



The desperate need for foster parents

This week we're printing the first in a series of articles by Helen Chase of the Cook Inlet Tribal Council about an Alaska Native who was forcibly taken from his family when he was 4 years old.

The horrors that Cliff Gray endured are things that should never be allowed to happen to anyone. A child of 4 cannot fight back. Cliff Gray never had a chance in the system that could have destroyed his life.

This series brings out many flaws in the adoption system for Alaska Natives, and it also stresses the desperate need for Alaska Native foster parents.

We applaud Helen Chase and Cook Inlet Tribal Council for bringing these issues into the public. We also applaud Cliff Gray and his large family in Alaska. It's hard to imagine just how painful it would be for him to relive all the terrible events of his childhood and young adult years, but he's done just that in the hope that other Alaska Native children will be spared.

Cliff Gray has decided to tell his story because of his strong feelings that he doesn't want other children to suffer as he did. He has also gone a step further and decided to become a foster parent himself, along with his wife, in an effort to help Alaska Native children. His main concern is that the children be allowed to remain in Alaska and that they live in a family setting where love is the norm.

Currently, there are few Native families available as foster parents. We urge anyone who is even remotely interested in becoming a foster parent to consider contacting Cook Inlet Tribal Council.

On a different note, on Page Seven we have an article about Wilfred Lane of Kotzebue. It seems incredible, but Lane and his wife care for a total of 18 children, six of whom are foster children. While that many in one family would be too many for most people, the Lane family is making itself a role model of caring.

Becoming a foster parent is not an option for everyone. For whatever reason, taking on the responsibility of a family may not be possible for some people.

There are things that all of us can do, however. We can all work toward ending child abuse and offering our support to those people who do become foster parents.