

What others say...

Time for pressure

To the editor:

The allotment act passed by Congress in 1906 insured that every Native in the country of Alaska be allocated up to 160 acres of land per individual. However three factors kept our tribes ignorant of this access to ownership:

- (1) We were not permitted knowledge of ownership.

- (2) We did not become citizens of our own country until the year 1927.

- (3) The federal government has always held complete control over our way of life through double standards.

Standards, which to this day insures Alaska Natives as second class citizens and in the case of isolated villagers — much less!

ANCSA, passed in the year 1971 insured at least in the eye of non-Natives, at last! Issues of Alaska Natives and their land was finally settled through forming of corporate structures. A profit oriented corporation so unique that only a chosen few Natives would rape profits while ignoring pleas of lost brothers. I do not know American law nor am I a Canadian chief justice conducting surveys on the

impact of ANCSA upon Indians and Eskimos. I have only lived this injustice and so have you.

It is time now to stop, study what America has promised us in the past for their word of honor shall apply to futures of our children. They in turn shall decide destiny for future generations.

Starting now, pressures on local, state and federal elected representatives in the form of public word action will guarantee results toward the betterment of our children's lives. I'm saying write your congressmen and senators, question your Native corporation, if in a village pressure your IRA council and local governments. For without word action we cannot be.

There are those who will say Charlie Blatchford does not know what he is talking about. In rebuttal I would reply, Charlie Blatchford has been fighting for lands promised. Come join me.

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Concerns about lead

To the editor:

There are a lot of problems in the world today. And most of these have been visited upon us here in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. In the pages of our newspapers we've read about the ravages of alcohol and drugs and their consequences of homicide, rape and suicide. We've heard about the dangers of eating too much sugar and of smoking and snuffing. And we've been warned about declining goose populations. While all of this has been going on, we are also in the midst of great cultural and economic change.

Something we have not heard much about around here though is what are called "neurotoxins," that is, poisons that damage the brain and/or nervous system and therefore tend to delay or prevent learning, especially in the young. Among the common neurotoxins are mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), organophosphates (such as malathion and parathion) and lead. Of these, we have read a little about PCBs over the past few years, but probably none of us has been exposed to them. The same with mercury and organophosphates. But the case is quite different for lead. Lead is pervasive among us since it is such an integral part of the regular gas which is the most heavily used fuel in our area. Anyone owning a snow-mobile, three-wheeler, four-wheeler, chain saw or kicker comes into constant contact with lead in the form of fumes from the gas itself and the exhaust smoke at the other end. Any way you look at it, the conclusion is easily reached, especially when the very young are the ones who are doing the breathing. In recent years, with the active inhalation of gas fumes by children, you can

almost visualize the increase in the quantity of lead in their systems.

Now what about the consequences? Lead is one of the most studied of neurotoxins. Dr. Herbert Needleman, director of the Behavioral Sciences Division of the Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh, presented the results of his studies on the effects of lead on young school children. He found that the mean I.Q. score of children with high lead levels was four points below that of children with low lead levels. Teachers tended to describe these children as "distractible, not persistent, not organized and hyperactive."

Since 1979 there have been other studies linking exposure to lead with learning problems and lower I.Q. These show that lead exposure lowers I.Q. by an average of five points. One might think that five points is unimportant but according to Dr. Bernard Weiss, deputy director of the Environmental Health Sciences Center at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, the longterm implications are serious for the American society at large. He warns that in a population of 100 million this decline represents a decrease in the number of individuals with an I.Q. of 130 from 2.3 million to only 990,000. (An I.Q. score of 100 is considered average, while a score of 125-130 is considered in the "gifted" range.) Weiss comments further that, "In this technologically competitive world such an outcome is a societal disaster!"

Closer to home. In a population of approximately 25,000 in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, the number of people normally having an I.Q. of 130

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would be about 550. Over time, with the insidious exposure of the population to lead, this number would decline dramatically to 220. With the challenges that are presently confronting the people in our area, such as those ANCSA has dropped on us, this decline would be quite close to disastrous.

What should we do about it? We all use the stuff that is the source of our problem. But my question, I guess, is, if internal combustion engines have been developed for automobiles that do not require leaded fuel, why in Sam Hill haven't they been developed for the smaller engines that offer us so much more direct exposure to the fumes and exhaust? So that at least we could have the option to poison or not to poison ourselves and our children?!

I imagine this is a question that we might also pose to our government leaders and to the manufacturers of these handy products? Why not?

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