

Joe Upicksoun Joins Board Of NTCA

By MARGIE BUAMAN
(Courtesy of the Anchorage
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BARROW — Joseph Upicksoun balanced his baby daughter Rachael on his knee, pausing to reflect on his new role in the powerful national tribal chairman's association.

"I have a belief that for the first time all the American Natives are united, from Barrow to Florida," Upicksoun said.

"I also have a belief that the Secretary of the Interior can be caused to sweat," he said, smiling, as he handed Rachael to his wife, Alice.

Upicksoun, president of the outspoken Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, was elected to the board of the National Tribal Chairman's Association during a recent convention at Eugene, Oregon.

He is the second Alaskan to hold one of the 12 board positions in this organization, which has risen to national prominence as a spokesman for tribal councils throughout the United States. The first was Don Wright, president of AFN.

"They are the most powerful native group in the country," allowed Upicksoun. "They know how to use the white man's tools — and that's the law.

"What really tickled me is here Alaska's involved in a powerful organization and we have the tenacity to tell the Interior Secretary what to do," he mused.

A board member is equal to a Bureau of Indian Affairs area director: That is, having the responsibility of guardian of the aboriginal people of his area. The tribal chairmen, however, feel they may succeed where BIA has failed because their objective is to unite every Native American in a leadership position.

All members of the N.T.C.A. must be elected officials and have the option of adopting any resolutions of represented tribal groups. Alaska has 12 votes in the association, one for each regional native corporation. Upicksoun was influential in the convention move to recognize the regional corporations to be on equal footing with tribal councils in other parts of the nation.

"The position I now hold as a board member is not my creation," Upicksoun said. "I was asked to serve and I never decline any of my people asking me to serve. I am proud that the Alaska area saw fit that I should be its representative."

At the next meeting of the NTCA, in Kenosha, Wis. Aug. 28-31, the board will discuss recommendations of various tribal organizations regarding land matters for possible pre-

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Joe Upicksoun . . .

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sentation to Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, of paramount interest are land and water rights problems.

Upicksoun also led the Alaska delegation to be the swing vote in electing the new president of the NTCA, Webster Two Hawk of the Sioux Nation, "because Two Hawk understands land problems intimately."

Prior to the Eugene meeting, Upicksoun and other leaders of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation participated in a seminar at Lake Wilderness, Wash. devoted to regional corporate structure, land selection, education, finance and administration and municipal affairs. Mayors and land Chiefs from each of the slope villages participated along with regional corporation officers and staff and the new borough school board.

At Lake Wilderness, an educational retreat center of the University of Washington, the Native leadership met with a battery of experts in each field in the private and governmental sectors. The goals and objectives, policies and procedures of the regional corporation were established, and working relationships with consultants and government officials were sparked.

Interior Secretary Morton recommended the seminar as a pattern for other regional corporations to follow, as a result of proposals put to him after the seminar by the Arctic Slope region.

Morton also noted the understanding of corporate affairs developed as a result of the week-long session.

The recommendations encompassed land selection policies, financial policy, housing program, educational direction, and direction of various lawsuits, including Alaska pipeline activities.