



Native American Contractors Association

Working to enhance the economic self-sufficiency of America's indigenous peoples

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NACA: *USA Today* Outsources Biased Story on Alaska Native Corporations

ProPublica Blogger Michael Grabell Ignores Facts Provided by NACA Prior to Publication

WASHINGTON, DC (December 16, 2010): The Native American Contractors Association (NACA) excoriated *USA Today* for publishing a one-sided story on Alaska Native Corporations by an online blogger who dismissed nearly every fact NACA provided on the history, significance and value of ANCs and Native Enterprises in advance of today's publication.

"*USA Today* had every opportunity to publish the untold story of thousands of Alaska Native people who have experienced first hand the power and benefit of the 8(a) program," stated NACA's Executive Director Sarah Lukin. "NACA provided both the author and newspaper editors with page after page of facts outlining, in explicit detail, the good work, strong value and increasing benefits many ANCs are returning to their communities. Instead, *USA Today* chose to follow the *Washington Post's* lead by making sweeping, irresponsible characterizations of all Native Enterprises based on the specific, individual and isolated events involving a fraction of the entire ANC community."

USA Today outsourced the research and byline of today's story to blogger Michael Grabell of the privately-funded organization, ProPublica.

NACA submitted nearly 12 pages of facts on ANCs and Native Enterprises to Mr. Grabell on December 7, 2010. NACA's document highlighted the sacrifice the Alaska Native people made in 1971 by forfeiting millions of acres of land *worth trillions in oil* to the U.S. in exchange for the formation of ANCs and economic opportunities to help achieve economic self-sufficiency of Alaska Natives. NACA's document addressed how the vast majority of ANCs are fulfilling their Congressional mandate by making a positive financial impact on their disadvantaged Native communities. NACA also outlined for *USA Today* the strong performance record of ANCs, the special trust relationship Native people share with the federal government, and how participation in the SBA 8(a) program is a significant element in advancing Federal Indian Policy. None of these facts were included in today's story.

Additionally, *USA Today* disregarded facts provided by NACA specifying that since the formation of ANCs:

- Inflation-adjusted household income has risen by 50 percent
- The proportion of Alaska Native people living below the poverty line has decreased from 47 percent to 22 percent



- The proportion of Alaska Native households without complete plumbing dropped from 51 percent to just 13 percent
- In 2008 alone, the twelve regional corporations distributed roughly \$171 million in dividends – and more than ten percent of their employment base represented Alaska Native individuals.

The investigative and reporting tactics of Mr. Grabell call into serious question *USA Today's* journalistic judgment in publishing today's story. Mr. Grabell refused to provide NACA with specific data and analysis to support the ANC revenue vs. profit allegations included in his story. On ProPublica's website, Mr. Grabell irresponsibly claimed NACA "declined to comment" despite his repeated refusal to provide NACA the details of his research. In his combined 1,800 word essay on ANCs in today's *USA Today*, Mr. Grabell sourced a paltry 22 words from NACA's comprehensive, 12-page factual overview.

"*USA Today* handed the keys to its newsroom to a blogger employed by a privately-funded online organization who steamrolled past the facts and re-aired the same tired and misinformed story previously printed by *The Washington Post*," Ms. Lukin added, "The public demands and expects balanced, newsworthy analyses from its national news organizations. *USA Today* failed its obligation to meet these standards and tell the complete story on ANCs in today's coverage."

For additional information contact Sarah Lukin at 202.758.2676

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The Native American Contractors Association (NACA) is a national Native advocacy organization based in Washington, DC. NACA represents and serves almost 40 Tribal, Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), and Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs) across the nation on issues relating to the economic self-sufficiency of America's indigenous people, focusing on our members' participation in government contracting and the Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development Program. NACA's members represent over 475,000 Tribal Members, Alaska Native Shareholders, and Native Hawaiians.