

# AFN sponsors tourism industry convention

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is sponsoring an Alaska Native Tourism Industry Convention on April 25, 26, and 27 at the Anchorage Westward-Hilton Hotel.

The convention was organized in response to a resolution passed at the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc., 1977 annual convention. It suggested that a more aggressive marketing effort was needed to increase the Native share of the tourism business.

Keynote speakers for the three day convention are Morris Thompson, President of AFN, and John Schaeffer, President of NANA. Panel topics on the agenda will cover tourism development — moderator Eric McDowell; government actions

— moderator Ross Miller; travel and tourism — moderator Bob Dindinger; and Native hotels — moderator Russ Woods.

Tourism is the third largest industry in Alaska and Native interests own or control nearly 50 percent of the hotel rooms statewide. "This convention will aid in the development of the Alaska Native tourism industry and disseminate information on developing tourist tours and tour guides," said Bernie Sophanavong, convention coordinator.

The need for the convention to organize an Alaskan Native tourism association was demonstrated by the positive response to a recent survey conducted by Thompson. The survey was directed to Native organiza-

tions and individuals on a formal and informal basis.

The sampling of this segment of public opinion came as a result of the 1977 resolution. The sense of the resolution was that a more aggressive marketing effort was needed to maintain or even increase the Native share of the tourism industry. An additional contemplated benefit would be the increase in Native employment in the private sector.

Based on the results of the survey, the interest already generated, Thompson expects a large attendance from those affiliated with the Native tourism industry. Also expected to attend are various dignitaries from the federal, state, and local governments.