

Alilkatuktuk Writes in 'MS'

By MARGIE BAUMAN
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"Although I am young and a woman, I feel that I cannot remain silent and see my people manipulated and put down," writes Jeela Alilkatuktuk in the current issue of "MS" Magazine.

Indeed, the shortwave broadcaster for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at Broughton Island, Northwest Territories, Canada, is anything but silent as she speaks out on the conditions of the Inuit people of her area.

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Many of the conditions she speaks of, conditions similar to those encountered by the Native people of Alaska, lead her to conclude her article with pessimism. "The future looks very bleak to me, and I often despair when I think of the power of the government and the oil competition and the aggression of the white culture. But my people are getting lost and I must say what I believe is right," she writes.

Alilkatuktuk, 21, is strongly critical of the high school education program for Native people in Northern Canada: Also of the attitude of others toward her marriage to a white schoolteacher.

"When I was 13, my family was told by the white governing officials that it would be best for me if I were sent away 'to get an education.' The Inuit love their children and wanting to do what was 'best' for me, my parents sent me away. I went 2,000 miles south to a vocational school at Churchill, Manitoba to spend the next three years living in a hostel and coming home only during the summer months," Alilkatuktuk wrote.

While her teachers felt she had made "giant steps forward" in education, the author found much to criticize about the system. "They seemed to be trying to make me a brown carbon copy of a white person. The white people made all the decisions and because I did not know English, and they did not speak the Inuit language, we had little communication," she wrote.

Eventually, of course, Alilkatuktuk learned English well and went on to work for the CBC. Now married to Tony Moss-Davies, whom she met while working at Frobisher Bay, she is encountering other difficulties with the dominating non-Native culture.

She has been told she and her husband are lucky to get low-rental Eskimo housing, because he is white. She is also told that their children will be regarded as white, a subject which greatly arouses her ire.

"This is silly." I am Inuit, and my children are Inuit. They

will be brought up to speak Inuit in a settlement that is 94 percent Inuit," she writes, leaving no doubt of her feelings on the matter. "I have been told that they will have to register at school as white people. If this happens, I will not send them to school," she says.

The three-page article, entitled "Canada: Stranger in My Own Land," is well worth reading.