

Den Nena Henash - Our Land Speaks
Ut Kah neek - Informing and Reporting
Yupit Qanlautciat - The Way Eskimos Talk
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Diabetes linked to Western life

To the editor:

I recently received a report from Dr. Neil Murphy of the Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka, citing medical information that diabetes mellitus has increased dramatically among the Native peoples of Alaska during the past 30 years.

According to the report issued in the October 1988 edition of the medical magazine "Diabetes Care," co-authored by Dr. Murphy, the increase in diabetes among Native people is due in large part to "a decreased use of subsistence resources and increased use of imported foods."

This is important medical information which deserves widespread circulation throughout our state. I stress

once again how important subsistence is to the lives and cultures of Alaska's Native peoples.

Subsistence is a way of life, a lifestyle, a source of healthy food, a means by which we identify ourselves as people with long histories in North America. This is why I have proposed House Joint Resolution 90, calling for a subsistence priority for Alaska Natives and rural residents statewide.

This isn't a question of greed, and certainly not a question of racism. This is life. This is our reality. This who we are.

With respect,
Rep. Kay Wallis
Juneau

Subsistence: Matter of life, death

To Congressman Don Young:

I am writing to you about a matter of deep concern to me. It seems to me like a life and death issue. I write with fear knowing that you may not fully understand what it is that I am trying to say. I fear that I may not state my case emphatically or eloquently enough for you to fully understand so that you can sympathize with the concern I present to you.

I would like to tell you a little about myself to give the background which gives me my world view. I was born and raised in a village called Holikachuk. My ancestors came from Dishkaket and below Kaltag. None of those villages exist now. Many of my relatives now live in Kaltag.

I grew up in Holikachuk in my grandfather's house. He was the traditional chief and medicine man. (The term "medicine man" means holy

man and/or healer in this instance.)

People came from villages all over, up and down river for consultation with my grandfather. My grandmother was his assistant and a midwife. People came from all over for her assistance when babies were being born. My father was a white man, a gold miner and store keeper.

My mother died when I was 2 years old. I grew up knowing great fear for the future.

Much had happened to devastate the lives of my grandparents before I was born. My grandparents were young children when the Russians first came.

Then the gold rush happened. Thousands of gold-crazed white people came setting up tent cities and disrupting the ordered structure of Native culture and traditions. The diseases came.

My grandmother's family was

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