

But being able to act quickly and competently saves lives at such times, he says. That's why 8(a) businesses are go-to teams for federal officials in times of trouble.

"And the government is the customer, the government ALWAYS can say 'yes' or 'no' to the deal," he says. "No federal agency is forced to give us the work."

### Experience 'a blessing'

Perry is grateful that he had a chance to direct a village Native corporation – for Salamatof, a village between Nikiski and Kenai – before becoming the shepherd for Alaska's 8(a) organizations.

"That was a blessing, a chance to learn a lot," he says.

He also believes he's one of only two entrepreneurs to head both a village corporation and his own 8(a) company. He's run several 8(a)s: His current endeavor is Teya Technologies LLC, offering IT and security services as well as medical employee leasing, logistics, construction and management services.

Teya, a subsidiary of Salamatof Native Association, was listed as the Alaska Native corporation of the year in 2006 by Northwest American Indian Development and National Center of American Indian Enterprise Development.

Perry is the past chairman of the CIRI Foundation, an education endowment established in 1982 to promote career development of Alaskan Native enrollees and their descendants through post-secondary educational scholarship and grant programs. He takes pride in being a past member of the city of Anchorage budget advisory commission and a supporter of the Boys and Girls Clubs, the March of Dimes and local Native arts.

He earned a bachelor's degree from Oregon State University and has attended 8(a) training through Loyola University and a pilot program between Howard University and the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Perry says most people don't get excited when they hear that corporate giants like Lockheed get bigger – "and that's the kind of company we're competing against for a lot of this federal work. But it is exciting to see Joe the Plumber get bigger – that means something long-lasting for the community." 🐾

## Don Young Declares Victory for Contractors

U.S. Rep. Don Young, Alaska's Republican congressman who worked with former Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens to structure 8(a) legislation, says critics of the program have had their say and been proved wrong more than once.

### How would you describe the outlook for Alaska 8(a) corporations in 2009?

Rep. Young: A little bit cautious. There is a lot of resentment and jealousy because they are successful. But the stimulus package will be very good for them. The money is ready for those who can go to work right now.

### You've testified more than once on the historical context of preferences for Alaska Native firms.

Rep. Young: We've attempted to make sure that Alaska Native communities have a chance to compete in other fields than catching fish and putting them in a fry pan.

Other minority contract opportunities are set-asides for individuals. The philosophy that Sen. Stevens and I had was to create a vehicle for collective groups with benefit to *many*, which is why the [\$3 million] ceiling on contracts was removed in their case. And now we're working with other minority groups in the Lower 48 to expand it. Let's not kid ourselves: These contractors save the government money.

Ultimately, we want to make Native corporations competitive without set-asides, and now many are.



U.S. Rep. Don Young is flanked by Native corporation leaders at a recent reception, from left: Michael McCanna, member of Chugach board of directors; Vicki Otte, ANSCA CEO; Sheri Burette, Chugach chairman of the board; Gail Schubert, executive vice president and general counsel for Bering Straits Native Corp. COURTESY PHOTO/ OFFICE OF REP. DON YOUNG

### Do you agree with critics of the GAO who say the report asked for more SBA oversight but budget cuts have made that impossible?

Rep. Young: (Chuckles.) I haven't heard that from the SBA or from anybody... If there is oversight the agency believes it needs to do, I think the money is there for it."

### Advocates for 8(a) corporations say misinformation is the biggest challenge they face. True?

Rep. Young: Lack of knowledge is huge: Go out and ask a thousand people in the Lower 48 what an 8(a) corporation is, and you'll be lucky if one can tell you.

People didn't like the idea that "Alaska Natives were coming down and taking jobs" in their areas. Once we were able to show that we were

creating jobs for people in their districts, the criticism abated.

I don't think there are any members of Congress who don't have an 8(a) contractor working in their district. When you show them the taxes they generate, the jobs they create, the advantages are obvious.

As much as I disliked testifying to the committees [of Sen. Pete Domenici-(R-N.M.) and Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif. ], it was probably good for everybody concerned. It got out in the open how good this was for both taxpayers and Alaska Native communities. 🐾

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### And the congressional investigations into the program?

Rep. Young: The GAO report's only criticism was that there's not enough oversight. There was no sound criticism against the *program*. We've had the GAO report, and the follow-up report by the SBA will be out in a month or so, and I expect it to be very positive.

I don't think there will be any more GAO reports – there's nothing there.

### Has any benefit come from this repeated scrutiny?

Rep. Young: I like to say that adversary conditions create stronger people. I'm sure stricter processes and attention makes 8(a)s perform better.