

Tununak needs more cooperation

To fellow village members:

If I should ever die without having to say what I wanted to say for a long time, I know in my heart I would regret it. Therefore, let me clear my conscience.

In the first place, I have nothing against anyone, and I made it a point a long time ago not to take sides and argue, but do whatever has to be done.

I am now 51 years old, and during my time I have gone through a lot of different changes. Regardless what has happened in my life, I have enjoyed every minute of living. It was all education. It was all peaceful.

The most important thing I would like to remind all of us is what is happening *now* in our village. There is doubt, confusion and people degrading one another. There is no unity and cooperation. Without unity and cooperation we will not get anywhere. We will continue to drift nowhere pointing fingers at each other.

Looking back in time, I can easily trace what is happening now to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. This is when we divided and started fighting one another. I know ANCSA is supposed to have helped us, but instead it distorted and confused our lives. I see the ANCSA as the root of greed, racism and sovereignty movement. Therefore, problems associated with the ANCSA should be corrected through the Restoration Act.

The United States of America promised us in the Constitution to give us a helping hand until we achieve the full powers of self-governance on a political plain equal to that of the United States. This will not happen overnight. It will take years. It is very important, therefore, we unite and work together with both the state and federal governments to achieve what we want — economic independence.

I know that we do not need three government entities. However, before we start tearing down everything, we need to examine each entity and take the one that is going to be most beneficial to all the community members.

As I know it, our traditional council is recognized by the federal government as the entity through the Indian Reorganization Act. Its constitution and by-laws are established, and it has an identification number. Through this entity, we can contract for programs that will help us to improve our living conditions.

We can also get economic development monies through this entity. Its by-laws also say that we can interact with both the state and federal governments on a government-to-government basis.

As for the municipal government, it is recognized by the State of Alaska. The state does not recognize our traditional council, which is recognized by the federal government through the In-

dian Reorganization Act.

As you know, the IRA is the law, and since the state is not above the law, it has to recognize our traditional council the same way the federal government does.

The law also says that the state cannot create another government in any village in order to give assistance. As it is now, if we dissolve our municipal government, the state will stop helping us. Therefore, we can interact with the state and sign an agreement to work together.

As for the Elders Council, it was formed recently by the elders to assert their sovereign authority over this village. It is not recognized by the federal government as the entity, and it does not have an ID number to get any kind of funds from the state and federal governments.

As I see it, it has divided this village. It has caused confusion, anger and deprivation to its own community members.

In closing, I want you to know that I am a firm believer of the democracy and economic independence, let alone sovereignty. I have always believed that God is the one that has sovereignty, for He is the one that can give and take.

In peace,
Andrew J. Chikoyak
Tununak