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Indian Health Service requirements

To the editor:

I am writing regarding the article in your July 31 issue, "Senate panel drops changes to IHS benefits." It seems that the rules that could be put into effect next year state that eligible individuals must belong to a federally recognized tribe which would eliminate many Alaska Natives enrolled at large in Native corporations and also children born after 1971 who were not enrolled at all.

But what about blood quantum requirement? To have been eligible to enroll in a Native corporation under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act you had to be at least one-quarter

Alaska Native. What is wrong with using this criterion for eligibility for Indian Health Service?

As it stands right now, if you can prove that a great great great grandparent was part Native you are eligible for Indian Health Services.

I realize that certain tribes Outside have no blood quantum requirement, or it's really ridiculous like one-sixtyfourth or less. There needs to be a line drawn somewhere, otherwise we should take the "Indian" out of Indian Health Service and the "Native" out of Alaska Native Medical Center.

Anna M. Barnes
Anchorage

Pro-subsistence women are heros

To the editor:

In critical situations, those who whine and cry are usually largely ignored.

In political situations, however, the reverse seems to be true. We elect them, look to them for leadership, and even let them write opinions for our newspapers.

I am very proud of the pro-subsistence women of the Kenai, and I certainly consider them heros.

They aren't sitting around crying about human injustices. Instead they seek to change them with love, strength and joy that touches the hearts of those they encounter.

They consider themselves a part of nature, not apart from it. The experience of gathering their own food heals them both physically and spiritually.

To them, it is as natural as breathing air and raising children.

They didn't spill the oil, they just wanted food for their families. But as Exxon walks away, some of these ladies face charges that could result in five-year prison terms.

Still no fear can be seen on their faces, and no whining heard.

Armed only with their small children, hope and admirable determination, they wage battle with an oppressive, business-oriented giant: The state government.

So far, the state has taken away many subsistence rights. Don Young now seeks to take away even more with Bill H.R. 2439, introduced May 22.

This bill would change ANILCA to allow subsistence only in areas where it is the principle source of the economy.

I guess this means that if a zinc or coal mine or a cannery is opened near your village, you may have to change your way of living.

I am not a Native, but I have always subsisted. I don't consider myself non-Native either.

I am, as they are, a part of nature, the human part.

Sincerely,
Jack Comeaux
Soldotna