

AFN, INC. CALLS FOR UNITY

The Need for Unity Far Exceeds any Individual Differences, Says Lang

By MARGIE BAUMAN

ANCHORAGE — An Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. convention packed with political punches and a call for continued unity wound up Saturday at Anchorage's Captain Cook Hotel.

The emerging delegates from this ninth annual convention of the statewide Native organization were handed a clean bill of health on AFN, Inc. and to stick together, no matter what the internal fights.

"The need for unity far exceeds any individual differences. . .," said AFN Inc. President Roger Lang, in his report on the status of the organization.

"We don't have to agree all the time.

"It is necessary once in a while that we fight like hell among ourselves. . .," Lang said.

But the Southeastern Alaska leader admitted that there was one fight he was happy to see resolved with the re-entry of the Aleut Regional Corporation into AFN Inc.

Lang said of all he had to report at this convention this was the most significant accomplishment.

"There have been instances in the past, where questions have been raised about the need for an organization which advocated a collective view of the Alaskan Natives, there have been forecasts that never again would Alaska's Natives be united for a single issue, and there have been

forecasts that we are too rich, too self centered in our corporate interest, and unable to function as we once did in representing the views of our constituents."



ROGER LANG

Lang said.

"All of these dim views were

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not made by Alaskan Natives, but by those at times, who are our adversaries in implementing of the act.

"So the Aleut Corporation's desires to rejoin the AFN is a blessing, and a special joy to report, and it defies those who would separate and divide us," he said.

Lang's report, in the midst of the convention, also included an evaluation of the ability of the state's 12 regional Native corporations to manage their affairs in finance, land battles and organization.

The AFN Inc. chief officer said he had not been advised of a single corporation on the village or regional level which has made a bad investment of its monies during the past year.

"In a time when the economy of the country has been categorized as having a topless inflation and a bottomless stock market, this is a remarkable achievement," he said.

Lang said in the less than three short years since the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act has passed there has developed an expertise in lands which is "startling."

Expertise within the land departments of the various Native corporations is a match for the federal and state agencies dealing in the same area, he said.

"The difference in Native land planning capability, is that our planning is the reflection of the feelings of the people we represent, rather than the preservation of either a bureaucracy or a cause. This is significant," he said.

Overall, Lang said, the new concept of Natives lives and aspiration in Alaska is good. We are producing, we are contributing, we are planning and forecasting the needs of our people," he said.

"Our views are being solicited, our views are being accepted and our views are being tested in almost every phase of Alaskan life. . . . We are the advocates for considerations which benefit the entire State and to date our considerations at the Alaska Federation of Natives Inc. has been at that level. To do less would demean our cause," he said.

Lang's optimistic report also included his own bid for another year as president of AFN Inc. The job had been he said "a joy, a privilege — one of the most rewarding I've ever done in my life."

The theme of the convention was a command from Tashunka Witka (Crazy Horse), which said "One does not sell the earth upon which the people live."

Indeed, the problems of land selection, in the midst of other pressing social service needs, are the most urgent as the regional Native corporations work to complete village selections by the December 18 deadline.

The convention lands panel, featuring several persons prominent in land selection among Native regional corporations and on the state and federal level, brought out the continuing difficulties of land selection.

"We're doing the best we can to choose the most valuable land, but it's hard to define which is the most valuable," said Calista Corporation's Lewis Lively, noting the high costs of evaluating the land and uncertainty of the law regarding selection.

"We are spending a great deal of money to find out which is the most valuable land, but once we do, there is no guarantee that we'll get the keys. There is a danger of having every square inch of the land we've selected encumbered," Lively said.

Beyond that, added Richard Atuk of the Bering Straits Na-

tive Corporation, "the biggest job is coming up — land management." Despite the many difficulties of selection Atuk said, land selection is extremely important. It brings the people together.

Easement problems were emphasized by Doyon, Limited's Robert Jenks, who urged that the regional and village corporations also look at easements they are going to need across other people's lands — "particularly across federal lands."

"We are at the point where we ought to be thinking ahead to future issues; matters of challenge and procedures to be set up for full enjoyment of the lands, once they are received," Jenks said.

"The easement issue itself, he said, boiled down to a matter of private control; "the right of a private land owner to enjoy to the fullest degree possible complete use of their lands."

Though the theme of the convention was lands, politics carried equal weight in the convention. Even U. S. Sen. Ted Stevens who is not up for re-election, put in an appearance and gave the delegates from throughout the state his greetings.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Jay Hammond, addressing the convention, reemphasized his stand of allowing self determination and more local control in the villages.

He also re-emphasized his stand that the state take a lead in communication, "a vital link — in some cases — the difference between life or death of the consumer," said Hammond, whose own Bristol Bay region is plagued with continuing problems of poor telephone service.

Governor William Egan, in turn, attacked the record of his opponent and asked the voters to look at the Egan administration record.

Reporting on state payments into the Alaska Native Fund, in accordance with the land claims act, Egan predicted that the state would reach the \$500 million mark with 10 to 11 years from the time the land claims act passed Congress.

The speeches of Egan and Hammond were without the friction, however, which arose among candidates for the U. S. House race. Incumbent Rep. Don Young came under fire from Emil Notti, president of the Al-

aska Native Foundation.

Notti questioned a particular advertisement Young has been using which emphasizes the Republican incumbent as a candidate for "All Alaskans."

"In your advertising you might imply that Willie Hensley as a Native is not worthy of representing some of the people in this state," Notti said, charging that it was "irresponsible to use race as an issue."

Young countered that "there is no racism in my body. When people try to make it a racist issue, that's because they are racist," he said.

State Sen. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue, the obvious favorite of the convention, drew cheers when he began his speech by saying "I'm very happy to be here before all you Alaskans. . . not just some of you."

Hensley said that the land claims settlement had given the Native people a substantial stake in the development of Alaska and called further for more control of all Alaskans of the growth and development of Alaska.