

AFN announces bush justice conference

Alaska Federation of Native Bush Justice Project announces a Third Bush Justice Conference. Necessary funding has been received and negotiations for a conference site and accommodations are underway.

It was 1970 the first Bush Justice Conference met in the first organized effort in the history of Alaska to recognize problems with the justice system in rural Alaska and to concentrate on solutions to those problems. This first conference was impetus for a second—and the Second Bush Justice Conference convened in June 1974 in the Athabascan village of Minto. In contrast to the first where only ten Alaska native participated, the second conference brought together over 200 natives from all over Alaska representing five different ethnic and tribal groups, as well as agency heads from organizations that are

responsible for delivering justice to rural Alaska.

Concerns are many. A prevailing theme is "village people do not generally understand the State Justice System and the State Justice System does not generally understand the village people." Some sort of education plan for giving people an understanding of the basics and the ways the justice system works is urged.

Concern is over the myriad of state and federal laws governing use of land and water in respect to their being a means of managing fish and game and in respect to their relations to the individual who is trying to support himself through subsistence. Concern is for the role of the village council and how it can have a legitimate role in the justice process.

The Minto Conference concluded by adopting a series

of findings and resolutions—with an emphasis on remedies. A Bush Justice Implementation Committee was elected comprised of five native persons from each region of Alaska. Their primary activity is to assess needs and problems of citizens in rural Alaska relative to the State Justice System and to insure implementation of the Minto recommendations.

With all the activity generated from the Minto Conference over the past two years, this coming conference will be an opportunity to review what's happening and what's been done we should now be in a position to better define specific problems and develop specific solutions to them.

Alaska Federations of Natives will keep you informed as plans progress and site selection and date for the Third Bush Justice Conference is confirmed.