

Anchorage Natives Form a 'Camp'

A group of Anchorage natives has formed a "camp" of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and elected Frank Mercer, Tlingit totem carver, as President of the group. He was installed Wednesday, October 23, in the Conference Room of the Kaloa Building.

Mercer is also President of the Welcome Center Participants Council and Member of the Board of Directors of the Center.

The Alaska Native Brotherhood is the oldest fraternal Indian organization in the United States and has been prominent in Southeast Alaska for the past fifty-six years but this is the first time a branch of the organization has been formed in Anchorage.

"The Alaska Native Brotherhood was organized in 1912 by a group of Indian leaders who were or had been students at Sheldon Jackson College, in Sitka. These leaders recognized the need for unity in order to fight for their rights as citizens and to enjoy all the privileges accorded

the citizens of the United States and the Territory of Alaska," President Mercer said today.

"It was through the efforts of this organization that our Native people were made citizens in 1924 and it also fought for the right of our Native people to vote. It was the first organization to push for integrated schools and in this respect was successful, through a lawsuit, in gaining admission for Indian children to public schools.

"In all the years of its existence ANB did not confine its interests to Southeast Alaska but concerned itself with the betterment of all Indian, Eskimo and Aleut people of the State," Mercer stated. "The Anchorage group has no intention of competing with any other established Native organization such as the Alaska Federation of Natives or Cook Inlet Native Association.

"On the contrary, the group hopes to implement programs of like organizations, and pledges its support to such groups. Membership in ANB is open to anyone desiring to join."

Mercer pointed out that the ANB has many achievements to its credit.

"This organization was in-

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strumental in getting the Workmens Compensation law amended to include Indians and obtained an amendment to the law to include Natives in the aid-to-dependent children program, and in the year 1936 it was successful in having Congress amend what is now commonly known as the Indian Reorganization Act to extend its benefits to Alaska.

"Through this amendment, several communities were able to pruchase salmon canneries, fishing boats, as well as village stores throughout the State."

The very first antidiscrimination bill ever passed by the State Legislature was at the instigation of this group. A bill was introduced at ANB's request in 1943 and was defeated, and reintroduced in 1945 and passed."

"ANB was the first group to initiate a land suit—for the Tlingit and Haidas. This came about at the annual convention at Haines in 1924."

Other officers installed at the October 23 meeting were: Archie Kahlen, vice presidnet; June Norris, corresponding secretary; Martha Benzal, treasurer; Matt Wanamaker, sergeant at arms.

ANB will hold its 56th Annual Convention in Juneau in November.