

Yupiit School District attends AASB Conference

The Regional School District Board Members for the Yupiit School District along with Reid Straabe, the Yupiit School District Superintendent, attended the 42nd Annual Association of Alaska School Boards' Statewide Conference Nov. 11-14 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage. While in attendance, Willie Kasayulie, Chairman of the Yupiit School District Regional School Board, was elected to serve on the AASB Board of Directors.

Over 300 hundred school board members and administrators, as well as student representatives on school boards, and other interested educators, met in Anchorage for four days of training and association business. Larry EchoHawk,

law professor at Brigham Young University, was the keynote speaker on the first day of the annual meeting, Nov. 12. His message: "Education is a special blessing in that it empowers a person not only to change his or her life but to change society as well, and thus its benefits reach beyond the individual to us all."

The second day of the meeting featured the 1995 National Teacher of the Year, Alaska's own Elaine Griffin, who addressed the Conference by video. Education Commissioner Shirley Holloway spoke to the school board membership on the topic of Leading the Commitment for Children. The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) has taken a more proactive approach in recent years.

Alaska's education policymakers and educators struggle with the complex challenge of providing a quality education to all students across the state, particularly when there are so many other factors that impact children's lives and their education. Recent task forces and commissions are again studying various aspects of the educational environment -- the educational funding mechanism, tenure reform, and bridging the fiscal gap. Each effort was viewed by the membership, and resolutions were passed on many topics of interest to schools.

AASB's annual conference provided orientation for new and experienced board members, as well as a special one-day session on "School Law" addressing

issues such as the open meetings law, policy implications of the Internet, freedom of speech, sexual harassment, and drug testing of athletes. School board members, administrators and students selected from over 30 workshops throughout the conference.

A student leadership workshop was also held during the conference. It was designed to help students who serve as the representative on their local school board and who deal with the decisions made by adults that affect kids.

AASB is administered by a 15-member board representing all regions of the state. It serves the state's school districts, comprised of over 330 board members.