

# Part twenty-two of serial: the rest of the regions, local and village corporations are formed

(Ed. Note: This is the twenty-second in a series of excerpts from the Alaska Native Land Claims book. It is the hope of the Tundra Times and Alaska Native Foundation that the publication of the series will further the understanding and implementation of all parties involved and affected by the claims Settlement Act. The book was released by the ANF in 1976 and was also made possible by a Ford Foundation grant. Robert D. Arnold edited the text. Authors include: Janet Archibald; Margie Bauman, Nancy Yaw Davis; Robert A. Frederick; Paul Gaskin, John Havelaock; Gary Holthaus; Chris McNeil; Thomas Richards, Jr.; Howard Rock and Rosita Worl.)



With more than 200,000 square miles within its boundaries, Doyon, Limited is the largest regional Native corporation in land area. Within its boundaries live about 58,000 persons, more than half of them residents of the Fairbanks area.

Doyon, a word which means "chief" or "important person" in Koyukon Athabaskan, has more than 9,200 stockholders. About two-thirds of them live within the region.

Chosen to be the first president of Doyon was John Sackett, a businessman and State legislator from Galena who, as a college student, had become engaged in the claims struggle. The principal office of the corporation is in Fairbanks, but regional offices also are located at four villages.

Three of the 37 villages within the regional boundaries — Arctic Village, Venetie, and Tetlin — voted to take title to their reserves, and hence will not participate further in the claims settlement. Of the 34 village corporations continuing to participate, the largest (with 737 stockholders) is Fort Yukon.

Government employment, transportation, and commercial activities provide the economic base for this region. Two major highways and the Alaska Railroad meet in Fairbanks. The region is to be crossed by the trans-Alaska pipeline and its service road. The Yukon River and its major tributaries — the Tanana and the Porcupine — are important waterways.

The isolated communities of the region depend heavily upon food gathering activities for subsistence.

This is an area of very cold winters and warm summers. Precipitation is relatively light. Permafrost is present throughout the region.

(Editor's Note: In 1976 Tim Wallis became president of Doyon, Limited after the resignation of John Sackett.)



With an area of about 7,300 square miles within its boundaries, Koniag, Inc. is the smallest of the regional corporations in land area. It includes the Kodiak Island group and a portion of the upper Alaska Peninsula.

Koniag, Inc. has nearly 3,300 stockholders, of whom 1,350 live in Kodiak, the city in which the corporation's office is located. Almost one thousand others live in the nine certified villages of the region. The largest village corporation, Natives of Afognak, Inc., has 392 stockholders. Virtually all of the 9,500 persons who live in the region live within the Kodiak Island Borough, the regional government for the Kodiak Island group.

The name of the corporation is shortened from Koniagmiut, the name applied to the original inhabitants of the island.

The president of Koniag is Jack Wick, a young Larsen Bay fisherman, recently returned from the Vietnam War. He had also been interim president of the organization.

Catching and processing seafood is, by far, the major industry of the region. There is some cattle grazing.

The region is mountainous and has a rugged and indented

shoreline. Temperatures are relatively mild, but precipitation is heavy. During fall and winter, storms with winds up to 100 miles per hour are common. Earth tremors are frequent.



NANA Regional Corporation, Inc. embraces an area of about 36,000 square miles fronting on Kotzebue Sound. The corporation's office is in Kotzebue, a traditional trading center of the northwest.

There are about 4,900 stockholders in NANA of whom about three out of four live in the region. The total population of the region is about 4,000 persons.

The regional corporation takes its name from the initials of Northwest Alaska Native Association, the organization formed in 1966 to seek a claims settlement. Robert Newlin of Noorvik, a long-time city councilman and regional leader, was elected chairman of the board of directors of the corporation. Its president and general manager is John Schaeffer, a former commanding officer of a National Guard battalion.

Kotzebue is the principal community of the region. Its corporation, Kikiktagruk Inupiat, has 1,983 stockholders, the most of any village corporation in the region. Federal and State governments are major employers. Subsistence activities are important in the economy of the entire area.

Most of the NANA region lies north of the Arctic Circle. Precipitation is light, winters are cold, and summers are moderate.



The largest of the regional corporations in number of stockholders is Sealaska Corporation. More than half of its nearly 16,500 stockholders live in southeastern Alaska. The total population of the region is about 43,000 persons.

Juneau, the state capital, is the location of the corporate office of Sealaska. At its first stockholders' meeting, John Borbridge, Jr., a prominent figure in the claims struggle, was named president.

Within the region's nearly 32,000 square miles are nine villages which have incorporated as village corporations to receive both land and money benefits of the act. The largest of these is Hoonah, which has 868 stockholders. A tenth village, Klukwan, elected to accept title to its reserve and, thereby, to remove itself from further participation in the settlement. Also within the region is Metlakatla, the reserve whose residents are not beneficiaries under the act.

There are four boroughs in the region, encompassing only a small part of the total area.

The salmon and timber industries are economic mainstays of the region. With the state's capital in Juneau, state and federal governments are major employers.

The climate is mild and precipitation is heavy.

## A 13th regional corporation

The settlement act had provided that Natives residing outside of Alaska could enroll to a village and one of the 12 regions, to a region only, or to a 13th region that might be established. If it were established, its members would share only in the money portion of the settlement, not the land nor money obtained from the resources of the land.

About 18,000 Natives who lived outside Alaska enrolled — the largest number of them from the state of Washington. Others lived in California, Oregon, Texas, and other states and nations. When they enrolled, those over 18 years of age

voted on whether they desired the establishment of a 13th region.

About 6,000 adult enrollees voted on the question. The 13th regional corporation failed to pass by a few hundred votes. As a result, all nonresident Natives became stockholders in one or another of the 12 regional corporations within the state, and some became members of village corporations as well.

Some of the persons who wanted a 13th region filed court action on the basis that the issue was complicated and confusing to voters and that the results certified by the Department of the Interior were in error. They won their court case. Late in 1975, the Department announced establishment of a 13th region. It asked eight nonresident Native associations to nominate persons to be incorporators and scheduled an election. The first meeting of stockholders and directors was scheduled to be held before February, 1976.

With the first distribution of funds by the corporation, all nonresident Natives were to be given a final opportunity to enroll in the 13th region or in one of the others.

Because the money received by corporations is based upon their enrollments, transfer of 5,000 or so stockholders to the 13th region was expected to reduce the 12 corporations' income by as much as \$25 million. Such compensation would go to the new corporation. Transfer of stockholders was also expected to affect land entitlements of some villages and regions.

(Editor's Note: The president of the 13th Regional Corporation, headquartered in Seattle, is Dennis Small.)

## Chapter 25 Local business corporations

Within three years of passage of the settlement act, 216 local corporations had been organized in villages and cities, and at other locations which Natives had identified as their permanent residences:

- 203 were village corporations which were acquiring land and money benefits of the settlement;
- seven others were located on five former reserves but neither they nor their stockholders were sharing in the money benefits;
- four others — located in non-Native communities — were acquiring land, but were not receiving money payments as corporations;
- two others were certified as "groups" which were acquiring land, but were not receiving money payments as corporations.

An additional 14 village corporations were organized but were not certified to be eligible for benefits. (All of the local business corporations and their enrollments are listed in Appendices B-E).

While the act had allowed villages to organize as profit or nonprofit corporations, villages organized profit corporations to obtain benefits under the act, for otherwise no distribution of the benefits could be made to their members. As with other such corporations, these local corporations are governed by State and federal law and operate within the framework established by their articles of incorporation and bylaws. They carry out activities expected to profit those who share in owning them — their stockholders. Boards of directors, chosen by stockholders, elect presidents and other officers to guide the activities of all paid employees and consultants.

Like the regional corporations, these local corporations are also controlled in a variety of ways by the settlement act.

## Village Corporations

The 203 village corporations which have been certified as eligible to obtain land and money benefits under the act are in the process of obtaining title to the surface estate of more

than half of the land provided for in the act. They are, in turn, the means through which most Natives will obtain individual title to parcels of land. As they receive their shares of funds distributed by their regional corporations and invest them, the village corporations are expected to produce profits over a long-term for their stockholders.

Taken together, these village corporations have over 49,000 stockholders. In size they range from Lime Village, Paimiut, Telida, and Ohogamiut, none having more than 25 stockholders, to Barrow and Nome, both of which have more than two thousand each. Most of the village corporations — three-fourths of them — have 300 or fewer stockholders. The median size is 171 stockholders.

More than one-fourth of the village corporations — 56 of them — are within the Calista region. The fewest village corporations are in the Chugach region where there are only five. All stockholders in the village corporations are, of course, also stockholders in the regional corporations.

As noted in an earlier chapter these village corporations are not entirely independent. If a village corporation desires to amend its articles of incorporation, it must obtain the approval of its regional corporation. To obtain its share of the distribution from the Alaska Native Fund it must submit its spending plan to the regional corporation. And, until December 18, 1981, it needs to seek the advice of the regional corporation before it can sell or lease lands.

Because December 18, 1974 was the deadline for land selection by villages, the most important activity of village corporations in the first three years was choosing lands to which they were entitled under the settlement act. Even though this was true, a few village corporations had launched new enterprises or purchased existing businesses before 1974 drew to an end.

With the exception of the Annette Island Reserve, all reserves and reservations in Alaska were revoked by the

Figure 6  
STOCKHOLDERS AND LOCAL CORPORATIONS  
BY REGION  
September 14, 1974

	Village Corporations overseen by region	Village Cor- poration stockholders	At-large Stock- holders	Village Independent Corporations, their stock- holders
Ahtna, Inc.	8	960	132	
The Aleut Corporation	12	2,314	1,039	
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	8	3,521	385	
Bering Straits Native Corporation	16	5,570	1,346	3 1,079*
Bristol Bay Native Corporation	29	4,850	667	
Calista Corporation	56	12,886	555	
Chugach Natives, Inc.	5	867	1,232	
Cook Inlet Region, Inc.	6	957	5,286	1 477** 2 80***
Doyon, Limited	34	6,693	2,528	3 428*
Koniag, Inc., Regional Native Corporation	9	2,003	1,337	1 500**
NANA Regional Native Corporation	11	4,466	439	
Sealaska Corporation	9	4,080	12,413	1 251* 2 4,444**
TOTAL	203	49,167	27,359	

\* Enrolled to revoked reserves which chose full title to their reserves instead of participating in other provisions of the settlement act; not stockholders in regional corporations.  
\*\* Enrolled in one or another of the four named cities; at-large members of their regional corporations.  
\*\*\* Enrolled to two groups which incorporated and were certified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; at-large members of their regional corporations.  
Note: All stockholder figures subject to change upon formation of the 13th regional corporation.  
Source: Enrollment Office, U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Anchorage, Alaska.

settlement act. Village corporations on such reserves, however, were allowed to obtain full title to their former reserve lands if they voted to give up all other benefits for themselves and their stockholders under the act. Of the 25 such village corporations, seven chose title to their former reserves.

These seven are Elim, Tetlin, Klukwan, each with its own reserve; Gambell and Savoonga, which share the former St. Lawrence Island Reserve; and Arctic Village and Venetie, which share the former Venetie Reserve.

These local corporations are in the process of obtaining ownership — both surface and subsurface — to their former reserves. Except for Klukwan, whose deposits of iron ore may have dictated its choice, these local corporations will also own more land than if they had chosen to participate in both the land and money benefits of the settlement.

Unlike the village corporations which are, in several ways, subordinate to the regional corporations, these seven local profit corporations are independent. However, they do not share as corporations, nor do their 1,758 stockholders share as individuals, in any of the money distributed under the act. Furthermore, the regional corporations have no legal obligation to provide assistance of any kind to them.

## Next week — four named cities, groups, and other organizations

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continued next week . . .