

# Akiachak comments on Venetie decision

*Editor's Note: The following statement was faxed to TundraTIMES.*

The Akiachak Native Community is appalled at our congressional delegation regarding the 9th Circuit Court decision on the Venetie case. (*Anchorage Daily News*, Friday, Dec. 20, 1996)

Like most non-Natives in Alaska, the congressional delegation does not understand or care to understand the desire of the Alaska Natives to exercise our governmental authority left to us by our ancestors. The State of Alaska and those that do not comprehend our desires are the "terrible problems."

If Senator Stevens was one of the authors of the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act, then he should remember that ANCSA was a land settlement bill and did not deal with the governmental authority of Alaska's tribes.

The fear of Alaska's non-Natives towards tribal governments is the myth of Balkanization of Alaska. Isn't the formation of state-chartered municipalities and boroughs a form of Balkanization? If the State and Federal governments mandate their forms of government and termina-

tion on the Alaska Natives without our consent, is it a form of democracy or dictatorial act?

It has been the desire of the Akiachak Native Community to become self-sufficient to operate the governmental services and develop economic opportunities for our members on the local level. We will be feeling the pressure to create more jobs when the Welfare Reform becomes implemented. We read the statements of Senator Stevens to mean that all federally funded programs and laws for Alaska's tribes will no longer be in effect of the 9th Circuit Court does not overturn the Venetie case.

All ANCSA corporations were created by federal law and they serve a purpose for the Alaska Native shareholders. They, not the tribes, control the majority of the traditional homelands of Alaska's indigenous peoples.

We don't think the Venetie case does not transfer corporate lands to tribal governments, but opened an avenue for the tribal governments to have governmental authority over the ANCSA lands. Both the tribal government and ANCSA corporations essentially serve the same mem-

bership.

Most eligible Alaska Natives exercise their right by casting votes to the candidates of their choice on all levels. We believe in individuals that promise us that they would represent our concerns on state and federal governments.

The congressional delegation, and the Alaska Majority party, wants to solve the Alaska Native problems by advancing their agenda without full participation of the affected residents. It seems their desire is for the Alaska Natives to remain in poverty, take away our identity by forcing state-chartered governments on villages, and to prevent tribal economies from being developed utilizing existing federal laws.

We urge our congressional delegation and the State of Alaska to refrain from creating "more problems" by opposing the desires of the 226 federally recognized tribes to exercise our governmental authority.

We seek support to preserve one of the most important identities of Alaska's first residents left to us by our ancestors.