

# TCC proposal calls for Native support

*The following is a proposal designed to improve Native advocacy on a statewide basis, according to Mitch Demienieff, president of the Tanana Chiefs Conference Inc. of Fairbanks. He explained that the proposal calls for the villages and nonprofits to assume the Alaska Native Foundation to focus on tribal and human resources issues and that the corporations would remain within the Alaska Federation of Natives. TCC recently withdrew from AFN.*

This concept paper is intended to initiate discussion as to the type of organizational structure that will be needed by the Alaska Native community statewide as we journey into the 1990s and beyond.

The recent experience with the 1991 legislation has pointed out quite clearly that the interests of the profit corporations and the Native people and/or villages in Alaska are not always the same.

Accordingly, this paper puts forward the concept of two strong Native organizations working together for the common good of Alaska Natives, but each with its own special concerns. AFN would continue to represent the corporate interests and ANF would represent the individual and villages interests.

Both organizations working together could sponsor the annual convention, but more importantly each organiza-

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tion independently could specialize in meeting the unique needs of their members. Since AFN is already doing a good job with the corporations, the suggestion being proposed is that ANF develop along parallel lines to provide a like service for individuals and villages.

Looking ahead to the 1990s and beyond, the important thing to consider is capacity building.

That is what this proposal is all about. The villages' ability and Native people's ability to survive in an increasingly more complex arena.

### Proposal

It is proposed that the Alaska Native Foundation consider a restructuring that would allow it to become a statewide, centralized resource center serving the regional nonprofit corporations, the traditional villages and IRA governments and individual Native Alaskans.

The foundation's work would be focused on charitable purposes, i.e., improving the health, human services, education, social well-being and culture of its members. In other words, a resource center/foundation for the improvement of human condi-

tions affecting the lives of Alaska Natives.

### Goals and Objectives

An example of some of the areas the foundation could work within are as follows:

- Human resource issues — problems affecting the quality of life and preservation of the lifestyle and culture of Alaska Natives.

- Tribal issues — sovereignty, tribal courts, Indian child welfare, jurisdiction, Native rights protection and others.

- Village government — training and technical assistance to help the traditional and IRA councils become better governments. If we are going to survive as a culture and race, we must have a strong and effective government structure capable of providing services and competing with non-Native structures.

- Economic development — the prevention of poverty and poverty creating conditions, the development of economic opportunity compatible with the rural lifestyle, local hire and others.

### Discussion

The above four areas of concern are

presently not being addressed on a statewide perspective, as a result, some of the nonprofits have developed specialized expertise in some areas and other corporations have not. This kind of hit and miss approach is not in the long-term best interests of Alaska Natives, especially as it relates to the above issues.

If the Alaska Native Foundation would take up this task and seek funding and secure staff who are specialists in each of the above for the specific purpose of providing technical assistance and support to the nonprofits and villages, and for providing advocacy services on behalf of all Natives in Alaska it would be possible to develop a very important and necessary resource.

At the present time, AFN makes an attempt to provide some of the above services, but they fall far short of the goal, focusing mostly on the needs of the corporations and approaching problem solving from the perspective of the corporation.

Obviously, this conflict in interest and perspective causes problems as witnessed in the 1991 legislative struggle. By having two strong organizations, one looking out for the needs of the corporations and one looking out for human needs, we would have a balance between both viewpoints and a much better chance of meeting all the needs of various Native organizations, groups and people.