

College Students too busy for 1991

by P.E. Hyslop

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Native College students are expected to be well informed, for they are the future leaders of Alaska. But just how aware are they of Native issues, with emphasis on 1991?

One University of Alaska, Anchorage (U.A.A.) student said

she was so busy with her studies that she was embarrassed to say that she didn't have any idea what it was about. She didn't know where she fit in and felt lost in the shuffle.

She joined other Native students from the Anchorage campuses who stood in half-embarrassed silence, shrugging

their shoulders when asked about 1991. There were common feelings shared by the majority of them in several other areas. For example they felt it is important for Natives to keep their land and not sell their shares because it is one way of keeping an identity and hanging on to the Native culture. They also feel that they are not receiving enough information to know what the issue is about. This may be caused by students who leave their villages to attend college forget to leave forwarding addresses with their corporations.

Sam Kito, Director of Alaska Native Institute, Alaska Pacific University (A.P.U.), said it is up to the students to take the initiative to educate themselves to current events surrounding 1991. But he realizes that students are not informed enough to make a decision regarding this important issue.

A.P.U. offers classes on Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act which can help students see the historical significance. Students can then draw from history when making decisions

for the future. This coming fall, Kito hopes to start a class on 1991, ANCSA, or both. Out of 60 Native students currently enrolled at A.P.U., 8 students took the ANCSA class last semester and 15 are enrolled this semester. "You just can't go out there and drag them into these classes," he said. "There are only so many electives that students can take, and then they are busy just trying to get their degrees."

A.P.U. student Judy Swanson, a sophomore majoring in Management, said she wasn't aware of the ANCSA class, nor the resolutions to be presented at the AFN meeting in March. She feels that her corporation is not doing a good job informing shareholders of these issues.

A Doyon shareholder who is a student at Anchorage Community College (A.C.C.) said her mother informs her of Native issues because the corporate jargon is too difficult to understand.

"Gosh, I never thought about it before, and it's pretty scary,"

an A.C.C. Computer Information student in her freshman year, commented.

Other students had differing opinions. For example, a senior with an Accounting major at U.A.A., said that he doesn't have the same ties to the land as other Natives because he grew up outside of Alaska. He doesn't think he would like to see restrictions put on his stocks, although he feels it may be the best way for most Natives because of their bond to the land. He wanted to attend the recent 1991 convention at the Sheraton Hotel but couldn't make it attend because of his busy class schedule.

Michael Jack, A.C.C. Political Science major, said he sees 1991 as a challenge and a way of uniting the Alaska Native people.

A major problem shared by most students is that they are too busy with school to keep abreast of the current events, with special focus on 1991. They did add, however, that they would attend workshops or meetings held on campus devoted to Native issues.