

# CEDC honors Harry Johns, Sr. at annual meeting

by Steve Kakaruk

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"Harry is our conscience. He is a reminder of where we came from and where we are going," said Orie Williams, a board member of the Community Enterprise Development Corporation of Alaska (CEDC). On February 20, CEDC honored Harry Johns, Sr. of Copper Center. He is the only director to serve the board for 17 consecutive years since CEDC's formation.

Johns, like many Elders who teach, is not afraid to link the past to the present. "Our ways are changing; I'm afraid we are losing our traditions and I try to teach our children about the way we used to live," Johns said recently.

Johns was born in November of 1909 along the banks of Copper River. There he learned the traditional ways of his people before working at a roadhouse at the age of ten. From 1929 to 1965 he worked at the Alaska Road Commission as a truck driver and mechanic. Johns and his wife Ruth raised ten children during that period.

Johns retired from ARC and began

working as a Pastor and paralegal. His interest in Native organizations and civic duties grew over the years and his lifestyle has been dedicated to serving the needs of his people.

His record also includes: President, Alaska Native Brotherhood-Camp 31; Chairman and President, Copper Center Village Council; PTA President, Copper River School; Board Member, Copper River Native Association; Board Member, Ahtna Incorporated; Board Member, Rural Alaska Community Action Program; and Honorary Elder Representative and Lifetime Board Member, Community Enterprise Development Corporation of Alaska.

His beliefs are shared by many; his kindness is felt and his leadership is recognized, though he has never sought the limelight.

Johns has been a teacher at potlaches, sharing many a traditional song and dance; he has been a pastor and legal advocate for the Copper River people during the days of land claims. For this, his wisdom and heartfelt dedication to Alaska Native people, he deserves recognition.



*Harry Johns, Sr., was honored at CEDC's annual meeting.*

Photo by Steve Kakaruk