

Anchorage hosts NAFWS convention

by Wilson Justin

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Write it down, folks. The Native American Fish & Wildlife Society knows how to put on a conference.

Many nations as one, before God, Indivisible with liberty and justice for all . . . !

These were the fragments of my thoughts Tuesday night as Native Americans continued to pour into the gymnasium at Central Junior

High School in Anchorage. They were there for the traditional feast and recognition ceremony. Eventually, it was announced that over four hundred people had registered for the evening festivities.

I'm not sure of the number's but it seemed to me that I counted 35 to 40 volunteer's and cook's working the kitchen along with NAFWS organizers. The food line was four deep and wound completely around the perimeter's. There were many

who thought that it could not get better, but it did witness the electrifying performance of the hoop dancer which bought the crowd to it's feet.

Then, without skipping a beat, NAFWS scored big again with the banquet auction Wednesday night at the Anchorage Hilton.

The overflow crowd quickly warmed to the featured speaker, Ted Nugent, known to legions of fans

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of the world as the "Wild Man of Rock and Roll," Ted incredibly as it seems was nearly upstaged by some visiting Indians from Saskatchewan, Canada. Murdoch Carriere, manager of Aboriginal Programs Saskatchewan Environmental Resource Management, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan came up to the stage and delighted the audience with assorted waterfowl calls. His loon and wolf calls were breath takingly eerie. Serving to transport all of us back to our youth and thoughts of home. Murdoch gracefully yielded the stage and Ted Nugent took to the task with equal grace. I was lucky I got a table not twenty feet from the podium along with Michelle Davis, Alaska Region Coordinator, Adelheid Herrmann and a number of other presenters, organizers, and volunteers.

The theme of the 13th Annual Conference of the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society was "Native American Resource Management in the North: A Discovery of Choices; The Process for Change."

Appropriately enough, day one began with a bevy of heavy hitters. After the grand entry, Alaska Region Co-Directors Carol Jorgensen and Larry Mercurieff, along with NAFWS President John Smith formally welcomed the delegates and guests. Following the welcome ceremony, the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Molly Beattie

gave an overview of the new USFWS Indian Policy.

Anyone who thinks that here aren't strong winds of change blowing in Indian country should have been there for this presentation. If possible, get yourself a copy of this policy paper and settle in for some surprising reading. All this from what many of us have long regarded to be "traditional enemies!"

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, U.S. Senator, Hawaii, unfortunately could not deliver his keynote speech in person, however, it seemed not to matter at all to the participants.

The remainder of the day, as well as the remainder of the week, were broken up into technical sessions, all vital, all highly visible issues and marked by very knowledgeable speakers.

For instance, here is the technical session I attended in the Alaska Room:

Wildlife Issues: moderated by Norman Jojola, Natural Resource Manager for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mescalero Agency, Mescalero, New Mexico. Speakers included Robert McLeod, Assistant Deputy Minister, Northwest Territories, Canada, Murdoch Carriere, manager of Aboriginal Programs, Saskatchewan, Canada; Craig Pleener, Natural Resource Director for the Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments and Orville Huntington, USFWS.