

# Williams responds to Sitka IRA commentary

*(The following commentary, written by Frank O. Williams, of Sitka, a board member of the Sitka Community Association, was presented to the Tundra Times in response to commentary published December 20, written by Andrew Hope of Sitka. Mr. Hope's commentary was largely critical of SCA's recruitment of hiring key personnel.)*

By FRANK O. WILLIAMS

I read an article on Sitka I.R.A. in the December 20 Tundra Times and would like to add to the information given in the article. I disagree that Pete Azure was largely responsible for reorganizing the I.R.A. in Sitka. Various members of the Sitka ANB took the initiative (Mr. Azure was not active in ANB) of getting all the local native organizations together,

ANB, ANS, Tlingit-Haida, Shee Atika, IEA/JOM, IRA for a meeting.

This group made the decision to reorganize the I.R.A. and utilize P.L. 93-638. Mr. Azure did serve as President, but there were other key members who made it work. As to the first General Manager staying for two years, all the extensions made by the General Manager were at the request of the Board, and usually the vote by the Board was unanimous.

It was not the General Manager's fault that the Assistant General Manager's position was not filled, he reminded the Board quite a few times that the position should be filled. The position was advertised and no selection made, but it was a Board decision.

When Mr. Azure left Sitka, he indicated that he may

be back, and never did resign his position as President.

The General Manager and some Board members did maintain contact with Mr. Azure but he never did resign his position, finally the Board took action to notify Mr. Azure that his position as President was going to be declared vacant, he was given time to respond, he did not, then the Board did take action to declare the President's position vacant. In the interim, Mr. Bill Brady who was the Vice President was the acting President.

In first selection of a new general manager, the vote was 4 to 2, with 2 votes for Mr. Azure. The four who voted for the other candidate knew Mr. Azure, served with him when he was President, all the Board members knew him when he worked for Sheldon Jackson, all

were present when he was interviewed.

If the out-going General Manager was lobbying for any of the candidates, he certainly didn't do it with me, he was asked to leave the meeting during the interview of candidates and during the discussions of the candidates. What was more of an influence was the interviews, Mr. Azure spent most of his telling the Board why he left Sheldon Jackson, and not much on what he would do for SCA, except that he would not consider any other position except the top position.

The Board made a selection, that person was offered \$25,000 per year, for whatever reason that person did not accept the offer, the Board met again, made a second selection, at the time it seemed reasonable that if the first selection was offered \$25,000 initially, the salary was advertised as being negotiated.

There was an additional offer made at higher salary level plus fringe which would put the second selection in the same salary range as the General Manager who was leaving. This offer was apparently made too late as the applicant took another job and was no longer available. Also the first General Manager was hired initially at \$24,000 per year.

One of the things that was pointed out during the Board's long discussions was that there are two basic areas to SCA, the governing body responsibilities, and the administration of contracted programs, it was felt that this could be handled better by two people. General administration of the new contracted programs would be the main responsibility of the Administrative Manager or Assistant General Manager which ever title was used.

The General Manager would

have overall responsibility but would have time to focus in on Native issues such as the hospital situation in Sitka, the subsistence issues, fisheries, education, the D-2 land issue, etc., issues that should have Native input from the village level. Basically what was offered (referred to as compromise) was the number two position (Assistant General Manager or Administrative Manager) would have the responsibility of administering the new contracted programs under the general supervision of the General Manager who has overall responsibility, and the General Manager would then have the time to focus in on the Native issues.

No one opposes Native or Indian hire they just insist that they be qualified for the job, just as additional information, all of the Program Directors with exception of the Social Worker are Native or Indian. SCA knows it has a long way to go, a lot more to learn, but, the Board members are Native or Indian, elected by the Natives and Indians in the area, they make decisions good or bad, they made the decision to contract some of their programs, that's Self Determination, maybe we still have a ways to go for "total" self determination, what others accept as self determination, all Natives running an all Native program for natives, in any case SCA has made a start and a lot of progress.

SCA did publish several newsletters and holds semi-annual meetings, the most recent meeting discussed all the issues in these two articles with the people who attended.