

ICC: Natives must have subsistence

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference has issued a position statement strongly supporting Alaska Native subsistence needs and decrying the Legislature's failure to act on the issue in the recent legislative session.

Meeting in Barrow earlier this month, members of ICC's Executive Council met with Rep. Eileen MacLean, D-Barrow, and others to discuss subsistence. The ICC represents Inuit of Greenland, Canada and Alaska.

The statement says the ICC is "deeply concerned" by the failure of the state of Alaska to bring the state subsistence priority law into compliance with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Because the current law has been declared unconstitutional, failure by the Legislature to take action ensures federal takeover of fish and game management on federal lands in Alaska July 1.

"It is the position of the ICC that the priority of indigenous subsistence rights must be recognized and protected. With regard to non-subsistence



utilization, it is appropriate that after subsistence needs have been met, and subject to conservation requirements, any harvestable surplus should be available for other uses.

"To achieve these management objectives in the absence of appropriate state legislation and regulation, ICC recognizes and supports the right of the Alaskan tribes and Native organizations to contract with the

federal government to cooperatively manage the resources on which they depend," according to the statement.

The ICC also said it would not be in Alaska Natives' best interest to have the state contract with the federal government for management responsibilities.

"It is the view of the ICC that tribal and Native organizations are in the best position to negotiate cooperative management agreements in the long-term interest of the resources and of subsistence users who depend on them.

"The Alaska Federation of Natives has called for the ultimate recognition of a subsistence priority for Alaska Native members and for the affirmation of the authority of Alaska tribes to manage and regulate subsistence activities by their members.

"The ICC strongly supports this AFN priority and calls on the state of Alaska to work with tribal authorities and Native organizations to seek a lasting solution which recognizes and supports Alaska subsistence," the statement said.