

SJC to Hold Native Conference

March 21 marks the beginning of Sheldon Jackson College's All Alaska Native Conference on Higher Education.

The conference will probe the needs of higher education in Alaska and how Sheldon Jackson can better serve its students, half of whom are Alaska Natives, according to Dr. Orin R. Stratton, President of the college.

The central theme of the 2 day conference will be Alaska Native Goals and Higher Education, according to Dr. Stratton.

Among the prominent Native leaders who have agreed to participate in a panel on that theme are Harry Carter, Executive Director of the Alaska Federation of Natives; State Senator Willie Hensley; Byron Mallott, head of the Local Affairs Agency under Governor Egan; Robert Willard, Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission and Morris Thompson, Superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"We have sought statewide representation of those Native leaders knowledgeable in the field of education so that the college may make some meaningful steps, and perhaps some pioneering steps in the education of Alaska Natives," wrote Dr. Strat-

ton.

"In the two years since the last conference Sheldon Jackson has come a long way. Implementing recommendations of the conference, the college has strengthened its counseling program by training dormitory supervisors, employing an Assistant to the Dean of Students, hiring an Academic Dean skilled in counseling, and instituting a comprehensive orientation for freshmen prior to the start of classes.

"Other conference recommendations also proved valuable: improved recruiting methods have resulted in more Native students enrolled—65 this year; personalized attention has given Native students at Sheldon Jackson College the lowest attrition rate in the state; and increased concern has motivated the administration to seek federal funding from various programs to improve curricular offerings and content, upgrade skills and provide additional career, educational and personal counseling."

The date for the conference was purposely set for during the week prior to the Tlingit-Haida meeting in Southeast Alaska so that representatives attending the meeting might attend both without a good deal of extra travel.

Delegates to the conference will stay in one of the college's dormitories and eat in the college's dining hall.

Sheldon Jackson College was originally begun as an industrial training school for Native students, but became a two-year college in 1944 and was accredited in 1966. Of the 120 full-time students, 65 are Eskimo, Aleut, or Indian. The largest group among the Natives is the group of Eskimos.