

McConkey says only Natives can use sovereignty as sword

To the editor:

What has been done to Natives here and throughout the country cannot be ignored and must be documented for all who study history to know. Once again we watch the powers that be ignoring the human rights of Natives and foregoing their fiduciary trust as imposed by their own laws.

The only ones to say we are sovereign are ourselves. We are the only ones to use that sovereignty as the sword it is.

It has been said that we could not use our laws because we held no jurisdictional boundaries and were without reservations and the likes. From the earliest times of non-Natives entrance into this country, they have

denied our Human Rights, and all that we used was taken for the profit of a few.

There are those amongst us who would laud the Native Claims Settlement Act as the greatest thing to ever happen to us Natives. Only a few benefit, even as we watch. The Act has been put upon us without treaty or consent of our peoples.

The state has much to lose, because the land it chooses itself is within Native Country and therefore under that jurisdiction. What can they offer that we don't already have? The state's non-recognition of our sovereignty is a bluff which is as the waters run. Even now, we see the movement of their lawyers against Native sovereignty.

If we are to keep what is ours, we must use what is ours. We have an inherent civil authority and jurisdiction that is our sovereignty and which no one can deny, not even their laws.

Why do we wait to be recognized when we are? Let them challenge it where they wish, let us use it where we wish in a peaceful way.

We are not the ones who must question that sovereignty, and as they needed not our consent to do what they did, we need not their consent to do what we must. I stress do this in a peaceful way with the surety that we are right in the doing.

Impose taxes and laws of zoning and development, start a judicial system to enforce the law and peace, offering without weapons. For this is but a con-

tinuing process of what we have always had.

How is it we can say the claims are fair when what was given back was already ours, and how is it fair when we can see no real economic benefit? Our peoples had to say it will benefit our people's children when the controls are still theirs.

I say all this in fear of my life which may be taken for stating my opinions, but I say what must be in utter confidence that justice must prevail.

As I have put my life in their hands, so let us join now and put our lives back in our hands.

Respectfully yours,
Clarence McConkey
Valdez