

# AFN Shows Signs of Unity

By MARGIE BAUMAN

ANCHORAGE — The Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. will concentrate henceforth on implementing the Land Claims Act, leaving coordination of social service programs to a special committee.

The move taken at the March 23-25 meeting of the board of directors in Anchorage, indicated renewed solidarity of a majority of regional native corporations and fulfilled a commitment made months ago to outline new goals and objectives for AFN, Inc.

'The new structure will allow maximum concentration by the regions on both the claims implementation and health, education and other (social service) programs that AFN is operating,' said State Sen. Willie Hensley, president of the statewide body.

The plan is to set up a

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separate committee of one representative from each region, to concentrate on social service programs, while the board of directors confronts problems implementing the land claims act.

Several regions have criticized for months the amount of time spent on social service programs by the board, rather than the land claims settlement itself.

The housing program, (now a separate entity) took up hours of the board's time, as did reports and action on health and education programs needing direction from the board.

Larry Oskolkoff, observing the meeting for the Cook Inlet Region, Inc., applauded the new structure. "We were looking to

see if there is substantial progress being made by AFN itself and from what I've seen in the past few days, they have," he said.

Oskolkoff said the Cook Inlet Region board would discuss the new action of the statewide board and consider rejoining. Arctic Slope Regional Corp. and the Aleut Corp. had also expressed concern over the length of time spent on activities not directly related to implementing the land claims act.

In attendance were Gary Longley, Sr., Bering Straits Native Corp.; Herb Smelcer, Alitna, Inc.; Ted Angeson, Bristol Bay Native Corp.; John Borbridge, Jr., Sealaska Corp.; Lucy Carlo,

Doyon Ltd.; Henry Eaton, Koniag, Inc.; Mike Swetof, Aleut Corp.; Cecil Barnes, Chugach Natives, Inc.; and Hensley, for NANA Regional Corp., Inc.

Joe Upicksoun, president of Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, arrived in town for Monday's session of the extended board meeting.

The health and social services committee will meet at its own discretion, with joint meetings with the board perhaps several times a year.

"It will be, in essence, a committee with substantial powers in decision making in the social services area, but still, under the non-profit corp., the present board of directors will

be the primary decision making body," Hensley said.

The board was advised by Carl Jack, head of the AFN Health Affairs Office, that that office would suspend involvement in the Alaska Native Health board, pending appointment of a new health board representing all 12 regions, by AFN, Inc.

"The idea is to duly represent all 12 regions," Jack said. Under the present set-up one representative speaks, in essence, for five regions; yet each region feels some of its health care problems are unique.

Lee Gorsuch of the Alaska Native Foundation, which is funded by the Ford Foundation

to assist in implementing the land claims act, presented the board with a "shopping list" of issues requiring immediate attention. Of the 22 issues enumerated by Gorsuch, recommendations on land selection rules and regulations were rated "top priority."

Indeed, the board later unanimously rejected as unacceptable proposed new rules and regulations provided by federal authorities, on grounds they were detrimental to the land claims settlement.

Concerned by the confusion surrounding enrollment and the March 30 deadline, the board moved to seek a 30 day extension from the Interior Department.

"An extension on the deadline would not hurt," said Longley, who served as acting enrollment coordinator before becoming executive director of Bering Straits Native Corp. "There are already 72,000 applications in."

Representatives from Sealaska, Koniag and Bristol Bay Native Corporations expressed concern over the number of persons outside Alaska who lacked information to make the choice on where to enroll.

"We found the people in the Lower 48 sadly lacking in information," said Eaton, whose region met with potential stockholders in Seattle. "It was sad; it really was. These people should be aware of their options."

In other action, the board heard a report from State Operated Schools officials on Senate Bill 122, which would establish an unorganized borough school district to replace the State Operated School system.

The change is aimed at placing more local controls on education, in military bases and state operated educational facilities in the bush. The bill was originally attacked for the lack of rural input into it, then re-written in the senate after hearings with a great deal of rural input.

The bill in its present form calls for all areas of the unorganized borough school district to initiate the transition of powers by July 1, 1975 and to complete that transition within two years.

It provides, subject to legislative appropriation, \$2,500 to each local school board and council for initial organization and development and priority for rapid transition in fiscal 1974 to areas demonstrating the greatest readiness.

Also under consideration is House Bill 192, which provides only for establishment of military educational service areas, rather than all State Operated Schools in the unorganized borough.

SOS officials advised AFN, Inc. that they supported the senate bill on this matter.