

Morris Thompson

Morris Thompson was one of Alaska's most prominent Native and business leaders.

"A really big Alaskan tree fell today," Byron Mallott, who recently stepped down as executive director of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., told the Anchorage Daily News.

Thompson, 61, his wife, Thelma, and daughter Sheryl had been in Mexico for a vacation.

Thompson retired last month as president and chief executive officer of Doyon Ltd., a Native corporation formed in 1971 as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The corporation has 12.5 million acres of land, making it the largest private landowner in the United States.

When Thompson took over Doyon in 1985, it had an operating loss of \$28 million. When he retired, it was generating \$70.9 million in annual revenues, had 900 employees and 14,000 stockholders.

Thompson was a special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior during the Nixon years. He was only 34 when he was appointed Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He also was a cabinet-level officer in Alaska Gov. Walter J. Hickel's first administration.

"He is a great Native leader, very personable, down to earth," said Sharon McConnell, a co-host of "Dialogue with Doyon" that aired on Alaska Public Radio until Thompson retired. "I think a lot of us are in shock about this."