

# *A look at the Native perspective*

by Mark Skok  
for the Tundra Times

All Alaskans must understand the Native perspective about the land if they are to agree on principles for managing Alaska lands, Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer recently told the Alaska Land Use Council.

Schaeffer spoke July 26 at a symposium organized by the council to explore principles for managing Alaska lands and resources through the 1990s. Now adjutant general and commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Schaeffer also has been president of NANA Regional Corp. and mayor of the Northwest Arctic Borough.

"How do you protect land use for Natives?" Schaeffer asked. "Every time you try to protect it, you trash it. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act wiped out our aboriginal rights and gave us something we never asked for.

"So, we worked on Title VIII,

and got rural subsistence protection. Now, people are trying to trash that. Those people misinterpret how Natives feel about subsistence and why we need it so badly."

Schaeffer compared Natives'

killing a sacred cow."

Schaeffer also said that, since the federal government has taken control of wildlife management on federal lands, Natives are better off now than ever before in terms of

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***— Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer***

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spiritual need for the land to America's need for patriotism.

"In no other country do people revere the flag as we do in America.

"The way we look at the land and its resources is similar. Many environmentalists would have you think that whenever we go and shoot a caribou, we're killing a sacred cow. What the environmentalists don't realize is that all creatures are sacred to us. We are

subsistence rights.

"But is the present situation better for Natives as Alaskans? I don't think so, because what's happening now isn't better. We won't have the local management we should have."

Schaeffer told the council that Natives have backed off the subsistence issue. "It's not a Native problem any more, it's an Alaskan problem," he said.

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