

88-49-14

Bill Timmy, general counsel, from Doyon talks with Ann Nicolai about the importance of voting

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Series: Potlatch series

Jeff Kennedy said they will have music from the Savoonga dancers, Peter LaFarge and a tribe from British Columbia.

Bill Timmy said the Land Claims is set up pretty much the way Congress was used to dealing with large organizations by using corporations. Many people are used to participating in their own villages through the selection of their leaders. Corporations are different. The offices may be far away from the villages. It is necessary for people to have a voice in it. What the people are doing is voting for the board of directors. They are the people who will be making the policy decisions for the corporation and for the shareholders. Unless the directors make wise decisions land claims can be for naught. It is very important that people think carefully about their choices. Ann asked what Native people are really voting for. Bill said a corporation is kind of a strange animal. Most people aren't used to dealing with them. The shareholders actually own the corporation. Along with the stock comes the right to choose the people who are going to run the corporation. The board of directors sets all the policies and hires people to carry out the policy. The shareholder elects people to make the decisions. It's kind of like a pyramid. Doyon has over 9,000 shareholders. If a village corporation decides to set up a store then the people hired by the board of directors does the work. The board of directors isn't paid a salary. They are paid travel and meeting fees.

Savoonga dancers performance recording.

Ann Nicolai asked what people should know about the political process. Bill Timmy said it is very important because corporations aren't run like a general election. In a general election everyone knows who the candidates are. The corporations also have proxy votes. Once a year there is an annual meeting. The most important part of business is the election of directors. People present vote in person. All the other shareholders not at the meeting can vote by proxy. The people grant someone else to cast their vote for them. At Doyon their proxy isn't a straight management proxy. He discussed the way Doyon handles proxy. He said it is important for two reasons. They have to have board of directors. They have to have a quorum or reschedule the meeting. The board of directors will say what the impact of land claims is going to be. People need to take an interest and see what is happening with their corporation. Ann asked how often village corporations vote. Bill Timmy said the state law requires that there be a meeting at least once a year to elect a board of directors for each corporation. Additional meetings can be called by the board of directors such as when an important decision is coming out. If articles need to be amended they must have a shareholder meeting. If the people are unhappy with the directors they may have a meeting. The shareholders can call for a special meeting to vote someone out. They have to learn how to use their power. Doyon had a meeting last year where ten seats were available on the

board. There were fifteen nominations and a place for write in. The write-in person was elected to the board at the last meeting. People have a choice and can express that choice.

Peter LaFarge song.

Ann Nicolai asked about proxy voting. Bill Timmy said normally when you get the proxy you check if your name is correct and the shares are correct. There is normally a booklet explaining who you are voting on and issues. There is a list of all the candidates. There should be an annual report, too. You follow the proxy instructions and fill it out according to who you want to vote for. He said it is important to sign and date it. If you are a custodian for your children you should sign your name on their proxy. They encourage people to send in their proxy and if they later show up at the meeting their proxy is pulled and cancelled.

The potlatch song.

Ann Nicolai asked if people vote for ideas or people. Generally you vote for people. But people have general ideas so you are voting for those ideas. You might vote on changes in the by-laws. The board of directors can change the by-laws, but the shareholders have to approve it. He said articles must be approved first off by the shareholders. Ann asked what happens when people don't vote. Bill said that two things happen when you don't vote. The first thing is you don't get a quorum. If you don't vote you also lose your voice in the operation of the corporation. He explained what a quorum is. At Doyon it is required to have 50 percent of the shareholders present at a meeting to make a quorum. They want the decisions made at the meeting to be the decisions of the shareholders. The regional and village corporations aren't like normal corporations. The Corporations own the land around the village and receive money. And they play a large role in what happens to the people. If it is used wisely it benefits the people. Land use is important such as hunting and fishing rights. The stocks cannot be traded right now. In twenty years they will be on the market. The annual meeting will be held in the third week in March. Most other corporations have their meeting in the spring. The most important thing that is happening right now is land claims for the present people and the children of the future. It's very important that people vote and make a choice. There are time tables. The proxies must be mailed in before the meeting. He said this is a way that the shareholders have a voice in what happens to their land and the money that they receive through the land claims.