

President's Report

The new year brings renewed hope, energies and commitment to our struggles in dealing with the changes we see taking place in our families and communities.

Our upcoming 1989 convention theme reflects our concerns - "Restrengthening Native Families and Communities." A number of 1988 convention resolutions direct AFN's *active* involvement and participation in these issues... and the work has already begun.

As outlined in our top story, we have just completed work on a report which has been submitted to Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. The report is a compilation of existing statistics which together help to provide a glimpse of the depth of the problems we currently face as Native people. The project was undertaken at the behest of Senator Inouye and will be the focal point of a March 10th hearing in Washington, D.C. and three hearings in Alaska this spring.

The report helps to provide an overview of our health status, the level and quality of education our children are receiving, and the limited economic and employment opportunities available within our communities. It can be supplemented with two other reports by former State Senator Willie Hensley that have been released in the last year that detail the alarming rate of Native suicides and the appalling level of education our children receive.

In the coming months, the AFN Board will take a number of steps to further address some of the findings contained in these reports:

- *We have begun working on plans for an Alaska Native Economic Development Summit Meeting to be held in May. This meeting will provide a forum for discussing the real economic and employment needs in the villages.

- *We have taken steps to form a statewide Alaska Native Blue Ribbon Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse to begin looking at the ways in which we can effectively support and encourage the current sobriety movement in our communities.

- *We will be working with the Alaska Native Health Board and other organizations to prepare testimony that addresses the findings contained in our report to Senator Inouye. We will then continue work to implement these recommendations.

- *We will be working to address the recommendations of the Senate



Special Committee on School Performance to improve the quality of education and to ensure our schools are held accountable for the education of our children. When addressing these issues, it's important to not lose sight of the fact that we - as parents and members of our communities - have a role and responsibility to work with the schools to ensure the success of our children. This must be a true partnership if we are to succeed!

- *We have begun work to identify some of the serious issues and problems that exist in our justice system. These include the increasing number of Native prisoners, especially young Native males, and low Native hire in the justice system. We will also be looking at local options available to villages such as the proposed judgment boards and the use of local village courts.

- *We will once again be coordinating an ANCSA and 1991 technical amendment package which will be forwarded to Congress this year to correct some problems contained in these two pieces of legislation. While this will not be a major amendment package, like the 1991 legislation, it is still an important effort.

These are some of the major activities that AFN will undertake this year. We will also continue to work on other important issues such as Native allotments, tribal governance, subsistence, Indian Child Welfare Act, implementation and amendments. We look forward to 1989 and the challenges it brings. We intend to continue our work to unite AFN and hope this new year ends with both Tanana Chiefs and AVCP back in the organization so that *together* we can work toward the positive solutions of the many serious challenges we face as Native people.