

Tribal Governments Committee to present findings to Convention in written report

The issue of Native tribal governments and their legal status in Alaska has been raised at several of the past few AFN conventions.

At the regular AFN Convention held in October of 1985, delegates adopted a resolution endorsing the concepts of tribal self-government generally described in Resolution No.35, which was submitted during the Special 1991 mid-year convention in March of 1985. The resolution, number 85-01, called for AFN to develop a strategy for implementing and protecting tribal government powers in Alaska.

AFN responded by creating a Tribal Government Committee composed of Willie Kasayulie, Chris McNeil, Andy Hope, Spud Williams, Mike Irwin, Suzy Erlich, Gordon Pullar, Mary Miller, Oliver Leavitt and a representative of the United Tribes of Alaska.

A number of interested persons were also in attendance at many of the six meetings held, including attorneys from the Native American

Rights Fund, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, and a representative from the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, interested members of the Native community from around the state.

The committee began its work by examining the goals stated in resolution 35 of the Special 1991 mid-year convention held in Anchorage last March. The members of the committee then formulated a list of the arenas that could be used to accomplish those stated goals.

The 11 goals range from confirming the authority of the Secretary of Interior to establish reservations in the state of Alaska, to securing a tribal role in the management of fish and game.

The five arenas for realizing those goals are the U.S. Congress; federal courts; administrative, such as the Department of Interior; the state of Alaska; and the tribes themselves.

By process of elimination, a strategy can be adopted for the realization of each of the stated goals

involving one or more of the arenas. For example, only one of the arenas listed would be effective in confirming DOI's authority to establish reservations in Alaska: the U.S. Congress, since federal law already prohibits the establishment of any more reservations in Alaska.

A comprehensive report on the findings of the Tribal Governments Committee and their recommendations will be presented to the floor during this year's convention.

