

# ASRC Severs Ties with AFN--

## Upicksoun Says Statewide Group No Longer Effective

By MARGIE BAUMAN  
(Courtesy of Anchorage Daily News)

Arctic Slope Regional Corp., citing the priorities of a land-orientated native people as the heart of the matter, has pulled out of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

"To resign as a member of the Alaska Federation of Natives board of directors and to withdraw the membership of the Arctic Slope Regional Corp. in the AFN are matters of serious concern and require judicious consideration," said ASRC president Joseph Upicksoun in the letter of resignation to AFN President Donald Wright this week.

"This reflection has, as you no doubt have felt, been occurring since the passage of the Dec. 18, 1971 legislation," he said.

"It is agreed that the native organizations of Alaska need some strong focal point to voice their concern and from which certain coordinated messages may be carried that affect our mutual interest.

"How this organization is to evolve in order to gain the rapport, cooperation and support of the several autonomous groups within the native community is a difficult and delicate

task of leadership. We do not feel that this effort has been successful to date despite the hard work in its attempt," Upicksoun said.

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CROSS-CULTURE ENCOUNTER AT KENAI — Over 150 Native students from the new Wildwood Project crowd into classrooms at the Kenai High School.

— Photo by JACQUELINE GLASGOW

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The Arctic Slope leader further charged that the AFN had, "moved too rapidly and with assumed powers into several fields of endeavor; thus not aiding but confusing the leadership of its constituent parts.

"In housing, we have experienced consternation and resultant delay; in education, our local budgets experienced cuts because of the central effort to establish Wildwood; in health, we find ourselves competitors with, rather than recipients of aid because of our coordinator's assertion of leadership and program controls.

"Consequently, the ASRC believes it is in the best interest of its own growth and development to openly withdraw its support and membership in the present structure of the Alaska Federation of Natives with the hope that an arms length approach to a greatly modified structure may occur," Upik-soun said.

Responding to the letter, Wright said that the AFN moved "only in a direction in the best interests of the majority. In the case of the Arctic Slope, they have been truly discriminated against by the state, in not providing adequate educational facilities, even after taking \$900 million out in bonds bids on the oil.

"In housing, it's true that the AFN was unable to deliver because of the extreme cost and limited ability of ASHA (Alaska State Housing Authority) to respond to the most needy area and many of the North Slope residents blame AFN for something we had no control over.

"RurAL CAP has not extended its services to the Arctic Slope. We have encouraged this, but gotten little or no response.

"AFN probably fought harder in support of Arctic Slope forming a borough than any other single entity. The record is clear on that and AFN did serve them well in achieving borough status, because AFN knows the state and federal government have refused equal opportunity and equal service to Arctic Slope.

"So my personal feeling is

that I get along with the members of the Arctic Slope, the statement from Joe is accurate and true and AFN will continue to fight to bring service to Arctic Slope in spite of the withdrawal," Wright said. "The federal and state representatives are deliberately neglecting certain regions to cause dissension and misunderstanding among the people of Alaska. I charge them with neglect and wilful intent to disrupt orderly integration in the societies of Alaska," he said.

The move is not the first pullout of the Arctic Slope from AFN. On Oct. 20, 1970 Charles Etuk Edwardsen Jr., Executive Director of Arctic Slope Native Association, announced a decision to withdraw from AFN.

Although a reconciliation came later, before the land claims settlement, Edwardsen's points at that time still underline the philosophy of the people of the Arctic Slope.

He said, in part, "we have supported the AFN in its goal of 40 million acres, \$500 million and a two per cent overriding royalty.

"However, we have objected continually to the philosophy of the AFN which under the Eskimos of the Arctic Slope have asserted dominion over the entire 56.5 million acres of the Arctic Slope since time immemorial. Our ancestors have lived and died there for thousands of years. It is our land, and now the white man comes upon our land to devastate it and to exploit its natural resources.

"What are we receiving in return for this treatment? We are being allowed to participate in a settlement whose framework is not based on rights in land, but rather is hinged on social welfare.

"Both the AFN bill and the senate passed bill make population the basis for distributing the cash proceeds and for confirming title to land in the natives. These bills simply do not provide for a fair exchange between what is being taken from us and what we receive in exchange," he said.