

Den Nena Henash - Our Land Speaks
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We can prevent alcoholism

To the editor:

This letter has been written to you mentally for years.

First, let me say as a journalism major, editor, past Sigma Delta Chi award winner and professional writer, you publish an excellent paper.

The purpose of this letter is twofold: to address my feelings on being an absentee "after the fact" Alaska Native and to applaud and encourage the *Tundra Times* position on combating alcoholism.

I am one-quarter Athabascan and one eighth Cherokee and an Ahtna at-large shareholder, born and raised in Seattle. My mother Lillian Dena Jackson, daughter of William (Bill) Jackson and Maude Goodlataw, didn't tell me of our heritage until I was 17, when the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was introduced.

Previous to that time, I felt different from the other kids. At summer camp, I excelled at outdoor survival and assisted the counselor by teaching the other kids what seemed natural to me.

I also seem to possess a gift for working with canines. One day, while visiting a wolf preserve called Wolf Haven, I lingered in front of a cage with four wolves in it. They all gathered in front of me, whined and pressed in front of the fence, either wanting me to pet them or play with them. When I rejoined the tour group, the guide told me that she'd never seen the wolves respond and interact with a stranger like that before.

There are other traits and interests, such as acute hearing, a love of basketry and fishing and a deep spirituality I attribute to my Native blood.

If anyone knew Maude Goodlataw of Cordova or Valdez, I'd appreciate

knowing of her and any other family members I may be related to. She lived up there in the 1920s.

The only way I've learned much about being an Alaska Native is your paper! It's very sad. I'd appreciate hearing from other Athabascans who may have known of my grandmother, Maude.

One of the less noble traits I seem to have inherited is alcoholism. I started drinking at 13, had a severe problem at 17 and quit without the benefit of treatment or support groups at 21. I began drinking at 27 and was in a treatment center four months later. One day at a time, I have been sober seven and a half years.

I appreciate so greatly the letters, articles and ads the *Tundra Times* dedicates to sobriety, recovery and primarily abstinence.

I feel that when "firewater" was introduced to Native Americans, white man's genocide was launched. We must learn to treat alcoholism the way black people treat sickle cell anemia. Both races have diseases indigenous to them. The only difference is that blacks can't prevent sickle cell anemia.

We, on the other hand, can and must prevent alcoholism. By never picking up the first drink, we can stop alcoholism and all its related disaster. If our heritages are to be passed on, preserved and taught, we must embrace abstinence and teach our children to abstain.

We have so much to gain. And too much to lose.

Four years ago I couldn't decide whether to be an alcoholism counselor or a realtor. I chose real estate and have been quite successful. My goal is to move to Alaska in five to seven

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Subsistence: Backbone of our culture

To the editor:

Welcome to 1990. Again the subsistence issue. Again the Natives got the shaft.

While the courts and media tell us that it is not a Native issue, we know better. They call us "rural subsistence users." Sure there may be a few ethnic Cubans, Libyans or Mongols living in the Bush who qualify as "rural subsistence users." But it is mainly Native Alaskans.

There are also the few guys who were born in Spenard who say they should have equal "Native rights," too. After all they were born here. Doesn't that entitle them to Native rights? Wrong.

I'll explain: When we refer to Native rights, whether it pertains to subsistence or whatever, what we're talking about is not just being born here, but the rights that our tribes have for establishing themselves here.

These rights have nothing to do with corporations either. Big deal, that I have stock in Doyon Corp. That

doesn't mean that I belong to a Doyon tribe. There is not a Doyon tribe, just as there is not an Exxon tribe.

Corporations do not have tribal rights. Long before Doyon was established the tribes existed, and they will continue to exist. Our rights will exist.

Individual or nations do not have the right to relinquish these rights without our consent, especially a nation that constantly professes that all men are created equal. We are equal. We have our own ways. We have our own government. Who says the American way is the only way?

Some also say that us subsistence hunters should go back to the bows and arrows. Don't do it, I warn you. Next they'll want to take your stereos, VCRs, microwaves and satellites.

This thing about bows and arrows shouldn't even be considered. The idea about subsistence is to get the food into our houses and into our stomachs with as little trouble as possible.

So we progressed from bows and arrows. We have a right to progress.

The Americans don't have an individual claim on the right to progress.

The idea of subsistence is that it is cheaper going out in the woods to get your meat, and not having to live on expensive beef, pork or chicken.

The idea of subsistence is that our system of harvesting is deeply ingrained in our social, cultural, economic, religious and tribal structures, not to mention our nutritional needs.

It is too deeply ingrained for the guy from Spenard to appreciate or understand. It is our way of knowing that we are alive, that we are still a people of the land and that we belong here.

If we are going to exist as tribes and maintain the values that have been passed from generations, it is vital to keep our access to our land intact. On speaking on Native cultures, it was a Siberian, Alitet Nemtushkin, who stated, "If my people are to have a future, they must stick to the traditional occupations, like reindeer herd-

ing, fishing and hunting. Only adherence to tradition can help us out of the impasse we have found ourselves in."

We are in trouble. I don't have to tell you that. Every aspect of our cultures is in trouble. And now, the backbone of our culture; our fishing and hunting rights are in trouble.

All these rights maybe are not worth really fighting over, certainly not worth dying over. And they might send us all to prison. Nobody civilized fights for these things anymore. They either go to court or pray about it.

Maybe it's worth a try to make them realize that we are serious about our subsistence rights. What we've been doing so far it not working. We've got to try a new approach.

Something is wrong when our food caches are empty and our prisons and cemeteries are full.

Have another good year,
Michael A. Savage
Palmer



• Alcoholism kills us

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years to build and run an Alaska Native alcoholism treatment lodge.

If you know someone or yourself think you might have a drinking problem, please know this. A person who can drink socially doesn't wonder if he or she has a problem. Blackouts are a symptom. So is denial.

If you feel you may have a problem, there is no shame in having a disease. The help for recovery is all around us,

and all it takes is a call to a treatment center or a support group in the white pages of your phonebook.

Alcoholism kills. It kills us. It kills our heritage. Recovery is survival. Abstinence is survival. Survival is success. And, as we say in the business world, success is the best revenge.

Sandra L. Crider
Marysville, Wash.

Writer says she's disgusted with subsistence decision

To the editor:

What this letter is leading to is basically my disgust with Alaska's Supreme Court ruling on subsistence being unconstitutional.

Memories flood back to about the 1976-78 sessions of the Legislature in Juneau, where I worked for the House Resource Chairman, Alvin Osterback, D-Sandpoint, when this committee passed the subsistence bill out of committee.

Literally hundreds of hours of testimony was heard from Native village leaders asking that the Alaska Legislature pass a law which would protect their rights to subsist off their lands as they have, literally, for centuries.

At that time, the Legislature realized that this bill was not perfect, but that it was the best that could be enacted giving Natives the right to hunt and fish.

The Alaska Supreme Court's decision would make real power leaders like the late Ernest Gruening turn over in their graves. This tenacious Jewish man had a heart and soul for Alaska Natives, having come from the most discriminated class in the world.

When he saw signs in Alaska's businesses in Juneau and around the state that said, "No dogs or Indians allowed," he was angered. So angry, he became our greatest advocate for an equal rights bill.

Why now does a Supreme Court that lacks vision decide that the law is unconstitutional... because it discriminates in favor of Alaska's first residents, first inhabitants of the land?

Why? Because sports hunters, Texans — specifically Gov. Steve Cowper — and other Outside non-Natives are crying "foul play."

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