

(Decided October 7, 1959)

THE TLINGIT AND HAIDA INDIANS OF ALASKA  
v. THE UNITED STATES

100. In 1899, the chiefs of certain of the tribes of southeastern Alaska selected Chief Johnson of the Taku tribe as their representative to go to Washington, D.C., and deliver a message on behalf of the Indians. The message was delivered to John M. Thurston, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, who referred it to the Secretary of the Interior with a request for a report thereon. The message read in part as follows:

*I have come a long ways from my home in Alaska to see you and tell you of the condition of my people. I was sent here by the Chiefs of the principal tribes to represent them, and have brought with me a petition signed by them.*

*We find our country Alaska over run by white men who have crowded or driven the Indians from their fishing grounds, hunting grounds, and the places where their fathers and grandfathers have lived and been buried.*

*Russia came and took possession of our land without consulting the natives of Alaska, the real owners of the country, and later on sold it to the United States. The Indians never knew anything about this sale until years afterwards, altho' it was our land and country which was sold. We have never tried to make any trouble over it, and this is the first time we have ever brought the matter to the Washington Government to consider, altho' Russia stole our country and sold it to the U.S.*

*We do not ask anything unreasonable of the U.S. Government. We do not ask to be paid for the lands which were ours by rights. We do not ask that the whites be prevented from coming to Alaska.*

*We do ask and pray that the good white people who have true and kind and just hearts will listen to our words and assist us in protecting us by good laws, and requiring the same to be enforced.*

*There are four principal things which the Indians desire the help of the government viz:*

*1st. That the fishing and hunting grounds of their Fathers be reserved for them and their children, and that the whites who have driven them off of the same be ordered by the government to leave them. The Indians chief method of support is by fishing and hunting and that is the only way the most of them can live, as only a small number are educated sufficiently to go out in the towns of the land and compete with the whites.*

*2nd. The Indians of Alaska pray that the U.S. Government will set apart certain reservations for them and their children where they and their children can each have a home allotted to them, the same privileges as the Indians of the United States enjoy. We ask this in return for all of Alaska which has passed into the hands of the whites without a murmur from us. We have given up a great deal and now only ask the great and good Father at Washington to give us back a little of the land, in return for the much we gave him, and protect us from the encroachments of greedy white men who would drive us into the Sea in order to advance their own interests.*

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*Therefore I have come to Washington to speak and to lay our case before the Congressmen of the government, to implore their aid in giving the Alaska Indians homes and schools, and protecting them by law from the encroachment of avaricious white men.*