

# Tundra Times

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## Congressional Committee hears testimony on ANCSA

by Steve Kakaruk  
Tundra Times

On Friday, August 9th, 30 Alaska Native leaders shed their different corporate and political affiliations to testify on issues related to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) before a Congressional committee.

To hear the Alaska Native leaders testimony at the Egan Convention Center were the members of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs: Bruce Vento (D-Minn), also chairman of the subcommittee on National Parks & Recreation; Barbara Vucanovich (R-Nev.); Ron DeLugo (D-Virgin Isle.) and Don Young (R-AK), ranking minority member. Often uninterested and encumbered by unseemly talk and laughter while Elders spoke with pride of their heritage, these committee members sometimes waived questions to remark amongst themselves on the fishing forecast for the upcoming weekend.

Governor Sheffield said in the opening words to the the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs that the land is the key to the Act and the Act is the key to the health of Alaska Native societies. He added that any changes must be true to the process that produced ANCSA, and that proposed changes must come directly from Alaska Natives.

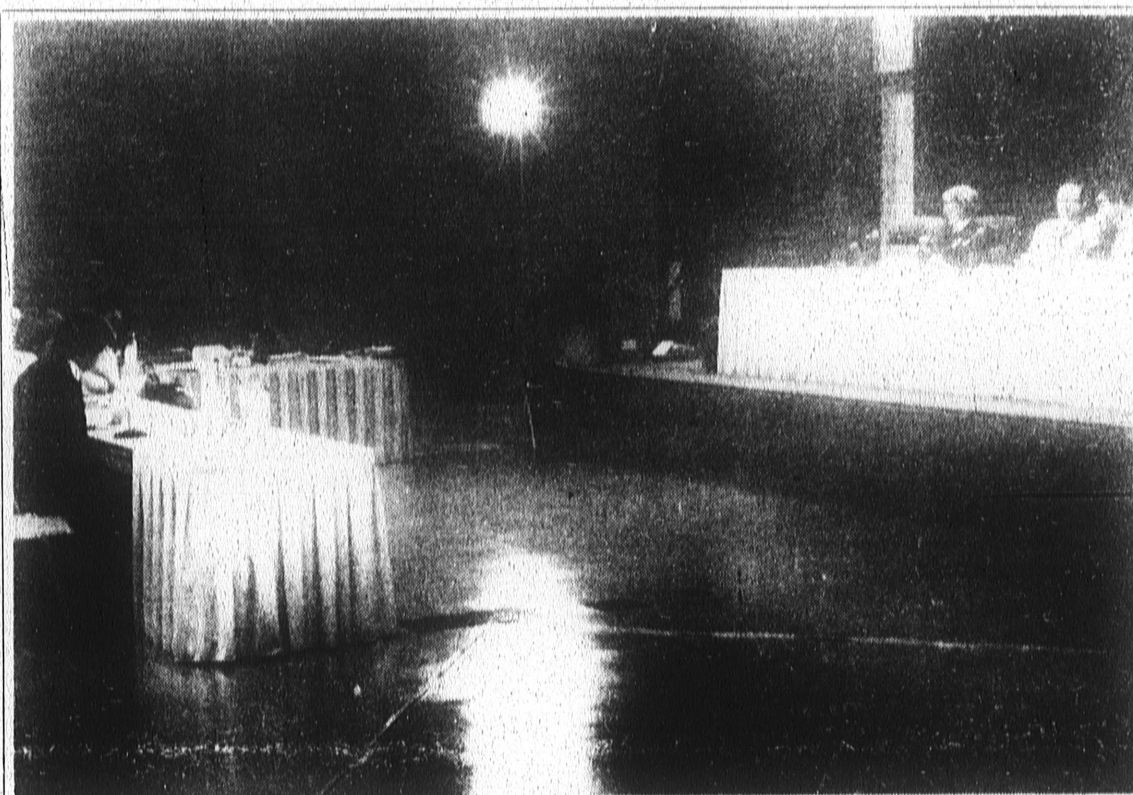
"As governor, I'll be happy to act as mediator in this matter but I cannot be an originator of change," Sheffield said.

Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) speaker Charlie Johnson followed Gov. Sheffield, reminding the Chairman and members that ANCSA was a landmark piece of Indian legislation, but that as narrowly defined, ANCSA was a real-estate transaction and nothing more. Johnson later said, "the question now becomes, whether ANCSA in its present form, will prove to be the legal mechanism by which we were finally divested of everything, or whether a properly amended ANCSA can become an Act to preserve the heritage of Alaska Native people."

AFN President Janie Leask requested that the 30-day comment period for the hearing record be extended to 60 days, saying, "many of our people are out in the fish camps during the summer months working to collect food for the winter." A 60-day comment period was agreed upon as requested.

Spud Williams, Chairman of the Human Resources Board of AFN, and president of Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc., viewed ANCSA's corporate structure as inconsistent with tribal values as related to Native land. He said that ANCSA is experimental in its approach to settlement of indigenous peoples' land claims, and that one must keep in mind that the Act does not represent termination of the Federal trust relationship with Alaska Natives.

Representing the panel of elders before the committee were Walter Soboleff and Al Grant. Soboleff eloquently spoke to the



Gordon Pullar addresses the Congressional Committee as Committee members Don Young and Bruce Vento share a moment during the address.

committee on the importance of the land. "We are close to the land; when people own the land they are at peace. If we lose our land we lose ourselves; my elders told me of this."

Al Grant, Athabascan Indian from Tanana represented 43 villages from the Doyon and TCC

Region. From a resolution he read, "Our subsistence way of life is continuously threatened by regulations and politics in Alaska and Washington D.C.; whereas our subsistence is the mainstay of our livelihood, now therefore be it resolved that Denakkanaaga, Inc. board of directors support

only those efforts which continue the protection of our subsistence lifestyle in rural Alaska.

In his own prepared speech Jim LaBelle Jr., born one year, one month and 15 days after the passage of ANCSA on December 18, 1971 said, "like my sister

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## Juvenile crime down, detentions up

by Maria Williams  
Alaska News Service

JUNEAU—More kids than ever before are being locked up in Alaska, despite the fact that juvenile crime is neither increasing nor becoming more violent.

According to a report on Alaska's juvenile justice system, the average daily population of state juvenile detention centers increased 58 percent between 1978 and 1984, causing dangerous overcrowding.

Paradoxically, the number of youths arrested during that same period declined by about six percent.

"We know for a fact that some kids who shouldn't have been detained, were detained," says Russ Webb, a state social service programs coordinator who worked on the report.

But Webb says that changes are being made to ensure that the rate

of detention doesn't continue climbing unnecessarily.

The report, by the state Division of Family and Youth Services, shows that in one year — 1982 — nearly 50 percent of all youths arrested were held in detention.

Out of 6,272 juveniles arrested for allegedly breaking the law that year, 3,087 were locked up. Most of those juveniles, the report says, were suspected of committing non-violent crimes.

"It is clear that the rate of detention is unjustified by the types of offense being committed and the level of danger presented by the youth," says the report.

The rate of detention is not only unjustified, the report says, it is also dangerous.

Juvenile detention facilities in Anchorage and Fairbanks are "dangerously overcrowded," and planned expansion will not meet projected needs for space if

the rate of detention continues.

Under state law, youths may not be detained unless their release threatens the safety of the community or the child.

Ideally, Webb says, the decision to hold a child or send him or her home in the custody of a parent should be made by someone specially trained to screen juvenile delinquency cases. But, says Webb, there isn't the money to place such a person in every Alaska community.

Within the last six months, trained screening officers have been assigned to Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai and Palmer. Webb says the difference has been astounding.

"Where before every child brought in by the police in Anchorage for detention was detained, we're now screening out some 44 percent of the kids," he says.

On Friday, August 9th, the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs held Oversight Hearings in Anchorage on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Individuals who were unable to present oral testimony may submit written comments to:

Congressman Morris Udall  
Chairman, House Committee on  
Interior and Insular Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20515

This 60-day comment period ends October 2, 1985.