

# It's a *real convention* for youth

Youth attending this year's Alaska Federation of Natives meeting in Anchorage will participate in a convention giving them a chance to debate issues critical to the Native community.

"This is the first time it's structured as a real convention, not just a conference," said George Irvin, AFN vice president. And the young people will be able to speak with a loud voice because up to 350 or more high school students are expected at the two-day meeting, which begins Oct. 19.

Irvin said more students than ever are expected in Anchorage because MarkAir is donating 60 "match" tickets. The airline offers one ticket for each one purchased for a youth to attend the gathering.

Another difference this year is that the youth will meet jointly with the AFN elders Oct. 21 to present official testimony to the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth.

Irvin said the commission, co-chaired by Niesje Steinkruger of Fairbanks and Peter Scales of Anchorage, will take testimony all afternoon on Oct. 21.

The entire commission, including Native representatives Reggie Joule of Kotzebue, Marlene Johnson of Hoonah and Clara Kelly of Bethel, is expected to attend.

They will hear testimony from one high student, one elder and one parent age representative from each of the Native regions. The purpose of the hearing will be:

- \*To define the range of problems currently faced by Native youth and their families in both rural and urban settings.

- \*To recommend public policy actions by the state to ensure that Native youth will be healthy, self-sustaining adults in their future roles as citizens, members of the work force and parents of their own families.

- \*To recommend public policies which promote and maintain Native culture and values.

Youth and elders will break into regional groups

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in the morning before they present their testimony and will focus on four areas: education, family/cultural change, social problems and the future. Groups will select the three members to represent them in testimony and will answer questions in each of the four areas.

Irvin said it is significant that the statewide commission has agreed to take testimony from the Native youth and elders. The hearing will give Alaska Natives an important forum to discuss the particular problems of Native young people.

At the youth convention before the commission hearing students will form regional caucuses. The convention will be open to the public, but only Native

students from grades 9-12 will be allowed to speak and vote.

"This is a real youth convention. It belongs to the kids," Irvin said. He pointed out that Perry Eaton, head of the Community Enterprise Development Corp., will act as moderator and parliamentarian, but that the final decisions will be made by the students.

The main difference between the regular AFN convention and the youth convention is that at the youth convention each region will get an equal number of votes.

Resolutions will be discussed, and at the end of the day Oct. 20, a new 13-member youth council and 13 alternates will be elected.

The convention will close with a youth dance at the Egan Center from 8 to 11 p.m. Oct. 20.