

Council signs treaty

By Paul Swetzof
for the *Tundra Times*

Dec. 10 was a historic day for Alaska Natives. Delegates representing over 120 Indian, Aleut and Eskimo IRA and traditional tribes from every area of the state, met in Anchorage. The delegates ratified a Constitution and By-laws which created the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council (AITC) and signed a treaty agreeing to work together to promote the common interests of Alaska Native tribes.

Twelve geographic regions each elected 2 delegates to serve on governing the AITC body. AITC's first chairman is Willie Kasayulie from Akiachak.



Willie Kasayulie. (File photo)

The ultimate authority of the organization is the member tribes, who will meet once each year to set the AITC's course for the coming year, ratify or reject Executive Council actions and conduct other business. The Executive Council will meet 3 times each year in addition to the annual meeting.

I have never worked with such a dedicated group of those who I served with to lay the groundwork for the AITC. All of those on the formation committee, as well as our interim Chairman, Will Mayo, spent many hours creating a draft Constitution, By-laws and in discussion over how best to create an organization which would be truly representative of Alaska Native tribes. We tried to make recommendations in the first con-

vention to assure the organization remain tribally oriented. We recommended only tribes be permitted to be members. AITC is an advocate for the common concerns of all Alaska's tribes. Most of the recommendations of the Formation Committee were accepted by the delegates and I feel that is a testament to the hard work and tribal commitment of the Committee members.

A few non-delegates attempted to amend the draft Constitution to allow organizations other than tribes to be members and the delegates soundly rejected their suggestions.

I wish every Alaska Native could have attended this first convention. History was made. We now have an organization that can be the legitimate voice of Alaska Native member tribes in promoting sovereignty, subsistence, federal funding and other tribal issues.

AITC is not a rival or to compete with any other Native or non-Native entity. It is an organization meant to promote our common tribal interests which is the reason why only legitimate tribes can be members.

Only IRA and traditional tribes are eligible for membership (no corporations, community councils, associations, etc.). Any Alaska Native tribe which is not a splinter group or faction of a traditional or IRA tribe, is eligible to join AITC at any time by submitting a tribal resolution to do so and then signing the Inter-tribal Treaty.

Dec. 10 was a wonderful and historic day. I predict this day will be talked about with pride for many years to come. Our children's children will thank us. In fact, I think we should declare Dec. 10 Alaska Native Day.