

# Thlingit Nations to gather this week

by Thlau-Goo-Yailth-Thlee  
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KETCHIKAN — The Kuui Kwaan of the Kuui Thlingit Nation and the Taant'a Kaan of the T'angaash Thlingit Nation, are co-hosting an historic 1990 Assembly of the Combined Councils of Elders, gathering in Ketchikan, starting Thursday and ending Saturday.

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## Ut Kah neek Informing and Reporting **OPINION**

The traditional tribal elders represent the Councils of Elders of the indigenous Alaska tribes and nations. Invitations have been and are being extended to the Thlingit, Inuit, Yipik, Inupiat, Eskimo, Aleut, Athabaskan, Haida and Dena'ina peoples.

This will be the first gathering of its kind in modern times. Only the tradi-

tional tribal elders or their designated representatives or interpreters will be allowed to speak, participate and deliberate in the formal sessions.

No other governing or political body has the power, the prestige, the full responsibilities as the traditional tribal government, which has successfully served indigenous peoples for thousands of years. No other entity can fulfill the duties that belong only to the Traditional Councils of Elders that are based on traditional tribal laws.

The indigenous peoples of Alaska have come to a dramatic crossroads in which crucial choices have to be made. Powerful forces are pushing for total assimilation of indigenous Natives into the European immigrant societies and lifestyle.

Equally powerful forces are working for the retention of the subsistence lifestyle and self-determination. The choices are simple.

To assist in self-determination, the compact of free association, an act of the U.S. Congress, offers the indigenous people of Alaska significant

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and important choices concerning varying degrees of association with the U.S. government.

This most important assemblage of the traditional tribal elders, representing the various indigenous nations of the region of Alaska, will affix their signatures and symbols representing their tribe and nation on a sealskin.

Since time immemorial the Native leaders and elders have prepared themselves for special occasions and events of great importance by fasting and prayer. Some elders may choose to do this.

Tribal elders and their retinue are

encouraged to bring traditional tribal regalia.

There will be entertainment in the evening, in the form of traditional tribal songs and dances, storytelling and speech-making, by both the men and women.

There will be a registration fee of \$60 per tribal group to help defray the costs of the assemblage. Free housing may be arranged for delegates.

For further information please contact the Tribal Elders Conference, Route 2, Box 7, Ketchikan 99901, or Fax (206) 364-9242.