

Outsiders caused loss of traditional values

To the editor:

I would like to share this with your readers as it concerns most of the people in Alaska.

I believe many of our heartaches which stem from alcohol and drug abuse are partially a result of the lack of understanding what has happened to our people during the time when outside influences were being introduced.

These changes were imposed on us without any regard to what the consequences might be.

In the days before schools were introduced, the children learned by watching and then by doing. The girls learned by watching their mothers, grandmothers, aunts or any of the women in the community. The boys learned by watching the men of the community.

The families were together at all

times. There were no distractions which separated the families.

As it became necessary to earn wages to take care of the family, and when children began to attend school, learning by watching and experiencing became harder and harder.

The children were attending school most of the day in a learning environment which was opposite of what they were used to and in a language they didn't understand. The time spent together by the families became shorter and shorter.

The parents wondered why their children were not learning their traditional ways as they had done when they were growing up.

When schools started, the parents were told that they had to help their children learn to speak English if they wanted them to succeed in school. Most of the parents didn't speak English but the children did and after

they finished grade school many were sent away from home to attend high school.

This is the age where children used to refine their knowledge of hunting, preparing food, sewing and taking care of a family. This generation missed out on this refinement of their traditional ways. Instead they were educated to learn in a method their parents knew nothing about.

The parents having children in the late 1950s and early 1960s spoke to their children only in English so most of those born during that era do not speak or understand the native language of their parents, Inupiaq in our case.

This has caused a true communication gap between these children and their grandparents who do not speak or understand English.

The opportunity that a grandparent had to teach the values and traditions

to his/her grandchildren or great-grandchildren has been lost, as has the opportunity to learn what can only be taught and learned in the language you are fluent in.

Nobody meant for this to happen to anyone else, but the changes that came about have happened very suddenly and without warning. The service providers who moved in on us were not aware of the different cultural styles either.

I believe we need to work very hard to make sure those who are here working for us from elsewhere know of our history and our culture, past and present. Also, we need to make sure we understand what they are offering us.

We can't keep them guessing and we are the only ones who can provide that knowledge.

Sincerely,
Molly Pederson

Protecting Native land is up to shareholders

To the editor:

The year 1991 is getting closer and what I understand is that Alaska Natives — who have been living in Alaska since their forefathers can remember — need to protect our land especially our elders and our kids.

We must speak out to the Congress,

which is hiding somewhere below, to let them know what is best for our land and our people.

Not only that, but to do the paper work that white people are experts at. We must send them proposals or some sort of resolution.

I know Alaska Natives are not familiar with all of that, but like I said, we need to give them what they want

to solve this.

I myself am too weak to help support what all our people want. But 1991 has been my concern for the past 16 years, beginning when I first heard about the 1991 deadline. Before that I wasn't concerned because from 1971 through 1981 I only knew that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act had 1991 as its exact deadline.

Alaska natives need to sober up before it's too late.

What we can do to protect our land is really up to us, especially the leaders.

Quyanag,
Nathan Tagarook
ASRC and UIC Shareholder