

# Legislation is Introduced to define Indian Tribes in Alaska

WASHINGTON—Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, has introduced a bill which changes the definition of "Indian Tribe" in federal law as it affects Alaska Natives.

The new definition allows greater centralization among Native groups which are now treated as separate "Tribes." Gravel said the purpose is to facilitate Native contracting with the Federal Government.

Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, is co-sponsor of the measure.

Gravel said in introducing the bill that the new definition is especially important in carrying out the Indian Self-Determination Act in Alaska. The Act, signed in 1975, enables Native Americans to take increasing responsibility for their own welfare by contracting with the Federal Government to provide services formerly administered

by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, and others.

"In Alaska, the purposes of the Self-Determination Act have been frustrated because of the way "Indian Tribe" is now defined in federal law," Gravel said. "Under the current definition, you could count as many as 465 "Tribes" in the state, and each Alaska Native could belong to as many as six separate tribes."

The Alaska democrat's bill would allow the various units now defined as individual "Tribes" to consolidate under single larger units, notably the regional non-profit corporations. The regional corporations could then contract with the federal government on behalf of the smaller tribal units, especially the village corporations.

Such consolidation would be optional, and the agreement of all the tribal units involved would be required.

Gravel said he and Stevens would be seeking comment on the measure in Alaska. The proposal was prepared by Native Representatives at a conference in Washington last month.

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