

A Great Achievement

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The delegates of the Statewide Native Conference in Anchorage last week came from all parts of Alaska from the Arctic to the Panhandle. The main thought in their minds, perhaps, might have been that of unity among the organizations from all geographical areas of the state. Some of the people may have had some misgivings that unity among them would be achieved. Others may have been confident that this would be attained.

When the conference got underway, it was inevitable that the main subject was to be the land question. This was a familiar ground of which the delegates knew well—a something in common to all of them. This fact, more than any other problems on hand, was the main motivating reason from which the Indians, Aleuts and Eskimos achieved unity and a common cause. The urgency and the gravity of it left no room for factionalism. The very seriousness of it was too great and whatever factionalism that might have existed fell by the wayside. It lent no hindrance to the conferees who worked hard to thrash out solutions for their problems. They worked in harmony while leaving ample room for thorough discussions and to iron out whatever differences they had and voting on the conclusions they produced.

The Anchorage conference became significant as the setting for impressive talent shown by the Aleuts, Eskimos, and Indians. This was manifest in their speeches—in their ability to tackle highly technical phases of varied problem areas. It made the conference the success it was. The work that was put forth by the Native leaders was highly creditable indeed and the people at home in all areas of Alaska can be justly proud of the men and women they picked to represent them.

When the conference was over, there was no doubt that unity of the Native organizations had been achieved, a fact that has been long sought by our people. We feel that what has been gained can live on because the leadership is there to help perpetuate it. It is what we have been desiring all along. It is a hard-fought achievement. It is worth keeping because the strength it represents will be invaluable in helping us to gain the benefits we all wish for our people.

— H.R.

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Ten years have elapsed since the preceding editorial appeared in this newspaper, yet our editor's faith in the strength of the unified Alaska Federation of Natives has been repeatedly reaffirmed in the accomplishments of the organization in its role as an advocate for all of the Alaska Native people. The most obvious and most heralded achievement is the settlement of Alaska Native Land Claims. Other great benefits are evident in improvement of health care, education opportunities, employment, and greater self-control by Alaska Native people of their own affairs. The Tundra Times congratulates the A.F.N. on its many victories of the past decade and encourages the entire Alaska Native community to pledge support to A.F.N. as it begins to address the challenges of the next decade.