

Nome Eskimo Community achieves milestone

The United States Attorney in Anchorage has agreed to dismiss a federal lawsuit against the Nome Eskimo Community (NEC), a federally recognized Indian tribe based in Nome.

The federal government had sought to collect over \$100,000 from the tribe for alleged cost overruns in tribal programs back in the late 1980's. The tribe has always maintained that no federal funds were misspent.

Sandra T. Tahbone, NEC's tribal council president, expressed

the tribal council's satisfaction that this dispute was finally concluded.

"This conflict has been hanging over our heads for seven years now, and it is great to have it finally resolved," she said. "We have been adamant that the tribe did nothing wrong, and we feel vindicated by this agreement. The best thing about the dismissal is that it will allow us to build a more cooperative relationship with the federal government, and this cooperation will allow us to better

serve our tribal members."

The dismissal was part of a settlement agreement worked out between NEC's attorneys, Lloyd Miller and James Glaze of Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Miller & Munson, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Pomeroy. "This is an example of the legal system working as it should. By negotiating in good faith, both sides were able to reach an agreement that makes sense for everyone. The tribal membership and the taxpayers were the biggest

winner because they were saved the expense of a lengthy court battle," Miller said.

Glaze attributed the success of the negotiations in large part to the work of the tribal council and staff, particularly Robin L. Harms, NEC's Executive Director.

"We would not have been able to achieve such a positive settlement for the Tribe if not for the work of Mr. Harms," said Glaze.

For his part, Mr. Harms says the tribe is looking to the future now that the lawsuit is settled.

"The Council and staff are preparing the Tribe for future endeavors through capacity building. This will enable the tribe to offer more services and programs to its members. The settlement agreement will allow NEC to enter this process with a clean slate and a sense of accomplishment," said Harms.

United States District Court Judge John W. Sedwick has been encouraging the settlement process and is expected to approve the stipulation for dismissal shortly.