

TCC ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT



BREAKING TRAIL — Melvin Charlie was hard at work Monday at his desk in the Tanana Chiefs Conference Office in Fairbanks — his first full day of labor as new president of TCC. Charlie will show the way in 1974 for 43 Interior Native villages.

Mitch Demientieff Unseated by Charlie

By CHARLES MALLEY

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) emerged from its three-day Fairbanks conference Friday with a brand new administration and renewed dedication to solving problems ahead in 1974-75.

Forty-three member villages from far-flung points in the Interior sent delegates to elect officers, conduct workshops and discuss the issues before the general body of TCC at Travelers Inn.

Melvin Charlie, 30, an Athabascan from Minto, was elected president in a run-off election with out-going president Mitch Demientieff. Nenana. Charlie promised to visit each village to seek "local input of the people" and to improve communications in all respects.

Demientieff was 20 years old when he took the reigns of TCC one year ago. He is viewed by many as a dedicated, imaginative and energetic Native leader.

As the gavel changed hands, Charlie told the 200 in attendance on the convention's final day: "Mitch (Demientieff) is a young man and has a lot of po-

tential. He has helped make TCC as great as it is now, and I hope he continues to work with the Conference."

Charlie was elected to a two-year term and will receive a salary of \$22,000 annually to direct the social service organization. He formerly served as TCC treasurer and executive board member.

Other new officers include Richard Frank, also of Minto, vice president; Pat Sweetser, Galena, treasurer, and 22-year-old Flora Bergman, Allakaket. Frank succeeds Spud Williams who was unsuccessful in a three-candidate bid for the presidency with Charlie and Demientieff.

Sweetser fills the seat vacated by Eddie Bergman Jr., Allaka-

(Continued on page 6)

New President . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

ket, and Flora Bergman succeeds Barbara Haggland, Fairbanks. Bergman is enrolled in a six-week village management training course in Fairbanks, sponsored by Doyon Ltd., the Interior Native corporation.

New executive board members elected for 1974-75 are Williams, the Fairbanks Native Association (FNA); Donald Honea, Ruby; Richard Carroll, Fort Yukon; Al Woods, Tok, and Paul Williams, Beaver.

Andrew Isaac, Dot Lake, continues as traditional chief of TCC, a lifetime post. Nominated for executive director seats, but failing to win a majority were Jim Walker, Holy Cross, Lorraine Albert, Northway; Kenny Sam, Huslia; Bob Jonathan, Tanacross; Franklin Madros, Kaltag, and Liz Newman, Rampart.

The TCC meeting began Wednesday in a week when hundreds of Natives came to Fairbanks for four major events; the convention, the first stockholders meeting of Doyon Ltd., FNA's annual potlatch and the Open North American Sled Dog Championships.

Speaking Friday, Sen. John Sackett, Doyon president, explained the proxy voting method which took place the following day. Regarding the corporation, he said, "Tomorrow is going to be the greatest day any of us have ever had. It will be the first time the corporation will be truly independent, with no government strings attached. Now we'll make it or break it, and I think we will make it." Sackett was re-elected president.

Some 70 resolutions were drawn up by TCC with 20 going to the executive board for action and the remainder approved by general membership. Among resolutions are the following:

That training opportunities be widely advertised in rural areas; that the state's decision to open the Yukon River Bridge and North Slope Road to public use be reversed (and the bridge and road conform to second class standards); that all proposed routes and designs for the Prospect Creek to Kobuk road be declared null and void; that TCC support creation of an Alaska department of transportation; that the organization form a committee to provide input to state transportation and land planning; secondary education for villages; land claim curriculum for use in Alaskan schools; inter-village communications by way of satellite and continued use of existing satellite communications.

Other resolutions called for improved mail services to rural areas, a vote of confidence to Monroe High School, Fairbanks, for an "excellent" education program and low drop-out rates; a curriculum on Athabaskan history for all schools in the TCC region; drug and alcohol abuse education in rural Alaska; opposition to a surface transportation corridor from Prospect Creek to Bettles, and support for a high school in Holy Cross, as well as extended Wien F-27 service to that community.

Sen. Mike Gravel, who hasn't announced his re-election plans, told the convention that as far as Washington is concerned, the Natives Land Claims Settlement Act is a "personal legacy" to Natives, "not a money payment to take the place of all other federal responsibilities" to them. "That should be understood once and for all," said Gravel.

The senator's remarks reacted to a workshop report the day before on a Native needs study (2-C) by Cliff Black. In strong language, Black said that because of lack of support from the Department of the Interior and

State of Alaska, the 2-C study is "the most frustrating, most demeaning" project he has ever been involved in.

"I'm glad Senator Gravel is here," said Black. "It gives me the feeling that someone is listening." He added, "If this study fails, we will have had no settlement and we will have lost millions of dollars."

Black urged all Natives to contribute input to the needs study because it will be the document that will influence Native life in Alaska for years to come.

Reacting to Black's speech, Sen. Gravel sent letters to Washington urging additional funding and a one-year extension of the study. He also requested that study headquarters be switched from Seattle, Wash., to Anchorage, "where it belongs."

Gravel asked support of one of his pet projects - Pet-4, the Navy's Arctic petroleum reserve where the senator says the Navy is hoarding oil and closing off 25 million acres of land. He wants to see the reserve opened up so that the state and Natives can select lands from the area and receive oil-mineral revenues.

In a delivery that rang with the rhetoric of a campaign speech, Gravel reminded his hosts that he alone stood up to argue for two per cent oil-mineral monies for Alaska Natives, a percentage that will run into the millions of dollars as years pass.

If Pet-4 were opened, the senator suggested, tantalizingly, "maybe you could take the two per cent off the top, receiving the revenue in six or eight years instead of waiting 20 or 30 years."

That approach would give the Natives working capital when they need it most, he said.

In his welcoming remarks opening day, Traditional TCC Chief Issac talked to young delegates in a fatherly way: "We have important business to do at this meeting. I want you right here - three days, for sure."

The Chief reminded them that young people were missed at the semi-annual TCC meeting held in October.

He told the convention: "We (Natives) know this land, we own it - our land." Issac expressed confidence in the "younger generation" and impressed upon them the responsibilities that they have inherited.

"I have no (formal) education," Chief Issac said, "but that makes no difference. I am doing my job."

The Dot Lake chieftain is respected for his years of speaking up for Native people. His efforts have been felt from Alaskan village meeting rooms to the halls of Congress.

ROGER LANG

On the convention's first day, Roger Lang, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, urged strong, Native-originated legislation for subsistence hunting and fishing. He warned that no one must be allowed to develop an attitude that says subsistence is no longer needed by the Natives "because they have all that settlement act money."

Lang signed a non-negotiable agreement with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. guaranteeing 1,000 Natives jobs during the first year of pipeline construction. That figure will increase to 3,500 the second year and hold during the third year, he said. Assurances were also secured that Natives will make up one-fifth of the operation and maintenance force.

Lang said pipeline jobs will be difficult because they will keep many Natives away from home during hunting and fishing seasons. "But, we'll let you know what employment conditions to expect," he said. "One thing is certain - there won't be any Louisiana rednecks saying 'hey, boy' to a Native."

The AFN president feels he has the "most interesting job in the world."

He cautioned against any assumptions that Native leaders are "getting rich" under the settlement act. "You don't get rich working for Native causes," he said. "After seven years, I'm getting poorer."