

# ANRC holds last roundtable discussion



*ANRC Commissioner Thomas Berger at the roundtable discussions.*

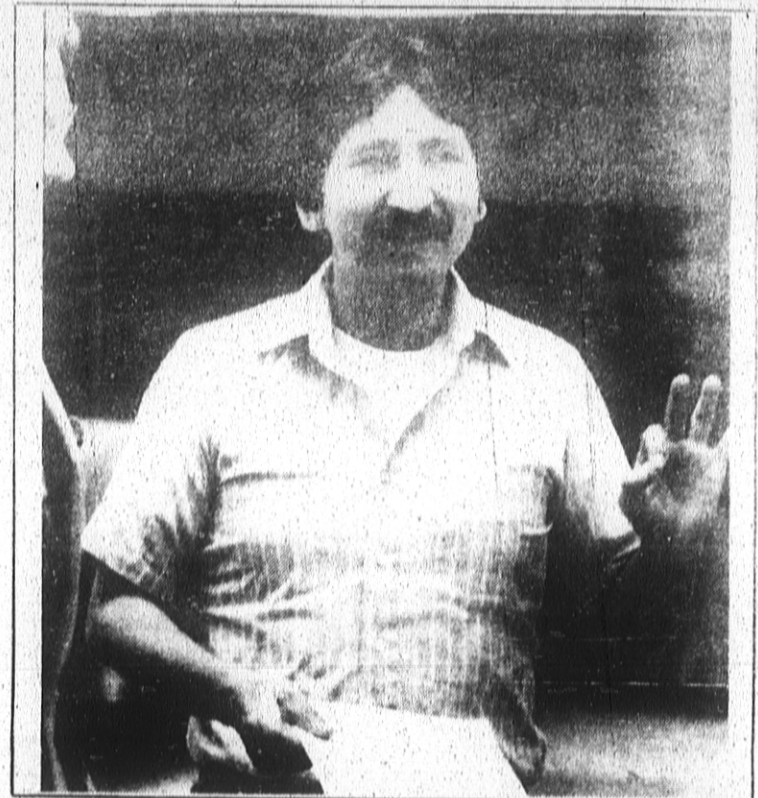
by Bob Koweluk  
Tundra Times

The Alaska Native Review Commission held the last of its public roundtable discussion meetings in Anchorage March 13-16. ANRC Commissioner Thomas Berger for two years traveled statewide to many villages and urban centers to talk with Alaska Natives to find their views about the issues created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. He warned that the act could be the instrument by which Natives could lose their lands.

The act has enabled Natives to hold on to their lands for 14 years since its passage in 1971. It has introduced Natives to the corporate world by creating regional and village corporations.

The act has also created many issues which the Natives are concerned about. Some of these concerns are: To retain the power of self-determination, to own and control their lands, to continue subsistence activities on those lands, to find ways to insure each generation in the future has equal rights of Natives who had the opportunity to enroll under the act.

Tony Vaska, at the Saturday meeting expressed his concerns on the representation village people will receive in their efforts to resolve these issues. "The government will go to the legitimate spokesman for the Native people," Vaska said. "That's the AFN. To me the people in the villages are more important than the people in urban areas. It is unfortunate that it happens that way at a lot of different levels of representation."



Photos by Bob Koweluk

*Tony Vaska at the ANRC roundtable discussions.*

Rosita Worl voiced her concerns on how Natives could achieve cultural maintenance and autonomy. "Our people are faced with many problems," Worl said. "Currently there are eight resolutions to change ANCSA. We are asked whether we want to be a corporate or a tribal people. I see many more conflicts and differences in these issues that are dividing our peoples which these differences are a threat to the Native community as a whole."

It is up to us, Worl said, to decide whether we the Native people will choose to attempt to survive as a corporate entity or as a tribal people. "We must develop a strategy to support our right for cultural survival and political autonomy," Worl added.

Berger said the commission provided Natives with an opportunity to express their desires and

needs on the issues created by the act claims. Berger will put a report together based on testimonies ANRC. The report will be given to ANRC's sponsors, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. The commissions report will be made public in September.

Berger said he intends to quote much of what Natives statewide has told the commission and this information will help in making recommendations on ways to better serve and protect Native interests.

Ways to satisfactorily resolve these issues are presently uncertain. Berger told the group, in Anchorage, "I think that we're charting some new territory. I don't think anyone presently can foresee how this commissions findings are going to have an impact in resolving these issues."

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# ANRC ends hearings

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Round table discussions on Native peoples of the world showed the Alaska Native issues are much the same with other indigenous groups throughout the world. In Canada, Natives there have taken a different route. Steven Kakfwi a member of the Dene Nation at Yellowknife,

Northwest Territories, Canada, explained how Canadian Natives are asserting themselves.

"The land mass is so large that it doesn't seem possible for the Canadian government and the Northwest Territories government to effectively rule," Kakfwi said. "One third of Canada or roughly one and a half million

square miles is ruled by Canada's colonial government. In that area there are about 40,000 people.

"The majority are aboriginal peoples which include the Dene Nation, Inuit and the Maetee or Natives of mixed blood. Native in Northern Canada worked to redesign and become involved in the government to improve their representation Kakfwi said.