

United Tribes of Alaska meet in Anchorage

by Polly E. Hyslop

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The United Tribes of Alaska is a voice for the I.R.A. (Indian Reorganization Act) and tribal governments in rural Alaska said Sheldon Katchatag at their first general assembly held in Anchorage February 21-23. He spoke to a group representing I.R.A. and tribal governments throughout Alaska.

When the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act passed in 1971, it did not include the rights of the Native home rule governments or sovereignty. Instead Native corporations received 40 million acres of land and \$962.5 million dollars which left many villages and Native people with little land and money of their own. Since then a growing number of urban Natives are feeling that corporations are only self-serving and do not meet the needs of a village.

The keynote speaker at the General Assembly Judge Berger, head of the Alaska Native Review Commission, said Native people in rural Alaska are worried about losing their lands under the corporations. There is "widespread dissatisfaction with ANSCA...because it does not offer future protection for their

land...it may be the very instrument under which they may lose their land."

He added that "There are, under ANCSA, three principal threats to continued Native ownership of Native land: corporate failure, corporate takeover, and the possibility of taxation of subsistence lands." These three threats may mean the loss of Native lands. Some threats already exist, he added.

There are alternatives to the present system. "Should Alaska Natives seek through ANCSA or by amendments to ANCSA to achieve perpetual Native control of the corporations; or, the only way of keeping Native land in Native ownership is to transfer the land received under ANCSA to Native tribal governments?," Berger asked.

Under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and 1936, tribal control of Native lands will not be taxable.

The state would like to work with the Native governments, said Jeff Smith, Dept. of Community and Regional Affairs, but only in the area of promoting the cultural integrity of their village. He said the problem with Native self-government is that the non-

Natives are not recognized. They will not have a voice in the enactment of Native laws.

In a recent column to "The Anchorage Times", AFN President Janie Leask wrote, "The recent Native sovereignty movement has been described as an effort to create little mini-nations. Granted, perhaps a few extremists have contributed to that perception. But I think the vast majority of rural Natives supportive of the sovereignty movement are reacting to what they see as forces out of their control - in much the same way the Alaskans resented their territorial status in pre-statehood days."

The United Tribes of Alaska will hold another meeting during the special AFN convention in March.

Sheldon Katchatag referred to the Steering Committee just recently formed by AFN as not representing the people in villages. "How can 12 people be able to reflect what all the people in the villages want to be heard," he asked.