

Work together, Benefit all

There were several beginnings made in Anchorage last week as representatives of the statewide regional and tribal organizations met among themselves and with each other.

At the United Tribes of Alaska, the first General Assembly was held and many of the frustrations felt by tribal members were discussed.

At the Alaska Federation of Natives convention, a beginning was made on a new chapter of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act—1991.

And a beginning was made when representatives of UTA and AFN spoke to the other organization and spoke of common goals and unity of purpose.

Unity of purpose is a topic which has been discussed a lot recently. Ramsey Clark, Janie Leask, Charlie Johnson, the Elders, the congressional delegation and many others spent a lot of time talking about unity.

And unity is more important between AFN and UTA than many might believe because here is where the chords of disunity may begin to be struck.

AFN and UTA are gifted with leaders who have many strengths and many concerns. Leaders of both organizations have as their goals the well-being of the Native peoples of Alaska.

They may see different ways to achieve these goals but their goals are the same.

It is therefore essential that the two groups continue their beginning. They must continue to meet with each other and listen to each other.

UTA was present at two AFN-sponsored retreats to discuss the 1991 issue and UTA has met in the AFN offices on UTA business. By sharing these experiences both learn much and prosper.

There is currently no plan for either organization to meet with the other and, while we realize that post-convention time is one of relaxation, we would urge that the groups hold regular meetings — whether formal or informal — with the other. Even if it means Willie Goodwin and Charlie Johnson go hunting together.

Such frequent contact makes it difficult for the seeds of suspicion to be sewn between groups. And politics makes for such seeds to be sewn. History has proven that.

The beginning has occurred.

We hope that the good will and progress will continue.