

# Questions focus on Indian role in journalism

by Holly F. Reimer

Tundra Times reporter

TULSA, OKLA. — Many questions were raised about how Indian reporters and journalists fit into today's tribal and non-tribal settings at the Native American Press Association conference held here earlier this month.

The 5th Annual NAPA Conference brought together nearly 200 American Indians, a few Alaska Natives, and even Canadian Indians for the three-day conference in Tulsa, Okla.

The questions raised included complicated issues, such as what does it mean to be an Indian in today's world? And what about tribal government and non-tribal government, how can they work together?

The whole point of all these questions was how do Native American

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journalists do all of this with an Indian perspective. And is an Indian perspective always the right way to report?

Although these questions weren't answered by any one individual, the questions were raised and people voiced their opinions on how they thought the system should work.

Conference organizers said they hoped participants could learn how to better communicate inside the tribal unit.

P. Sam Deloria, a Sioux Indian who is the director of the American Indian Law Center in Albuquerque, N.M., said that to answer these questions Indians must take a modern approach.

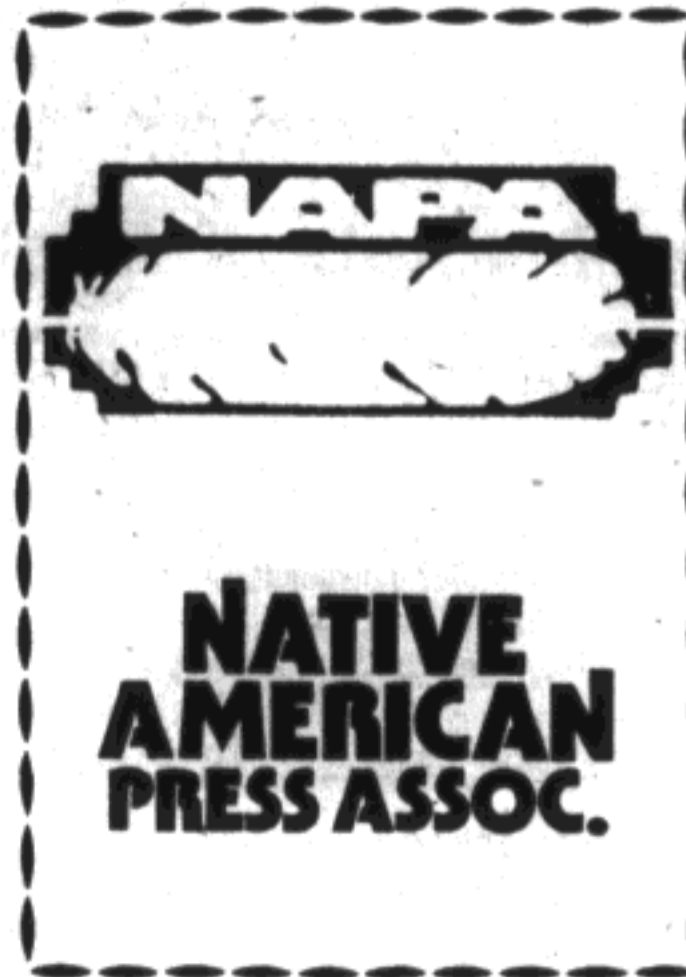
"We need to ask how culture has changed. Indians are living differently than how they were 200 years ago," Deloria said.

He also expressed a need for better communication between the press and lawyers and the need for the two to share their views.

Besides the many pressing questions, there were workshops about news writing, resume writing, headline writing, job interviewing, advertising, layout and design, photography, feature writing and many other workshops related to newspapers, radio and television.

Another speaker, Dwight Ellis, expressed his concern during the convention about getting more minorities involved in these fields.

Ellis is vice president of Minority Administration at the National Association of Broadcasters. He said



that nationwide Natives comprise only 5 percent of those in the field of communication.

And he added that one of the challenges NAPA is faced with is to try and get more young Natives involved.

"One reason it's hard to get young people involved is because there are so few Native communicators," Ellis said.

"High school students don't have positive role models in the field."

And he said if young people don't see somebody doing a job in the communication field who is Native, then how can they feel they are wanted to do this type of job.

On the last day of the conference a general membership meeting was

held.

Mark Trahan of the *Arizona Republic* in Phoenix, Ariz., was re-elected as president.

John Tetpon, a reporter for the *Anchorage Daily News*, was elected to the new post of executive vice president.

Steve Christilau, a reporter for *The Seattle Times*, was elected to the NAPA board and as vice president for print media.

Debra Smith of the *Circle*, a tribal newspaper in Minneapolis, Minn., was elected to the board and as vice

president for broadcasting.

And a graduate student at the University of Missouri, Columbia, Minni Two Shoes, was elected secretary.

Mike Burgess, of *The Talking Leaf*, Pasadena, Calif., was elected as treasurer. And Laverne Sheppard of *Sho-Ban News*, Fort Hall, Idaho, was named minority liaison officer and elected to the board.

Also during the general meeting it was decided to have next year's NAPA conference in Tacoma, Wash. But a date has not established yet.