

THE CHALLENGE IS BEING MET

There was a sense of purpose and determination as more than a thousand observers and participants gathered in the William A. Egan Center in Anchorage last week to attend the 1985 Alaska Federation of Natives annual Convention.

Delegates from the ANCSA village and regional corporations mingled with representatives from the United Tribes of Alaska and high school students joined the elders in discussions about the future. It was apparent that the business on the agenda had presented a challenge to those who came to vote. The business at hand included eight proposed amendments to ANCSA, and no one could have predicted how the voting would come out, but the amendments were approved.

Over the past several months, there has been disagreement amongst our groups about the Claims Act and the amendments. Some have perceived that Alaska Natives are permanently divided on the issues, but those perceptions are not accurate. The fact is Alaska Natives are bound together by a concern for the future and how best to protect the land. We're one people regardless of the disagreements, and we are meeting the challenges.

THE TUNDRA TIMES BANQUET: AN EVENING OF GAFFES, LAUGHS, AND CULTURAL DRAMA

Guess who came to dinner and didn't have a place to sit? None other than Anchorage Mayor Tony Knowles and Lieutenant Governor Steve MacAlpine. With much humiliation we seated our distinguished guests, who laughed good-naturedly about our faux pas. Seating more than a thousand guests is not easy.

There were plenty laughs when Hilda Woods sitting at the head table and introducing the Tundra Times Board and staff forgot to introduce her boss and the Board Chairman, Willie Hensley. Marlene Johnson, our esteemed Mistress of Ceremonies valiently held the program together while affectionately joshing a few.

Oliver Leavitt, our new AFN Chairman was presented with a miniature Mercedes Benz because he couldn't find the one he was reported to own, and we heard from past Master of Ceremonies, Roger Lang, speaking from his hospital bed. Roger hasn't lost his famous sense of humor.

The evening was topped off with a dramatic performance by the Chevak Tanqik Theatre. The entire audience became involved in the ancient ceremony called the 'Bladder Festival' which is a story of cultural conflict and pain; of healing and happiness as told through song and dance. The Chevak group superbly illustrated the reasons why cultural values are a vital force in the lives of Alaska Natives today.

We wish to thank all our 1200 guests for joining us this year and sharing in an evening of gaffes, laughs, and cultural drama at another successful Tundra Times Banquet.