

Leaders Eye Reorganization Of AFN Setup

(Special from the Anchorage Daily News)

By MARGIE BAUMAN

Alaska Native leaders looked into the reorganization of the Alaska Federation of Natives Tuesday, but plan no major moves pending a meeting with a U.S. Interior Department representative coming to discuss the land claims.

Harrison Loesch, assistant U.S. Secretary of the Interior for Public Land Management, was to discuss details of the land claims and enrollment with the Native leadership Tuesday and meet separately with regional representatives and their attorneys. He was also to speak Tuesday evening at a public meeting at Sydney Laurence Auditorium.

The AFN board and representatives of the 12 regions designated under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act gathered in Anchorage Monday for the start of a hard look into the future and pending amendments to the land claims act being discussed in Washington this week.

Harry E. Carter, executive director of the AFN, noted that organization had to date "suc-

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Reorganization . . .

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ceeded in achieving a land settlement and positively influenced the state and nation by our interests at all levels of human concern."

Carter said that the AFN is "currently responsible for seven grants and five contracts totaling over \$3 million annually," and that a number of other federal funds were being considered, pending approval of regional representatives.

Carter said there had been "some adverse feelings of degression amongst the central staff" because the land claims act did not provide for the AFN or a counter-part central organization. But he noted strong support for continuing organization, with power lying within the 12-member task force formed especially for the post-settlement AFN.

State Sen. Willie L. Hensley, D-Kotzebue, proposed creation of the 12-man task force during an AFN executive session at Juneau Jan. 16.

"We need to delineate what powers and responsibilities the statewide corporation will have vis-a-vis the regional corporations," Hensley said at that Juneau meeting, and he continued his support of reorganization Monday while noting legal obligations to the present federation.

Still to be decided are the powers and limitations of the AFN in the post-claims era, "but the very fact that we are here indicates support in setting up the statewide organization," Hensley said.

Carter urged in his report that the pursuit of grants and contracts not be considered the primary function of the AFN central office, but also the provision of services through creation of a central data bank and information clearing house with expertise in all areas of need. "Many of the services could be rendered at little or no cost if we fully utilize the agencies or foundations available to us," he said.

Carter also said that the AFN is faced daily with problems and considerations which affect all Alaskan Natives and urged

the group to consider establishing a regional office representative within AFN to help in the decision making and carrying out business for the various regions.

"Within our staff and personnel limitations, we are your servants and will help as much as possible to carry out our assigned tasks," he said.

The Native leaders also heard a lengthy report from Ken Bass on proposed amendments which would close a number of loopholes in the land claims act. A number of questions on the proposed amendments were raised in the meeting.