

# THCC, AFN question 1985 contract award

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Tundra Times

The Tlingit-Haida Central Council has asked the Alaska Congressional Delegation to check into the awarding of a Secretary of Interior contract to study the effects of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA).

The THCC Executive Committee voted last week to ask Senators Ted Stevens, Frank Murkowski and Rep. Don Young to investigate the contract which was awarded to Management Concepts, Inc., of Alexandria, Va.

The firm was apparent low bidder among a group of 12 firms trying to get the study contract with a bid of \$512,000. The Department of the Interior set a high of \$750,000 to conduct the study.

Judy George, a THCC board member confirmed last week that the investigation had been requested but said the request asked for the delegation to research the bid award. The term investigation was not used.

THCC and the Alaska Federation of Natives are concerned about the contract award because of "grapevine" rumors about the contract for almost a year. Even before the request for proposal (RFP) was issued, the rumor mill had the contract going to MCI and those rumors prompted the concern.

Janie Leask, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, said "there have been a number of concerns expressed on the board (of directors) level about the whole process," of awarding the contract.

"There are credibility problems and they need to be talked about . . . There are some concerns about the wording of the contract," said Leask.

The study is known in Alaska as the 1985 study because a provision of ANCSA requires a study of the progress of Alaska Natives under ANCSA to be submitted to Congress by 1985.

The AFN was asked to write a "scope of work" for the study and subcontracted the writing of that "Scope of Work" to the defunct Alaska Native Foundation.

The ANF submitted that scope of work which was in turn turned in to the Department of Interior but, according to Leask, it was rewritten.

Leask is concerned that the study isn't being allocated enough money to allow it to accomplish much, nor is an adequate amount of time being allocated to conduct the study.

AFN originally recommended that the DoI allocate \$2 million for the study. That figure was originally budgeted but has been pared down in stages to the last maximum \$750,000.

Leask also is critical of the deadline for the study — June of 1984.

"They were supposed to issue an RFP (request for proposal) in January. It was delayed and delayed and delayed and now they are supposed to have it done by next June.

"How can they do a decent job in that short a time?" she asked.

Ray Kent, who has been hired by MCI to head the project, says the work can be done and will be done.

Kent, who is on leave from his job as director of planning at Tanana Chiefs Conference, says that the main work of the project will be analyzing research which has been done on ANCSA

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since its passage. Little primary research will be conducted, he said.

Don Mitchell, an executive vice president at AFN, said he was concerned about the contract because it orders a study of the status of ANCSA without ordering a research into what actually caused that status.

He used village housing as an example. If housing has improved in the village from 1971 to 1985, and that fact is reported, it may leave Congress with the impression that that improvement was caused by ANCSA while forgetting that numerous federal programs helped to provide housing in the villages.

Thus, the conclusion might be drawn that no federal programs are needed because of ANCSA when, in fact, those programs may have been the prime cause of the improvement, said Mitchell.

The fact that little new research will be done also has drawn fire from AFN personnel. "We could have done that contract in a month by just gathering up everything that was written and re-writing it on a couple of Apple II computers," quipped one person. "Then we could call it the 1985 study."

Although the Interior Department announced that Dave Case, a noted legal authority on the Act, will be working with the MCI team, Kent said that is not the case yet. But Case may yet join MCI, he added.

Kent expressed surprise that anyone is dissatisfied with the way the contract was awarded.

George from THCC said their executive committee invited Joe Donahue from the Interior Department to the executive committee meeting to discuss the contract and, she said, he too was surprised at the concern.

THCC's request was sent to the delegation late Friday and no comment could be obtained from the senators.