



# CLAIMS MONEY QUOTAS FESTER



TLINGIT-HAIDA Central Council President John Borbridge argues his region's position on land claims distribution to the Alaska Federation of

Natives Board. Borbridge seconded a motion to distribute land claims monies on a per capita basis. —Photo by MADELYN SHULMAN

## Two-Thirds Board of Directors Vote Erases Earlier Quota Planned

By MADELYN SHULMAN  
Staff Writer

Land claims money distribution has probably become a deadlock issue among several regions of the Alaska Federation of Natives, with at least one region planning to send representatives to Washington to push their own point of view.

By a close to two-thirds vote, the AFN Board of Directors decided Saturday to advocate distribution of \$404 million of the \$500 million they are asking from Congress as land claims payment on a per capita basis.

Eight million dollars will then go to each of the twelve regional corporations proposed to administer land claims monies.

The vote this month reverses a position taken in December at a marathon four day board meeting to distribute land claims money on a land claim basis—and promises to send the Arctic Slope Native Association to Congress to push this view.

The new vote, on a motion proposed by Tony Lewis at Friday night's session was the result of over a month of dissatisfaction on the part of the more southern regions with December's "compromise" with the Arctic Slope.

After the vote, which went

against ASNA's insistence on a land loss distribution of reparation money, ASNA executive director Charles Edwardsen, Jr. told the board ASNA would be heading for Washington on Wednesday to advance its position before Congress.

Both Edwardsen and Tlingit-Haida Central Council head John Borbridge, who were on opposing sides previously told the board if either lost they would send their own people to Washington to try to influence Congressional committee hearings.

"We in the Central Council," Borbridge told the Board, "in an action which I have no power to reverse, have taken the position of distribution on a population basis."

"We have no intention of weakening the AFN by withdrawal or other such action. We will fight hard on that point and we will lobby hard, but not

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## Bethel Heights Housing Under Fire

Poor planning, which disregarded village life and the exigencies of life in the Arctic, have turned the \$3 million dollar Bethel housing project into an unreachable, quarter empty, problem-filled example of bureaucratic inadequacies.

This seems the sum of testimony before the Alaska House Commerce Committee hearing on Friday which branded the federally funded project to improve housing standards in the bush as something less than a total disaster—but not by much.

Among the more serious problems brought out in hearings were poor planning which built the houses a mile and a half from town, far from the Kuskokwim River and the centers of Native life.

A complex pressurized sewer and water system was buried in permafrost. In the summer, the metal coated plastic pipes of the \$2 million system float in the melted ground, snapping connections.

The result is astronomical maintenance and repair costs and a system which may never function properly.

The lack of low income applicants led to the low income houses being rented to school teachers and other middle income families. Even so, in an area with a serious lack of housing, 25 per cent of the 200 units are empty.

Inadequate building on permafrost resulted in shifting foundations and the road between the project and town is often impassible.

Each of the low income units is estimated to cost at least \$16,000 and House Finance Committee chairman George Hohnan (D-Bethel) estimated that by the time sewer system and road repair costs are added in the figure will be closer to \$28,000 per unit.

Hohnan said only half of the 200 houses are occupied by low income people.

"It is an unattractive project to low income people, whether that is due to mismanagement by ASHA or poor design," he told the committee.

The Bethel project was federally funded and administered,

according to the Alaska State Housing Authority executive director Robert Schenker, by a number of different agencies.

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## Willard Being Considered for Deputy Labor Commissioner

"Five years ago we never would have dreamed labor leaders would sit at the conference table with us," commented Alaska Federation of Natives board member, Robert Willard.

Willard, director of the State Human Rights Commission, spoke about meetings he chaired this past month between labor leaders and AFN representatives. On January 21 the labor and AFN leaders developed a "letter of intent and understanding" to be presented to both their constituencies.

The letter recognizes various problems in union-Native relations—and some solutions.

Willard, a Tlingit Indian, is believed to be one of the prime candidates for Deputy Commissioner of Labor in Alaska. At their January 23 meeting, the AFN board endorsed him as their wholehearted candidate for the post.

Among the areas labor union leaders and AFN representatives agreed upon were:

—provisions to aid Native workers with insufficient knowledge of written English in union written exams. The use of translators or reliance upon work experience as a basis for union membership were suggested as alternatives.

—provisions to guide union relationships with workers hired

by Native corporations and for signing such corporation workers as union members.

Union leaders from Seattle and San Francisco regional offices participated in the talks along with leaders from Alaskan offices.

"It is agreed," said the letter to be presented to constituents before becoming final, "that mutual trust and understanding is a prime prerequisite to implement the goals and objectives of the parties concerned."

"It is amazing how many conservative labor leaders have come around even since October when we began negotiating on the Alaska Plan," said Willard.

As head of the Human Rights Commission, Willard has been in charge of preparing an Alaska Plan for equal hiring in the construction industry.

Willard cited the unions' outlook for the post land claims settlement as one reason for increased cooperation.

"Natives and labor unions both want to be part of post settlement development in the State," he explained.

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## Supportive Services for Leaders While in D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Many Alaska Native leaders have made frequent visits to the nation's capitol in recent months in an effort to influence congressional action to settle the Alaska Native land claims.

Although highly dedicated and well skilled in representing their groups in Alaska, these delegates often find themselves handicapped by lack of basic supportive services available to them during their stay in Washington.

After becoming aware of this problem, a group of Alaska Natives living in the Washington area recently organized to lend assistance.

First meeting in early December, the group opened membership to Alaska Natives and spouses and their dependents. They decided to call themselves Alaskans on the Potomac.

After deciding to become a non-profit and non-political organization, the group has considered plans for opening an office and making its facilities available for use by visiting Native delegates.

Membership in Alaskans on the Potomac now numbers twenty-one and continues to expand. Members originate from such places as Haines, Hooper Bay, Kotzebue, Nome, Unalak

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