



Native remains are sacred

Reporter Jeffrey R. Richardson has written an important story for us this week concerning the ancient burial cave which came to light in the Aleutians this summer.

Richardson points out that the cave may seem like a new and exciting discovery. In fact, it is to many non-Natives. To the Aleuts, however, the "discovery" is something that has been known to the Aleut elders. They were not anxious to have outsiders made aware of its existence, however, according to our story.

As we've stressed before in the past, Alaska Native burial sites are every bit as sacred as any non-Native cemetery. Rather than being treated as curiosities, these sites should be accorded respect. It is the policy of this newspaper to fight for strong protections for Alaska Native burial sites.

We're pleased that in this situation, it is The Aleut Corp. that is in charge of making decisions. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is complying with the corporation's wishes. We're also pleased that plans call for reburying bones that have been uncovered.

It will be quite difficult to keep this site a secret, but we hope that can be accomplished. Looting must not be allowed under any circumstances.

As Alaska is developed further and as more areas are explored, we can only assume that more sacred sites will be found. Alaska Native remains must be accorded all due respect by whoever finds them. This is not something that is negotiable. It must be required in all cases.

Miss Lena River

We offer our congratulations to Bernice M. Joseph of Nulato, who recently won a beauty contest in the Soviet Union. She was named "International Miss Lena River" while she was in Yakutsk, visiting with a group of Alaskans.

It's incredible to realize that only a few short years ago, Soviet people were "enemies" to be feared. Today, Alaska Natives are finally able to renew cultural — and even in some cases family — ties with our neighbors in the Soviet Union.

We believe the Yakutian people chose well when they named Joseph to represent the river that they call "our sister" or "our brother."