

Murkowski bill would create Native panel Study of policies

A major joint federal-state commission charged with looking into Alaska Natives' plight would be created under congressional legislation planned by Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska.

Murkowski said he plans to introduce the bill this week and that it will be co-sponsored by Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, and chairman of the Select Committee on Indian Affairs Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii.

The "Joint Commission on Policies and Programs Affecting Alaska Natives," would be a "high profile, authoritative commission," according

(Continued on Page Fourteen)

• Native panel

(Continued from Page One)

to the Alaska Federation of Natives. AFN spokesman George Irvin said the idea for creating the legislation emerged during a congressional hearing held by Inouye.

At the hearing, AFN's report on the status of Alaska Natives, "A Call for Action," published in January, was discussed.

The panel would have the responsibility to develop recommendations for Congress and the state "to help assure that Alaska Natives have life opportunities comparable to other Americans, while respecting their unique traditions, cultures and special status as Natives," Murkowski said.

"In pursuing this goal, the commission would address the needs of Natives for economic self-sufficiency, improved levels of educational achievement, self-determination, reduced incidence of social problems and improved health status," he said.

Under the proposed legislation, the commission would conduct a comprehensive review of the social and economic status of Alaska Natives and the effectiveness of federal and state policies affecting them. During its two-year life, the commission would be authorized to employ staff and consultants, appoint task forces and conduct public hearings.

The commission would have 12 voting members, six appointed by President George Bush, three of whom must be Alaska Natives, with no more than two federal officers or employees. Six would be appointed by Gov. Steve Cowper, three of whom would be Alaska Natives, with not more than two state officers or employees.

In addition to the 12 voting members, the commission would draw on the political influence of 10 non-voting, ex officio members of Congress and the Alaska Legislature.

Murkowski said he expects Congressman Don Young to introduce a companion bill in the House of Representatives.