

Den Nena Henash - Our Land Speaks  
Ut Kah neek - Informing and Reporting  
Yupit Qanlautciat - The Way Eskimos Talk  
Unangan Tunukun - The Aleuts Speak  
Inupiat Paitot - People's Heritage

## *Subsistence articles frightening*

To the editor:

It is somewhat frightening to see all of the articles suddenly appearing in the newspapers about subsistence.

It is frightening that this issue is not and has not been resolved over the past years, at least to a certain degree. Being a Native living in rural Alaska it makes me feel uncertain about the future and also less trusting toward the people who are making the state's decisions.

I had thought that our state progressed toward unity between the urban and the rural populations. I had thought the people in the urban areas had had time to get to know what rural Alaska was all about.

I somehow thought that was why people came to Alaska — that they were attracted to the variety of cultures, the harshness of the land, that

people lived off that land. But apparently this is not so.

I think the time has come to exercise some of our ancient powers. I think the time has come to begin expressing ourselves in a diplomatic fashion and to have faith that our wants and needs will be met. I know we as a people have the power to do just that.

I think we need to express to the non-Native population what our cultural heritage really means, not only what meets the naked eye but also the ancient powers of old felt in the arts and the very life that we live.

I feel this is each and every Native's responsibility, and I feel with this will come empowerment, more than what's ever felt before.

Sonia Vent  
Galena

## *Byelorussians seek contacts*

To the editor:

We, the members of the Byelorussian-American Indian Society, have a dream of getting into contact with the Natives of Alaska.

Our brothers, the Chukchi, the Eskimos of the Soviet Union, are near to you; they travel to Alaska now, and you can visit them. Some Byelorussians live in the Chukot autonomous region.

There were very few Byelorussians among the Russian (and Ukrainian) settlers in Alaska during the 18th and 19th centuries. Byelorussia (called Northwestern Territory) and Alaska (Russian America) were the western and eastern frontiers of the Russian Empire until 1867.

We were the Natives of similar fortunes in the borders of one state.

It is our belief that the Bering Straits

and Siberia won't be barriers to our renewal of friendly relations.

We are attempting to research Byelorussian-Native American contacts in the Americas since the 16th century. The Alaska information is scanty. In fact, Russian America was colonized mainly by the ethnic Russians. Unfortunately, we have read some America Indian appraisals of evil Slavic deeds and fault.

We, the BAIS, hate any white expansionism. We think non-European Natives could build better societies without any Spanish-Portuguese-English-French-Russian, etc. "help."

We hope we shall not find evidence of Byelorussian atrocities against the Indians, Inuits and Aleuts.

Please help us to find friends among

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# Swetzof urges consensus on subsistence

To Julie Kitka:

The Alaska Native Coalition is opposed to any organization, including AFN, attempting to speak for or support a particular option or plan which will affect Native hunting and fishing rights until Native people have had a chance to discuss the issue and reach a consensus (or at least a near consensus).

For AFN or any other Native organization to support a subsistence option before a Native consensus is reached would be divisive and without authority. The villages have certainly not given AFN the authority to lobby for an amendment to the State Constitution or to pursue any other option.

ANC recently held a statewide tribal government conference in Anchorage. The conference was very well attended. Many villages from each region of the state sent their council members and other village representatives.

The conference delegates sent a very clear message to ANC not to take any position on the subsistence question

until each village had a chance to consider the problems, present their preferred option and then work with Native villages from all over Alaska to come to a consensus.

ANC, at the direction of the conference, will be mailing a survey to every tribal government in Alaska, including every village in Alaska. The hunting and fishing options presented at the conference will be a major focus of the survey. The options will be presented in an unbiased manner and there will be a "comment" area for villages to represent any options which conference delegates may not have thought of.

If a consensus, or near consensus, is reached, ANC will pursue the preferred option. If a consensus is not reached then we will facilitate a statewide dialogue among all tribes/villages in Alaska in order to develop a course of action suitable to all.

ANC does not believe that the villages can be ignored simply because your organization or any other organization feels they must do

something immediately. Even if one or more of our Executive Committee members were to feel that something had to be done now, which they don't, it would remain in the realm of personal option.

You can be assured that our organization would not act without the authority of the villages. As you are no doubt aware, within the past few weeks a number of villages and regional tribal conferences have met to discuss the subsistence issue, and most if not all have decided on a preferred option different from the one AFN endorsed and promoted.

In summary, ANC does not believe that AFN has the right or authority to act on any proposal affecting Native subsistence rights until the villages, acting in unison, agree on a solution and a course of action.

Of course, once a course of action is decided upon we feel that AFN and ANC are obligated to pursue that option, not to obtain a result through compromise which is different from the result authorized by the tribes/villages.

We are asking AFN to withdraw

their support of a subsistence amendment to the State Constitution and to not take any other position or action relating to subsistence until the villages have reached agreement on the course of action which needs to be taken. I hope and pray that AFN does not want the burden of knowing it acted on an issue as important as our hunting and fishing rights without the authority of our respective villages or in a manner opposite to the desires of our people.

ANC would very much like to work with AFN to promote the will of the villages. We don't want to be put in the position of opposing AFN over the subsistence issue. We will, however, have no choice but to oppose any position or action AFN may take on this most important issue if it was not taken with the consent of the Native tribes/villages.

Your prompt attention to this matter will be appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Paul Swetzof, staff  
Alaska Native Coalition  
Anchorage

## Natives must have priority

To the editor:

Subsistence hunting and fishing is important to my family. During the winter, we eat moose, caribou, herring and salmon.

We depend on subsistence fishing and hunting because it has been passed on from generation to generation.

In the villages there aren't too many jobs available for people, and they can't buy food for their families, because the prices are too high.

The Natives are dependent on fish, moose, caribou and other Native foods as their main food source. If the Alaska Natives have to change their diet from Native food to store-bought food their bodies will become sick. Store-bought food has a lot of chemicals and preservatives in it. The Natives aren't used to it.

The subsistence law right now says that rural Alaska residents have priority over hunting and fishing rights. Some people that live in the urban

areas feel that this law is unfair to them. The federal officials might take over the management of fish and wildlife so that the rural residents will have subsistence rights.

I feel that subsistence rights should be given to the Alaska Natives because we've hunted and fished these waters and lands for thousands of years. There were no rules that said we couldn't go out to hunt and fish to feed our families.

If the urban residents are also allowed to hunt and fish, there will be a shortage of food. Also there will be competition for these resources.

I'm strongly against the urban residents having equal hunting and fishing rights, and I also feel that Alaska Natives should have priority in subsistence hunting and fishing rights.

Sincerely,  
Julia Kozevnikoff  
Togiak



## • Byelorussian contact

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the Natives. Send us addresses of persons interested in Byelorussian-Native American friendship and local historians. (For example, in the area of Holy Cross, is the village Koserefsky existing now? We are interested in the history of this village named after a Byelorussian.)

We shall be very much obliged to you. Please write: Ales Simakou, Byelorussian-American Indian Society, USSR, BSSR, 246049, Gomel, 5 microdistrict 19/78.

What can we do for the Native people of Alaska?

We are awaiting your reply.

Ales Simakou  
Gomel, USSR