

History of the TT-

Struggle for Claims Settlement

There can be no doubt about it—passage of the land claims bill this week is the biggest story ever published in the TUNDRA TIMES, but there have been many significant stories published since the newspaper began in October, 1962.

The story itself of the struggle for the settlement of the land claims issue was actually, as were many stories in the Times, a continuing story over the years, beginning in Vol. 1, No. 1 with the report of Secre-

tary of Interior Stewart Udall's visit to Alaska and his declaration that the settlement of the historic rights and claims was the most important problem facing Alaska Natives today.

William Brandon, author of THE AMERICAN HERITAGE BOOK OF INDIANS, helped focus national attention on the problem with his letter to President John F. Kennedy, in which he urged that the Interior Department "withdraw from the

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'public lands' in Alaska tracts of land around all native villages. . . (to) afford protection to the natives against any encroachment by the states while all parties await the eventual definition by Congress of aboriginal land rights."

And in 1963 about 1,000 Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts from twenty-four villages signed their names to a petition to Secretary Udall asking that land around Alaska native villages be "frozen" and closed to all selection.

Thus, as it is recorded in the TUNDRA TIMES, the grass roots impetus to the movement began, culminating this week in passage of the native land claims bill.

Among other continuing stories in the Tundra Times are the following:

- The coming together of all the Natives throughout Alaska for political action for their common good.

Such unity enabled Alaska natives to succeed in battles against such proposals as the Rampart Dam and Project Chariot, which threatened hunting and fishing areas and the location of some villages.

- The problem of employment in the villages throughout Alaska. Stories in the Times do not reflect that this problem has yet reached a solution, but passage of the land claims bill pre-

sents some hope for Alaska natives to provide their own economic base through utilization of their land and mineral resources.

- Problems of alcoholism in Alaska.

Through the combined efforts of the city, the state, and federal government, Fairbanks is beginning a pilot program which will provide a full program of treatment and counseling for the alcoholic.

- Problems involved in hunting rights of Alaska Natives.

Prior to the publication of the first issue of the TUNDRA TIMES, two Barrow men were arrested for shooting ducks and geese for subsistence, and, as a result of their arrest, 138 Eskimos went out and took ducks and appeared before the arresting officer, demanding their arrest.

Thus began a battle of several years, recorded in the TUNDRA TIMES.

In a similar case in Canada, Judge J.H. Sissons ruled that the Migratory Birds Convention Act of 1916 has no application to natives hunting for food.

Not so, said game agents in Alaska, "That's one man's opinion," but they finally yielded to public pressure and the native was once again allowed to carry out his ancient right to hunt for food anytime of the year.

- The involvement of an overall

educational plan for Alaska which will meet the needs of all its people.

The TUNDRA TIMES began with an editorial cry for vocational and professional education for all Alaskans and for the kind of education needed to bridge ancient and modern cultures.

At that time over 1,000 Alaskan students had to go to the lower 48 states to complete their education. This has been reduced to about 250.

Stories involving education have told about the establishment of the William E. Beltz vocational school in Nome, regional high schools, Headstart and Boarding programs and bilingual educational programs in native schools.

Directly related to this has been a recording of efforts made in the state to enrich our modern culture with the culture of the past.

- Problems of housing in rural Alaska.

During the past few years some strides have been made with housing constructed in Nome, Bethel and Minto.

And the pages of TUNDRA TIMES record the collective bravery of Alaskans during the Good Friday earthquake and Alaskans' dogged determination in rebuilding their state.

An example: The villagers of Chenega (half of the town's population was killed by a sea wave following the earthquake) surveyed the debris of what used to be their town and rebuilt the village on a new location.

Other highlights from past editions of the Tundra Times include:

- The oil boom and the dilemma concerning the Trans Alaska Pipeline;

- Anaktuvik Pass residents receiving the distinction of having the highest radiation count in the nation;

- Cannikin;

- The investigation of the Pri-bilofs and improvement in the living conditions of Alaska Natives there, for which our editor, Howard Rock, was instrumental.

- An investigation of Federal Electric's threatening to fire DEWLine non-native employees married to native wives if the husbands attempted to spend nights with their families—and a report of the subsequent change in policy.

There have been lighter sides, too, such as the story of the local prestige world famous Eskimo parka maker Laura Wright received when Elvis Presley sent her an order for a gold velveteen parka—or the quiet humor found in Eskimo legends and poems such as "Eskimo Woman's Love Song:"

Here I am sitting,
And I am sitting still;
And I see two kayaks coming.
Here I am sitting,
I am sitting still
And two men are coming
To court me.
And here I am a ne'er do well
And I'm not very good looking.

Over the years, the Tundra Times, in its stories, its legends, its poems, has reflected the goals established in its first editorial: to be the "Medium to air the views of the native organizations . . . (and to) strive to keep informed on matters of interest to all natives of Alaska..."