

AFN, Inc. Pays Its Debt

The land claims debt is being paid off.

State Sen. Willie Hensley, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives Inc., said Thursday that the statewide organization has completed payment of loans totaling \$547,000 that were used to lobby for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

In addition to \$225,000 repaid to the Yakima Indian Nation in ceremonies in Juneau, the AFN Inc. paid \$100,000 to the Native village of Tyonek and the National Bank of Alaska.

Hensley said the AFN Inc. still has some debts left from lobbying efforts, necessary to get and keep the land claims settlement, but that these could be taken care of when the Arctic Slope Native Association paid its share of the debt. ASNA has already committed itself to pay its share of that debt.

Hensley said the loans were paid off "as a result of a commitment by the regional cor-

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porations set up under the Alaska Native Claims bill to pay the debt incurred by AFN.

"This week AFN received checks of \$135,626.85 from Calista and \$51,105.77 from Cook Inlet Regional Corp.," Hensley said. "The money was used to make final payments on the loans from the National Bank of Alaska and to pay off the Tyonek loan."

With some staff cutbacks,

AFN still has the routine bills from legal services, staff salaries and general functions of the statewide organization, "and grants will cover only part of this," said John Shively, executive director of AFN, Inc.

Shively said the Native regions will have to contribute financially if AFN Inc. is to continue operation, but first the regions must decide what services they want the statewide organization to perform for them. This will be a top item on the agenda when the board meets March 23-25 in Anchorage, starting with a one-day closed work session.

Shively predicted the board would probably agree to centralizing certain services, such as portions of legal work, while

remaining independent in other areas.

The Alaska Native Foundation to help implement the land claims act, is working on a model accounting system for use in a number of regions and villages, Shively said.

"The ANF is also doing a tremendous amount of training and research work", taking some of the load off the Alaska Federation of Natives Inc., he said.

Legal battles are expected to continue to cost a great deal of time and money, however.

"The bill at some point is going to have to be amended and this will require a statewide lobbying effort," Shively said.

"If the Bureau of Indian Affairs doesn't meet enrollment

deadlines, it is conceivable they would want to open it up this fall for amendments. We must decide, by consensus of the regions, what we want changed and when we want to do it," he said.

The statewide body may also continue social service work indirectly related to implementation of the land claims act, such as health issues and education, he said.

"Many other services are possible, but it is up to the board," ... which has the other important bonus of being "the only regular form for regional leaders to get together over land claims problems," he said.