

# To Natives, some parting words of advice

By JERRY C. GILLILAND

*(Editor's note: Mr. Gilliland formerly was Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus's special assistant for Alaska. He recently left Alaska to become director of communications for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.)*

One thing I'll miss about Alaska (in addition to the beautiful mountains and rugged people) will be seeing firsthand how the Natives' experiment with free enterprise turns out.

I've been impressed in my four years with the Eskimos, Indians and Aleuts' decision to reject the Indian reservation solution of the lower 48. Instead, they chose through regional and



JERRY GILLILAND

village corporations to take full title to their land and their destinies.

My observation has been that the reservation system intends to destroy Indian cultures and, besides that, the budget-cutting now going on in Washington, D.C.,

shows how much you can depend on the Great White Father to take care of you. Not much.

So, I wish the Alaska Natives well. But in parting I do have a few suggestions they may wish to consider.

-Demand, push and scream and raise hell until the federal government completes conveying the 44 million acres of Alaska land due you. Until that land is in your hands, it is in jeopardy of being taken back.

-For the sake of your future, put together some sort of program to turn your young people away from alcoholism. Your respected Native leaders should make personal efforts in their regions. Radio and television programs should be devel-

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oped, all pointing out how proud your youth should be of their heritage and how essential it is that they reject excessive use of booze.

-Develop a comprehensive outreach program to the non-Native residents of Alaska. Make them understand the contributions your people make to Alaska society and why all Alaskans benefit from preserving the Native lifestyle (including subsistence).

-Work to inject Native participation in federal, state and local governmental decision-making. You

are the largest private land-owners in the state. You deserve a say in the decisions affecting you, and you'd better make sure you are included.

-Develop a talent bank of potential Native leaders for upcoming positions in government and industry and on boards and commissions.

-Avoid, if you possibly can, village and regional corporation squabbles over minor issues or personalities. Try to work toward building up the future of all Alaska Natives.

Those are a few suggestions the Alaska Natives may want to consider. I have every confidence that your people will succeed in this experiment with free enterprise.

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