

# Success is for all

By Steve Conn

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The Alaska press continues to depict the assertion of governmental power by Alaskan tribes as a threat to state sovereignty. More than one Alaskan politician has stated that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act put an end to the special obligations owed Alaskan Indians and Eskimos as tribal members by the federal government. These politicians view that as a good thing.

But it is not a good thing for the non-Indian and Eskimo in Alaska. And it would not be a good thing for the state we love.

The reasons are simple.

If the federal government owes no special obligation to Alaska Natives for a string of governmental services, then the state of Alaska must foot the bill.

Twenty-five years of statehood have not demonstrated that Alaska wants to provide fundamental services to those hundreds of communities peopled by Alaska Natives that are *both* first or second class cities (or) members of the unorganized borough called "the bush") under Alaska's flag and authority and tribes under the doctrine of federal Indian law.

Even diehard Libertarians acknowledge that government has some basic responsibilities. Things like providing law and order and courts.

Alaska has not lived up to those basic responsibilities in a hundred plus villages. No urban Alaskan would long endure the degree of services provided to Alaskan Natives as citizens of this state who happen to live where the roads don't run and only ravens and Wien fly.

Termination of the special relationship would mean an end to federal obligations to support these services and, more importantly, to provide ways for tribal governments to take care of their own needs.

It is time for Alaskans to realize that whether or not they are pro-tribe or anti-tribe as a matter of principle or belief, that federal obligations and tribal power are ways to accomplish the impossible: governance of the Alaskan land mass that state government cannot reach.

And what of for-profit Native corporations established under ANCSA? Are they powerful demons in our midst, hell bent on division of Alaska society?

In fact they are not. ANCSA corporations, unlike the rip and run multinationals, are Alaskan corporations for Alaska. Their stockholders are born and will live and die here. Their investments make us all prosperous. They provide jobs for Natives and non-Natives alike.

ANCSA corporations are models for the Alaska business community. What they earn is returned to the Alaska economy. They are part of the Great Land as long as they are owned and managed by Alaskans.

Native control and Native power is Alaskan control and Alaskan power.

Control of Alaskan destiny by Alaskans will never occur without tribes and Native corporations as partners and allies in that battle to free ourselves from the colonialists and their allies among the local business and social elite.

I am pro-Native because I am pro-Alaskan. Alaskan tribes are Alaskan. Alaskan Native corporations are Alaskan. Their fight for survival is our fight. Our fight for survival is theirs.