

WHITE PAPER

Calista Corporation's Role in The Land Selection Process Pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of December 18, 1971

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Executive Summary

This paper documents the role of Calista Corporation during one of the most crucial parts of its history, when land selections were made and other requirements of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) were fulfilled.

The passage of ANCSA on December 18, 1971, is discussed within the context of other key legislative, land management, political and public policy events in Alaska. The paper then introduces Calista Corporation and describes the formation of its land department by Calista's Board of Directors and management.

ANCSA brought benefits and opportunities to Alaska Natives, and at the same time, presented major challenges like meeting its land selection deadlines. The 56 village corporations of the Calista Region had only three years to complete the first round of land selections, and only one additional year after that to complete a second round of land selections.

The primary focus of this paper is the Calista Land Department's efforts to assist villages fulfill the selection deadlines in a manner that benefited not only the 56 village corporations, but also Calista, due to its entitlement in the subsurface interest in the lands selected by village corporations. This work included surveying and identifying the best available lands for subsistence and other resources including hard rock minerals and oil and gas.

This paper memorializes some of the challenges faced by the village corporations in the Calista Region regarding their land selections, and how those selections were successfully facilitated by the Calista Land Department, which comprised a team of young Yup'ik land planners, with guidance from the Calista Board of Directors' land selection committee.

Every effort was made by the Calista Land Department to find ways and means of expanding the Calista Corporation, village corporation and Native group land bases in the region, on or before ANCSA's December 18, 1974 and December 18, 1975 land selection deadlines.

With assistance from the Land Department and support, guidance, and advice from their Elders, the village corporations met their first and second-round ANCSA land selection deadlines, selecting sufficient acreage to fulfill their entitlement to more than 6 million acres of surface estate lands in the Calista Region.

A further intent of this paper is to fill in gaps that exist in a series of reports that, from time to time, were submitted to the Calista Board.

Because the Calista Land Department was required to report directly to the board, rather than to the Calista management team, it had a unique working relationship with the board. The board reserved the power to control department actions through the office of the department director. This relationship created a consistent direction for the Land Department during a critical period. However, at times, this resulted in an interesting relationship between corporate and Land Department management.

The concept of land ownership, as perceived by Western society and mandated by ANCSA, was not fully understood by Alaska Natives, particularly Yup'ik people. Owning a full-title deed for a tract of land was a foreign concept and this is addressed in the section on land selections.

Finally, this paper also addresses other issues faced by the Alaska Native community and Calista during implementation of ANCSA, such as subsection 17(b) public access easements, 17(d)(1) and 17(d)(2) land withdrawal mandates, and the impacts these provisions had on lands selected by and conveyed to the village corporations.

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