

# John Borbridge Paces Washington Column

By JOHN BORBRIDGE

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16— This column formally inaugurates the Washington Report to the Native people from the AFN's delegation in the nation's capital.

The authorship of this column will shift from week to week depending on who's in town and what's happening.

This week most of the AFN's legislative steering committee and their regional attorneys are in Washington to be available for the Senate Interior Committee's mark-up session on the various settlement proposals.

We've waited a long time for this day. We hope that a bill

settling Native land claims will soon be out of the Senate committee and ready for consideration by the Senate.

The AFN steering committee will be meeting throughout the next few weeks on the legislation. We'll be trying hard to get as much of our proposal as possible in the Senate bill.

Arriving last Friday were AFN Second Vice President Eben Hopson and AFN Secretary, Margaret Nick.

They were joined on Sunday December 14 by Rep. Willie Hensley, Aleut League head, Flore Lekanof, and Al Ketzler of the Tanana Chiefs.

Together with President Emil

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Notti we have been meeting with our attorney Ramsey Clark and the Native regional attorneys to map out our strategy for this key period.

And this is a key period, make no mistake about it. It is vitally important for the Native people that the Senate pass a fair and generous bill.

Because of this we are mobilizing all our resources for a total effort these next weeks in Washington.

We realize that some of you may be concerned about all the time we're spending here. These past months have, as we're all well aware, not been the best of times for our people.

From your calls, comments and letters, I know that the fishing season in Southeast has been disastrous. And there is urgent need for help on the home front. While our primary focus is on the long range benefit of the land claims settlement, we are also working on the implementations of programs which can benefit our peoples immediately.

We firmly believe that unless ample time is spent now in Washington our chances for a settlement which will benefit all

regions in a magnitude far beyond any programs our own Southeast resources could possibly generate, will be seriously threatened.

Justice Goldberg, our chief counsel, has put it to us very bluntly. "The best salesmen for the Native cause are the Native peoples' elected representatives."

That is why we've left our families this holiday season and come to Washington to work for all of you.

And that is why we're heartened by the many letters of support we get, your overwhelming response to the AFN petition, and your expressions of good wishes.

But let me say in closing that the best gift the leadership could get this holiday season is knowing that our peoples throughout the state are studying land rights and understanding the AFN position.

The fact is we are only as effective in Washington as you are knowledgeable. The better informed the Native people, the better chances for our success.

With that support at home, we'll try our best to do the job.



**AFN OFFICIAL**—Eben Hopson, Barrow, is the 2nd vice president of the AFN. He, along with other AFN officers, is in Washington on working assignment on native land claims.



**CONFERRING**—Rep. Willie Hensley, left, is talking with Byron Mallott, right, during land claims hearings in Washington, D.C. Hensley is the executive director of the AFN. Mallott is director of RurALCAP.