

Editorial



Convention belongs to AFN's youth

by the Alaska Federation of Natives

The sixth annual Alaska Federation of Natives Youth Convention, which will be called to order at the Egan Convention Center at 2 p.m. Wednesday, represents a significant step forward in the evolution of Native youth activities.

Beginning in 1984, this annual gathering of high school students has grown to a registered attendance of almost 400. More importantly, its activities have evolved from the standard conference format — students sitting, listening to adults — to that of a real convention.

It is chaired from the podium by students, and only students have voice and vote on the floor and in regional caucuses. It grapples with many complex resolutions drafted, introduced, argued, amended and adopted by the students themselves.

Adults are there, to be sure. They help with parliamentary tangles at the podium and complex issues in caucuses and on the floor. But the convention *belongs* to the youth. They run it.

The position they take on any issue is perhaps the most legitimate reflection of public opinion in the next generation of Native leadership.

A good example of that is the centerpiece debate of this year's gathering. After considering many issues, such as alcohol and drug abuse, social problems, education, tribal sovereignty and subsistence, the AFN Youth Council chose as the primary focus this year the topic of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act stock issuance to New Natives.

No matter that it was debated at the Youth Convention two years ago, or that Congress has now adopted the 1991 amendments to permit such issuances by corporations. Most New Natives still have no stock. For them, the issue is still pending.

This year, all resolutions adopted by the Youth Convention will be forwarded to the Resolutions Committee of the AFN Convention, to be considered for action on the floor. The AFN Convention will also get a full report on youth issues by a panel of three Youth Council officers Oct. 19. This arrangement is something the young people have wanted for some time — a direct connection between their debates and those of the big convention — a way of getting their ideas in front of the larger Native community.

So, if the next generation of Native politics interests you, stop by the Egan Center this week. We particularly recommend the plenary floor debates on New Native stock (Thursday afternoon) and student resolutions (Friday morning).

The AFN Youth Convention is open to the public, and all observers are welcome.

