

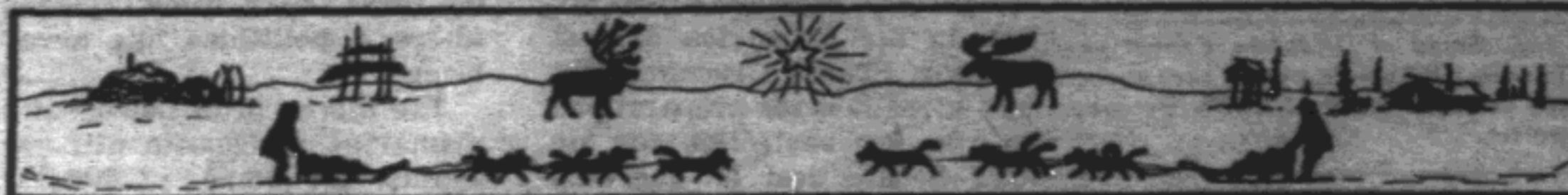
ALEUTS BATTLING FOR LEGAL IDENTIFICATION AS 'INDIANS'

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Justice Dept. Says Aleuts Not Identifiable Indian Group for Claims Purposes; Blames Link to Eskimos



SURVEYOR GRAD—Jobe Zacheaus of Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island, center, is receiving his diploma and congratulations from John Rosa, acting director, of the North Star Borough Community Action Agency, as he graduates from the surveyor course conducted

by the CAA and which was financed by U.S. Department of Labor grant. Forty-five out of 50 who enrolled received their diplomas, a percentage that is considered to be excellent. See story and photos on page 5.
—Photo by HOWARD ROCK

The Land and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice of the United States has for some 15 years taken the position that the Aleuts are not American Indians because anthropological evidences link them as a branch of Eskimos.

Yet the Department of the Interior in its policy of dealing with the Indians of the United States has consistently treated the Aleuts as "Indians" in giving services afforded the aborigines of the states.

Back in 1951, St. Paul Island Aleuts of the Pribilof Islands filed two claims, one for the islands and one for the southern portion of the Alaskan Peninsula, for taking of the aboriginal title.

Both were signed by the late Ilodur (Eddie) Mercurieff who died recently from heart failure on his home island of St. Paul.

The Justice Department subsequently took the position that the Aleuts' claims would not stand up because the Aleuts were not an identifiable group of Indians.

Now the strange battle is shaping up in the Indian Claims Commission between the United States and the Aleuts, the latter attempting to get a legal footing that they are indeed included in the generic term "Indians" as has been applied to the aboriginal people of the states in the past as well as

the present time.

Recently, Attorney Roger G. Connor, along with others, acting on behalf of the Aleuts as petitioners filed a memorandum against the United States "of points and authorities in opposition to defendant's motion for summary judgment and in support of the petitioner's cross-motion for partial summary judgment."

The brief was also served on the Land and Natural Resources Division of the Justice Department on December 15, 1967.

"This case has significance because if we lose, it may effect the Eskimos as well as the Aleuts," said Roger Connor this week. "I also think the position of the Justice Department is untenable as a matter of either sound law or logic and common sense."

The brief contends that the Aleuts, Indians and Eskimos of Alaska were all classed as "Indians" from the beginning when the United States took possession of Alaska from Tsarist Russia.

The brief quoted a Dr. Hunter-Miller who quoted verbatim a memorandum by the then Secretary of State William Seward with regard to the proposed treaty with Russia for acquisition of Alaska:

"Mr. Seward proposes that Russia cede and convey to U.S. her possessions on the North

(Continued on page 6)

Claims Hearings Formally Announced by Sen. Gruening

Senator Ernest Gruening announced formally yesterday plans for hearings by the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs at Anchorage on legislation to establish procedures for adjudication of claims to land asserted by Alaska natives.

Senator Henry M. Jackson, chairman of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, plans to go to Anchorage to conduct hearings on the bills, which have been referred to the full committee for action.

It is hoped that as many as possible of the members of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee will also go to Anchorage for these hearings.

The hearings will be held February 8-10 in the Sydney Laurence Auditorium, 6th and F Streets, Anchorage, con-

vening at 10:00 a.m. each morning.

"At the request of the

(Continued on Page 2)

Task Force Presents Report to Governor

The Alaska Native Land Claims Task Force has submitted its report on the proposal for settlement of claims to Governor Walter J. Hickel. The report was dated January 10-16, 1968.

The Task Force proposed a four-part settlement plan consisting of:

"(a) A grant of 40 million acres of land in fee, or in trust, to village groups (compared to the 102.5 million acres given the State of

Alaska under the Statehood Act, or the much larger area encompassed in the Native claims) allocated among the villages in proportion to the number of persons on their rolls.

"(b) A grant of a 10 per cent royalty interest in outer continental shelf revenues, along the lines proposed by Secretary Udall, in lieu of the right to compensation for lands reserved or disposed of

(Continued on page 7)

Roy Peratrovich Appointed to Head South Central BIA District

A Tlingit gentleman, Roy Peratrovich, and a man who has served 30 years in the territorial government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, became the BIA district superintendent in South Central Alaska.

Peratrovich replaces Thomas Pillifant who resigned recently to enter private business in Anchorage.

Peratrovich said he was notified of the appointment on January 16. Commissioner Robert L. Bennett of the Indian Affairs had said earlier that he would appoint a native person to fill Pillifant's position.

Bennett made the statement during his visit to Anchorage this month.

During the past several years Peratrovich has been serving as the head of the BIA Tribal Operations with offices in Juneau.

He will officially assume his new office duties on March 3.

He expects to move to Anchorage in the middle of March.

In his statements to the press, Roy Peratrovich said that the BIA was a service organization and that he intended to stress it as such. He intends to work extensively with native organizations, make the duties of his office as part of the community so the people will become familiar with programs of the BIA.

He said he is not planning to make personnel changes when he assumes office but that in the future, he will fill positions with qualified native persons when the need arises.

Peratrovich was born in the Southeastern Alaska Indian village of Klawok. His brother Frank is a former state senator who has served as the president of the senate succeeding the late William E. Bolts after the latter died in Anchorage.