

Be fair to BIA

The following letter was received by the Tundra Times from a person who asked not to be identified and requested that the bulk of the letter not be published.

However, we felt that some of the criticism of the article in question was worth publicizing without attribution:

"The North Slope people have had hard times in efforts at local management of numerous projects. A fair amount of these troubles can be attributed to learning, but that is not an excuse in perpetuity.

The BIA, while a highly bureaucratized agency, is not full of bad guys and paternalists. Portraying this current episode as the innocents (the ICAS who "deserve the opportunity to control their own programs") versus the uncaring system (the BIA: "no one from outside can do it properly") is implicitly condoning past practices.

If it is correct that only those up north can adequately deliver the services now being provided by the BIA Fairbanks office, then do a story

on the poor quality of the present program delivery—do not just repeat hollow statements about outsiders not knowing how.

I fully support local control — when it best provides what the people receiving it are entitled to receive. I think that rather than blind-faith support for contentions such as are made in your editorial, your paper could quite constructively search for the best solutions to problems faced by Native and rural Alaskans."

Something fine and powerful

*Don't ask me how we know; we know.
We feel it. Listen, we came here walking.
We came here with only our hands and tools.
of bone and stone, and we made it.
For many thousands of years we made it.*

*We made a living in a hard land—
a frozen land—but a way that was good.
Something fine and powerful back there
but something that started going even when
our ancestors swapped skins for that first
steel knife. Something good and real
back there, when work was living and living
was work; we worked together.*

*We are not foolish. We know
that steel knives made it easier, that
steel axes made it easier, that rifles*

*and harpoon guns made it easier—
outboard motors, snow machines, pickup
trucks. Now television spends our time
as though it were nothing. All so easy.*

*Until it has slipped away like a seal
in dark waters. And only realizing now
that we started losing it even when that
first whaling ship brought the white man
with their knives and beads and axes. Even
then we had begun to lose it.*

*Yet with all our hearts we know, with
our bellies we know, with all our being
we know: something fine and powerful
back there. Something fine.*

—Ronald Crowe

They have their own worlds

*An old Eskimo lady
stops at an intersection.
Maybe she stops to rest.
She has high blood pressure.
She needs to catch her breath.
She can't rush.*

*She watches the world go by.
Cars, trucks, more cars, motorcycles,
each in a world of their own.
Each having to get to work,
each with things they have to do today.
They see her standing at the intersection.
They don't really see her. They are in their
own world.*

*Traffic stops. She stands alone.
But not for long. Here they come again
each zooming by. Some signal, some
don't.
Can she understand the signals?
They all pass by.*

*Once again silence. She starts making her
way across the intersection. She hurries.
She is trying to time her crossing so she can
get across before more traffic arrives. She
reaches the other side and rests. It is several
minutes and many cars, trucks and motor-
cycles later before she moves on.
They have their world. She has hers.*

—Norman Westdahl