

# Religion Act comments wanted

JUNEAU, June 27 -- Alaska Natives will have an opportunity to voice their views on how federal agencies' policies and procedures affect traditional religious rights and cultural practices. That opportunity will come during a consultation in Anchorage Thursday, July 12. The session starts at 10 a.m. in the Bureau of Indian Affairs conference room, 1675 "C" Street.

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 sets forth as government policy that the rights of American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts and Native Hawaiians to believe, express and exercise their traditional religions will be protected and preserved.

One part of the Act requires an evaluation of federal agency policies and procedures in consultation with Natives. The Act

also requires the President report to the Congress the results of the consultations. The July 12 session is in preparation for that report.

John Hope, chief of BIA's Tribal Operations Branch in Juneau, will conduct the consultation. "The Anchorage session will give Alaska Natives an opportunity to focus on ceremonial and traditional use of natural products, animals and birds which are important in the religious and cultural lifestyle of Alaska Natives," Hope said. "Persons making presentations will also be able to address access to traditional fishing, hunting and gathering areas," he continued.

Hope emphasized that the official record would be open to Natives wanting to talk about religious ceremonies and practices

or any other topic related to Native religious concerns. Appointments are not required.

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