

KETZLER SURVIVES CHALLENGE

Strong Bid to Oust Ketzler as President of Tanana Chiefs Fails

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Nine years ago, Alfred Ketzler of Nenana joined the land claims fight. In the early 1960s, he organized the Tanana Chiefs Conference and became its president. Later, he was part of the early leadership of the Alaskan Federation of Natives.

For almost a decade, Ketzler, like a host of other native leaders, often sacrificed jobs, personal life and security to organize a political movement that could accomplish the changes we see today—native power, political influence, settlement of native land claims.

Last weekend, after serving as president of the Tanana Chiefs for most of the years since he founded it, Ketzler had to fight for his office. The Tanana Chiefs met in Fairbanks September 10 and 11 to consider reorganizing their board as a regional corporation under the laws gov-

erning nonprofit corporations in the State of Alaska.

The once almost meaningless post of head of the Tanana Chiefs has become a powerful office. For years, the Tanana Chiefs was a regional organization of destitute Athabascan villages without power, without money, without anything—but hope—and for many villages, there was not much of that either.

Now, with funds from AFN, federal grants and extensive BIA contracts, it is becoming a powerful regional organization.

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MECHANICS EXPLAINED—As Tanana Chiefs president Al Ketzler looks on, attorney Barry Jackson explains the ramifications of land claims legislation.



DEFEATED CHALLENGER—Ralph Perdue of Fairbanks made a strong bid to wrest the chief post in the new Tanana Chiefs conference from Al Ketzler last week. Fred Stickman is shown in the background at the meeting.

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Among its new assets are paneled offices in the new Fairbanks Native Community Center and access to the Center's staff of experts on employment, education, housing and a host of other native concerns.

As the Tanana Chiefs met to consider their problems, foremost among their concerns was land claims. Next came their reorganization—to create a non-profit corporation which will administer money and programs. The corporation, which was approved, will be known as Dena 'Nena' Henash and will include the member villages of the Tanana Chiefs.

Along with the reorganization came a new slate of officers for the newly forming organization. A powerful move developed to replace Al Ketzler as president. Ralph Perdue of Fairbanks made a strong bid for the presidency of the new corporation, which will administer hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of money and programs.

The men of Interior Alaska who met to vote on officers were mostly part of the older generation—many of them imbued in the old ways and tradi-

tions trying valiantly to solve pressing problems of poverty, health, sanitation and housing.

They know Al Ketzler as a vocal, articulate, experienced fighter. He won the presidential post by a vote of 13 to 9. The time has not come when a fighter is no longer needed.

Ketzler himself, and he says it often, is not a bureaucrat. He recognizes that someone else will have to administer the settlement when it comes.

The old ways are swiftly changing. Many young people are tired of giving lip service to the old ways when they see so many new ways to tackle problems. They want to voice. They want leadership.

Near the end of the two day Tanana Chiefs conference Mitchell Dementieff, a young Fairbanks native, addressed the Chiefs to ask for their support for a new youth organization—the Native Youth Movement. He, and the more than 50 young people who are founding the group, want to combine the old and the new—not talk about a return to the 'old ways' of their people. They want to work with their elders—but separately.

Many of the older chiefs protested. How, they insisted, can these young people form their own movements so blithely. Why don't they take part in the native associations, the Tanana Chiefs, the other regional groups?

Native politics is no longer revolutionary. Native youth, brought up in a political age, want to chart their own directions.

Today, the leaders of the Tanana Chiefs, and of other regional organizations, are the respected elders of their villages. Tomorrow, their sons and daughters will demand a voice. They will demand leadership because their parents have sent them to the white man's schools and they understand the complexities of organizational management, power politics and legal maneuvers as their parents often do not.

When that day comes, and it has already begun in the AFN, an epoch will be over. It will leave its bitter memories as well as its proud ones.