

# AFN Conference centres on North-South unity

by David A. Moses

VANCOUVER, B.C. - Sixty years ago, members of both Canadian and American First Nations were invited by the University of Toronto to a joint assembly to discuss common issues and concerns shared by native peoples on both sides of the border. The conference was orchestrated by some U. of T. academics and consisted of about one hundred and fifty delegates.

This small gathering — more like a study group for students and professors rather than the beginnings of a political movement — preceded the formation of the Assembly of First Nations in Canada and the National Congress of American Indians in the United States.

Last week in Vancouver another joint assembly took place between First Nations rep-

resentatives, but this time it was initiated, organized and run by First Nations people themselves.

This conference was called "Uniting First Nations - Tecumseh's Vision" and took its name from Tecumseh's desire to unite all native people with "one heart, one body". It was part of the AFN's 20th Annual General Assembly and was declared the first such joint gathering in sixty years.

The Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre was the site of what were really two conferences in one. There was the AFN and NCAI joint assembly from July 20th to July 23rd and the AFN/Nexus'99 Trade Show and Business Conference from July 21st to July 23rd.

*Continued on page 2*



*NCAI President Ron Allan and AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine celebrate the signing of a Unity Declaration between their two organizations at the annual AFN meeting last week in Vancouver. Said Fontaine, "I'm certain we will all remember this moment for the rest of our lives"*