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INSIDE:  
Kodiak art - page 3

PHOTO BY EDWARD S. CURTIS



The pride and happiness of a "Family Group-Noatak" in the early part of this century is evident in this photo by Edward S. Curtis. For more images from a rare collection owned by William Hensley, turn to pages eight and thirteen.

## 'Keep Native land in Native hands'

By Bill Hess  
Tundra Times

Editor's note: Last month, tribal leaders from communities across the state gathered in Anchorage and laid the cornerstone of a new organization. That organization would represent tribal governments formed under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, as well as traditional governments. The powers and authorities of IRA governments in Alaska are issues which are generating ever more controversy. The inherent sovereign powers of Native American tribes to govern themselves can not realistically be denied. This right has been affirmed in court many times, and the Reagan administration has acknowledged it in a recent Indian policy declaration. In Alaska, the controversy surrounds the status of such governments after the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Although the act does not address the powers of tribal governments, there are those who claim its intent was to "terminate" the special status held by the tribes. Even if the powers still exist, they argue, the act turned over the vast majority of lands it left in the hands of Natives to state-chartered regional and vil-

lage corporations, rather than to the tribes, and thus they have no land base, "Indian Country," over which to exercise those powers. Tribal leaders disagree strongly, and are taking ever bolder steps to assert the authority they con-

tend is rightfully theirs. This article is the fourth in a series of four to take a look at a few of the issues brought up at the meeting.

Keeping Native lands in Native hands — that, say leaders in a movement growing

throughout Alaska, is the reason for the increased interest surrounding tribal governments formed under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

The act was amended in 1936 to allow Alaska Native (Continued on Page Seven)

## Sigwien Savok passes away

Memorial services were held in Selawik last week for Sigwien T. Savok, one of the founders and the first treasurer of the NANA Regional Corp.

Savok died April 10 in Selawik. He was 41 and is survived by his wife, Mary, of Selawik, his parents, James and Annie Savok Sr.; daughters Aleisha, all of Selawik and Alberta Kirk of Buckland; sisters, Betty Blubaugh and Susie Erlich, both of Kotzebue; Rose Crenshaw, Milda Riley and Flora Henry, all of Selawik, and Julia Savok, of Renton, Wash; brothers James of Barrow, John of Santa Clara, Calif., Bernie of Kotzebue, Paul of Selawik, Lemuel of Portland, Ore., and

Milton of Buckland.

Savok was born July 4, 1941 in Selawik. He also is a former mayor of Buckland and was employed as a welder.

While working with the NANA board of directors, he was involved in establishing Maniilaq Association health service delivery system. Maniilaq and NANA were formed under the same roof until the two separated services years ago.

John Schaeffer, president of NANA since its formation, called Savok a "conscientious board member who was stable and dependable."

Schaeffer said that in the early days of NANA, Savok's duties included complicated fi-

nancial planning for the organization.

"The board was involved in a lot of things . . . we were brand new and there were a lot of committees. Sig's being treasurer was a tough job because he was dealing with things like oil leasing agreements for resources, and setting up finances with banks.

"None of use had much experience in those types of things. We had to hire consultants. We tried to keep the board involved and he did that."

Schaeffer said that Savok was a "happy-go-lucky guy, a great guy to have around. I hated to lose him from the board."

## Court rules property leased by KNC taxable

The Associated Press

The Alaska Supreme Court on Friday ruled that the Ketchikan Gateway Borough may impose a property tax on land leased by the Ketchikan Native Corp. from the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood.

The high court reversed Ketchikan Superior Court Judge Thomas Schulz's decision that the property is tax-exempt under federal law.

The Ketchikan corporation — created under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 — in 1977 leased a parcel of land from ANB and constructed a two-story Native center.

The Ketchikan borough assessed the property at \$406,050, including \$381,300 for the building. Title to the building reverts to ANB when the lease expires.

Federal law exempts property held in trust by the United States on behalf of an Indian tribe from state and local taxation. The Supreme Court ruled that exemption was not applicable because neither ANB nor the corporation had sought to have the federal government take title to the property.

The high court said an Indian tribe cannot unilaterally create a trust relationship with the federal government.

The court also rejected the corporation's argument that the tax is improper because it interferes with its tribal autonomy. The court said that even if the corporation had tribal status, the borough's interest in obtaining tax revenues to pay for services provided to the taxed property outweighs the tribal interest in retaining those revenues to provide governmental services to its members.

The Ketchikan corporation conducts vocational, cultural and other community service programs in its building.

Judge Allan Compton wrote the majority opinion. Justice Jay Rabinowitz wrote a concurring opinion, saying the corporation is not an Indian tribe under federal law.