

# ISI puts animal rights groups 'on notice'

by Jim Benedetto

Tundra Times editor

KOTZEBUE — Spokesmen for a two-year-old organization, Indigenous Survival International have put animal rights groups on notice that they will be "pursued to the ends of the earth and held accountable for the suffering that has resulted by their actions."

The remarks were made by David Monture, secretary-treasurer of ISI (Canada), during a press conference called at the recent meeting of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

Monture, attending the ICC meeting as an observer drew applause with his remarks.

Representing the Alaska contingent of ISI at the press conference were Ben Nageak of the North Slope Borough, and Matthew Iya of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission. The press conference was timed to coincide with the efforts of the Toronto Humane Society to organize a massive demonstration against the North Pacific fur seal harvest.

Monture told ICC delegates and observers that ISI will be working with representatives of the Aleut residents of Alaska's Pribilof Islands to counter the media campaigns of animal rights advocates. Their program will be aimed at educating the general public about the importance of the fur seal and other hunts to indigenous peoples.

Monture said international animal rights groups were "threatening the survival of indigenous cultures," and he cited the ruined economy and resultant social ills of Native communities in Greenland and northeast Canada after a successful Greenpeace International campaign to stop the harp seal harvests there.

Greenpeace spokesmen later apologized, saying they had "never meant to harm indigenous peoples."

Emphasizing the importance of an annual wildlife harvest for viable Native cultures around the world and for the physical survival of certain species that overpopulate in the absence of predation, Monture said that professional wildlife managers

across Canada had formally and unanimously endorsed a statement that "hunting and trapping are legitimate and desirable tools in wildlife management."

But, says Monture, "more radical" animal rights organizations have begun to infiltrate long-established animal welfare bodies in order to polarize opinion within them.

"They are extremely well organized," said Monture. "They pursue their interests with religious fervor. They appeal to people's ignorance, and play on their emotions.

"It is advanced, organized intolerance; they care nothing for traditional people. They are indeed an animal rights protest industry."

Monture says ISI cannot hope to raise enough money to compete with animal rights groups' multi-million dollar media campaigns. Still, he said he hopes that through education people may see the truth about the intimate relationship and mutual dependence of indigenous peoples and wildlife.