

Congratulations, Alaska Inter-Tribal Council

The Alaska Inter-Tribal Council held its third annual meeting last month. This might not seem like a big deal, but it reflects an important milestone signifying that AITC has survived longer than two previous efforts to establish a statewide tribal advocacy organization for Alaska Natives.

In an era when finances are so problematic, it is no surprise that securing a quorum for this year's meeting posed a serious challenge. But with wit and common sense, Chairman ProTem Will Mayo deftly led the gathering through a series of productive discussions until the quorum threshold was achieved on the second day.

In order to thrive and fulfill its critical mission, AITC will have to minimize mistakes and learn from awkward circumstances which are visited upon it, such as this year's quorum difficulty. For example, tribes for whom travel funds are short could work towards the type of consensus in their communities that would allow tribal officials to also hold municipal positions. This would increase the opportunities to combine travel for legitimate city and tribal business that could be covered by municipal funds. Another possible solution is for AITC to seek grants that would enhance the capability to achieve quorums and conduct other organization business, as provided for in the organization's by-laws. Such telecommunications refinements could also be made available to tribes for their individual use as a membership benefit, or for a reasonable user fee.

Like all young organizations, AITC has good days and bad. A dedicated core of visionary leaders and a growing number of tribes have given it needed momentum in a difficult struggle for recognition and respect in political arenas from Juneau to Washington, D.C. We salute their efforts and pledge our continued support.

The Alaska Inter-Tribal Council has given tribes a badly-needed voice, with integrity and a sharp focus that which other organizations have not been able or inclined to provide. We feel that Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, with cooperation from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Alaska Native Health Board and other statewide advocates, will contribute greatly to fostering an all-important goal for Native communities: self-governance.