

Candidate Pledges Native Department

Walter Hickel, Republican candidate for governor, told a Nome audience this week that if elected he will propose to the next legislature the "creation of a Department of Native Affairs."

Charging that "the present administration has done little or nothing to bring the Native Alaskan into our mainstream of life" Hickel said the new department "will be directly responsible for taking action to assure Native Alaskans full rights as citizens of this state."

The candidate said it was "painfully obvious" to him that positive action to aid the village people was "long overdue."

"My Department of Native Affairs, enjoying full cabinet level status, will have several divisions...it will be a clearing house for all matters relating to Native Alaskans and it will be headed by a commissioner who will be a Native Alaskan.

"There are many Native Alaskans qualified to do such a job, people who not only know the conditions first hand but who have previously been thwarted in attempts to correct them—

thwarted by eight years of inaction, eight years of politics, eight years of denial of their rights."

Hickel said one of the divisions would be a legal service division staffed by attorneys who would give legal

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Department...

advice to the many Native organizations of their rights.

"It will aid and assist village people with meager resources to protect their rights, particularly their land claims," Hickel said.

He said the new department would also include a Division of Apprentice placement, charged with "seeing that Native Alaskans are trained in skills they can use as we build this state."