

The need for Mt. Edgecumbe

To the Editor:

I had the privilege of attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School for two years and in my senior year, I was the student council president. I, as well as many others, were very pleased and happy to learn that the Alaska Federation of Natives decided to investigate the possibility of filing a lawsuit against the federal government to keep Mt. Edgecumbe High School open.

Because I believe so strongly for the need of Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and care so much about the future of not only the students who are attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School, but those who will attend in the future, I felt I had to write this letter.

The issues I want to bring before you today now will have a tremendous impact upon the students at Mt. Edgecumbe High School as well as the future generations.

The reason why Mt. Edgecumbe High School exists is for the *students*! I would appreciate it if I could have your undivided attention for a few moments because what I have to say comes from the hearts and minds of many concerned students and parents. I would like to share with you some comments, concerns and feelings.

Since 1947, Mt. Edgecumbe High School has maintained a high standard of quality in meeting the educational needs of the young Native students of Alaska.

At M.E.H.S. there is an opportunity for interaction with many other Native tribal groups. The socialization that takes place when Yupiks, Inupiat, Athabascans, Aleuts, Tlingits, Haidas, and Tsimsh-

eans interact creates an invaluable experience that cannot be replaced! This interaction of the cultures is something that is rare and special that cannot be obtained anywhere else. At M.E.H.S., young Native students from the Bethel area, Lower Kuskokwim area, Interior, Aleutian Chain, Pribilof Islands, as well as Southeast Alaska are brought together and become like one big family.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School provides an opportunity to develop self-reliance, responsibility, and an awareness of what the future holds. The opportunities to develop leadership are limitless. The leaders that have been produced at our school are outstanding. Through the many years that M.E.H.S. has been in operation it has provided doctors, lawyers, teachers, and students that have dedicated themselves to helping their people and have become assets to society.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School provides a challenging curriculum that motivates a desire to further our education. Because of these invaluable opportunities that M.E.H.S. offers, their parents are willing to make such a big sacrifice to allow their children to leave their homes, yet they choose to send their children to M.E.H.S., even in many villages where there are high schools because they know M.E.H.S. provides a better preparation for the future.

The special benefits that are provided at M.E.H.S. cannot be replaced so quickly! It is not easy to establish such a quality school as Mt. Edgecumbe High School. For 34 years, M.E.H.S. has been striv-

ing year after year to obtain this quality. An alternative such as M.E.H.S. is necessary not only to meet the educational needs, but is vitally needed because of the social problems such as broken homes, alcohol, and drug abuse, among others that occur in many rural areas throughout Alaska. The health and social services that are provided at M.E.H.S. are not available in many rural areas. There **must be this alternative!**

Education is the basis of growing and learning to live in our society and is necessary if a person is to lead a contributing life. If M.E.H.S. closes, the education of Alaska will definitely be set back so far that it will be too late, and the state will suffer the consequences.

Any amount of money cannot equal the opportunity, or privileges to receive an education. The issue of who is responsible for the education of Native children in Alaska is a complex one. The Alaska Constitution requires the state to "maintain a system of public schools open to all the children of the state."

On the other hand, it has been recognized that it is the responsibility and goal of the federal government to provide comprehensive education programs and services for Indians and Alaska Natives. I'm not writing about how much money it will cost the federal or state government, or state against federal, or federal against state! I'm writing about human lives - students, parents, families, and teachers that will be individually hurt if the the formulation of a plan of action for Mt. Edgecumbe is (Continued on Page Five)

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not properly administered.

It means so much to so many people of Alaska if Mt. Edgecumbe High School would be given a chance to prove how much it can and will do for the Natives students of Alaska. Such an alternative as Mt. Edgecumbe High School gives students the opportunity to get away from a troubled environment and the opportunity to become someone - to have dreams - to have goals,

also even the opportunity for religion to become an important and most needed role in their lives. I had these opportunities and that is why other people and I have fought, prayed, and worked together in hope that Mt. Edgecumbe High School will continue as an educational alternative so, the future Native students of Alaska will also have these opportunities.

I definitely feel that the advantages outweigh the disad-

vantages for filing a lawsuit against the federal government, by the Alaska Federation of Natives, to postpone the closure of Mt. Edgecumbe High School!

This decision of a possible lawsuit from the Alaska Federation of Natives is a very crucial one. I would like to ask or

urge anyone who can and will support Mt. Edgecumbe High School to act now, before it is too late.

I would be more than happy to assist in any way I can to help come to a conclusion to help my Native people, because I know that if anything is worth fighting for and stand-

ing up for, it is Mt. Edgecumbe High School! I believe in Mt. Edgecumbe High School, I love Mt. Edgecumbe High School, I feel it is definitely needed in the state of Alaska. Please help us to keep it open.

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