

Dennis Banks to speak in public program

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Native American activist Dennis Banks will take part in a free public program to highlight current Indian legal battles at 8:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 24, at the University of California, San Diego.

Banks, who will visit San Diego in the course of his march to support "The Longest Walk," will speak in room 107 of the Third College Lecture Hall. "The Longest Walk," currently underway, was conceived as a protest in opposition to proposed federal legislation now being debated which many consider a backlash package attacking all Indian rights.

The UC San Diego program will include music, films and discussions of the 11 pieces of Congressional legislation which, in the words of a resolution introduced in the California legislature by Coronado Assemblyman Pete Chacon and others, "attack tribal jurisdiction and sovereignty over land specifically set aside as Indian land."

The program, which begins at 7 p.m., will feature guitarist Ralph Cayedito, Virginia Hill of the San Diego Indian Center and two films, one highlighting the Indian water rights struggles and another on the impact of the proposed federal legislation.

The walk, in which Banks has been taking part, began Saturday, Feb. 11, in Sacramento. Indians from 24 tribes have pledged to walk the 3,000 miles to Washington, D.C. along the same trails their ancestors followed when they were forced onto reservations. Local tribes will join the marchers along portions of the walk. Gatherings are planned in Pueblo, Colo., Lawrence, Kan. and in Washington. The march is expected to take six months.

Banks, who is fighting extradition to South Dakota in connection with incidents related to the protests at the Custer courthouse and Wounded Knee in 1973, will be able to join the march only as far as the California-Nevada border. One of the founders of the American Indian Movement, Banks has been a central figure during the past decade when Native Americans have been militating for the restoration of land and other rights and the honoring of treaties they say the federal government has consistently and systematically broken.

Banks fled to sanctuary in California about three years ago. Since then he has taught courses in federal Indian law and Native American religion and philosophy at Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University, about 20 miles west of Sacramento. Governor Edmund G. Brown has refused to extradite Banks to South Dakota, despite an April 1977 ruling by a California appellate court that South Dakota's request was valid.

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