlimited expectation in the faces of these children on Gambell Island is what CEDC is all about. We're committed to help them, and thousands like them, achieve their hopes for the future.