

Lost VISTA Volunteer And an Old Eskimo Strange Encounter Leads Into Extensive Analysis of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

Land's End Village
State of Alaska
July 10, 1973

Dear Howard,

Hello my old friend! I am sorry for not writing to you for so long, but with the break-up and the nice spring weather, I was so involved in our village activities that I didn't have time to write. Springtime is so beautiful here in the village when our land comes back to life with so many flowers, birds, green plants, and animals. Even the people feel more alive when we can take part in all of this activity on the tundra just as our fathers have done for generations. It never fails to excite us even though it happens every year. No native is so old that there isn't a thrill when spring comes to the tundra.

Do you think that the people who wrote AN ACT have the same feelings? Can they understand the power of these simple pleasures or do they only see the land as something to be measured in terms of profits and losses? This seems to be a vision of Alaska that makes lots of dollars and no sense to the people who live here, especially the Natives.

The reason I bring this up is that last week we had a visit from some of the Land Use Planning Commissioners here in our village. They said that they were doing their duties under Sec. 17 of AN ACT and they wanted to know our thoughts about what to do with 80,000,000 acres of public land in Alaska. They were in a bit of a hurry, so they didn't even spend a full day here. I guess that if I got \$100 a day, I wouldn't spend too much time in any one place either, but the problems they are dealing with are so big that it was hard to know what is best for Alaska Natives. Besides we are mostly worried about the land near our village and I am sure that other Natives are worried about the land near their own villages. Actually, there should be no question about what to do with these 80 million acres — this land was Native land before the government got it and it would be only right that the Natives should get it back now.

Wally, my ex-VISTA friend, says that the Land Use Planning Commission seems like a bureaucratic boondoggle to him — or a blunder at best. To me it seems like a waste of money, especially since I understand that there is only one Native Commissioner out of ten and very few Natives on the staff. How come I never seem to hear about it when they are passing out the \$100 a day jobs?

Well, I still have lots more work to do here in the village since I am not old enough to "retire" and not do anything if I want to eat.

Your friend,

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