

Interior villages aided by association

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There has been a lot of talk about the future of the Native regional and village corporations created by the land claims act.

A lot of talk about how village and region may clash over priorities in resource development, or clash over new and traditional uses of the land.

The management, and villages making up one region, Doyon,

Ltd., have done something to prevent such conflicts from reaching the point of no return.

At the urging of a seven-man village/regional steering committee, village corporation presidents incorporated the Interior

Village Association (IVA), in December, 1975.

The purpose of IVA is to provide technical assistance to Doyon village corporations to help them run their businesses and manage their land.

As IVA President Bob Jenks explains it, the regional corporations had a duty to help the villages set up their own corporations and select their land. However, Doyon and the In-

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IVA offers buffer between village, region

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terior villages came to the realization "that the duties of the regional corporation did not legitimately include management of the village corporations. There came a time when the relationship with regard to land was undefined. And the same was true with corporate management."

Buffer Role

Jenks is quick to emphasize that serious regional/village conflicts may not arise. However, he acknowledges that underlying IVA's role as an educator is the potential to become an effective village-oriented buffer between village and region.

For village corporations that do not like "big - daddy" regional corporation looking over their shoulder all the time, IVA is just the thing.

The non-profit association provides several "packages" of services to member villages according to a fee schedule approved by IVA's Board of Directors, the 37 villages in the region covered by Doyon and the Tanana Chiefs Conference belong to IVA. Each year, they elect a seven-person Board of Directors to oversee IVA's program, budget and expenditures.

Village Oriented

This control of IVA by the villages is crucial to its success. According to Jenks, "We are 100% village-oriented. We have no other loyalties, either with our money or our time."

Just what can IVA do for its members?

An initial package of basic services is mandatory for villages if they wish to buy other packages. The basic list includes a periodical "Information Bulletin," attendance by IVA staff of a minimum of two village corporation board meetings, educational material on taxation, fiscal reporting, shareholder relations, by-laws, budgets, business ventures and filing systems. The list also includes a corporate management seminar for village corporation staff and boards and referral of general investment proposals received by IVA.

IVA Financing

Making this first package mandatory helps IVA pay overhead and "keep the doors open," as Jenks puts it.

In order to open the doors at all, IVA received a \$20,000 loan from Doyon, which has been repaid, and a \$20,000 grant through the Alaska Native Foundation from the Donner Foundation.

Who actually provides the services under the IVA banner?

Jenks, as president of IVA, is responsible for developing and overseeing its programs on a day-to-day basis. He is also a land specialist and qualified to assist corporations with land management problems. The association also has a vice-presi-

dent for management services, an administrative assistant, a part-time attorney, a part-time accountant and a secretary.

Services Optional

Jenks explained that all services are optional beyond the initial package. Although the emphasis is on educating village corporations, IVA will perform some services on a regular basis.

Other services available to villages include computer financial record keeping, creation of stock register and issuance of stock certificates.

Land management services include land records, advice on easements and navigable waters, land use planning, training seminars and development of a Land Asset Valuation program designed to save money for village corporations they might otherwise have to pay in land taxes.

The fact that all but six Doyon villages have bought services from IVA is some indication of the success the association has had.

Although Jenks warns that such a system might not be

successful elsewhere, he commented, "We look at this as something that is working very well in our region."

Reasons for Success

According to Jenks, there are several reasons for IVA's success. Because of its "great specialty and expertise," IVA is able to "look down the road at issues that are coming and help the Boards of Directors prepare for them."

"Secondly, we are non-profit. We feel that by being non-profit, there is less chance of village funds being carted off where they don't belong," Jenks explains.

In addition, "We're never political. Our job is to offer technical and administrative services." Being non-political makes IVA the likely group to head off regional/village conflicts.

Reserving the right to back out of any discussion, Jenks suggests IVA can still go a long way to solve problems:

"We'll do every thing in our power, up to a point to resolve

the hassle," Jenks said, "I feel that it provides a healthy organizational outlet for a time when conflicts could arise between villages and regions. It provides an arm's length relationship that's structured to prevent instability."

A modest brochure published by IVA neatly summarizes its goal:

IVA's Goal

"We believe: IVA can provide village corporations with more and better technical, administrative and managerial services, at less cost, than can be obtained from any other sources."

And Jenks concludes, "I know there are many people in the state who are pessimistic about the future of village corporations. But I feel the existence of IVA has stabilized our villages."