

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
April 17, 1973

Dear Howard,

Something really special happened when the mail plane came through our village last week. There was a letter from a young fellow in Anchorage named Joe Ayagutug who is a distant relative of mine. He is the son of my wife's cousin who used to live in a nearby village.

Years ago when Joe became old enough to be starting school the people from the Bureau of Indian Affairs came and took him away to be educated in Wrangell. This made his family very sad and also very angry. They were sad because they would miss their son, but they were so mad because their son was taken away against their wishes and without their knowledge.

As for little Joe, he never came back to stay for good with his family because he was too young to know what was really happening. Growing up in an institution he gradually forgot how life was supposed to be in the village. When he did come back to visit his folks they did not know his new ways and he was no use at all around the house.

Since his own family died in an accident a few years ago, I guess that makes me one of his closest relatives in the world. In the letter he says that he wants to come back to the village and learn about how things were in the old days. For my part, I want to talk to him about how things are now-a-days. I often wonder about all of those children who were taken away from their families to be educated and then took up city ways. Wally has often told me about how exciting those cities are supposed to be but they don't sound so good to me. Maybe Joe can tell us about some of the things in AN ACT since he said in the letter that he got a job with one of the Regional Corporations that were created by AN ACT.

Wally and I looked up what it said about Regional Corporations in AN ACT and it set my English lessons back about a week. To begin with it seemed pretty clear what a Region was even if it wasn't clear why they did this in AN ACT, but Wally's explanation of what a Corporation was didn't make much sense.

I know what a company is or at least I can understand what it does, but he said that a Corporation was a Person under the Law and that this was an example of a legal fiction. But Wally had already told me a Person was a Human Being and that fiction was a story that wasn't true so you can imagine how confused I am getting.

Then I asked him if there was any place in the White Man's Law for Legal Truth. He didn't say anything so I asked him if a person who became a Corporation was still considered a human being. Well, he started getting a bit angry and I was getting more confused so I guess we won't talk about it for a while till things calm down.

Anyway, maybe when this young fellow from Anchorage gets here he will be able to explain some more about what AN ACT means for us out here in the villages.

Your friend,

Naugga Ciunerput

LETTERS FROM HERE AND THERE

Poem 'Ahnah' And Evelyn

Kotzebue, Alaska
April 24, 1973

Dear Howard:

It was with much pride mingled with tears, that I read the beautiful Poem "Ahnah" written by Tommy Richards Jr.

Thank you Tom - for expressing our thoughts as beautifully about "Ahnah" your grandmother and my mother.

Evelyn L. Conwell

Social Security Check Stopped

Nulato, Alaska
April 18, 1973

Dear Friend Mr. Howard Rock:

I was up there to your office the 12th to tell you my troubles but you was in Anchorage I guess.

I wish I had your education

then I might be traveling too on business. I think my luck has run out. They stopped my social security check for one whole year after paying big taxes and I'm 66 years old. What you think about that?

I went up to see a lawyer, or legal service, Tanana Chiefs, AFN, BIA, Native Association, but I didn't have the gall. It's not the money, it's just the way it's run. And I was going to throw a monkey wrench in there. I was just thinking someone read this might do something about it because I don't like someone have the same trouble after I kick the bucket. I still get sno-go's on credit, grub, whiskey, money. I have too much problem, as I say, I think I'm getting the rear end, just like I told you before.

The reason why I'm here - they robbed my check, or take the money out of my checks too much because I'm an old bachelor.

Anyway, don't feel sorry for me, Buddy. Best regards to all my friends, especially the Eskimos and Indians.

Good luck, Howard.

Fred Stickman, Sr.