

Restructuring of AFN proceeds with Statewide Village Board

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During the past few years, it has become increasingly clear that AFN needs to provide a way for the villages to have a voice in policy decisions that affect all Alaska Natives.

At the 1984 Convention, a resolution was passed directing the restructuring of AFN to include all Alaska Native peoples and their organizations.

In January of 1985, AFN sponsored a statewide village meeting where one village representative from each of the 12 regions was chosen to sit on a Village Steering Committee. Last year, the Village Steering Committee was replaced the Interim Village Board.

The Board has served for the past year, providing valuable input on 1991 and the restructuring.

At the meeting of AFN's full Board of Directors in late Septmeber, the Interim Village Board presented the full Board with their recommendation for the permanent restructuring

Acting on the recommendation by the Interim Village Board members, the full Board moved to amend the bylaws of AFN to incorporate village representation from each of the 12 regions of Alaska.

The Statewide Village Board members would be elected by regional caucuses at the convention by villages who have paid their village membership dues and convention registration fees.

Though the selection of Statewide Village Board members will be accomplished by those paying dues, the inclusion of the Statewide Village Board on a permanent basis will not be dependent on raising these dues from the villages.

If the bylaw change is adopted by the Board on October 14, however, all villages will be urged to join and pay their dues, in order to participate fully in setting AFN policies.

Another motion, designated Resolution 86-11, authorizes that the

titled to voting representation at AFN Conventions: 1) all ANSCA certified village and urban corporations; 2) all corporations established pursuant to ANSCA which hold title to former reserves pursuant to Section 19 of ANSCA; 3) all Native group corporations established pursuant to ANSCA for Native groups, the certification for which group is pending or has been granted; 4) The Annette Island Indian Reservation of Metlakatla; and 5) all other Native organizations which have been recognized by the federal government as tribal councils under the Indian Reorganization Act or as traditional councils.

AFN would like to make clear that it is inviting **village** participation at the conventions; how the villages decide to choose their delegates, what proportion of them come from the corporations or tribal councils, and who pays the registration fees, are entirely up to the villages. If a dispute arises over delegate selection

from an individual village, NO DELEGATES FROM THAT VILLAGE WILL BE SEATED UNTIL THE VILLAGE ITSELF RESOLVES THE DISPUTE.

Villages have declared that they are ready to help set AFN policy for the past several years. Like the last restructuring, which incorporated the non-profits on the AFN Board, the restructuring of AFN to allow village membership is an idea whose time has come. The issues facing Alaska Natives in the future must be met by a community in solidarity. Each must be willing to shoulder his part of the load.

For the villages, this means taking an active role in AFN's policy decisions. The decisions made by the AFN Board affect all Alaska Natives; it is only fair that villages have their say in decisions which affect them.

