

Calista's new president builds ties to villages

By BILL HESS
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The man who was hired to turn around the economic fortunes of the Calista Regional Corp., has taken steps to improve those fortunes while improving the

services the regional corporation provides to its shareholders.

Alex Raider was hired by Calista last month to shore up the Native Corporation's sagging economic stature.

Already Raider has taken steps

to improve the outlook, by weeding out some of Calista's least-productive enterprises, such as ESCA-Tech, the money-losing earth sciences consulting subsidiary. The company was sold last month to the Ninihuk Native Association.

Although Raider expresses confidence that the economic fortunes of Calista, which has lost many millions of dollars since its beginnings 10 years ago, will improve greatly, he stresses that the corporation is interested in much more than just dollar signs.

"There has been a lot of writing on Native corporations," he notes, "yet most people do not know what a native corporation is all about. It is not a corporation in the common sense, where profit is the only concern. At Calista, we have a tremendous responsibility to the welfare and well-being of our shareholders. We are trying to address these concerns as well."

To help the executive offices of Calista keep in closer contact to the people within the region, Raider appointed Phillip Hendrickson, a shareholder, to serve as the new Assistant to the President for Village Affairs. Hendrickson, who grew up in the subsistence lifestyle and who is fluent in his Native tongue, will be based in both Bethel and Anchorage. As "Village Coordinator," he will spend much of

his time within the 56 villages of the corporation.

"We expect this will be of great service to all the villages," Raider emphasizes, "and to our shareholders." Hendrickson will have the job of helping and assisting the Calista Village Corporations in any business matters that he can, and of relaying problems which he cannot handle to Raider so that others may be assigned to help out.

As an example, Raider notes that some of the village corporations have elementary book-keeping systems which do not meet their needs. This often leads to trouble with government agencies whose book-keeping requirements are not met along with resultant fines. Hendrickson will have the responsibility of helping such villages set up proper bookkeeping systems, with lists of dates, trained personnel, and whatever else is needed.

"We have kids in the villages who can't get scholarship funds," Raider notes. "They don't know where to go!" Now, they should have help in finding their money. Hendrickson also will help with governmental forms and will assist village corporations in understanding stock transfers and how to set up good relationships. "We intend to have damn good villages!" Raider stresses.

The way of life of the Calista people is a major concern of Calista's, Raider emphasizes. "The Calista people have traditional and very important subsistence rights," Raider notes. "For thousands of years they have had these rights. Now they are threatened. You have a group out of and Anchorage which is now challenging these traditional subsistence rights."

"They think that to be able to have sports, to play with the fish and game, that this is more important than to protect the rights of the Calista people!"

Raider pauses, briefly. "We will fight this with all of our power and resources! We have never capitulated! This is a right

guaranteed by the Congress of the United States!" Some subsistence rights opponents claim that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act abrogated these Native rights. Raider flatly says they are mistaken. He also totally dismisses any possibility of the Native people losing these rights. "We are very positively oriented here. No matter how long we have to fight, we will win. We will go to court if we have to. We will win!"

Raider claims to be solidly behind the village way of life. He recently visited some villagers himself. "It is a beautiful experience, a magnificent experience! There are no roads to get there, and the villagers don't want any. They have a heck of a good life! Beautiful! All they want is a little assistance, it doesn't mean they need to be cheated out of their lifestyle."

Raider notes the extremely high price in the villages of gas and heating oil. One reason for this, he says, is because petroleum products going to the villages originates in Alaska, goes to Los Angeles for processing, and then back up to the bush, passing through many hands along the way. Calista has a plan, Raider says, to help bring these prices down a bit. "We can't release the details just now, but we will soon."

Calista and Raider also have some big economic plans but say that public disclosure of these is still a few months away.

The corporation has just entered into a new association with Wertheim & Co., a leading Wall Street Investment Banking House. Wertheim works with such giants as ITT, CBS, and ABC, Raider says. Raider was associated with them before coming to Alaska, and is hoping for good things to come out of the new relationship.

For the present, Raider's main intent is to help strengthen and solidify Calista; in fact Calista is cutting its former six subsidiaries down to just three, the \$40 million dollar Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage, The Settler's Bay Properties, Inc., and Calista Fisheries.