

Villagers Asked To Back Leaders

Birch Creek, Alaska
June 12, 1969

Emil Notti, President
Alaska Federation of Natives

Dear Mr. Notti:

The recent resignation of Arthur Goldberg and the great variety of land claims settlement proposals and comments that come to us in the mail make us think the land claims will never be settled unless the Alaska natives speak with one voice. We cannot possibly read the great stacks of literature that come to us, and even if we could, we still would not have the background and perspective that would allow us to judge them perfectly. We want to be able to trust one single native association to look after our best interests, and we think it's much more desirable to have the land claims settled soon, rather than letting them drag on and on, wasting everyone's time.

We want the Alaska Federation of Natives to speak for us. We support your efforts in our behalf, and we're inclined to think there's no point in supporting other associations. We'd be glad to have any comments you might care to make on this.

Birch Creek Village Council
Margaret Martin
Lawrence Martin
David James
Neil James

Beaver Village
Affairs Committee
Beaver, Alaska 99724
May 28, 1969

Dear Emil:

In the past the native people of the Interior have had no voice in the affairs which concerned them, rather they tended to accept the decisions made by the non-native in Washington and other positions of authority.

This old way cannot continue. We need a voice that has a possibility of being heard. We need to be allowed to make some of the decisions which affect our lives and affairs in order to stand as men and women of a proud race and tradition in a rapidly changing world.

It is our opinion that such a voice is being heard in the form of the native leadership of the native federations and councils.

Unfortunately, these leaders have had to stand alone for us to the outside with little or no interest, help, or support from the people who they stand for—the small villager.

Let this paper stand as our support of the native leadership and organizations as they talk for us. Let them help us gain back our pride! Let them help us in our ability to "talk" to the outside culture! Let them help us make the changes necessary to be men and women in this changing world!

Sincerely,
/s/ Paul Williams
Committee Secretary

Writers Express Concern Over Likely Loss of VISTA Lawyers

May 27, 1969

Mr. William Allen
Coordinator-VISTA
Box 1957
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Willie:

I would be unable to list one by one the services provided to us, the people and native groups in our area of Northwest Alaska, by the VISTA lawyer, Gordon (Spike) Stein. I now am informed that we might be losing the total or a number of our VISTA attorneys.

The legal service program has more than proved its value to the people who previously could not afford the fees charged by a lawyer. Plus, and of more importance, the people now have become aware that they as poor people are being considered as people with rights and these rights apply not only to those who can afford to pay for them.

It would be a great set-back to have such a service, and when the need still remains to remove it.

If this worthy program is to be dropped the people will want an answer. Be prepared.

Sincerely,
(Mrs.) Verna Mickelson
Center Director

May 26, 1969

Mr. William A. Allen
Coordinator - VISTA
Box 1957
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Mr. Allen:

I was made aware of a very disturbing situation about the VISTA lawyer program either being substantially reduced or eliminated entirely. Firstly, I am an employee of Rural Alaska Community Action Program and the only reason I am stating this

is because I cover eight villages in the Bering Strait area and have first hand knowledge of the area.

Secondly, before the introduction of the VISTA lawyer program, our native people had no one to turn to for legal advise and representation in civil matters. Since the VISTA lawyers became a reality through Alaska Legal Services, our native (Eskimo) people have had extensive legal advise, services, and representation in civil cases. I would even recommend extending Alaska Legal Services to where they can cover criminal cases also.

I very strongly feel and believe in the VISTA lawyer program. Our people have never had access to legal advice much less services and/or representation. We have used the VISTA lawyers in forming our Regional Development Board into legal entities and have received advice whenever it was needed.

Our village people have used the services of the VISTA lawyers in forming their own incorporated cooperatives, in adoptions, divorces, collection of non-payment of wages, incorporation of villages into 4th Class Cities whereby these matters would still be existing problems today crying for attention.

In closing, we need the VISTA lawyers.

Sincerely,
Alvin Kavouktuk
Area Community Developer