

Leisnoi weathers tumultuous summer

Leisnoi Inc., a village Kodiak area village corporation, will hold its annual meeting on September 16, leaving behind a long, difficult summer.

The corporation has been staggered by a prolonged battle between shareholders vying for control of the company, and attacks from some Kodiak residents over its land management policies. The internal conflict has been complex, intense and bitter even by the standards of the Kodiak Archipelago, where village corporations and Koniag Inc., the regional Native corporation, struggled for years over merger and de-merger issues.

The current directors took their seats last April when their predecessors resigned en masse amid charges of mismanagement.

In its recently-released annual report, Leisnoi president Edward Ward noted the past year "will be

remembered as a very trying and traumatic period in Leisnoi's history. Many extreme events and challenging situations occurred that threatened our very existence as a Native village corporation. Leisnoi was internally self-destructing while being attacked on all fronts with little or no resources to defend itself."

Leisnoi and a timber venture in which it was involved together lost more than \$2 million last year.

"This was a massive financial blow for a corporation of our size to take," said Ward.

However, he noted that in the last quarter of the company's fiscal year (May, June and July of this year), under new management, the company posted its largest monthly profit ever from operations, \$339,211 in June.

According to the report, the company's chief enterprise is the management and development of

the 53,000 acres it received under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. This includes timber harvesting in the Cape Chiniak area. Most of the 327 shareholders have ancestral ties to Woody Island, located east of Kodiak.

In addition to the timber losses, Leisnoi has had other land management difficulties. First, Kodiak resident Omar Stratman has spent literally decades trying to have Leisnoi decertified as a Native village corporation. Leg-

islation now pending in Congress will likely invalidate Stratman's claims once and for all and re-

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move the cloud over Leisnoi's title to its land. Second, the corporation took steps this summer to post its land holdings and require permits and fees for public recreational use.

"(This) created quite an issue for

the residents and Leisnoi shareholders in Kodiak," Ward stated in the annual report. "The lands we own are our most valuable as-

set. It was no secret our lands were being trashed, abused, and littered upon at will by the residents and visitors of Kodiak."

Some of those lands may eventually be sold to public entities as part of efforts to mitigate damage by the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989 which brought crude oil to local beaches.

At its annual meeting, which will be held at the West Coast International Inn in Anchorage, Leisnoi will elect two directors to three-year terms. The board has nominated four shareholders to its slate from which these seats will be filled. The nominees are Jeffrey Chester, Michael Komm, Michael Kerr and David Ardinger. Five other directors are not up for election this year, including Ward, Chairman Fred Zharoff, Linda Resto, Robert Carpenter and Bruce Robertson.

Bristol Bay Native Corp. posted its third straight net earnings increase in 1995, according to its recent annual report. The corporation earned \$3,868,000.

While BBNC has previously had higher net earnings, the corporation earned more from operations in 1995 than any other time in its 23-year history.

The 12 percent increase in net earnings is attributed to improved operations at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel, reduced financing expenses and natural resource income.

"The investment portfolio did not perform well last year, but over the long-term, the conservative strategy employed by the board has proven quite effective," the annual report stated. "The corporation's new ventures in corporate, environmental, and government service contracting are off to a slow start, but are showing positive growth in a highly competitive marketplace."

A donation of \$5,000 has been made by **Calista Corp.** towards establishment of a nursing home in

Bethel. The facility would be the first of its kind in western Alaska. The regional corporation donated another \$100,000 to the Betty Guy Memorial Fund for the betterment of elders, much of which is also expected to be used for the nursing home. *The Tundra Drums.*

Corporation Digest

A new headquarters building for **Bering Straits Native Corp.** is rising in Nome. The two-story, 14,500 square-foot structure is being built primarily with local labor and materials. When completed, the building will house BSNC, and the Bering Strait Foundation. The corporation's current office building will be sold to Kawerak Inc., the regional non-profit Native association. This will allow Kawerak to consolidate its scattered offices under one roof. *The Nome Nugget.*

Three 30-foot Tlingit river canoes streaked across Twin Lakes near Juneau last month to the cheering of excited spectators on shore.

Although made of fiberglass rather than the old time cottonwood or spruce, the canoes proudly displayed their traditional lines and were powered with plenty of cultural spirit. The independent crew known as the Tlingit Warriors beat out crews sponsored by **Goldbelt Inc.**, the Juneau urban Native corporation and **Sealaska Corp.**, regional Native corporation for southeast Alaska. Participants hope the first-ever contest will become a regular summer social and cultural event. *Juneau Empire.*

Speaking of fast boats, **Goldbelt Inc.** president Joe Beedle has been pitching the idea of a privately-operated high-speed ferry system for Upper Lynn Canal. Beedle predicted such a venture could capture 63 percent of the traffic between Juneau and Haines, and 54 percent of the Juneau-Skagway run from ferries currently operated by the state. He suggested land owned by Goldbelt could house a terminal for a hundred-ton ferry, 250 feet long, capable of holding 100 vehicles. *Chilkat Valley News.*

NANA Regional Corp. of Kotzebue announced the discovery of large deposits of zinc and lead just 1,500 feet north of the Red Dog Mine in northwest Alaska. Although the deposit must still be proven commercially viable, corporation officials were encouraged by the quality of the deposit, the prospects of increasing the life of the mine and sustaining shareholder hire. *The Arctic Sounder.*