

# ANB really does have a big impact

by Naats'keek  
for the Tundra Times

**YAKUTAT** — Several years ago, I was a delegate from my camp at an Alaska Native Brotherhood convention which was held in Juneau that year.

After a long day of attending meetings and workshops, I met a relative in the lobby of the hotel. After exchanging pleasantries, I answered her question regarding my presence in Juneau.

"I can't understand why the ANB has such long conventions," she remarked. "I've been a delegate a time or two and I haven't seen one thing that the ANB has done that is worthwhile anymore. All you guys do is come to these conventions to socialize."

Politics, she attempted to inform me, in no uncertain terms during the length of our conversation, was now in the hands of the for-profit Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporations and there was no longer a need for an organization such as the Alaska Native Brotherhood.

After our encounter, I pondered what she had said and concluded she must not have attended any of the meetings in order for her to come to an in-depth understanding of what the Alaska Native Brotherhood is all about.

Over the years, even though it may appear to many to have been put on the "shelf," the Alaska Native Brotherhood has been a vital force to contend with because it is constantly involved in events which affect every aspect of our living.

Take for instance, during a Alaska Board of Fisheries and Game meeting in Juneau one year in January. A new governor had been in office only a few weeks and had been in the process of filling his appointive offices.

One office was that of the commissioner for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Of one man who was in serious contention, little had been known about him, other than the fact that he had been serving as the deputy commissioner for a time.

I was serving on the Grand Camp Fisheries Committee. The chairman of the committee had arranged several meetings with the prospective candidate in one of the hotel rooms.

Members of the Grand Camp Fisheries Committee comprised of representatives from every community in Southeast Alaska were there. That small hotel room was bunched with people like the "money bag" in a purse seine net!

After several meetings with the individual, the committee was convinced enough to put its support behind his bid for the job. The Grand Camp president consequently telephoned the governor, followed by a letter, expressing the ANB's preference. The man was appointed.

Another important issue the Alaska Native Brotherhood Fisheries Committee was instrumental in was influencing a decision when it backed a Yakutat Fisheries Advisory Committee's proposal to close the power troll effort off shore along the gulf coast from the Lost to the East Alsek Rivers.

The Southeast Power Trollers Association fought the proposal tooth and nail. It was evident their lobbying effort seemed to be in their favor.

On the morning, the day the testimony was to be taken by the Board of Fisheries, two representatives from the Yakutat group met with the Grand Camp Fisheries Committee.

Two other representatives concentrated their lobbying efforts in other important areas.

The members of the committee were

tough people to convince; the entire two hours were spent answering questions so the committee members could become familiar with the unique Yakutat set-net fishery.

Before the meeting was concluded, the committee voted to support the proposal. That afternoon, when testimony was given, the chairman of the committee sat with the Yakutat delegation.

After the testimony was completed, all the chairman said was, "The Alaska Native Brotherhood Grand Camp Fisheries Committee goes on record to support the Yakutat proposal."

The proposal passed and was written into the regulation book that spring. To this day, it has not been changed.

Now, I wonder if it was a social call made when the president of my camp instructed the chairman of the camp fisheries committee to pay a visit to the local fish processor to inquire about complaints regarding the work-

ing and pay conditions our local workers were experiencing?

And was it a social act, when delegates of our camp took with them 15 resolutions touching on every aspect of living to the ANB convention one fall?

These dedicated people were successful in getting every resolution passed by the Grand Camp during the course of the convention.

And was it a social issue when the president of my camp took with him five of those resolutions pertaining to fisheries to a meeting of the Board of Fisheries and Game which had been held in our community that spring?

He gave testimony, using those resolutions to support his testimony.

Admittedly, there is a lot of socializing which takes place at annual conventions. This is a special time for the participants, a time when old friends and classmates can renew acquaintances, sing, dance, partake of favorite foods, entertain and be entertained.

It is tradition for Alaska Natives to

have fun while they conduct serious business; any attempt to make changes would certainly be a weighty break from tradition.

In any event, the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood conventions are productive. When all the delegates return back to their communities, they take concerns regarding health and welfare, housing, education, social and economic issues and much work involving fisheries.

All these actions can be used by the individual camps on local and statewide levels to achieve the goals of the Alaska Native Brotherhood.

Well, maybe we're not much competition for our regional and local ANCSA corporations; each entity serves its purpose. I know, however, and for a surety at that, that when the Alaska Native Brotherhood speaks people like E.F. Hutton listen.

*Naats'keek is Bertrand J. Adams, Sr., 53, a commercial fisherman from Yakutat.*