

Politics can be used to change future

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As Alaska Natives think about the future they should begin to think in terms of who they want to be and what relationship they want with other, non-Native peoples, says Sea-Ska Chairman Byron Mallott.

Mallott said that Alaska Natives have to decide in the future "not only how we got here but who do we want to be. What is it we want to be able to say to other people that is important to us."

"We talk about our culture and identity. We know we want to survive as a Native people and to continue to be recognized as a racial identity," said Mallot, but he said the important question is how to relate to others.

"We can exist in isolation and in spite of others or we can use our influence and ideas to make changes and work with the public so they can join us," said Mallott.

Mallott said that part of the way to achieve change is to work within the political system. But that system has a bad reputation among many people, he says.

"It is ironic that if Native

leaders have a reputation among the community it is for being good politicians," he said. "If people want something done, they go to Native politicians," he said.

"Politics has to do with making change. Managing change is not something that should be taken lightly at all. Many of the institutions that we must change do not share our aspirations or understand our aspirations or the goals of the Alaska Native people."

Good politicians can help change that, he said but "to make change you have to have some sense of what it is you want to achieve."

Mallott said that when Alaska Natives have set their sights on a goal they can unify and achieve what they want. "That's politics," he said.

But to achieve what they want, people must change the institutions and that takes dedication and vision, he said.

"We talked about what Native people determined for themselves as important and how to achieve it in such a way that people respond. We have demonstrated that we have been able to do it in the past and there is no question but that we will be able to do it in the future."