



photo by Chris Cushman

Simeon Arnakin, left, congratulates Harry Johns at a birthday party at the CEDC offices in Anchorage recently.

Celebration honors Ahtna's Harry Johns 80th birthday

by Warren Jarvis
for the Tundra Times

Harry Anthony Johns celebrated his 80th birthday last week in a building dedicated to him and in a room where a painting of him in traditional garb dominated the walls.

More than 40 people attended the gathering in the Community Enterprise and Development Co.'s offices in the C-Street Plaza.

The informal party given by his family, was attended by friends and

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numerous representatives of CEDC, the Ahtna Heritage Foundation and Alaska Legal Services, all of whom Johns has or is working with.

After several short speeches, including one by former Anchorage Mayor George Sullivan and a "This is your life" speech by David Vought, the cakes were cut and the group relaxed into a friendly, mingling

crowd.

Johns, born Nov. 15, 1909, on a dogteam trail between Klutina Lake and Copper Center, said he did not think his ninth decade will bring any changes in his level of activity. Rather, Johns said, he will continue to be involved in the community, including translating for Alaska Legal Services when the occasion arises.

According to Vought, a 10-year friend of his, Johns is also helping

pastor the Copper Center Community Chapel, is program director for the annual Wrangell Mountain Bible Conference, is an honorary chief and traditional dance director for the Ahtna Heritage Foundation and is an honorary chief and board member of CEDC.

Johns and his wife have, according to Vought, been an area resource for the Copper River basin.

"Harry and Ruth have many times

put aside their personal life to help their family and friends," Vought said, citing John's roles as former pastor, volunteer driver before ambulance service became available in the area and in installing telephones in every home in the village at his own expense.

To Johns, however, these are not exceptional things. And that, perhaps, is what makes him exceptional to all who know him.