

# Non-profit Native Corporations

## Hope for Relief on Contracting

By NANCY HARVEY

The trials and tribulations of operating a non-profit corporation are many, according to the leaders of Alaska's non-profit Native corporations.

Representatives from state and federal agencies, congressional staffs, and the Native corporations met on June 1, 2, and 3 for the first in a series of conferences addressing the prob-

lems and the future role of Native non-profit corporations.

The conferences are being jointly sponsored by the Alaska Federation of Natives, Rural Alaska Community Action Program, AFN Human Resources Committee, Kawerak, Inc., and the Tanana Chiefs Conference. Coordination for future conferences will be handled by Gordon Jackson of the Alaska Native Foundation.

Fairbanks attorney Barry Jackson co-chaired the conference with newly-elected Human Resources Committee chairman Cliff Black of the North Pacific Rim Native Corporation.

Jackson defined the purpose of the initial conference as two-fold: an internal effort by the non-profits to define their future role and functions, and to determine what public policies at both the national and state level need to be adjusted or changed.

Each of the eleven non-profit representatives gave a brief overview of their historical background and current or past financial difficulties they had encountered in administering state

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and federal programs.

## Perfect Management

Possibly the biggest headache in running a non-profit corporation is attaining an indirect cost rate that will allow for effective program administration. All too often the corporations are tied to low indirect rates mandated by state and federal contracts. This may, and often

does, result in the corporation actually losing money in the administration of programs.

One non-profit leader termed the situation, "subsidizing the federal government to run their programs."

One of the many consequences of inadequate funding for administrative purposes is the problem of hiring and retaining qualified personnel. Many of the non-profit corporations are facing a high staff turnover rate.

"The services that should be provided aren't, the positions that should be filled aren't," said Pat Pletnikoff of the Aleutian-Pribilof Islands Corporation. "We just don't have the money for administration."

Totally, the eleven non-profits are operating in excess of \$25 million in programs — not including health corporations, housing authorities, and other independently run programs. Total losses for the corporations are averaging \$1 to \$1.5 million annually.

State and federal representatives listened intently to the non-profit presentations and responded appropriately. As a result of the conference a state follow-up committee was organized to review problems and recommendations of the non-profits. The committee will meet in Juneau on June 22, prior to the next meeting of the non-profits, to discuss their findings and proposed solutions.

## Outcome Encouraging

Participants were encouraged by the outcome of the initial conference.

"This was a most successful conference in bringing out people's ideas," said Jeanmarie Larson of the Cook Inlet Native Association. "It restored my confidence that we can get things done together."

The non-profits will meet again on June 27 in Anchorage to develop a policy statement on the future role and functions of the corporations. On June 28 and 29 state and federal agencies and congressional staffs will join the non-profits to report on their progress in identifying and resolving issues.

A tentative meeting has also been scheduled for mid-July in Washington, D.C. to meet with state and national leaders and to recommend legislative solutions for consideration by Congress.