

Den Nena Henash - Our Land Speaks
Ut Kah neek - Informing and Reporting
Yupit Qanlautciat - The Way Eskimos Talk
Unangan Tunukun - The Aleuts Speak
Inupiat Paitot - People's Heritage

IRA councils are recognized tribes

To the editor:

In your Sept. 25 issue, an opinion by John W. Katz stated that the villages of Circle, Stevens and Nenana petitioned the secretary of the Interior Department for recognition under the Indian Reorganization Act.

I disagree on the word "recognition." IRA councils in Alaska and Native governments have already been recognized — past tense — since 1934 by law.

What the secretary should be asked to do is approve the updated constitutions requested by these villages.

I hope that the clarification of their updated constitutions does not cloud the sovereign rights of these villages under the law, but in fact enhances their inalienable right to self-government and strengthens the limits of self-preservation.

Respectfully,
Gene A. George
Eagle River

Reader disappointed by BIA policy

To the editor:

I am writing this after reading your article with great disappointment of our Bureau of Indian Affairs attendance to the Native Emphasis Week in early September.

I heard through the grapevine that both the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received administrative leave to attend this function, whereas the BIA had to take annual leave.

I don't understand how an organiza-

tion could do this to their own people when the program's purpose was to enhance the historical awareness of the Native people of Alaska.

I do know more BIA employees would have attended, but did not have the leave to take to attend this function.

Again, I am sorry to say that I feel ashamed that so many could not attend.

Sincerely,
Ada Cameron

Our youth need Native role models

To the editor:

Having just received my doctor's degree in educational administration and policy with an emphasis in educational law, I would like to offer ideas to my Native people about our Indian, Eskimo and Aleut children.

Since my thesis was in this area, with much background research, I

have come to this conclusion:

•Our Native children foremost need Native role model teachers and administrators.

Research overwhelmingly verifies that a picture says more than a thousand words.

The educational experience should be meaningful to the participant. There

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Schools need Native leadership, administration

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must be a common bond of understanding between teacher and pupil.

I had a Haida grandmother who said, "The teacher will appear when the student is ready." That means mentally.

Native students may very well be present physically, but never emotionally or mentally.

The non-Native educational system, even as lacking as it may be in teaching their children, has a common bond of sameness in their environment, race, possibly religion and politics. That is lacking horribly with our Indian, Eskimo and Aleut children.

The most powerful fact I've discovered in my academic pursuits lies in this simple statement:

A teacher walks into a classroom and their mere presence gives a

message.

This is a powerful realization that a teacher can destroy a child's day or make his day by mere verbal contact.

The rural village school boards must do all they can to include elders in classes teaching Native history, art, carvings, songs and even Native civics. Use non-Native teachers to teach the three R's — reading, writing and arithmetic.

But the basic foundation is to give our children a sense of belonging, being part of and identifying with the world around them.

At Mt. Edgecumbe High School I had one Tlingit teacher, Mr. Truitt, and I really strived and worked hard in his class. Everyone knew he was a Tlingit Indian. He told us.

And then I would leave his class and enter another class where the teacher was a non-Native. I entered another

realm of reality. I was present but not ready to learn.

Throughout my educational experience, especially at Stanford University and the University of Minnesota, I sought Indian professors to no avail. No wonder only one percent of all doctor's degrees are Indian.

There are no mentors, no role models. I couldn't find one Indian professor — the University of Minnesota has 55,000 students and no Indian professors with doctor's degrees.

Why is the educational system failing Native students? I believe it's because there are no role models. The system presently shuts down Native students. They basically are non-participants.

In Mt. Edgecumbe I was told that I should go into vocational work like hotel work and maid service. Well, I'm a little bit further than maid ser-

vice and I didn't belong in vocational school.

This is just an example of what I think is tragic in underestimating and underutilizing the talents of many of our Native children.

How do we reach the children?

One way is to certify Native teachers for our classrooms — change state certifications if necessary.

Two, we should provide Native leadership in administration. Place a Native as head of the school system.

Three, we should give our Native children a chance by providing Native role models.

I beleive it will work.

Sincerely,
Dr. Diann L. Morrison. (Kil Sly)
St. Paul, Minnesota