

AFN to study impact of 1991 on Native lands

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Concern about Alaska Native land holdings and the fate of Native corporation stock after 1991 when that stock can be sold to non-Natives, has prompted the Alaska Federation of Natives to take on a project to study the matter.

Under federal D-2 legislation last year, all regional and village corporation stock will be recalled and re-issued to shareholders in 1991, 20 years after the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

That re-issued stock can be sold by the Native shareholder to non-Natives if the shareholder desires and Roger Lang, an AFN board member fears what might happen to Native holdings then.

In a memorandum to the AFN Land Claims Committee, Lang recommended the study be conducted with the possible end of rewriting the D-2 amendment to state that any stock sold to a non-Native after 1991 will take on a non-voting status. In that way, Native shareholders would retain control of their regional and village corporations.

"The stock owns the land. The Natives don't own the land and that's a great danger," warned Lang.

"The whole of D-2 is predicated on the given (assumption) that the stock will be sold and I think there are other options," said Lang.

He warned that the matter should be studied and recommended because he fears that much Native-held stock will be sold off and Native ownership of their ANCLA lands lost if some action isn't taken.

"We have people in our region whose whole livelihoods depend on the state-issued permits and they (the Natives) are selling those permits off."

Lang, a Sealaska shareholder and Board of Directors member, was speaking of the state-issued fisheries permits. He also heads the Alaska Native Foundation, a non-profit coalition which represents Alaska Native non-profit organizations and village corporations.

Lang said he is particularly concerned about the fate of the village corporations which are making little in assets. He said he fears that people may sell off that less lucrative stock and lose control of their villages.

Lang is less worried about losing control of regional corporation stock but said that concerns him too.

The land claims committees voted to accept the study as a project of the full land claims board and to fund it at \$50,000. Under the structure of AFN, when a project is accepted by the board, each region contributes to the project as it sees fit.

Voting to accept the project were Arctic Slope, Bering Straits, Bristol Bay, Calista, Chugach, NANA, Sealaska Regional Corporations. Representatives from Doyon and Ahtna were out of the room when the vote was taken. No representative from Koniag was present. Cook Inlet abstained.

The year-long study will be conducted by the ANF which Lang heads, and the full board. Lang offered the use of a recently-installed teleconference hook-up at ANF to enable them to

(Continued on Page Sixteen)

AFN committee decides to study effects of 1991

(Continued from Page One)

hold teleconference meetings instead of requiring all the committee members to be present in one place to meet.

One suggestion that the AFN seek money to fund the study from the federal government or other sources was shot down when a board member said he didn't want someone else paying for a study telling Natives where they would be.

Lang said the timing of the study is important if only because of many of the attorneys and panels of experts who helped on the land claims act and

other matters involving Natives are still alive and working, a situation which might change in 10 years.

One possible recommendation the study group might look at, according to Lang's memorandum, could be requiring shareholder to give first option to purchase stock "at a reasonable price" to their Native relatives, or the regional or village corporations before selling to non-Natives.

"The urgency of these questions, and the development of answers to them, is emphasized

by the current financial condition of some of the village corporations which have no visible surface resources. To some of them, the year 1991 is not all that important, since they will be out of business before that date."

He told the land claims committee that seven village corporations were dissolved last year because the corporation leaders hadn't filed papers with the state or paid the required registration fee for the past three years. All but one has been re-incorporated with the help of

AFN, said AFN chairman of the board Nelson Angapak.

The committee members also discussed the cultural aspects of Alaska Natives and Willie Hensley, of NANA discussed the NANA's Inupiat Spirit Committee which has taken on the job of revitalizing the spiritual development of the Inupiat community in the region.

Hensley pointed out that without the inner spirit that Alaska Natives have, all their holdings are meaningless.

"We must be willing to convey this to our people... Whether

you have stock it doesn't matter if you have no spiritual identity. The land gives the power to survive in the political arena. Our first priority should be to be profitable, it weakens us and someone else gets the land."

One reservation voiced about the study group is the concern that the groups it represents are so diverse and many of the regions may be uncertain about their future.

"The difficulty is that I don't know any regions that have made long-term goals for themselves," said Lang.