

Definition of "Indian" in question

I am of the Tlingit tribe from Southeastern Alaska. I live here in Anchorage and although I am involved in many committees regarding the education of Natives, I am here before you as a concerned parent.

My statements will be in regard to the definition of Indians.

Back in fall of 1979 we were really scrambling to get together our testimony for the hearing on the Definition of Indians. We have not heard anything since.

In our research we did find the following:

- In 1492, Columbus did the first definition and he got it wrong;

- Today, Anthropologists

patiently explain to the Aleuts in Kodiak that they are not really Aleuts, but Eskimos;

- Many American Indians Recognize each other by asking, "Are you enrolled?" My personal feeling is, I don't have to enroll, I was born a Native. Enrolling is for people who want to join an organization.

This is the message we want you to take back to the "Great White Chief." We appreciate the efforts of the U.S. to help us define who we are. But, we have been told from early childhood who we are, therefore, we as Alaska Natives should be asked to define who is a Native and who is not. It was successfully done for the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

Let all the tribal organiza-

tions in Alaska be the group to determine who is a Native!

The success rate would be higher because we know each other and would eliminate one factor that has been a continuous barrier in reaching Alaska Natives, that is, that the U.S. insists on calling us all INDIANS.

As a child when the teacher told us we were INDIANS, we went home and told our parents. My mothers' reaction was to very quickly advise me that "we are NOT Indians, we are TLINGITS!" She has told my children the same thing.

This is typically a problem throughout the state where the feeling about this is so strong that BIA had to change their name to ANS.

If you think this is a problem, imagine the Aleut that is told by the anthropologist that he is an Eskimo, then have to sign a form to say that they are certified INDIANS! It would take such little effort to add ALASKA NATIVES to the titles of all these programs and make it relevant to us.

One whole Title IV program disappeared from "the chain",

because parents refused to sign the forms that states that this is for INDIAN STUDENTS. Since the consequences of not signing the certification forms makes the student ineligible for services, it would be well to add to the title, "Alaska Natives" and also provide a space for Native Corporations, so we can identify with it.

It is further assumed, because of intermarriage that there would eventually be no more Natives. The Vanishing Race concept has not happened in 200 years and will not happen, therefore we recommend that the following be eliminated from Section 453, that reads, "who is a descendant, in the first or second degree."

My last comment is: Please include us in all planning for Native education and in the development of forms.

In Summary:

- Let the Alaska tribal organizations define who is a Native and accept their documentation in place of enrollment forms.

- Delete, "who is descendant in the first or second degree." from section 453 in the Act.

- Change the titles of the programs and forms to include Alaska Natives.

- Include the Alaska Natives to plan and make changes in the education program and forms.

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