

A tribute to Matthew Iya

By Mary Miller

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There is a saying: "Sometimes we must leave our safe places and walk empty handed among our adversaries." When it comes to subsistence in Alaska, the Native community has many adversaries. But Matthew Iya made a choice to leave this safe place and to walk among our adversaries. He walked empty handed and more often than not went out alone, but he brought with him a wealth of knowledge of the facts, the system, and most important, he brought with him a message. Matthew appealed to the decisionmakers in high places to take action which was fair and just for the original people of this land and the livelihood they so much depended on. To complete the picture, we must also take note to these state and federal officials in whose hands so much of our future is at stake, Matthew extended his hand to

them, offering his friendship. I learned so much from him, just in observing how gracious he was to these people.

There is another saying: When you love someone, you must let them go. Veronica, Julian and Nathaniel: You demonstrated the depth of your love for Matthew in how you let him go and we as a Native community received him, because we so much needed his leadership and talent in advocating for subsistence. So for all of Matthew's accomplishments, we must recognize his accomplishments are your accomplishments because you as his family helped Matthew to excel by giving your support so generously and believing his work was very important.

A kind deed and a kind word never dies: It lives on and on, as we cherish in our hearts the memories of this special human being. To Matthew's family I also offer this thought: His love for you will

never die, it will live on and on, giving you the strength and the will to move forward. That's the beauty of love. We are all richer for having had Matthew on this journey for the time he was with us. I must say it was indeed my honor to have known Matthew and it was a privilege to have worked with him.