

The d-2 controversy: truth or rhetoric?

The Alaska Federation of Natives have faced many major issues in the past and we will be forced to face many more in the future. The major issue facing us at the present, however, is the issue of d-2 and its consequences. This one is as important as the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act itself and should be viewed in that light.

Our elected leaders have all made many statements, both pro and con in regard to the need for legislative remedy. The issue of d-2 has produced another issue of major significance; the issue of believability and credibility. If all of the statements we heard were true, then all of those we have heard would be liars. We are in a quandry as to who to believe and who to trust in our movement toward another try at Congress. Obviously, not all of our leaders are liars, nor all of our liars leaders, fortunately. But, it has become increasingly difficult to ascertain who one can put one's faith with, without fearing derision or loss of credibility.

Governor Hammond asked that we rally around our Alaskan Flag. No one could feel otherwise, unless they preferred living elsewhere. But, it will be difficult to get anyone to rally around anything, including our flag, unless we do something extraordinary that brings us all together. These comments are written in the hope that suggestions in regards to an outreach mechanism, can be elicited and from them one chosen that will act as a catalyst and meld our oft times tangential resources.

There is a great need to get all of our representatives of differing views, together, to begin understanding and learning from one another. The reason that so many different positions are taken and backed unquestioningly, is that very few of the principals who represent those views, have sat and listened to the reasoning of the "opposition." It is not altogether their own fault. Those who have the greatest stake in the outcome of the d-2 resolution, have not taken charge and played the lead role as they could and should have done. It is time that the State of Alaska meets with the other major landholders and those of other interests and develops a plan of action to change the apathy and distrust that presently permeates our populace. It won't be easy, and this suggestion as to one way it might be done is hopefully only one of many.

An invitation should be sent to all significant factions who have demonstrated a sincere interest in the future use of Alaska's lands. A working conference should be convened with the goal clearly known to be the development of a compromise position that the majority of Alaskans can support. All participants would know without question, that no one would be able to salvage all that they desired in the final compromise position. Because many from the National level have never heard the reasoning put forth by those who live on and off of the land, it would be an opportunity to have them sense the realities of what living with the land really means. It would give those from the National level an opportunity to explain why they back the position they have taken. No representative has any greater feelings or knowledge of the feelings of their constituency than the other and it would soon become clear that omnipotence is not within the grasp of either. If truth was what the ultimate decision was to be based on, then all could realize true compromise and real benefit, without sacrifice. For truth is the most powerful weapon Alaskans have in this d-2 battle, and if we do not utilize it, it will never be heard. And, the only way we can assure that it will be heard is to place everyone before everyone else, on satellite or local television coverage and give them an opportunity to sell their idea.

(See THE D-2, Page Ten)

● The d-2 Controversy

(Continued from Page Two)

Or, if it works at all, to sell at least a portion of their idea, and accept portions of other ideas expressed.

Alaskans are no different from anyone else; we laugh, we cry, we have our hopes, and we sometimes hunger. But, we are all human beings and want to be treated as such. Those simple messages will enable us to make much more inroads into the preservationist mentality than all the threats we can muster, or all the clout we can deliver. Let us prove that truth and humility are more powerful than rhetoric and disdainful enterprise.

Clifford A. Black
Executive Vice President
Human Resources
Alaska Federation of Natives