

Revolving cycle of land swaps

By RONALD C. MALLOTT

On February 14, 1979 an article entitled "Too Many Chiefs—Not Enough Indians" was published by the Tundra Times. The article complained that Native Leaders were compelled to act on their own because for good or for bad, the Native population remained silent on current issues.

It sometimes now appears that when the Natives speak, their leaders remain silent. For what purpose?

On March 5, 1980 a letter from an Alaska Native was sent to Governor Jay Hammond, which suggested the State of Alaska and the Native regional corporations combine their forces to combat the D-2 land issue, by making land selections pursuant to the Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and to file counter claims against the Antiquities Act and any other federal land grabbing policies, directly to the United States Supreme Court.

On March 13, 1980, eight days later, the Governor responded with the remarks he found the idea interesting and was sharing it with the Department of Law, but wondered what the response from the Alaska Federation of Natives might have been, since a copy of the letter to the Governor had been sent to the AFN Board of Directors.

Efforts to solicit a response from AFN have thus far resulted in silence, the same type accorded to the Native population. One can only wonder how long the revolving cycle of land swaps will continue, with silence from the peoples affected by the deprivation of lands awarded, but not delivered.

The Alaska Federation of Natives is the spirit of the Native population, our vessel by which our hopes are carried to the world. Need we demand more than silence from our leaders, or can we become satisfied with the whispering voice of reason, maybe some justification for silence replacing action.

Several months ago another letter calling for an inquiry into the congressional purpose and intent of the savings clause in the ANCSA was sent to Senator Mike Gravel, a copy to Senator Stevens and the Alaska Federation of Natives. Senator Gravel responded, Senator Stevens responded, AFN did not. Congress did have a purpose and intent for protecting our lands in the ANCSA, does AFN have a purpose and intent for it's silence?

Until Alaska Native peoples receive more than silence from the leaders, perhaps the article "Too Many Chiefs—Not Enough Indians's" should become, if it has not already been, reversed, as a contribution to the revolving cycle of land swaps.