

Atty. Chides Congressmen on Lack of Knowledge of Natives

To Alaskans, familiar with seeing Alaska Natives in all types of professional, business and technical positions in the State it seems difficult to comprehend that Congressmen in Washington doubt the Natives' competence to manage their own affairs.

Yet, Congressmen, familiar only with reservation Indians in the lower 48 often view Native leadership as a thin veneer of trained "leaders" whose followers are mainly poor and uneducated people, incapable of managing large amounts of funds

such as would be provided in a land claims settlement.

To combat this image, Tanana Chiefs' attorney Barry Jackson is trying to develop an Alaskan Natives' "Who's Who."

This exhibit would list brief biographies of natives who are professionals, businessmen, technicians and public servants—to establish that Alaskan Native leaders are not just the 20 or 30 AFN board members seen lobbying in Washington.

They are trying to show Congressmen that trained and com-

petent Alaskan Natives fill positions in all walks of life, not just politics. Also, that many native permeate the lower 48, many of whom would return if sufficient opportunities become available.

"Based on our Washington, D.C. contacts," Jackson told the Tundra Times, "and discussion with our Congressional delegation, we have discovered that many Congressmen and Senators who are familiar only with the depressed condition of Indian

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reservations in their own states are not aware that in Alaska there are many natives who have demonstrated capacity for functioning in the American semi-capitalist system.

"While there are many such Indians in the lower 48, they have largely lost contact with the Indians who live on the reservations.

"As a result, these Congressmen and Senators do not realize that Alaska Natives will be able to manage the land and money that will come to Native corporations under the land claims settlement.

"If these members of Congress are not convinced," Jackson stresses, "the land claims settlement may well perpetuate dependency and deny to Alaska's native people the right of self determination."

Jackson has written to several dozen native leaders, heads of educational institutions, corporations, and government agencies for information about Native people who should be included in his exhibit.

He hopes that 500 names can be documented within a short time, hardly an exhaustive list of Alaskan native people in responsible positions, but enough to show the wide range of native

leadership activities.

So far, response to his letters of inquiry has been slim and consists mainly of unorganized information which will require a great deal of clerical help to organize.

He is hoping Tundra Times readers can submit lists of Alaskan Natives who by their education, training, work experience, and current position demonstrate the competence of Alaskan Natives to manage their own affairs and the affairs of Native owned corporations.

Names should be organized by name, age or estimate age, city and state of residence, his or her qualifications and place of origin.

"In a matter of a few minutes I developed a list of 24 such natives from the middle and lower Yukon area of the Tanana Chiefs and that list was far from exhaustive," Jackson said.

Hopefully, an exhibit of pertinent biographies would have some influence on the final land claims bill draft of the Senate and House Interior Committees. It should convince the Senators and Congressmen, Jackson hopes, that regional corporations staffed by Alaskan natives will administer the intelligent and wise use of land claims funds.