

SJC Conducts Education Conference

In a two-day conference held on Sheldon Jackson College campus over 100 Native leaders and students from across Alaska urged the Alaska State Legislature to pass H.B. 52, which calls for funding the tuition equalization provision of the Alaska Student Loan and Grant Act.

The controversial bill to provide funds to enable students to attend the private institutions of their choice in Alaska has been in troubled waters in the State House.

Participants also recommend forming an All Alaska Native Educational Association to coordinate and oversee educational programs dealing with Native students throughout the State of Alaska.

The Conference had suggestions for not only Sheldon Jackson College, but other educational institutions as well. They included a voluntary foster parent program for students outside the college community; employment of full-time development planners in order to secure funding for improved curriculum and facilities; additional Native involvement in program planning; follow-up studies of Native students; employment of counselors with a greater understanding of all the students and their complete cul-

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tural background, regardless of the cost of hiring such counselors.

Contribution toward education to deal with deficiencies of incoming students by the college or university.

In a panel discussion which kicked off the small group meetings and workshops, Henry Kaiser, Higher Educational Counselor for the Alaska Federation of Natives and the BIA; Robert Willard, Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission; Byron Mallott, Advisor on Native Affairs to Governor Egan; Dr. James Simpson, Resident Director of Ketchikan Community College; Robert Peratrovich; and Showalter Smith, Division of

State Operated Schools, provided provocative observations, and questions on higher education.

"A man forced to live between two cultures is a man without identity," commented Showalter Smith.

Robert Peratrovich called for additional counselors at the state university from different Native cultures in Alaska. He said, "There is one Eskimo counselor only. Where are the Aleuts, Athabascans, and Tlingits?" He also asked for instructors and staff of increased comprehension.

The American ideal is a melting pot into which many different kinds of people went out of which only white people emerged, commented Byron Mallott. He calls that that philosophy to be changed in Alaska and for Native people to realize that "we are different - in a real, definitive way."

Robert Willard sees the key issue as rural housing. Speaking about the Native land claims settlement he calls the post settlement era probably the most crucial of our time and recommend that it be administered by the Native people.

Small group discussions on Native goals in higher education suggested a need for Alaska Native Studies programs to meet the needs of students returning

to the village; counselors to advise high school students up until the time they enter college; emphasis on multi-meaning words in elementary school and

means to instill self-confidence in the student.

Featured speaker at the Conference was Dr. Frederick P. McGinnis, Commissioner of

Health and Welfare and former President of Alaska Methodist University.

The Natives of Alaska have been subjected too long to influences which have been harmful to them and their future, McGinnis said. Institutions, libraries, schools of uniform quality, and access of opportunity - which have been available in most communities in the United States - have been missing in the Native villages of Alaska.

The former President of Alaska Methodist University quoted an earlier question at the conference by Byron Mallott "Have we come so far down the road we cannot stop? And is the Native culture only to live in the museums?" Education consisting only of imitation of family and neighbors, the Native suspects, will not be adequate to meet the world of today, he said.



NATIVES SPEAK OUT ON EDUCATION—A panel of Native leaders from throughout Alaska set the pace for the Sheldon Jackson College conference on Native higher education during the general session at the Sitka Centennial Building. They are, from left, Henry Kaiser, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Robert Willard, Executive Director of the Alaska Human Rights Commission; Byron Mallott, Advisor on Native Affairs to Governor Egan; Elaine Ramos, Assistant Dean of Students at Sheldon Jackson College; panel moderator Dr. James Simpson, Director of the Ketchikan Community College; Robert Peratrovich, President of the Tlingit-Haida in Anchorage; Showalter Smith, Alaska Division of State Operated Schools.