

Leask says Washington seems receptive

AFN visit finds reaction to ANCSA proposed amendments encouraging

Key members of Congress and officials in the Department of Interior appear receptive to possible changes in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), according to AFN President Janie Leask.

"AFN will not go to the Congress with concrete amendments until the Native community reaches a consensus on precisely what amendments should be sought," Leask continued. And that is expected to happen in March, at a special 1991 convention in Anchorage.

The AFN contingent went to Washington seeking initial reactions to general concepts developed by AFN over the last two years. Those concepts are proposals to amend ANCSA and resolve problems associated with 1991, when restrictions are to be

lifted from Native corporation stock.

Leask said the trip to Washington was to elicit some general, initial reaction to the proposals, as they stand now, and to discuss the timing of ANCSA legislation.

"We needed to know whether any of the concepts were way off-base; whether they had any fundamental objections to the concepts we're considering," Leask said. "Since we will be working with Congress and Interior on ANCSA amendments, it's important that we keep in close contact with them."

"We're very encouraged by the reactions of the people we talked to," she said, "they seemed amenable to the ideas that we are considering. The only major questions which came up were

about eliminating dissenter's rights."

That refers to the right of a shareholder, under certain circumstances, to demand that the corporation buy out his shares if he opposes the corporation's action.

Leask said further research on dissenter's rights is planned before the March convention.

Although the 1991 concepts are still in draft form, Leask said, the AFN group wanted to be able to report back on the Washington reaction at the March convention and at a Statewide Village Conference to be held Jan. 31.

The AFN group also talked with the senator and congressmen about timing of ANCSA legislation. Leask said such factors as election years and hearing

timetables should be considered, since they can affect the outcome of legislation.

In addition to Leask, the Native group included AFN Chairman Charlie Johnson, Oliver Leavitt (Arctic Slope Regional Corp.), Roger Lang and Chris McNeil (Sealaska), Spud Williams (Tanana Chiefs Conference), John Schaeffer (NANA), and Morris Thompson (Doyon, Ltd.).

The group met with Alaska's Congressional delegation; Rep. Morris Udall, chairman of the House Interior Committee; Rep. John Seiberling, Chairman of the Public Lands and National Parks Subcommittee and a member of the House Interior Committee; Senator James McClure, Chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee; Senator Malcom Wallap, Chairman of the Public Lands Subcom-

mittee; John Katz, head of the Governor's Washington, D.C. office; Interior Secretary William Clark and his Deputy undersecretary for Alaska, Bill Horn; and various staff from house and senate committees expected to address the legislation.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 settled the aboriginal land claims of Alaska Natives. The landmark legislation awarded Alaska Natives 44 million acres of land and \$962.5 million as payment for lands given up. ANCSA set up a system of regional and village corporations to manage the assets for their Native shareholders.

The movement to amend ANCSA focuses on such major issues as land protection, stock alienation, participation of Natives born since 1971 and the corporate structure, itself.