



Marie Tyson, right, admires a painting of her husband, done by Moses Wassillie, center. Family friend Pat McAdoo, left, was present for the ceremony as well.

Photo by Mike Hinman

School named for St. Marys elder

by Mike Hinman
for the *Tundra Times*

One of four new elementary schools in Anchorage has been named after a St. Marys elder.

The William Tyson Elementary School was dedicated on Nov. 21. The ceremonies at the Mountain View school were highlighted by recollections from some of the people who knew and were influenced by Tyson.

"I would like to thank William for setting an example for me," Moses Wassillie told the standing-room-only crowd during recent dedication ceremonies. "I learned from him I don't have to be wild and crazy to succeed."

Wassillie painted the picture of

Tyson that was given to the school as part of the artwork for the building. The other artwork for the school is of Native emphasis and by Native artists from Alaska. The school mascot, the Raven, was done by Tlingit carver, Nathan Jackson.

Pat McAdoo related stories and told of William and his wife Maria visiting the Alaska Native Medical Center where she works.

"He was a quiet man, a gentle man and a humble man," McAdoo told the audience.

She said in a later interview that there would be "brightness" whenever the Tysons came to visit.

"William would give the most won-

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derful hugs," said McAdoo. "It's just so wonderful to have someone of that caliber recognized."

"I thought it was a good ceremony," said Sue Gamache, vice president of corporate affairs for Calista Corporation, of which Tyson was a shareholder.

Gamache said that the Tysons would, besides visiting the hospital, often visit the school district and the Highland Mountain Correctional Facility to help Native and non-Native inmates through learning Native heritage and spiritual guidance.

"(He) always saw the positive in (people and) things," said Gamache.

Tyson helped organize Calista and was in charge of enrollment of the 13,000 plus original shareholders of the corporation.

Tyson moved within three worlds with ease; the white world, the Native world and the spiritual world of his Roman Catholic faith.

He was born in Akulurak, a small village in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and was sent to the mission school at St. Marys when he was 11 years-old.

The mission school taught him English, and he eventually became a translator for the missionaries.

He survived a bout with tuberculosis by going to a sanitarium in Sitka in 1950.

In the course of his religious life, Tyson was to become one of the first translators

of common prayers and liturgies of the Catholic faith. He eventually became a deacon in January, 1977. He also helped at the altar, representing all Eskimo deacons, when Pope John Paul II visited Anchorage in 1981.

The honor of having the school named after him came after the recommendation of 35 students from East High School in Anchorage.

Tyson was also elected Chief of the "Elitnauruk Within East High School."

Elitnauruk means "a place to learn" and the program is a "very active" Native American program that sponsors a Native Youth Olympics team among other activities.

"He was our elder and our Chief," said Lucy Brown, a counselor and program coordinator at East High School.

The process started with discussions of the idea by the students of the Native Culture Club. The students solicited letters from the Native community and went through all the protocol and forms that are needed for the school board.

The name of a school is recommended by a the members of the community, members of the school board and an area community council, in this case the Mountain View Community Council.

The students finally met with the school board to argue in support of the Tyson name. The whole process took about five months, according to Brown.

"He was nominated because of his energies, his wisdom and his message," she said.

Brown also noted that Tyson was a man of much energy and "soft spoken" demeanor that was involved in teaching Native dance, Native arts and crafts, AIDS prevention, and sobriety.

The estimated 300 people attending the ceremony consisted of members of the Native community, Calista Corporation, the students and their parents along with several members of the school board.

School walls are still bare, but should have all of the artwork delivered by the end of the school year, according to Principal John Kito.

"We are still moving in," said administrative assistant Judy Martsolf. "We are still getting supplies in."

Kito brings 22 years of Anchorage School District experience to the head



Marie Tyson, center seated, drums for the Caribou Dance. At the end of the performance, the drum she played was donated to the school.

Photo by Mike Hinman

office of the \$10.5 million school that is designed to accommodate 496 students in 24 classrooms.

Other schools that opened at the same time with the same floor plans, are Lake Hood, Kincaid and Kasuun ("a beautiful place" in Athabaskan).