

Since 1962 *Tundra* **TIMES**

THE VOICE OF NATIVE EXPERIENCE

\$1.00

Volume XXXVI, No. 12 • Wednesday, April 9, 1997 • Anchorage, Alaska

Tribal judicial conference charts practical course

by Tundra Times staff

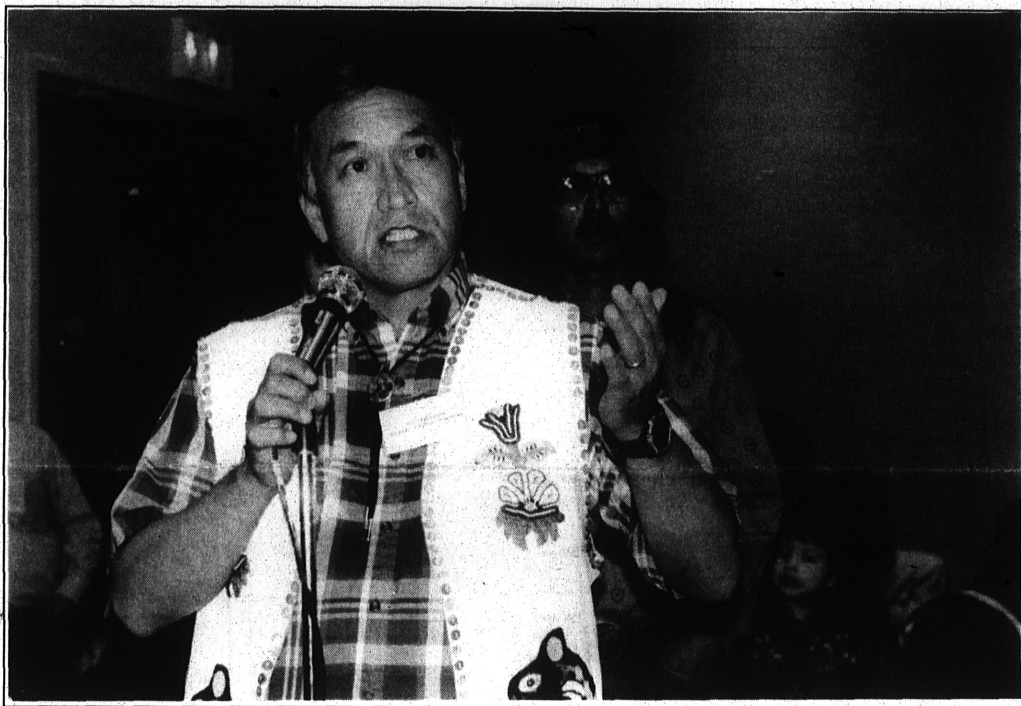
Although speakers focused on the politics of global indigenous unity took up a lot of microphone time at a recent tribal conference in Anchorage, there was still a lot of nuts-and-bolts work being done by more than 300 participants.

Organized by the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, the conference provided a forum for tribal leaders to discuss some of the possible implications of a recent federal court ruling which held that Alaska Native tribes have jurisdiction over some Native-owned land. In particular, sessions provided a close-up look at several tribal courts which have been operating successfully in Alaska for some years.

Even as delegates met, the tribal sovereignty drama continued to unfold in court. The state filed its last-ditch appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, asking justices to review a 9th Circuit Court ruling upholding tribal jurisdiction over Native-owned lands in and around villages. At the same time, the Alaska Federation of Natives, representing Native village and regional corporations, announced it was filing a brief in support of the so-called "Indian Country" ruling.

Much of the conference was devoted

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Joe Williams, representing the Organized Village of Saxman, talks to participants of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council conference, "Scope of Indian Country," regarding repatriation issues in his region, and how Indian Country would help in keeping remains and artifacts close to home. Stevens Village Chief Randy Mayo waits his turn at the microphone. AITC hosted a 3-day conference in an effort to answer questions of tribes and tribal governments about Indian Country's tribal powers.

Photo by Anna M. Pickett

Stellar sea lion protection sought

Greenpeace has demanded that the National Marine Fisheries Service move swiftly to designate the Steller sea lion as an endangered species, saying such a move is already years too late. Greenpeace said the Fisheries Service's failure to curb the reckless over fishing

of pollock in "critical habitat" for Stellers has led to the species' drastic decline. The Steller sea lion was scheduled to be uplisted as an endangered species last month, eight years after Greenpeace and other groups first called for such an action.

The western stock of the Steller, which relies on pollock and other commercial species for its survival, has declined 85 percent between 1960 and the present. A recent National Research Council study says the only factor

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Keepers of the Treasures plan Anchorage meet

The Keepers of the Treasures: Cultural Council of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians will hold its Sixth Annual Conference in Anchorage, Alaska, on Sunday, April 27 through Thursday, May 1, 1997 at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel.

The conference title, "Speaking with Our Ancestors - Preserving Our Native Languages," will highlight the importance of our Native languages, as well as present workshops and panels on how some Native communities are working to pre-

serve and rejuvenate their languages.

This year, the National Museum of the American Indian is conducting a special panel presentation on tribal museums. Presenters will discuss getting started, curatorship, educational and internship opportunities, and building collections. Plans are also underway for a NAGPRA workshop that would be supported by the National Park Service.

Keepers of the Treasures-Alaska (KTA) will be co-hosting the conference with Keepers of the Treasures (KOT). KOT is

comprised of Native people who preserve, affirm and celebrate their cultures through traditions and programs that maintain their Native languages and lifeways. The Keepers protects and conserves places that are historic and sacred to indigenous peoples. It is a national organization comprised of Indian, Alaskan and Hawaiian representatives from around the country. KTA is a sister organization to KOT and performs very similar functions as the national organization, but works only with the Native people of Alaska.

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