sensitiveness about himself. He warms up a little after he’s seen the visitor up.

He says simply that the chief’s job is to “be the boss. I’m chief and presi-
dent of the tribal board of directors. That’s that. It’s simple. We have elec-
tions every year.” He has been chief for five years.

As in ancient times, the chief enjoys much prestige, but has little real au-
thority. “Inherited, rather than elected,” the authors of “The Original Vermonters” write. “We explain that the actual duties of the chief were rather mundane and his main role was an ability to define problems bet-
weem warring factions.

Blackie has this ability. But don’t push him. Things move slowly here and decisions are not made rapidly. He has a dark complexion and blue eyes, a mustache of white beard, a mustache and over gray hair. He is often seen in his luxurious home. He has a is nickname in the Ar-
my from a black woman in Louisiana who called him “Blackie” when he bought some fried chicken from her.

His goals are simple and he intends to achieve through legal means and perseverance. “We will have a reservation someday. I don’t know when, but we will,” he says. The vice-president’s fingers bring the cigar to his mouth. He inhales, then exhales, puffs a smoke and offers another.

“The other hand, what’s the recognition worth if a governor can give it (or take away)?” he asks, play-

ing the Abenaki version of the devil’s advocate. He is referring to one of the latest actions taken by former Gov. Richard Snelling.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1978, the federal government signed the Abenaki Treaty, established the Gover-
nor’s Commission on Indian Affairs, and called for a study of the Abenak

is unenforced by the Abenaki Treaty. This treaty requires the federal govern-
ment to provide for the Abenakis’ cultural and educational needs.

In 1980, the state of New Hampshire recognized the Abenaki Treaty. However, the treaty remains unenforced. The Abenakis still face discrimination and poverty.

As for the state of New Hampshire’s recognition of the Abenaki Treaty, Blackie sees this as an indicator of the sovereignty nation within another na-
tion. “It is not just the cultural, but the unenforced housing and education that we still need to address,” he says.

“Snelling kept up the Abenaki tradi-
tions,” Blackie interjects.

And Gov. Madeline M. Kunin upheld the Snelling recognition.

Blackie says his people have given up on applying for state recognition and are concentrating on their ap-
plications to the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs.

“SUCCESS STORY”

“We know what we are,” says Jim Meder, spokesperson for the Abenaki Self-Help Association. “We don’t need others to tell us who we are.”

Meder is an Abenaki success story. He is the only non-Indigenous Nation member of the Abenaki, who was once identified as an alcoholic.

One day, through an alcohol abuse program, he heard that an alcohol abuse program was being offered. He attended the program and received treatment for his alcoholism. He became an Abenaki man.

Today, he can claim among his ac-

complishments to be a member of the Abenaki Nation. He has also been successful in securing federal funds for the repatriation of his homelands.

The work is done by a construction crew called Abenaki Enterprises, founded by the Self-Help Associa-
tion. The project sometimes has jobs for as many as 50 people.

“Taxes, they call us welfare peo-
ples, but it’s welfare for those who are welfare dependent,” Meder says. “We’re trying to change that and we’re now more successful in our projects.”

In addition, 21 Abenakis have received their General Education Diploma through the Self-Help’s adult education program and 20 more have taken classes through the Comm-
unity College of Vermont with scholarships from the Self-Help.

“All of our youth from Indian families where there is not much support growing up, lots of family violence, no motivation. Here, we’re

Continued on page 11