

Youth Conference represents 'Hope for the Future'

by Louise Sagmoen
Tundra Times

Over 300 Alaska Native high school students gathered in Anchorage to voice their concerns at the 1985 Alaska Federation of Natives convention. A panel of 12 students representing Ahtna, Arctic Slope Regional Corpora-

was selected to represent her people at AFN. The 15-year-old president of the Barrow Student Corporation said, "I feel honored to represent the Arctic Slope Region. I am looking forward to learning from this experience." When asked what she planned to do as representative Opie said, "help organize next year's

of my region's Native youth." The 17-year-old attends Nome-Beltz High School.

There were ten young women elected to represent the regions; only two of the high school students were young men. One of them, Mike Nixon, who will represent the Bristol Bay region, looked forward to his task. "I in-

region. By Tuesday, Oct. 22, 129 student delegates representing the Calista region were at the Egan Convention Center while the total number of youth delegates reached approximately 300 students.

The 1985-86 youth council representative for the Calista region is Pam Theroux who lives in Trapper Creek which is outside of the Anchorage area. "I'm glad to have been chosen to represent not only Calista but my people as well. I will do my best as a representative. I plan to voice opinions and speak out," the

Larsen, Kodiak; and Cole Schaeffer of Kotzebue.

The current and former youth council members along with approximately 300 other high school students studied such issues as subsistence, the year 1991 when stock can be sold, historical overview of the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act along with youth concerns and a review of federal legislation affecting Native families.

Among the keynote speakers were two elders. Retired District Court Judge Nora Guinn of



Members of the Youth Council participated in the AFN Youth Conference held Monday and Tuesday of convention week.

photo by Steve Kakaruk

"I feel honored to represent Arctic Slope. I'm looking forward to learning from this experience..."

tion, Bering Straits, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Calista, Chugach, Inc., Cook Inlet Region, Inc., Koniag, Sealaska, Northwest Arctic Natives Assoc., Doyon and Aleut Corporation were elected as youth representatives by fellow students.

Barrow high school student Taqulik Opie, representing ASRC

convention."

Bering Straits Region council member Marie Wassmann also explained what her plans were as a youth council member. "I feel honored. I am very excited about the upcoming year. I know it will be very busy but I'm going to love every minute of it. I plan to work very hard to voice the ideas

tend to get my point across and do my best to represent the opinion of the youth in my region. First I have to meet with the younger people and gather their opinions and represent that," Nixon said. He attends Dillingham High School.

The largest number of youth delegates came from the Calista

young Yup'ik said.

Other students elected to serve on the youth council were Julie Jones, Sharon Anderson, Kelly Rasmus, Victorial L. Onalik, Katy Inga, Connie Bourdukofsky, Christine Milton and Loree Marlon.

Outgoing youth council members are Valerie Davidson, Fairbanks; Doreen Abyo, Anchorage; Genon Dundas, Metlakatla; Valerie Gamble, Angoon; Kathy McGlashan, Unalaska; Laurecita Meamey, Anchorage; Geraldine Sakeagak, Barrow; David Totemoff, Tatitlek; Sheila Evans, Galena; Ferry Fleury, Glenallen; Tyler Johnson, Nome; Jana

Bethel and Walter Soboleff of Tenakee Springs spoke to the younger delegates.

For the first time a joint session of elders and youth were gathered as part of AFN's theme "Alaska Native Youth: Hope for the Future." Last year the joint session was requested to share information and develop ways for youth and elders to help each other. After the students met in regional caucuses their comments and suggestions were presented to the full AFN conference.

During the meeting of the elders and youth delegates, high school students raised concerns

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Youth Conference

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about elderly benefits. The youth felt regional corporations should be distributing monetary benefits to the elders.

The youth conference was scheduled for Oct. 21-22. Many of the students such as Barrow's representative Taqulik Opie had to return home before the convention ended.

In addition to being a youth council member, Opie is also part of a unique program at her Barrow high school.

She serves as president of Barrow's high school corporation which is modeled after the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. In the North Slope Borough School District there are eight student corporations.

Barrow High School Faculty Advisor Martha Stackhouse explained the student corporations. "Each corporation has 100 shares (for each student) and they're formed in the same pattern as a regional corporation with one exception...these corporations are open to all students. We can't discriminate in public schools."

While Alaska Natives face 1991 knowing shares can be bought, the Barrow students also have to give up their stocks upon graduation. Students are encouraged to sell their stock to other students prior to graduation. Two types of stock are issued. The seventh and eighth graders get Class B stock which can't be bought or sold while the high school students get Class A stock which can be bought or sold. According to Stackhouse, few students have sold their stock.

Opie explained why she ran and was elected as president. "We're still kind of beginning. We're deciding on what kind of business we should get into. I thought it would be good experience for my future," the youthful president said.

One of the initial implimentors of the program, Brenda Itta of North Slope Borough told why the program was started in Barrow and seven other schools. "What they're learning to do is explore the market. Nothing prevents them from going into joint ventures," Itta said.

Itta said NSB is the only school district which has such a program. Opie is probably one of the nations' youngest corporate presidents.