

Leadership project told 'You cannot go back'

The Alaska Native Leadership Project has just completed a week of meetings in Juneau. These included meetings with Governor Hammond, Lieutenant Governor Terry Miller, and legislators, as well as forums on how to impact political activity.

The following speech was presented for Senator Ferguson to the Alaska Native Leadership Project. Participants in this year's project were: Martha Ramoth-Davis from Selawick; Harry Boone from Golovin; John Evan from Newtok; Jake Wells from Noorvik; Mary Dalton from Sitka; Ted Panamarioff from Ouzinkie; Carolyn Hoseth from Dillingham; Dixie Dayo from Manley Hot Springs; Paul Theodore President, of Knik Village Corporation; Debbie Lee from Aniak; Jeannette (Dolly) Carter from Nome; Evelyn Pootoogooluk from Shishmaref; Ellie Stickman from Nulato; Louis Keller from Nome; Judy Ramos from Yakutat; Paul Agangalook from Gambell; and Cheryl Anderson from Hydaburg.

Your involvement in the Alaska Native Leadership Project indicates not only your commitment to learning experiences but to the destiny of the people as well. As you walk this path that you have chosen, you walk with responsibility. Many decisions are made here that affect the people today, as well as our children's children of the future. Your conduct here, as representatives of the people, therefore, must be impeccable. You all come from strong cultures and it is anticipated that your behavior will reflect that strength and dignity. Assuming a stance of integrity enhances our work and our success. When times get rough, and they will, remember the aloneness that our ancestors faced while hunting. Hunting calls for stamina, courage, above all patience, and a belief in oneself, the family and tribe. Therefore, in our hearts we know we are not alone. There are reasons for being here now.

As Alaska proceeds and progresses, it is imperative that the leadership of Alaska Natives and rural residents engage themselves in leadership posts or positions and put forth the concerns and necessities of the Alaska Native and rural Alaska communities.

And, as spokespersons for Alaska Natives, it is expected that the leadership be above reproach, as well it should be.

Laying aside self interests, the voice from the wilderness should stress the needs of the rural communities and be prepared to address issues either publicly before the Alaska Legislature or the United States Congress.

We must not only be knowledgeable but factual. Ever since the 1960s and the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 and attendant legislation, such as D2,

the Alaska Native leadership has been called upon to speak and rightfully so.

We do not feel inhibited about expressing the Alaska Native leadership viewpoint.

It is either that or have organizations like the Wilderness Society or the state Chamber of Commerce or other special interest groups speak for us. The complexities on the Alaskan scene requires precise and direct input of the Alaska Native leadership.

Therefore, the Alaska Native leadership program was funded to develop the potential that each of you and others like you possess for leadership. The Alaska Legislature wants you trained today to accept the awesome responsibility demanded of you tomorrow. The future requires that you be involved and skillful in order to be effective. Take advantage of this opportunity for positive growth.

In conclusion, I would like to read a poem that reflects upon the people.

You cannot go back.

You cannot live here believing that

Our way is the bridge to yesterday.

Now is the way it was.

Now is beautiful because

Everything that matters

Has found its way to us.