



*Ole Gaup of Finland and Athabascan Audrey Armstrong model traditional dress*

## **ISI Conference focuses on preserving Native lifestyles**

by Holly F. Reimer  
Tundra Times reporter

Trapping, fishing, whaling, seal and walrus hunting were the main focus for discussion during the Sixth Annual Indigenous Survival International Conference held at the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage recently.

Indigenous people from several nations joined together in efforts to find

**More coverage. . .  
Page Four**

ways to protect their inherent rights to traditionally, culturally and spiritually live subsistence lifestyles in today's world.

continued on page eighteen

# • Sustaining traditional life

continued from page one

With these goals in common, participants had a chance to look at how different countries are approaching these issues.

Keynote speaker Hemmo Muntingh, who is with the Environmental Committee of the European Parliament, said he used to oppose activities such as hunting seals and trapping animals because he is an animal lover.

He had the opportunity, however, to learn first hand what it means to be indigenous to a land.



"A friend invited me to go seal hunting. . . another friend took me on a trapline. . . these are the experiences of a lifetime," Muntingh said.

These are in fact the experiences which changed his mind about how he should go about trying to protect, preserve and conserve the world's animals and natural resources.

Those encounters which he calls the experience of a lifetime need to be shared with others.

He said the fact that most people or groups who want to protect animals and natural resources are those people who probably live in big cities and are — except by watching television or movies — totally alienated from the real wilderness and don't understand the meaning of subsistence to indigenous peoples.

He said what needs to be solved is

the nearly total clash of opinion between those who hunt and those who are adamantly opposed to hunting.

He said the issues involved are very emotional on both sides and he believes the solution needed to reach an understanding lies in the hands of education.

With education he believes the people in support of groups such as Green Peace and other related organizations are people who are scared.

He said people can continue to be animal lovers and nature lovers but they must also understand other people in the world are also animal and nature lovers and at the same time kill animals for survival.

"Pollution is a threat to life itself. The health of humans is in danger. Forests die on a large scale. Rivers are polluted and whole seas are becoming ecologically dead," he said. "Nature dwindles everywhere."

He said animal lovers who are the main supporters of these animal rights groups are blinded by the mass media.

He said the media, which develops commercials and pictures of animals being killed in efforts to raise money to save the animals are misleading to the public.

"The media should look at the facts and print the facts," he said.

Jeanine Kennedy, Rural Alaska Community Action Program executive director, said animal rights groups have been pressuring indigenous people since the mid-'80s. About that same time ISI had held its first meeting in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

Indigenous people representing Arctic areas of Alaska, Canada and Greenland attended the meeting. Their purpose was to establish a united

organization with the ability to respond to challenges to their way of life being made by the growing animal rights movement.

Kennedy said there is too much money put into protecting animals. She said the people who give money to these groups don't understand what they're supporting.

"These good hearted people don't understand that Natives have knowledge of the land, otherwise how did they — humans as well as animals — survive for thousands of years?" she asked.

Harry Allen, co-chair of ISI in Canada, said all indigenous people should feel good about what they're doing.

He said because Natives are going to be a permanent part of the future, indigenous people must find ways to sustain a livelihood that is traditional.

Finn Lynge, co-chair of ISI in

Greenland, told the group about some of the issues which indigenous peoples from his country are facing.

He said animal rights activists are trying to totally stop trapping which is a very important economic resource in parts of Greenland.

He said activists don't want walrus to be hunted because they say they are an endangered species, but Lynge said this is not true.

"We need to find ways to avoid this polarization," he said.

Rep. Kay Wallis, D-Fort Yukon, was also at the conference. She drummed and sang a song to welcome those who were visiting Alaska.

Wallis said Alaska Natives have been fur trapping since the beginning of time and other people need to understand that Natives trap and hunt from within their hearts.

"It's more than just fur. It's art and tradition," she said.