

Actions of a few called 'outrageous'

by Paul Swetzof
for the Tundra Times

What do Hank Ostrosky, Gary Harrison, David Harrison, Desa Jacobsson, Mary Ann Mills and Tom Abel have in common?

OPINION

They hang out together, pretend to be experts in Native sovereignty and customary and traditional subsistence issues, show a lack of respect for individual village sovereignty and are a direct threat to the sovereignty and customary and traditional hunting and fishing rights of all Alaska Natives.

Where are these people from? Ostrosky (a non-Native) has lived in the Bristol Bay area for a number of years. Gary and David Harrison are from Chikaloon, 20 miles north of Palmer. Mary Ann Mills is from Kenai. Desa Jacobsson is from Bethel. Tom Abel is from Hydaberg in Southeast Alaska.

Why aren't these people at home performing social experiments with their own people? Who knows?

The only one who is spending time at home is Mills. She can often be found calling up the news media to beg them to send reporters to one of her outrageous actions. Her own tribe, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, has divorced itself from her actions.

What are these people doing? Basically, running all over the state trying to find villages with people they can sweet talk into falling for their line. Once they find a village willing to listen to them, they set up shop.

Then, usually after calling the media, they proceed to take actions so inflammatory and outrageous that they threaten the very significant progress all of us as Alaska Natives have made in obtaining and maintaining our sovereignty.

What are a few of the specific actions "the bunch" has taken? Abel and Ostrosky have been hanging around Aleknagik. It appears Ostrosky wrote a resolution for the council, essentially stating that the village is claiming its "suzarian trust" responsibility in its "bio-linguistic region." When you see words such as *suzarian* and *bio-linguistic*, it's a safe bet Ostrosky wrote them.

In simpler terms, "the bunch" has somehow talked the village into claiming all the land and waters between Norton Sound near Nome to the Shumigan Islands at Sand Point as its territory for hunting and fishing purposes.

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tle respect "the bunch" has for village sovereignty. Their statement that the entire region is linguistically similar, entitling them to claim the area as their exclusive domain, is about as ignorant and self-serving as you can get.

The Aleut communities of Sand Point and Nelson Lagoon, and the Inupiat and Yupi'k villages of this vast area probably won't look kindly on this ridiculous claim. Each of the villages in this area has the right, both morally and under federal law, to customary and traditional subsistence uses in their areas without having to make a formal declaration of their right to Ostrosky, Abel or anyone else.

Mills and Jacobsson are putting their borrowed nets into the Kenai River. Mills called every media person she could think of prior to taking this action. She is claiming to lead a group of dissident Kenaitzes who feel they have the right to set their nets whenever and wherever they wish, ignoring tribal authority.

First, Jacobsson is not a Kenaitze. Second, members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe have publicly denounced her actions.

You see, the Kenaitze have struggled for years in the courts to be able to exercise their customary and traditional fishing rights. Now, thank God, after a 30-year absence, the U.S. courts have ordered the state to allow the Kenaitze to put their net into the Kenai River for subsistence fishing.

For this first year, the court approved an interim fishery with one net. The net is operated by tribal members, and the fish are being distributed to all tribal members upon request.

The tribe is seeking a permanent and more extensive subsistence fishery for future years. The actions by Mills and Jacobsson jeopardize everything the tribe has fought for all of these years.

Mills has also stated her desire to start her own tribe. This will be interesting, since her actions have shown she doesn't understand the meaning of a tribe. A tribe is made up of Native people with a long common history. Tribal members can agree, disagree, fight over policy and attempt to win

other members over to their way of thinking.

However, once a decision is made, members of a tribe go forward with one voice, as one people, in unity. They don't take actions which jeopardize the tribe or threaten to start their own tribe.

Mills and her sidekick have also gone on a crusade against the Hepatitis-B vaccine. As usual, she contacted every member of the press she could prior to her crusade, going so far as to arrange to appear as a guest on a radio talk show in Kenai.

Mills has been claiming that the vaccine is a plot by non-Natives to kill off Natives. She claims the AIDS virus has been introduced to the Native community through the Hepatitis-B vaccine.

In spite of having it explained to her, she ignores the fact that the vaccine is given to most people in the form of a synthetic, making it virtually impossible for the AIDS virus to live in the vaccine.

Additionally, there has never been a reported case in Alaska or anywhere else of a person contracting AIDS through the vaccine.

Let Mills explain her foolish theory to the Yupi'k people who have seen the death and suffering of many of their children and young adults caused by Hepatitis-B prior to the introduction of the vaccine.

Ostrosky, David and Gary Harrison, Abel and Jacobsson, joined by Mills, appeared in Kenai a while ago. They put their boat in the Kenai River and claimed they had the right to fish anywhere they wanted because they are Native. Ostrosky, not being Native, claimed he had this right because he was an "agent" of a village in the Kuskokwim region.

To make a long story short, after causing no end of grief, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe kicked "the bunch" out of their offices, their annual meeting and their lives. This was but another example of the disregard these people have for tribal sovereignty.

What danger does "the bunch" represent? They and their recruits are a very small group of people. They

pretend to be authorities in sovereignty and subsistence matters. Many people and villages are aware of them and avoid them.

However, in a few places where they have been allowed to set up shop, they have managed to take actions which have been portrayed by the news media as being representative of Native claims to sovereignty and subsistence. Their actions have been seized upon by those opposed to our legitimate claims to sovereignty and customary and traditional subsistence.

Their actions have been brought to the attention of members of Congress as examples of why the Congress should take legislative action to terminate the tribal status of Alaska Natives. For the most part, their actions will be rejected by the U.S. courts.

However, the adverse decisions will result in the making of bad case law which will be used as precedent to prevent our legitimate claims from being heard.

The trash "the bunch" has managed to have smeared all over the news media is tearing down the fabric of trust many of us have been working on for many years with the non-Native community, in order to help non-Natives see sovereignty as a good thing, not something to fear and fight.

These misguided people and those few who have naively followed them have caused all of us hardship and pain.

For help in pressing for our sovereign and subsistence rights you may wish to get assistance from such groups as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Alaska Native Coalition, the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, the Native American Rights Fund, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, the Association of Village Council Presidents or other legitimate advocates.

Any village or tribe wishing help in promoting their rights can feel free to contact me, and I will help them in any way that I can, including putting them in touch with the most appropriate organization I can find to meet their needs.