

'I may not agree with what you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it' —VOLTAIRE

Guest editorial

by Jane Angvik

Thursday, May 21, marks the end of two years of effort on behalf of the staff of the Alaska Native Foundation in the production of "ANCSA: Caught in the Act," a six-part video series which explores the origins, implementation and implications of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The premiere of the series will be Thursday at the Fourth Avenue Theater in Anchorage at 7 p.m. You're all invited.

The programs are designed for use in high schools throughout the state and were funded by the Alaska Department of Education. However, it is clear that adult audiences will also find the shows worthwhile since there are still misconceptions about ANCSA.

All Alaskans should know why and how Alaska Native people came to own more than 90 percent of all privately held land in Alaska. Similarly, all Alaskans should know how those same lands are at risk and should recognize that all of us — Native and non-Native alike — have a stake in who owns Alaska in the future.

The production of television is a new endeavor for ANF. For the past 18 years we have written reports, published books, provided training and technical assistance to enhance the well-being of Alaska Native people. It's clearly time for us to use the most commonly used method of communication in America — TV. If we can use this tool to begin to de-mystify ANCSA and, in some small way to communicate the life-sustaining characteristics of the land for Alaska Natives, we have achieved our goal. The series is entertaining and instructive — there is humor and tenderness, reflection and action — it's television!

If you love the series, it's because Carroll Hodge, the series producer and Ron Eagle, the camera person and director/editor of three shows are extremely talented professionals who have given mightily of their energy.

If you think the content is correct, it's because numerous Alaskans reviewed, revised and commented on design concepts, scripts and rough cuts. Classrooms from Angoon to Noorvik and Anchorage to Kotzebue reviewed the programs and made suggestions that significantly changed how the programs look.

If you enjoy seeing Native actors, it's because these talented young people — Linda Ayagarak, Wes Goodwin, Bob Harris and Diane Benson — drove themselves very hard to achieve excellence in their roles and the people of St. Marys generously gave of themselves and their resources.

If you're glad to see the programs at all, thank the Alaska Board of Education and the Department of Education for the funds, assisted by generous support of the CIRI Foundation, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Alaska Airlines and Bristol Bay Native Corp.

And finally, if you don't like it, if you think we missed the boat and we interviewed all the wrong people, the buck stops here — I'm responsible. But even if you feel this way, I love the idea that we got people to talk and argue about, "What is the essence of ANCSA?" — for years to come!