



Niles Cesar joined SEARHC in 1979.

SEARHC names Cesar as president

Niles Cesar has been named president of the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corporation. Cesar, who first joined SEARHC in 1979, has most recently been the organization's executive vice president.

SEARHC provides health services to Native people in Southeast Alaska. It is the nation's largest Native-administered health care organization.

Cesar said that when he joined SEARHC the corporation's budget was \$600,000. Now it's up to \$18 million.

The big jump, Cesar said, came in 1986, when SEARHC took over operation of the Indian Health Service's Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka. SEARHC, which also runs the Juneau Medical-Dental Clinic and community based programs in the rural villages, now has a staff of over 350.

The Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 mandated that the Indian Health Service turn its medical facilities over to Native control. Since then, Cesar said, there's been a big change in the relationship between Native organizations and IHS.

"It used to be much more adversarial. IHS thought services would deteriorate when transferred to Native hands, but we have demonstrated that we can deliver quality services," he said.

He credits his predecessor, Ethel Lund, and the SEARHC board of directors with the successful incorporation of hospital operations.

Both Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital and the SEARHC Juneau Clinic have this year again received full accreditation from the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.

Cesar said he plans to continue the work of Lund, who resigned late last year to take a position with state Division of Subsistence.