

Shareholder feels corporation is drifting

This is an open letter to Mr. Donald Nielsen, Senior Vice President of Bristol Bay Native Corporation.

Dear Mr. Nielsen:

I have been reading your articles in the papers and I want to comment on some of your views and assertions. For the most part, I favor what you say about unity. There is a need to solidify our relationships whether we agree on issues or not.

You know that I feel strongly that BBNC as a whole has lost touch with its people in Bristol Bay. BBNC has no real presence in our region and has been drifting further away as time goes on. There is a one person office in Dillingham and little else that shows that we have a regional corporation. BBNC presence is felt only during proxy time.

Unless you and other members of the BBNC administration are closer to your people, you will lose sight of what our values are in the villages. I feel as though you and BBNC in its policy making ignore what our people really think.

I think our people want to give our children born after 1971 full shares of stock in our regional and village corporations. This statement flies in the face of your survey results. No one that I know who has thought about this has said that they want to exclude our children. They don't want to make them second class shareholders either.

I believe that if your survey had been preceded by an adequately funded information campaign that that would have allowed all of our people in all of our villages a real chance to debate including our children in ANCSA benefits, taking care of our elders, never selling our land and protecting our stock, you would have found the survey results considerably different.

There are many of our people who need more time to debate these issues in an unhurried manner. Our elders, many who do not read, write, or understand English, need to be allowed to give us their considered opinion on these issues. Our children, who were born after 1971, need

to be asked how they feel about being left out.

Those born after 1971 also need to be asked if their brothers and sisters need to be given stock just like us. After all, we were given stock at no cost to any of us. The 1971 date was an arbitrary date that should never have been in the ANCSA law.

All villages and regions should be given the right to issue free stock to those born after 1971 as soon as possible. It is critical that this injustice to our children be corrected immediately to prevent future litigation, heartache, bad feelings and social disruption. The villages and regions should issue stock and let the villages decide who are eligible just as it was done when the first was issued.

I would recommend that BBNC engage in a regional information program to allow all of its shareholders an opportunity to hear the people express themselves in the land claims act and the implications of 1991. I urge you to work with our school districts in Bristol Bay to get

closer to our children in school so that they can learn about the land claims act.

I traveled to nine village schools recently and found that many of our students need more information on the land claims act. Our children need to be taught about how the act was developed and eventually passed by Congress. They need to know how much land they own as village shareholders and regional shareholders. They have to learn to understand the meaning of being a shareholder. They must be told what their rights, duties and responsibilities are as shareholders in their village and regional corporation.

I believe you need to hold village hearings on ANCSA and 1991 before 1991 legislation is introduced in Congress. You need to have material sent to each shareholder long before your ANCSA/1991 hearings are held.

The hearing process will lift the awareness level of ANCSA and 1991 in our minds and give us information that our people need to more accurately guide you as you

negotiate 1991 legislation on our behalf.

You could select an impartial hearing officer to conduct the hearings and begin to plan the hearing schedule when our people are at home during the winter. You could also hold hearings during festivals and other times when people are concentrated in one place during the winter.

I share these thoughts with you because I don't agree with your position on many issues, especially when you rely on a survey that I believe is faulty at best. That survey does not reflect what our people want to do about 1991 issues because the issues were not explained clearly before the survey was given. Further, because of a general lack of knowledge of the Land Claims Act itself, how could you or anyone else expect a survey to give you policy guidance?

Thank you for your consideration.

Nels A. Anderson, Jr.
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