

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire

Tundra Times



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Terribly Wounded BIA Will Never Be the Same

(Continued from page 1)

the Washington, D.C. BIA building and held it for a week. During the process, thousands of cubic feet of records were destroyed, furniture was smashed, art objects defaced and stolen. The damage has been set at close to \$2 million. That is a lot of damage. It is most appalling. What is going to be done to those who were responsible? Should they be punished? The latter suggests at once that they would become martyrs if such is carried out. It could make a bad and delicate situation worse if retaliatory moves were to be made. It might be a good idea if those responsible for damages were handled by their own people. It should be remembered that the Indians themselves have their own law ways.

What the Indians did to the BIA building has come out of many injustices. "Trail of Broken Treaties" used as the movement theme denotes the glaring reason behind the Indian action. They have been victims of genocide within the great land they once owned. They have been subjected to the ruthless and relentless effort of assimilation "to the mainstream of American life" for 200 years. This has been one of the most glaring failures of the BIA during the great many years of trying. Still there are people in it today who believe in this inane effort. What the assimilation effort has succeeded in doing is that it has robbed the Indian people of their spirit to meet their problems.

Despite the massive effort of assimilation, great many of the Indian people have managed to hold on to their lifeways, traditions and arts. They still have their songs and dances. They still have their reasoning, fair and wise leaders. These are the basic areas the new BIA, or whatever successor it might be, to take into account and go forward from there. If this direction is taken, who knows, the terrible wound the BIA absorbed last week might heal in shorter time than people expect.

An Open Letter

November 9, 1972

AN OPEN LETTER:

One of my jobs at the Tundra Times is to answer inquiries from teachers and students about Alaska, the Tundra Times, and more often about the Natives of Alaska. This interest is needed and welcomed. It is the tone of these letters which concern me.

Nine out of ten letters I receive ask about the "drunken Native", suicide rates and problems of the young. They seem to be asking, "Is it true that the word Indian is a synonym for drunkard?"

The idea of the "drunken Indian" is unfair. Yes, these are problems — as they are in many societies — but placing the emphasis on these problems in courses taught about our Native Americans in many schools throughout the country is wrong.

These courses should tell about the beauty of these people and their cultures; their fight to retain the land that is rightfully theirs; the constant struggle for better schools, medical facilities, housing; and the need for agency personnel, teachers and social workers who not only care but RESPECT them and their way of life.

So, please, give our Native peoples the respect that is so rightfully theirs.

Linda T. Resh
Staff

Outline of Claims History—

Author Notes TT's Role in Shaping Native History

SETTLEMENT — PART SIX

By THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.
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OLANGAPO CITY, P.I. — October of 1972 marked the tenth anniversary of the Tundra Times, a newspaper which has both recorded and shaped much of recent Alaska Native history. Although I had glanced at Howard Rock's tabloid occasionally during the mid 60's, I rarely gave it much attention until I was a student at the University of Denver.

I believe that all individuals involved in the fight for Alaska Native land rights will confess to having been influenced by the Tundra Times in much the same way as I have.

While in Denver, Eskimo culture and the land of my birth were far removed from my thinking, but I was hungry for news about Alaska. It was primarily for that reason I began to devour copies of Howard Rock's Native tabloid, and not originally out of any special interest in Alaska Native affairs. I could have read it earlier in Alaska, yet I didn't because it seemingly had little bearing on the life I wanted then to lead and carried little news of my hometown. Stories in the Tundra Times about Native politics and bi-cultural programs held little interest for me.

But isolated as I was in Denver, my weekly study of the Tundra Times provided me with new definitions of aspects of Alaska Native life. As a kid in Kotzebue, I saw poverty, disease, hunger, and poor housing surrounding me. But these things were a part of village life; I didn't think of them as social and economic problems in need of correction until the Tundra Times defined them as such for me.

In the village, men hunted caribou and seals, women sewed furs for mukluks and parkies, and the old people told stories of Eskimo life as it had been for thousands of years. In my thinking, it was home, and a place different from Fairbanks or Anchorage or the lower forty-eight. I never envisioned village life as being an ancient culture, and a culture in danger of dying a sudden death. The Tundra Times clearly defined that situation for me.

As the paper has been doing since 1962 for many Natives and non-Native observers, it made

me aware of the issues and problems concerning my people for the first time. The Tundra Times sparked a massive movement among young Natives newly discovering the richness of their cultural heritage and among older Natives concerned about the loss of it; among educators striving for curriculum relevant to Native students and among politicians who wished to appropriate funds for correction of social injustices; and, in 1968, Howard Rock gave me a job and made me a part of that movement.

I became so impressed with what he was accomplishing through that newspaper that I wrote Howard Rock, asking for a job, and returned to Alaska. On the day we met, Howard, who was given approval by his board of directors for hiring me, greeted me with enthusiasm even though it was a busy deadline day. He had been leaning over his illumination board, and like the conductor of a fine symphony, was orchestrating a collage of stories and photos for a newspaper which has earned recognition as the voice of Alaska Natives and a chronicle of Alaskan affairs.

Rock is a strange nomenclature for a pudgy, ebullient character like Howard. Excited in meeting people, and a curious observer of human nature, he might rather be the elf popping out from behind the Rock. Rock more aptly describes the determination with which he has pursued the editorial policies of the Tundra Times.

His editorial policies have unfailingly resulted in better lives for Natives and all Alaskans. A Tundra Times series about servitude imposed upon Pribilof Islander Aleuts by the Commerce Department resulted in actual cash wages to seal harvest workers since the harvest began over 60 years ago. The late Senator E. L. "Bob" Bartlett used Howard's arguments in advocating a ban on atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons when he revealed that Anaktuvuk Pass Eskimos had the highest radiation count of any of the world's peoples. The concept of a two per cent mineral royalty as a provision of the land claims settlement made its first public appearance on the editorial page of the Tundra Times.

Howard delights in telling of how the Tundra Times came to Alaska Natives courtesy of the

Atomic Energy Commission. In 1961, Howard returned from Seattle to visit Point Hope. With Project Chariot, the A.E.C. planned to create a man-made harbor at nearby Point Thompson by detonating nuclear devices. Northwest Alaska villagers worried about the blasts' effects upon the animals which formed their diet, as well as the direct danger to themselves. In order to effectively oppose the inane exercise, they felt tighter communication was necessary. A newsletter was proposed and Howard was drafted to edit it. Although the blast was successfully averted before it ever went to press, Dr. Henry Forbes of Milton, Massachusetts noted the need for improved communications among Natives and offered to finance a statewide Native newspaper on the condition that Howard was to be the editor.

Howard Rock has sacrificed the exercise of his greatest talent in order to provide a very necessary communication service for Alaska Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts. He is an artist. He is a gifted painter who hasn't touched a brush since assuming his editorship. Without complaint, he left his career at the age of 51 to make another meaningful contribution to his people. Yet, it is a difficult thing for an artist to take a leave of absence from his natural means of expression. Occasionally he confides to his friends, "You know what I would really like to go to some nice quiet place and just paint."

The success of the Tundra Times is due to two factors. The first is the skill and persistence acquired by an Eskimo artist from the village of Point Hope while he adapted to a new profession. The second was the availability of the paper itself, a new medium for ancient cultures, to the Native people of Alaska. It bolstered pride by recognizing the accomplishments of Alaska Natives; it explored issues to expedite solutions to problems which would have remained ignored; and it held fast to a policy of exploring issues because they merited exposure. It has struggled financially because it has been a newspaper which has sold advertising in return for dollars instead of editorial consideration. The Tundra Times has continued to do these things on a regular basis for over ten years, and continues to do so. For this reason, the Tundra Times deserves recognition beginning on page one of any history of Alaska Natives and Native land rights.

The Tundra Times has provided me with the toughest and most rewarding job of my life, and I eagerly await the opportunity to return to Alaska and that newspaper.

During the years I have been associated with the paper, I have heard many people offer a wide variety of suggestions for expanding circulation and increasing the revenues of the tabloid. But, most of them begin with the words "if only" followed by a discourse on editorial posture.

I believe that, in continuing to perform the same invaluable service for Alaska Natives during the coming decades as it has during its first ten years, that the budding economic potential of its intended readership will continue to ensure its continued existence and effectiveness.

Happy Birthday, Tundra Times.

Claims Film Preview

The premier showing of the film "THE ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT" will take place in Anchorage at 4:30 p.m. on November 21, 1972 at the Anchorage-Westward Hotel.

General distribution of the film throughout the State will follow in early December enabling Regional corporations, Native villages, Native associations and other interested groups to utilize the film for informational purposes.

Sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the movie attempts to explain the legal and technical language of the Act in understandable layman's terms.

The 30 minute documentary incorporates both animated and live scenes outlining the complexities of the law.

Those who must operate with-

in the framework of the Act, the Native corporations, and villages, plus State and Federal agencies — have expressed the need for such a film.

It is meant to clarify understanding of the basic content and broaden awareness of the rights and responsibilities imposed by the legislation.

Technical assistance on the film script was contributed by staff members of the Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Native Foundation, Rural CAP, the State Department of Education and BIA.

The picture was produced and directed by Don Morrow of Bureau-Wide Film Services. Morrow has developed several other movies in Alaska, the most recent being "Education in Eskimo," a film on bi-lingual education.