

## ***The Alaska Inter-Tribal Council is off and running***

**By Paul Swetzof**  
*For the Tundra Times*

The Alaska Inter-Tribal Council (AITC), an organization whose membership is limited to Alaska Native IRA

### **Congressional investigation of radioactive waste sites**

A Senate committee will investigate if any radioactive waste sites exist in Alaska, in addition to the Project Chariot site near Camp Thompson.

Sen. John Glenn, D-OH, Senate Governmental Affairs Committee chair said that committee will undertake the search, after a request by Sen. Ted Stevens, R-AK. The committee will be assisted by an investigator from the General Accounting Office (GAO.)

The GAO staffer will work full time reviewing federal agency files.

and traditional governments, is off and running. There's money in the bank, committees have been established, the Native American Rights Fund is the attorney of record and AITC is rapidly working to establish itself as the voice of its member tribes.

In order to assure harmony among Native entities, it is critical other Native organizations, such as the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), respect the authority of AITC when it comes to matters central to tribal sovereignty, such as governmental and subsistence issues.

AFN and other Native organizations must not take actions affecting tribal issues, including subsistence concerns, without first consulting with, and obtaining permission from AITC. It is time for everyone, particularly the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the U.S. government, to recognize AITC and no other entity, is the authority for its member tribes on issues of common concern to all of its members. No other organization should attempt to influence legislation affecting

the common interest of AITC's member tribes, represent itself as the authority for tribal matters or take any other actions demonstrating disrespect for tribal self determination.

It is important AITC, AFN and other Native organizations meet as soon as is practical in order to establish the limits of each entity's authority and to establish a dialogue with the goal of working in unity.

AITC made an excellent decision when it decided at its last meeting to concentrate, in the short term, on the immediate goals of establishing itself as the voice of its member tribes, to concentrate on the issues of tribal status and jurisdiction and to make certain AITC maintains adequate funding. If AITC sticks to these short term goals, it will remain focused and able to establish itself as the recognized organization representing member tribes in Alaska and will be in position to advocate effectively for tribal government powers, subsistence and other tribal issues.

Switching topics, exciting changes are taking place in the

Dept. of Interior. The new Secretary of Interior, Bruce Babbitt, has indicated he is aware of and will be taking favorable actions regarding Alaska tribal issues in the very near future. The nominee for Solicitor for Indian Affairs, John Leshe (I'm hoping I'm spelling his name correctly), taught Indian Law at Arizona State University. Mr. Leshe understands Indian law and

from all indications is sympathetic to our position which is Alaska Native tribes are similar in all respects to Outside tribes and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) did nothing to diminish tribal status, including jurisdiction in Alaska.

Events will be unfolding rapidly now President Clinton and Secretary Babbitt have acquainted themselves with the issues affecting Alaska.

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