

Starr . . .

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mountains into Seattle when there was no railroad. The white men were just settling that part of the country. I use like to listen to him see how it was in his young days. Old man use to tell me white man stole Indian country. I talk lot with old Indians different part of the country both in United States and Canada."

When he returned to Alaska, Starr resumed his life as a trapper and hunter. He married. More change was evident. Although apparently recognized as a chief due to his heritage, Starr was elected chief of the village of Tanana. Elections for village chief were part of the change. He spent many seasons in the Lake Minchumina area, running his traplines by snowshoe and dog sled. Every time he returned to Tanana or Nenana, he would talk land.

World War II brought the outside world even closer to Interior Alaska, via the Alcan Highway. In 1940, Starr got more fuel to feed the growing flames of his land rights rhetoric when a Native allotment became part of an airfield without the owner's consent.

Then, Starr began hearing the first rumblings of a land claims movement gaining momentum in another part of the state. His narrative explains:

"About fall of 1945, I begin to get reading materials from Alaska Native Brotherhood, [National] Congress of American Indians, Association of American Indian Affairs.

"About all Indian land cases and everything that concerns their land problems, what [was] lost; what outside Indian was asking about old treaties, kept or broken; what Native Brotherhood was doing in Southeastern Alaska. All this I did not ask for."

Starr had difficulty reading some of the material he received, particularly the legal documents which were written to support the land claims of the Tlingits of southeastern Alaska against the federal government, a case they finally won. Starr elaborates in his narrative:

"Tlingits was going to sue United States Government for some lands. There was lots about this case; it seem no end what lawyers were doing on this case. Finally, I got a brief on what the

Washington law firm who was handling this case for the Tlingits of southeastern Alaska was going to present at the trial.

"Lawyers explain Alaska Purchase: Russians said at the time they were selling Alaska they were only selling land which the North American Russian Company (sic) was on. Russians said Alaska Natives were Russian citizens, therefore owners of the land which they are on. In the bill of sale contract, Russia told the United States to make Alaska Natives citizens to honor their land.

"It was not till 1924 that American Indians were made citizens of the United States with the right to vote.

"Briefs were made for lawyers' use. With my grade school education, I had hard time to understand. I study it for two winters through dictionary for meaning of words.

"When I finally got through it, I know the Tlingits was going to win their case, which they did, for \$35 million.

"I begin to understand meaning of documents I was getting. They want Natives of Interior and rest of Alaska to talk about their land.

"This was big problem, there were no Native association in Fairbanks or Anchorage."

There was no Native association. And, Starr found out, no records at the Bureau of Land Management of Native allotments which Natives were living on, assuming that their possession was secure.

Starr became a letter-writer as well as a speaker. He warned the Athabascans of the Interior. "If you don't talk now, nothing will happen about your land." Now somewhat bemused at the apathy he encountered, Starr commented that some villages apparently posted his letters for all to read, but they all went unanswered.

"I held meeting here in Nenana quite [a] few winter. I use come from my trapline [at] Birch Creek-Kantishna between Christmas and New Year. The first two winters, hardly anybody came to the meeting. About third winter, few begin to come. It was during third winter I meet Charlie Purvis, white man just brought his family up from the lower states.

"I'm glad Charlie came to

meetings one winter. He talk to some people at the university who help to start first chiefs [present-day Tanana Chiefs Conference] meeting in Tanana in 1962. It took another nine years after that before Congress of United States pass the Alaska Native Claims Act.

"It was pitiful for me all alone to put on town bulletin board meeting about Native lands. I spent hours writing letters to villages and different groups and politicians and so on."

Even his friend Charlie Purvis thought he was crazy.

"I was working against public opinion. It was hard on me," Starr writes. But Starr did not give up. If anything, the several years he and his wife and children spent alone in the woods, trapping and hunting, served to harden his conviction that something was due all Alaska Natives and only through organization and cooperation could they hope to get it.

Starr worked again for the Alaska Railroad. After several years, in 1961, he was transferred to Fairbanks.

Starr spent a cold winter in the railroad dormitory, talking land whenever he could. Fairbanks proved to be "where it was happening" with Native land claims. Friends of the blossoming Native movement, such as Kay Hitchcock and Sandy Jesson, both instructors at the University of Alaska, offered encouragement and assistance to Native leaders like Al Ketzler and Richard Frank. Starr frequently took part in meetings.

Slowly but surely, the groundwork was laid for a new gathering of the Athabascans of the Interior. The Tanana Chiefs Conference, as it is known today, met in Tanana in the spring of 1962. Along with other regional Native associations formed in the early Sixties, Tanana Chiefs Conference helped lobby for a Congressional settlement of Native land claims brought to protest the taking of Native land without consideration or compensation.

By the time the settlement came, Starr was weary, talked out, you might say.

The Alfred Starr narrative concludes much as it began—with cautious hope and plenty of advice. Starr's narrative is partly a pragmatic lament of the passing of a way of life, but his con-

clusion offers the opinion that there are ways of adapting to change without writing off Native culture.

Starr suggests wise use of land claims money, including possible investment in cooperative farms. He urges young people to complete their schooling. And he urges Natives to protect their interests by using the democratic process to their own advantage.

"Too many Natives don't vote. Every time there is election vote, nothing. Nothing will go your way if you don't vote and elect

men that help you."

Starr provided an interesting footnote to his written narrative when he asked us to use our newspaper and radio to publicly thank the people of the Tanana area for helping search for his young nephew, who was lost about a month ago; land claims settlement or not, daily rural life in Alaska today brings hardship not unlike the hardships experienced by a young Alfred Starr and his father, and his father before him.

People of Tanana, on behalf of Alfred Starr, thank you.

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Urban legislator's view of subsistence . . .

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then if necessary to favor the subsistence users who show the greatest economic need.

For example, if it were found necessary to limit the take of moose to 500 in the Kobuk valley, then the people of Kobuk, Kiana, Ambler, and other nearby settlements would be granted the first right to harvest the moose. If more than 500 subsistence users from the area applied, those with the least cash income would come first.

Under the above plan, if there's more than enough fish or game for the residents of the management area, then Alaskan sport hunters and fishermen would get their chance. If the resource is plentiful, outside and foreign sport hunting could continue on a carefully monitored basis.

Another important question that must be answered in the d-2 legislation is whether the state or the federal government will manage the newly-created parks

and refuges on a day-to-day basis.

In the past, the performance of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has been heavily criticized by residents of the rural areas. This has resulted in a feeling that federal management might be more sensitive to the needs of the local people.

Unfortunately, rules and regulations issued from Washington, D. C., sometimes don't make much sense in Alaska. Federal management looks good now to some who are disgruntled with the performance of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, but the best solution may be to change Fish and Game.

A good way to start might be to encourage, and perhaps require, Fish and Game to use local paraprofessionals in both research and enforcement activities. In addition, overall control could be shifted from the present statewide boards of fish and game to regional boards consisting of local people who have to deal with local problems on a daily basis.

Over the long haul, it is likely that state government will be more responsive to the needs of

Alaskans than the federal government. The Carter administration has pledged to keep the federal budget from undue expansion; that means that federal employees who may be needed to manage fish and game and to enforce the laws on federal land in Alaska may not be approved. Inadequate management and enforcement will inevitably mean a decline in the number of animals, and perhaps also of fish.

If the new federal parks and refuges are managed by Fish and Game, the Secretary of the Interior will still retain the right to formulate his own rules to which Fish and Game must adhere. Thus ultimate control will remain within the federal government, even though the state will be making the day-to-day management decisions.

Also, if the federal government is managing the lands and they aren't doing it properly, you have to write to a distant official to complain. If Fish and Game is the manager, your legislator can step in; and the last time I noticed, Governor Hammond was answering his mail also.