

Yes, there is a consensus on 1991

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for the Tundra Times

Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc.

OPINION

Recently, Tanana Chiefs Conference joined the Alaska Native Coalition and was given a seat on the Coalitions Executive Board.

This development is important not only for the TCC region, but also for the entire Native effort on 1991. Today, on behalf of TCC, I participate on both the AFN 1991 Steering Committee and the ANC Executive Board.

We at TCC feel this is possible and desirable because of the strong consensus between AFN and ANC on the 1991 issue which emerged out of the last AFN Convention.

Last year, tribal and corporate interests within the Native community split over 1991, which weakened the overall Native position before Congress, and resulted in a bill which the Native people were forced to reject at the last AFN Convention.

Positive things came out of that split, as the various tribal and corporate Native leaders came together, each realizing the need for Native uni-

ty and consensus. We knew we needed that consensus if we were to obtain a bill affording the widest possible options for Native people to deal with the 1991 bill, addressing the economic and social needs for all of the Native regions, and representing all the Alaskan Native people.

While we realize that the Alaska U.S. Senators, Ted Stevens and Frank Murkowski, disagree with several points in the AFN-ANC proposals, AFN-ANC asked the Senators to introduce the bill "by request" in order to allow active consideration of the Native proposal by Congress.

As stated by Sen. Murkowski at the May 19 hearing on 1991 in Washington, D.C., the Alaska Senators refused AFN-ANC's request because they felt it would "confuse the issues."

In the past, the Senators promised

the AFN Convention they would support any proposal which represented a unified Native consensus. Now that the AFN and ANC have developed that consensus, the Senators are trying to renege on their promise by denying that a consensus exists.

At the May 19 hearing, Senator Murkowski attempted to create the impression that there was still a split in the Native community on 1991. As Natives, we can be proud of Janie Leask of AFN and John Borbridge of ANC, who demonstrated a firm commitment to maintain Native unity when they clarified for the record that there is a Native consensus on 1991 and it is expressed in the AFN-ANC consensus proposal.

Moreover, we can be proud of Cook Inlet Region, Inc., and the Bristol Bay Native Corp. While their corporate needs are met by the Stevens and

Murkowski bill, they voiced support for the inclusion of the AFN-ANC proposals in the 1991 bill.

TCC has supported and will continue to support legislation which meets the needs of its Native shareholders in all the regions and allows the Native people the ability to select their own future from the widest possible number of options. That is true Native self-determination, whether expressed through corporate or tribal entities.

We urge that all regions continue in support of the AFN-ANC consensus proposal and hold firm in our resolve to insure self-determination for all Alaska Native people. So long as we continue to express a unified Native position, those people who wish to divide us will fail.

Sens. Stevens and Murkowski cannot mislead other Senators into believing that a Native consensus does not exist so long as we work together to accommodate our mutual needs and continue to voice our unified support for the AFN-ANC proposal.

If any of us fail in this effort, a 1991 bill cannot pass and we will all fail.