

Inter-Tribal executive council

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Outside the formation of the Alaska Federation of Native's in the mid 1960's to establish a statewide voice for Alaska's indigenous peoples, the tribal governments have attempted to form two statewide organizations representative of tribal governments.

Rather than going into detail of the former predecessors of Alaska Inter-Tribal Council (AITC), both the United Tribes of Alaska (UTA) and the Alaska Native Coalition (ANC) served their purpose in making our people aware of the need to involve Alaska's tribal governments in the development of policies affecting our people on the village levels.

AITC has a tremendous responsibility for the accountability of the inherent rights of it's tribal membership. Interpretation, dissemination and education of specific state and federal legislation and court actions impacting the ability of tribes to exercise self-determination on a village level is of paramount importance. The villages need to reawaken the sleeping culture and reassume the age-old tradition our grandparents exercised using the Native and modern technology available to us today.

Unlike the other statewide organizations, the AITC membership is restricted to the tribal organizations organized traditionally or under the Indian Reorganization Act. Any recognized village tribal

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lands, waters and resources.***

For those reasons, I'd like to thank the former leadership of the UTA and the ANC for their efforts.

Dec. 10, 1992 marked the historic day for Alaska's tribal governments in the formation of the AITC and the signing of the Inter-Tribal Treaty. The formation of AITC coincided with the 44th year of the signing of the United Nation's (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the announcement by the Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali for designating 1993 as the Year of the Indigenous Peoples.

Contrary to the revitalization of our tribal powers and some recognition by the federal government and the UN, our tribal powers are constantly questioned by the State and federal governments. A good example is the Solicitor's Opinion on tribal status issued by the Republican Administration prior to the change over to the Democratic Administration on Jan. 19, 1993.

Given the amount of criticism towards tribal authority from the State and certain federal agencies, the

government is eligible for membership by tribal resolution.

The AITC Constitution developed a 24 member Executive Council comprised of two delegates from the 12 geographic areas. The Chairman for AITC is elected on an annual basis during the convention, while the Executive Council serve staggered terms and are elected by their geographic regions.

The Executive Council has limited powers granted by the triber through an adopted Constitution. The Constitution calls for quarterly meetings of the Executive Council to give direction to the Executive Director to carry forward the day-to-day ooperation of the Council.

The first meeting of the Executive Council was March 4 and 5 in Anchorage. The purpose was to review job descriptions, authorize for statewide advertisements, establish long and short term goals and to hear reports on issues effecting tribes based upon federal/state legislative and court activities.

The AITC is a new organiza-

Council meet, faces tremendous responsibility

tion and will be three months old March 10. To maintain an effective office for the AITC, it needs support and commitment from the elected Councils and members. To maintain the collective "Native voice" on a statewide basis, it needs to have a working relationship with all statewide Native organizations serving our membership.

The Inter-Tribal Treaty preamble states . . . 'We, the First Nations of this Homeland, now called Alaska, by this Act and Treaty, do collectively declare, in the exercise of the sovereign right to free association, the common bond of our ancient heritage shall continue, unencumbered and inviolate, as a union of our peoples by the Creator, shall forever mark, as a testament,

**our members . . . to
customs, traditions,**

the sure determination in our unity we shall strive to protect the rights, privileges and immunities which define our nationhood. We further affirm, by this covenant, and by reason of our ancient and continuous existence in our sacred Homeland, by unified voice and action, we shall defend the right of our members and tribal nations to the peaceful enjoyment of our customs, traditions, lands, waters and resources. By this expression of our certain resolve, it shall be made known to all peoples, we, the Alaska Tribes, as Sovereign Nations, have placed our hand for the stated purpose to wit: CHARTER OF THE ALASKA INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL. For all purposes set forth by this Treaty, do we, the indigenous tribes of Alaska, affix our signature and pledge our commitment and thereby charter the creation of the AITC. The AITC Council is hereby authorized to exercise all powers and functions as may be granted by a 2/3 majority of the signatory tribes of a constitution and by-laws adopted for such purposes at a duly called convention of said tribes. This treaty does not waive or supersede the sovereign authority of Alaska tribes.' 128 tribal governments were represented on this historic day.

Based on the language of the Inter-Tribal Treaty Preamble, the AITC Council has a tremendous responsibility to insure the existence of our peoples into the future as a distinct society among the family of world's nations.

I urge your tribal governments to contact your distinguished representatives on pertinent issues affecting the livelihood of your tribal

members. I urge those communities which are not members to adopt resolutions to joining the AITC.

Our temporary offices are in the Tanana Chiefs Conference's office in Fairbanks. Call

Donna Lewis at 452-8251 for information. Quyana.

Editor's note: The above was presented to the 5th Bristol Bay Tribal Government Conference in Dillingham March 2.