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Native unity forces cooling of rhetoric

by Tundra Times staff

In a show of growing unity on the issue of tribal rights and subsistence, Alaska Natives have taken the initiative during remarkable meetings over the last two weeks.

First, hundreds of village representatives meeting in Anchorage issued a stunning proclamation opposing the restoration of state fish and game management on federal lands and demanding that tribes be "acknowledged as having a co-equal right to manage our fish and wildlife and other renewable sources."

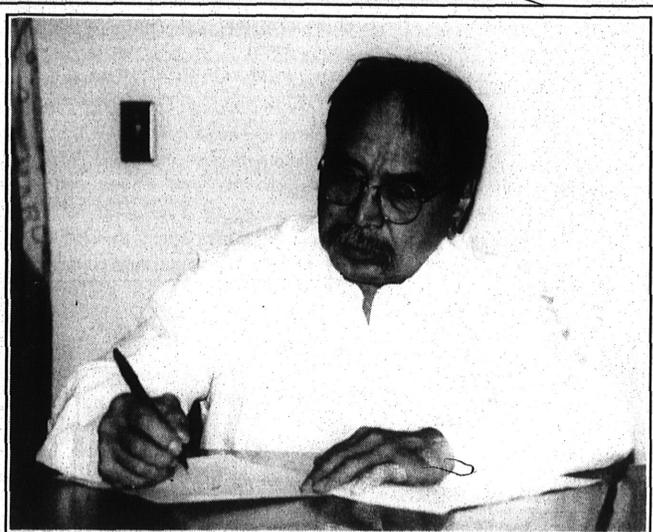
Immediately following the summit, scores of Native leaders—village, regional, corporate and tribal—descended on Juneau for a series of probing discussions with state and federal leaders regarding differences over tribal rights. Especially urgent was the need to confront state

lawmakers. Some have made racist comments in the wake of federal appeals court ruling in the so-called *Venetie* decision upholding certain rights of Alaska Native tribes to exercise jurisdiction over Native-owned land.

Subsistence summit

The Feb. 17 proclamation departs from a long-standing position of several Native organizations and the Knowles Administration, who have pushed for a state constitutional amendment to give rural residents priority access to fish and wildlife resource in times of resource scarcity. Knowles has sought the amendment, and a return of state management. The Legislature has refused to place such an amendment before voters, and favors amending the federal law grants rural

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Sea mammal accord signed

Charlie Johnson of the Alaska Nanuq (Polar Bear) Commission signs a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish Wildlife February 19th in Anchorage. The accord, also signed by the Eskimo Walrus Commission, sets in motion a wide range of co-management activities aimed at conserving marine mammal populations. A similar agreement will soon be signed with the Alaska Sea Otter Commission. The agreement are authorized under recent amendments to the Marine Mammals Protection Act, and are authorized under recent amendments to funding secured by Senator Ted Stevens.

Photo Courtesy USF&WS by Connie M.J. Barclay

AVCP starts relending program in Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

The Association of Village Council Presidents has a new Intermediary Relending Program to assist business development and expansion in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

In a signing ceremony on Jan. 17, Myron Naneng, president of AVCP, and Ernest Brannon, state director for USDA Rural Development, closed an \$800,000 loan from USDA to AVCP. AVCP will use

the funds to provide loans to businesses throughout the region.

"This loan represents a significant investment by USDA Rural Development in the economic growth of the communities in AVCP's area and exemplifies how the partnership of public and private entities can work to the benefit of rural residents," said Brannon.

Nicholas Charles, AVCP's vice president of operations, said AVCP is grateful for the opportunity to provide low-inter-

est loans for new and expanding businesses and the creation of job opportunities in the region, particularly in light of welfare reform.

"AVCP's loan fund will work hand-in-glove with a grant USDA Rural Development made to the State of Alaska," Brannon said. "The State's Department of Community and Regional Affairs will use the funds USDA provided to research viable business enterprises in the communities of Emmonak, Marshall, Toksook

Bay, Quinhagak, Mekoryuk, Goodnews Bay, Aniak and Chuathbaluk. DCRA will then provide technical assistance to entrepreneurs who desire to start businesses in those communities," he continued.

In addition to the loan from USDA, AVCP received grants from the Coastal Villages Fishing Cooperative and the Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association. "This confluence of efforts will provide a substantial conduit through

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T&H empowers sustainable lifestyles

The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Vocation Training and Resource Center has trained 258 students since February 1996 in courses as diverse as computers and small business, to case management, and lead base paint surveying. The training center was envisioned to empower tribal members to create sustainable, self-sufficient lifestyles that were achievable and in agreement with traditional values.

The classes are currently held in the Central Council offices in Juneau. However, the Center will now benefit from Community Development Block Grants of \$2 million which were awarded to five

villages by the Alaska HUD Office of Native American Programs. The grants will be used for construction of a 21,000 square foot facility dedicated to job training, small business assistance, and library resource services. The Center will also bring classes to the rural community and provide distance delivery options for accessibility to any community in Southeast Alaska.

While the majority of the classes are in Juneau, instructors travel to outlying communities to reach Natives in the region.

"We're doing this to provide local training, so people can be employable and

responsive to their local economy," stated Eric Davenport, Business Director of Tlingit-Haida Central Council.

The Center's mission of providing high quality and unique vocational and small business training will be critical and timely for those Southeast Natives to be affected by the new Welfare Reform Law or "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996" work provisions. With the Act's emphasis on self-sufficiency, the Center can assist Alaska Natives by training and preparing them to enter the job market and enhance current skills for career advancement.

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