

Editorial



Time to settle 7(i) disputes

Byron Mallott, president of Sealaska Corp., is calling on Native leaders to end the years of costly fighting and bitter disputes over Section 7(i) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

He has pointed out in a front page story of this issue that these disputes have drained regional corporations of well over \$25 million in attorney fees alone.

We'd like to thank Mallott for his strong stand on this issue, and we hope other Alaska Native corporation leaders take his concerns to heart. After all, it was Mallott who was instrumental in the crafting of the 120-page compromise signed by all the corporations in 1982.

This compromise, which appears to be in danger of unraveling, came about only because people worked hard at finding a solution to what seemed an impossible problem.

It's difficult to overstate how damaging the disputes over 7(i) have been to the Alaska Native community. Besides the loss of money, time and talent used in this fight, a blow has been struck against Native unity.

It's important to remember that one of the main things that sets Alaska Native corporations apart from other corporations is the idea that the common good — not money for a few — is what comes first.

There are many concerns about whether the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act should have created Alaska Native corporations. Many raise valid arguments against the corporate model.

Seven(i) is what sets Alaska Native corporations apart. It calls for a unique concept in corporate America — sharing. Those who have more resources, those who are able to reap bounty from the earth itself, share their revenues with others.

Solving — once and for all — disputes over Section 7(i) will not necessarily prove that the corporate model can work for Alaska Natives in the long-term. Continued fighting among each other over this vital concept, however, will ensure that the corporate model will not work.

We urge Native leaders to look deep into their hearts when they go to the bargaining table. Byron Mallott has set the agenda. Let's hope many others pick up this idea and go with it.

