

Genocide continues

By Brian Bergman and Doug Torrance

Genocide of Native peoples is still being carried out in many parts of the world including Alberta, American Indian Movement (AIM) representative Ed Burnstick told a SUB Theatre audience Tuesday.

Speaking on AIM's concern for Canadian Natives, Burnstick protested that "this is one of the richest countries in the world and yet its original citizens are amongst the poorest." He insisted various levels of government in this country are "playing games" with the rights of Natives and that "our people no longer want promises: they want something done."

The time for talking is past and the need now is for action, Burnstick said. He warned "when you corner any kind of animal he will turn around and fight back; so too will the Native peoples."

Burnstick, speaking to the Resource Development session of Native Land Claims Week, claimed that the Native people in Alberta endure the lowest standard of living anywhere in North America. According to Burnstick, recent resource developments like the Tar Sands project will do little to improve the Natives' position.

"With 75 per cent of the development of the Alberta tar sands completed, practically none of the promised benefits to the natives have been seen," Burnstick claimed.

It is because of this uncaring attitude of government and big business that the natives of the north are determined to settle their land claims before any unwanted development deals are made, such as the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, he said.

"But now such claims in Alberta are being stalled because the government is planning



changes in legislation controlling the filling of caveats (declarations of prior interest in the land)."

Burnstick pointed out that resource development typically

involves the intrusion of highways, railroads and pipelines into otherwise isolated communities and that these in turn create new social problems which must be dealt with.

AIM speaker at SUB Friday

Friday, March 25 at 5 p.m. Ken Dennis and John Graham will speak in Rm. 104 SUB about the American Indian Movement (AIM) Native Survival School in Winnipeg. The school, begun in December 1976 with five students, now operates out of a three-storey house where 25 out of the 30 students live together with the staff.

The students are all young native people who had dropped out of the public school system. Unable to cope with a system that does not recognize the vast cultural difference between native and white society, these students were hanging out on the streets, around poolrooms and bars.

Now, says Dennis, these students are not only learning about their own history and heritage as well as studying the "three R's" but are also developing a sense of self-respect and community as native people.

Elders from nearby reserves teach the students about Indian culture. Accredited native teachers from the University of

Manitoba instruct them in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic.

Students discuss current events, with special attention to problems of native people across the country.

The school is part of a federation of AIM Survival Schools. Many of the 39 schools in the United States are recognized by universities as providing equivalent to high school education.

The organizers of the Survival School in Winnipeg are working to get similar recognition from the school board and universities in that city. Although some important officials have been unresponsive because of the school's connection with AIM, at least three high schools in the city have indicated they would like to refer all their native students to the Survival School.

The Winnipeg police have also recognized the work of the AIM people, and a relationship has been established between them.

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by Michael Thomas

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