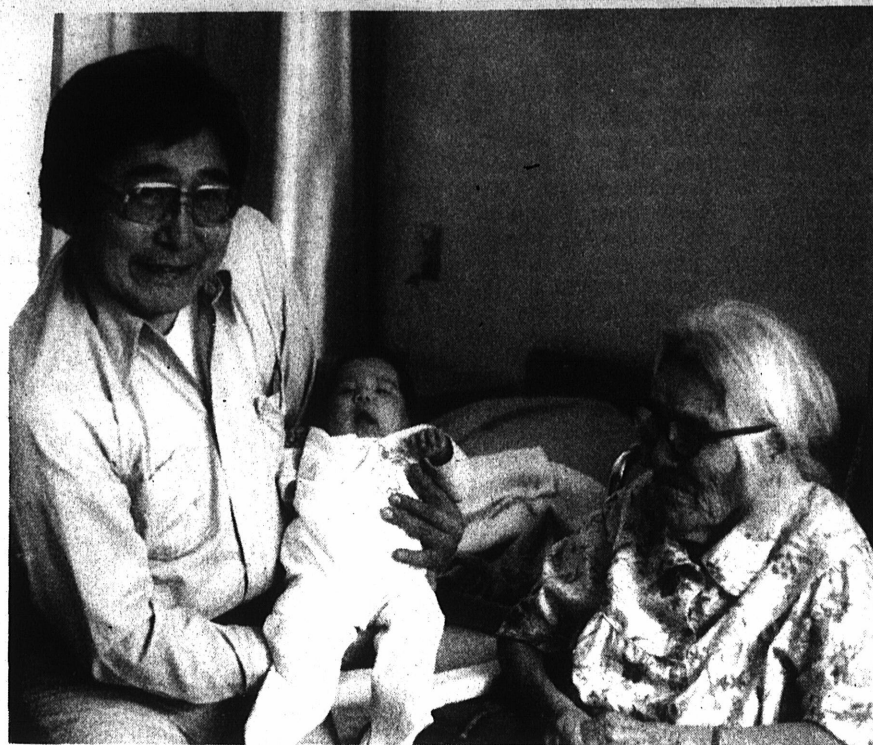


Profile on President Oscar Kawagley



Oscar Kawagley, his daughter and Grandmother Matilda Oscar

Oscar Kawagley, the Yup'ik speaking Eskimo leader of the Calista Corporation, is a "Genuine Person." From the joys and hardships of Eskimo Village life he has worked his way up the ladder of success to become the President of a multi-million dollar Native Corporation.

He was born and raised in Bethel, the largest community in the Calista Region. The Bush town of Bethel is located 80 miles from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River in the Southwestern Alaska. Bethel also serves as the chief transportation hub to the many Eskimo villages of the Kuskokwim and Yukon-Delta area which is accessible by air and water only.

When Sakagley entered the first grade, he could not speak one word of English. He missed a lot of school going to Spring and Fall camp with his family. Today, he can laugh when he says, "I missed so much school going to Spring and Fall Camp that I had to repeat the first grade." He also recalls that it was difficult for him to learn English at the BIA school in Bethel.

Going to camp was an exciting highlight in the life of young Kawagley. His parents died before he started school and he was raised by a very wise and kind grandmother, Matilda Oscar, who taught him how to live in the traditional Eskimo way of

life. She instilled in him many values that have carried over into his adult life and helped him set goals for the future.

Kawagley's uncle, Jesse Oscar, was also an important influence in his life. He took him under his wing and taught him how to fish, hunt and trap in the typical Eskimo subsistence lifestyle. Kawagley could hardly lift an oar when his Uncle Jesse took him fishing on the Kuskokwim for the very first time.

He fondly recalls that it was his duty to keep the fish nets free of tangles. He also remembers how he helped the women hang the fish to dry and carried them into the smoke-house. Kawagley worked hard as a child and he enjoyed the subsistence lifestyle in the village.

Every Spring and Fall the family looked forward to the camp. Kawagley remembers how his uncle used to get the boat and supplies ready and travel up the river where he set up the tents and stove for the members of his family. After the camp was ready, he would return to Bethel and load the entire family into the boat for the trip up the river to camp.

In the spring they went back and forth by boat, but in the winter, they returned to Bethel by dogsled after freeze-up.

Kawagley stayed busy during his childhood and benefited

Oscar Kawagley

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greatly from the wise guidance and affection he received from his Grandmother Oscar. She encouraged him to seek and education and often told him, "The white man's way of life is here to stay. You must prepare yourself for it and learn to live in their world also."

Kawagley thought about his grandmother's advice quite often. This was especially true after the BIA school he was attending became integrated when he reached the fifth grade. At the time he used to daydream about his future quite often. He decided that he wanted to become an Army Officer at a very young age. He thought very positive about achieving this goal. In fact, some of his cousins in Bethel still remember how he used to sit and draw pictures of an Army Officer complete with two bars on each shoulder.

During his senior year in high school, he also became interested in the teaching profession. The superintendent of the Bethel School encouraged his interest and allowed him to do substitute teaching for some of the lower grades. He also persuaded Kawagley into seeking a higher education.

Going to college was a big step in the life of a young Eskimo who grew up in the Bush. Leaving the familiar way of life in the village was not easy for Kawagley. His first year at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks was difficult. He went through a very critical period of adjustment. He was often homesick and he missed his relatives and friends. He also missed fishing and hunting, and of course, the familiar Eskimo food he was used to eating in the village.

Staying in school was not easy for an Eskimo 21 years ago in Alaska. Kawagley had to overcome many obstacles and sometimes found it difficult working his way through school. But Kawagley was determined to complete his college education and in 1958, he became the sixth Eskimo to graduate from the University of Alaska in Fairbanks with a degree in Education.

In 1958, he also achieved a major goal and at the same time, realized one of his childhood dreams when he became the first Eskimo to become a commissioned officer in the United States Army. Kawagley stood at attention proudly as he received his second lieutenant bars, the same bars he used to draw upon paper when he was a young boy growing up in Bethel.

The young college graduate was eager to get ahead in the world. He spent nine years teaching in high schools in various school districts in Alaska. During that time he also attained his master's degree in education and became interested in business management and the activities of the Alaska Native Corporations formed in 1972.

Kawagley left the teaching profession to become the executive director of Yupik Tak Bista, the Bethel based non-profit vil-

lage corporation. He enjoyed being in business management and became keenly interested in the activities of the Calista Corporation.

He often recalls his early life in the village and says "For me, Calista Corporation represents a brighter and prosperous future for the many Alaska Eskimos living in the Calista Region. I understand the concerns and problems of the people living in this region."

Kawagley went on to become president of ESCA-Tech Corporation, a Calista subsidiary. He served in this position for a short time until he was appointed the acting president of Calista Corporation in late 1977. At this particular time the Calista Corporation was experiencing its share of financial difficulties and work was stopped on the \$40 million dollar hotel in downtown Anchorage.

After the Calista Board of Directors elected him president in

December of 1977, he felt a strong fiduciary responsibility to the people living in the 56 villages comprising the Calista Region. He has proven to be an honest, conscientious and determined leader of the state's second largest Native Corporation. Under his leadership, the Corporation strengthened its financial position and resumed work on the construction of the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel.

Calista's chief executive officer recently stated, "We have benefited from the mistakes of the past and we have learned from them. Our present management team is composed of educated and professional business men who are making every effort to build a strong foundation for the Calista Corporation," said Kawagley.

Kawagley has a genuine interest and concern for the Eskimo people living in remote villages in southwestern Alaska. For this reason, he endeavors to make wise financial decisions so that all shareholders of the Calista Region will eventually reap future financial rewards and a better way of life for many generations to come."

Needless to say, Kawagley's grandmother is very proud of his many accomplishments in the field of education and in the business world. He visits her often in an Anchorage Nursing Home where she still offers him the same words of wisdom he heard so often as a child. Kawagley estimates her age at 117 years-old. He said, "My grandmother vividly remembers the day the Moravian Missionaries arrived in Bethel. They arrived in 1875." Kawagley pointed out that his grandmother was a young girl at the time.

During a recent visit with his Grandmother Oscar, she reminded Kawagley that he must not forget the traditional Eskimo way of life. She warned him not to waste any fish or wild game. She also told him not to be too strict with his four children and to take care of them to the best of his ability.

And, like many times in his youth, she told him, "Remember Oscar, you must always try to help other people whenever you can."

Kawagley is striving to do just that. He is genuinely concerned with the needs of the people

living in the Bush and he is constantly trying to help his fellow shareholders in the Calista Region. As president of the Calista Corporation he is interested in their welfare now and for many years to come in the future.

Calista Corporation saw the realization of one of its major projects this fall when the 16-story, Sheraton Anchorage On Calista Square opened. Kawagley stated, "The hotel, decorated in an authentic Alaskan Native motif, displays the rich art and culture of the Alaskan Natives. It is also an investment in the future for the 13,264 shareholders of the Calista Region."

Kawagley has certainly achieved many goals in his 44 years. The transition from village life to his present professional lifestyle was not easy. It was a long hard road from Bethel to the Calista President's office in Anchorage.