

letters

Writer asks, where is Burton's evidence?

Editor
Tundra Times
P.O. Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska

June 14, 1977

Dear sir:

I was reading the local newspaper on Friday of last week about what Mssers Leschack and Burton had concluded to be a threat to the trans-Alaska pipeline. Where and from whom do they get their evidence and/or statements pertaining to this conclusion of probable sabotage?

It seems to me that in order to get the feeling of this impending action against our pipeline it would involve a spy/counter-spy ring under the direction of these misguided people (Leschack and Burton).

Furthermore it seems to me that even though the pipeline is indeed very susceptible to possible disruption, to what ends do our law enforcement people have in mind singling out any one people as a group as prime actionaries? I just don't understand this brash and paranoid conclusion drawn towards the Native people of Alaska and especially the folks on the North Slope.

W.B.A.

Fairbanks

June 14, 1977

Bigjim has Subsistence Commentary

(Editor's Note: The author is an Inupiat Eskimo from Nome. He is an educator, formerly a professor with the Alaska Methodist University, and most recently associated with bilingual instruction at Kuskokwim Community College, and education affairs coordinator for the Association of Village Council Presidents.)

To define subsistence is to define the Alaska Native Culture. Subsistence activities are an integral part of the culture, just as Native and Native art, Native music and Native customs have been a part of the culture.

"Subsistence" is a way of life. To say that a non-Native lives a subsistence existence is wrong. The non-Native approach to subsistence activities is different from that of the Native. The non-Native usually hunts, fishes and traps only to supplement his other food sources. To the non-Native animals are considered "game."

"Subsistence" to the Alaska Native is much more than the taking of game or the supplement of food sources. The Native lives in a harmonious relationship with the land which provides his life style. His subsistence activities are regulated by the seasons. It is though there were some huge clock in the sky which tells him when it is time to camp, when it is time to hunt, fish, and gather and store food, and when it is time to celebrate at the end of a successful subsistence season.

The Native incorporates into his concepts of subsistence living feelings of challenge, pride, and honor. "Subsistence" is a taste in the Natives mouth that cannot go away. He hungers for the taste, and is culturally hungry without it.

The Alaska Native and "subsistence" are one and the same. One cannot exist without the other. If one dies or goes away, the other will follow.

—Fred Bigjim