

Nixon invited to AFN convention

Former President Richard Nixon, whose support of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Act was instrumental in the controversial bill's passage in the U.S. Congress, has been invited to be keynote speaker at the 1981 Alaska Federation of Natives Convention.

AFN Executive Director Janie Leask confirmed this week that Nixon had been invited. She said that the invitation included the request that Nixon notify AFN by Aug. 1 of his intentions.

AFN sent a request to Nixon via U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens on Feb. 12. Stevens replied to AFN on March 4 that he had sent the invitation to Nixon on March 4. No other response has come from Nixon.

His New York business office could not be contacted this week.

The Alaska Native Claims Act bill was passed during Nixon's tenure and according to the book, *Alaska Native Land Claims*, Nixon was more than a signator on the bill.

The book, written by Robert D. Arnold, states that Nixon's support of the Native Land Claims bill was important in turning aside the objections to the bill which came from conservative U.S. House of Representative leaders.

Nixon, himself, delivered a proposal to Congress on the Native claims which called for a 40

million acre settlement, \$500 million in monies from the federal treasury and \$500 million from mineral rights. Nixon also met with House leaders and made it clear that he would veto any bill which Natives felt was not adequate to meet their needs.

The bill passed the U.S. Senate and House on Dec. 14, 1971 and was accepted by delegates to an AFN meeting on Dec. 16. When Nixon was informed of their approval, he informed them, via a specially taped message hook-up, that he had signed the bill.

The AFN Convention is set for Dec. 16-18 with further celebration on Dec. 18 to mark the 10th anniversary of the ANCSA signing.

The annual Tundra Times Banquet will be held in conjunction with the convention on Dec. 17.

Although Nixon's support for the bill was very helpful, Arnold noted that the support was generated more from interest in Arctic Ocean oil than from interest in the cause. Quoting a legislative aid, the book said "This assistance came largely from the oil industry and related business interests, and from the only Republican in Alaska's delegation, Senator Ted Stevens. This was the first of many times that the shared fates of the land claims and the trans-Alaska pipeline would produce a strange coalition of support for Native causes."