

The year 1978 in review

The year 1978 will be a memorable one for Alaska Natives. Many of us will be glad it is behind us, although it had a few positive points. The job market in Alaska shrunk noticeably following the wind-up of pipeline construction, and the people hit hardest by the slump were those in rural Alaska, and in the Interior. Alaskans somehow survived the strangest political election in the state's history. And the failure of Congress to enact a d-2 Alaska National Interest Lands bill, prompting Interior Secretary Andrus to invoke authority of the Antiquities Act to create National Monuments throughout vast areas of the state, created a tremendous uproar throughout Alaska.

Briefly, and not necessarily in order of importance to us, are the news events which were most significant to Alaska Native people in our opinion:

— **The d-2 Failure:** A compromise Alaska National Interest Lands Bill, worked out by Senator Stevens and Congressman Young, was the result of a two-year effort by multiple interests, including Natives. It contained many provisions favorable to Native people including subsistence protection language and guarantees of Native land conveyances. The hard-fought effort was junked when Senator Gravel objected at the last moment. As Senator Stevens predicted,

Secretary Andrus invoked the Antiquities Act to create National Monuments throughout Alaska.

— **General Election:** Alaskans saw an unprecedented legal challenge to the 1978 statewide primary, sought by Republican candidate Walter J. Hickel and his attorney Edgar Paul Boyko. The outcome of the election was in suspense for weeks, awaiting a recount and the review of the courts. Superior Court Judge Ralph Moody ordered a new election, only to have his decision overturned by the Supreme Court. Governor Hammond handily won re-election to a second four-year term.

— **Legislature approves rural school construction:** In a torturous climax to a record session, lawmakers in Juneau approved an education package of more than \$100 million designed to bring about rural education improvements. The measure was a trade-off between the Hammond administration and key legislators to win approval of a new tax package for the oil industry.

— **Eskimos defend bowhead whaling:** The Alaskan Eskimo Whaling Commission told the International Whaling Commission that it

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would ignore the IWC-imposed quota on subsistence bowhead whaling, and that the AEWC would itself manage the traditional whaling harvest.

— **Ann Stevens killed in tragic crash:** Ann Stevens, Joseph Rudd, Clarence Kramer, Richard Sykes and Richard Church were killed in the crash of a Lear jet December 4 at Anchorage International Airport. Senator Ted Stevens and Tony Motley survived the tragedy.

— **State subsistence law adopted:** The legislature late in the session, enacted a law which gives subsistence users of fish and game primary access to the subsistence resource. Controversy over delays on the part of the state in implementing the law continues to concern Native groups.

— **Wien investigation:** President Carter, acting on an amendment to the airline deregulation bill introduced by Rep. Don Young appointed a fact-finding panel to look into the nearly 19-month-old labor dispute involving veteran Wien pilots and Wien Air Alaska, Inc. Young cited requests from thousands of Alaskans for an end to the pilot strike in introducing the amendment. Hearings into the dispute continue in January.

— **Copper River fishwheel flap:** Four elderly Athabascan Indians were cited by state protection officers for subsistence fishing in violation of an emergency order. Fishwheels were padlocked, then released after the salmon run passed Copper Center area villages. Charges were subsequently dropped, but the region lacks its traditional winter fish supply.

— **Ahtna-Alyeska dispute:** Ahtna, Inc., the smallest Alaska Native regional corporation, continues its David-and-Goliath dispute with Alyeska Pipeline Company. Ahtna argues it has been denied pipeline maintenance contracts promised by Alyeska in 1974 when the Native corporation allowed easements for the pipeline across Ahtna lands. 34 of 37 Natives working on pipeline maintenance in the region were discharged when Alyeska awarded the contract to an outside firm.

— **Leadership changes in regional corporations:** Long-time Sealaska Corporation head John Borbridge Jr. was replaced by action of the Sealaska board, sparking a controversy which carried over into the corporation's annual meeting. In the Calista region, Calista Corporation President Oscar Kagagley fired Vice President for Investments and Finance Fred Notti.

— **Pribilovians win:** After a 27-year effort, the Aleut communities of St. Paul and St. George were awarded more than \$11 million for abuses wrought in the government-run fur seal harvest from 1870 to 1946. Between 1964 and 1966 the Tundra Times reported that Pribilovians were still kept in a condition of servitude. The Aleuts won their first victory in the Pribiloff peonage issue when Congress enacted the Pribilof Home Rule Act of 1966. The U.S. Justice Department has asked for an extension of time in which to decide whether to appeal the Indian Claims Commission award. In 1979, we expect more significant revelations about the treatment of Aleut people, received at the hands of both the U.S. and Japan, during World War II.

Those were the major stories from the front pages of 1978's Tundra Times. Doubtless, 1979 will present challenges. By way of advice on how to face them, we defer to words of wisdom from our founder, written in 1975: "If troublesome obstacles come upon you, think of the achievements of your ancestors. They established cultures that very well met the unkind situations. They won over them and left ample room for fun, arts, and for big shares of light-heartedness."

From the staff of the Tundra Times, to our friends and readers, we wish peace, health and prosperity for the coming year.