

Dissension Hits 13th Region--

Alaska Native Association of Oregon Withdraws

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The bad luck that has clung to the 13th Regional Corporation concept continues to hang like a black cloud over all activities connected with it, and dissension within the questionable Esk-Ind-Al corporation has grown to ominous proportions.

In spite of hard sell promotional material mailed out to Alaska Natives living outside the state (neatly packed into a Seattle First National Bank envelope), mistrust about the motives and legality of the Esk-Ind-Al keep surfacing.

The Alaska Native Association of Oregon has announced its withdrawal from Esk-Ind-Al in a soul-searching letter directed at fellow natives in a similar position.

Presented to the members of the Alaska Federation of Natives in Seattle, Washington, the letter affirms ANAO's belief in a 13th corporation but revealed a history of bickering and in-fighting within Esk-Ind-Al.

Listing such abuses as "questionable use of proxies in voting", "railroading of resolutions and issues", "unbusiness-like handling of financial matters", and "a singular lack

of planning for future management and handling of capital", the Oregon people resigned from the Esk-Ind-Al organization in hopes of re-forming the lower '48 natives into a new corporation that "is truly representative."

Esk-Ind-Al has been strongly controlled by a small group in Washington State, including attorneys William and Fred Paul. Its symbiotic relationship with Seattle First National Bank has raised eyebrows among the twelve legally constituted corporations.

The question is asked: Is

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Esk-Ind-Al interested in the needs and human concerns of out-of-state native people or is it interested in their dollars?

A recent letter sent to many out-of-state natives asking for support for Esk-Ind-Al went out over the signature of the Board of Directors, AFN Incorporated.

Esk-Ind-Al has NO legal affiliation with AFN, Inc., the official Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. The president of that organization, Willie Hensley, notified Esk-Ind-Al that they may NOT use the name of his organization to promote Esk-Ind-Al.

"AFN, Inc. has taken no across the board policy determination on the 13th Region," said Hensley in Anchorage, "but we have been concerned about substantial misrepresentation and lack of information. Some people are being misled."

Hensley said that AFN, Inc. has received requests from organizations of native people living in the lower '48 to have representatives from Alaska come down and address their groups on the alternatives to the 13th Region.

Alaska Natives living outside the state have the option of enrolling back to one of the twelve regional corporations here in Alaska. As members of these corporations they would receive stock equally with local members.

A thirteenth corporation is to be formed only if a majority of Alaska Natives living outside the state favor it. The vote was taken on the enrollment form but due to lack of information at the time of enrollment, John

Hope, Enrollment Coordinator, said non-resident Natives may change their designation up until August 6.

The final vote for or against a 13th corporation will not be tallied until all appeals have been processed, around December 6 or 9, and no legally constituted corporation under the Land Claims Act can be formed until after that date.

Hope said his office, as a federal agency, has made a concerted effort not to get involved in the 13th corporation controversy. "There would be a danger in assisting either one side or another," he stated.

Hope said that the lists of names of non-resident natives were not directly furnished to Esk-Ind-Al or to any other group, but that Esk-Ind-Al may have had an indirect way of obtaining the names through his office.

Many of the native organizations in the lower '48 were hired to assist in the final enrollment push and in locating persons the central Enrollment Office had been unable to find.

The twelve duly constituted regional corporations complain that they have had no access to the lists of names of non-residents in order to present their side of the story, although some have traveled to Washington, Oregon, and California to reach outside native groups.

Like a rollicking family fight on Friday night, the tug-of-war for the vote of the "Lost Tribes" goes on, and the number 13 retains its aura of ill will, conflict, and disaster.