

Hensley named AFN citizen of year; NANA honors Schaeffer

Two of the men responsible for the NANA Region's Inupiat Spirit renewal have been hon-

ored for their efforts — one by the NANA Region and the other by the Alaska Federation of Natives.

John Schaeffer and Willie Hensley, nephew and uncle, were honored at the annual Alaska Federation of Natives/Tundra Times banquet.

Hensley was named AFN Citizen of the Year by AFN, and Schaeffer received a plaque from the NANA Region for his efforts to help renew the NANA region's interest in Spirit.

An obviously moved Schaeffer simply thanked the people of the region for the award.

Hensley, who has become used to public speaking in numerous appearances since the drive to wrestle Alaska Native lands from the federal and state government, was unable to speak for several moments after being called to the stage to receive the award.

Hensley was one of the first Alaska Natives to begin working on the land claim issue and wrote an extensive paper on the issue while he attended Georgetown University in Washington.

Hensley has since served as president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, president of the Northwest Arctic Native Association — the Native association which was formed prior to the passage of the land claims act, has been an Alaska state senator, and is president of the NANA Development Corp., the profit-making arm of NANA. He also is chair-

man of the Board of the United Bank of Alaska, of the United Drilling Company of Alaska and is vice-chairman of the Eskimo, Indian, Aleut Publishing Corp., the corporation which owns the Tundra Times.

Despite all the business and political successes that Hensley and NANA have achieved, in the past year he and Schaeffer have been working to form the Inupiaq Spirit Committee which is seeking to return the NANA Region to the traditional cultural values that Inupiat had before contact with Western society and the bad effects that that contact has had.

The two men have been visiting each village in their region to talk with all villagers about the changes in their lives since the heavy contact with Western society has occurred.

Although Schaeffer and Hensley modestly admit that Hensley has been a prime architect of the Inupiaq Spirit Committee movement in the NANA Region, his voice filled with emotion, laid the credit for his success at the feet of the people of the NANA region.

As he asked the people from ANAN to stand to be recognized, Hensley said he felt that he was accepting the recognition for them.

"If anybody deserves commendation, it is really the people from my region who backed me for all these years. Frankly, I'd rather accept this for all the people from NANA."

The AFN citizen of the year is chosen by a committee from AFN after receiving nominations from the regions.