

The Dawn of Things—

AMU President on Native's Future

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A new day is just around the corner for the Alaska native. There are several reasons for the changes which are on the horizon for Alaska's original inhabitants. Three of the major reasons are: (1) A new level of competent native leadership emerging from all the native groups; (2) the prospect for an adequate and just land claims settlement and (3) a new affluence within the state of Alaska. Elemental justice would demand major assistance to the native citizen as well as the non-native citizen.

The Alaska native can soon exercise far greater options than he has had in the past with regard to his own life style. He will have the economic empowerment to make choices which were earlier denied to him because of lack of financial resources to fulfill his life plans and ambitions in ways of his own choosing. In order to have equality of opportunity and access to the variety of choices enjoyed by the non-native three requirements must be met: (1) basic justice on equal terms with non-natives (2) genuine liberty or freedom of access to opportunities and (3) incentives. If the native citizen settles either as a group or personally for less than all three of these basic requirements for the enriched life, the future can be as limited as the past. If ways can be found to demand these three key elements for the current rising expectations of the native the struggle for the deserved greatness will be won.

The changes which can be expected during the next decade are, in part:

(1) Self determination: more and more of the decisions affecting the life of the native will be in native hands for determination and for basic decisions;

(2) Economic empowerment: with the passage of an adequate land claims bill in the federal Congress the basic economic tools should be available to bring economic power to the native;

(3) Political empowerment: with the continuance of a strong Alaska Federation of Natives the political unity and strength presently available to the native can

be extended and improved. If the Alaskan native groups will manifest substantial unity on political questions their votes could determine many of the basic problems facing all Alaskans, native and non-native alike.

(4) Social development: on the horizon for the Alaska native is the possibility of major breakthroughs for improvement of health, life-span, facilities for social well-being.

(5) Educational development: the next decade will see a major emphasis on education which will enable the native to take a first-rate place in the non-native culture, if it is of his choosing and at the same time retain a sense of identity, pride and dignity within his own ethnic group. Included must be regional schools at home or close to homes, bilingual teaching aides, courses in native culture, relevant curricular materials, courses in Alaska native history, culture, art and other fields. Improved higher educational opportunities will be available both within and without Alaska and in both academic degree and in vocational-occupational areas. Improved health, living conditions, sanitation and nutrition will contribute greatly to the educational development.

(6) Employment opportunities: will be vastly improved as an outgrowth of the overall development within the state of Alaska and as a consequence of improved health and education. Overall improvement in Alaska's basic industries: fisheries, timber, mining, petroleum and others yet to come will make possible additional opportunities for the native for choices in vocation. The service industries and the professions will hold out more and more promise to more and more natives as preparation is possible for nursing, teaching, healing arts, law, government, research, business and in other fields.

The promise of the future is already dawning today. One of Alaska's greatest assets is the nature, the ability, the creativity and imagination of her native citizens. The next decade will see the Alaska native taking his rightful place in all the affairs of the most promising state of the union.