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SUNDAYS, E1



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# FAIRBANKS

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# Tribal courts fight to establish authority

## Conference examines issues facing system

By MATT BUXTON  
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Alaska's tribal courts have

fought for years to establish themselves in the eyes of the federal and state governments. They've made progress with a legacy of lawsuits, but there's still more work to be done.

The tribal court system was the focus of a three-day Alaska Tribal Court Development Conference held this week in Fairbanks by the Tanana Chiefs Conference that

covered everything from the history of the courts to the current issues facing them.

Organizer Lisa Jaeger, a government specialist for TCC, said the idea behind the approximately 80 tribal courts in Alaska is that they're based on important cultural tenants and are better-suited to deal with the issues unique to each community.

"The goal is to use local people and local traditions to achieve more of a restorative justice for the people," she said.

The tribal courts in Alaska have jurisdiction over tribe members only and deal with issues like child custody, adoptions, marriages, divorces, alcohol regulation, employment and domestic violence.

In many cases, non-traditional methods of community-based restorative justice have a more successful outcome when compared to incarceration, Jaeger said. She said it's a matter of not only finding the authority but necessary funding.

The system isn't without its

Please see COURTS, Page A5

# DENALI'S WILD SIDE



**A** Dall sheep dashes across the open tundra at Denali National Park and Preserve. **Editor's note:** Daily News-Miner staff photojournalist Eric Engman spent four days in Denali National Park and Preserve late last month documenting, among other things, the sheer wonder and beauty of its wildlife and scenery. Check out his video at [www.newsminer.com](http://www.newsminer.com).

## Woman injured in shooting Saturday on Lathrop Street

Staff Report

Alaska State Troopers are investigating a report of a shooting at the south end of Lathrop Street.

A report from troopers Saturday states troopers received a report of a gunshot victim at the "south Lathrop flats" at 12:20 a.m. Saturday.

The female victim was wounded in an unspecified extremity, troopers spokeswoman Beth Ipsen said. The injury is not life-threatening, she said.

Early information indicates the incident happened when a fight began at a party, Ipsen said. The victim was not involved in the fight.

Troopers are trying to determine who fired the weapon. During the investigation, they arrested Aaron Hodges, 22, of Fort Wainwright, on a charge of possession of a firearm while under the influence. It was not known if Hodges is a suspect in the shooting.

Troopers are asking witnesses to contact them at 451-5100.

## Stuart Creek 2 Fire begins to burn hardwoods, blankets area in smoke

By MATT BUXTON  
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The Interior was blanketed with thick, acrid smoke Saturday with prolonged hot weather allowing the Stuart Creek 2 Fire to begin burning green hardwoods.

Even though the Stuart Creek 2 Fire east of North Pole was brought under containment last month, a lack of rain and continued warm weather has allowed it to tap into unburnt fuels, said Alaska Fire Service spokesman Terry Anderson.

Some activities were cancelled in town because of the smoke, including a high school football jamboree to be hosted at Lathrop High

### INSIDE

Fire near Delta Junction puts homes at risk. **Page B1**

School.

The prolonged dry season is drying out hardwoods to the point that they can burn, producing the particularly acrid smoke seen and smelled in Fairbanks today.

"Things are holding there and the smoke levels are due to unburned pockets of fuel. That fire won't be out until it rains," he said. "Usually, we don't see this happening. ... We're up against a lot of fuels that are burning that shouldn't be burn-

ing this time of year."

Anderson said fires this late in the season are rare and that the rest of the state is on an elevated watch for the risk of old fires coming back to life or new fires springing up.

"What's unusual is how dry this summer is. Usually in this time we're in a rainy season," he said. "This is unprecedented for the dryness of the fuels. You have Red Flag conditions funneling the winds. When you have a combination of record drying, then those fires continue to burn."

Contact staff writer Matt Buxton at 458-7544 and follow him on Twitter: @FDNmpolitics.



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"Where did the sheep go to get a trim?  
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