

Alaska Native Coalition gains strength

by Paul Swetzof
for the Tundra Times

The Alaska Native Coalition, an organization consisting of IRA and traditional councils, as well as non-profit village corporations, is going through a period of revitalization and strengthening.

OPINION

ANC exists to advocate for and strengthen tribal government in Alaska, as well as promote the well-being of individual Alaska Natives. It is a voice for village Alaska.

ANC hopes to establish and staff an office in Anchorage in the near future. Solicitation of grant writers and contributors has begun.

ANC's goal is to become a powerful voice in Congress, the courts and all other forums on behalf of Alaska Native tribal government interests, including the specific concerns of its member villages. This is significantly different from the Alaska Federation of Natives, which primarily represents the interests of Native corporations, which is exactly what AFN should be doing.

ANC exists to advocate for and strengthen tribal government in Alaska, as well as promote the well-being of individual Alaska Natives. It is a voice for village Alaska.

ANC believes that AFN and other Native interest groups should work together. The ultimate goal of all Native people and entities should be the protection of Native people, and this means our lands, jurisdiction, tribal governments, economic entities and our nonprofit organizations.

When we work together there is little we cannot accomplish. There is power in unity.

ANC is planning a conference/workshop in Anchorage Feb. 13-14. Workshops will include recognition of IRA and traditional councils, IRA constitutional changes and village ordinances, tribal courts, fish and game management, Indian child welfare, 14(c) land reconveyances, tax status of IRAs,

pros and cons of IRAs versus traditional governments and other topics of concern to Alaska Native people and their governments.

Funding for travel for village representatives may or may not be forthcoming. At this time, villages planning to send a representative should plan to finance their own travel.

ANC is attempting to work out special discounts with air carriers and hotels to keep the expenses to a minimum.

There will be no charge for attendance for village council or Native nonprofit/corporation representatives.

This conference should prove to be extremely valuable to all Alaska Native tribal governments and village individuals. It will provide a statewide

opportunity to unify our efforts and develop strategies to control our own destinies through our own governmental institutions and on our own lands.

The Rural Alaska Community Action Program and the Native American Rights Fund have been instrumental in providing work space, conference funding, advice and legal assistance. ANC, RurALCAP and NARF will be working together to provide continuing updates regarding the conference to all villages.

Place note that ANC does not charge membership fees to join. However, any assistance, including donations and/or advice which can be provided helps all of us and is appreciated.

See you at the conference.