

Transfer land to tribal governance

Hon. Ada Deer
Asst. Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Indian Country in Alaska

Dear Honorable Ada Deer:

The Kipnuk Traditional Council has land aggregating approximately 115,000 acres that was transferred by Kugkaktlik, Ltd. (ANCSA Village Corporation), on November 1, 1988 through a majority shareholder vote. All shareholders supported the transfer through proxy votes and was verified by an independent election official. We also have a map with the

late Chief Paul's boundaries made up in the 1930's that was requested by the BIA Bethel Agency Superintendent named Moorelander that it be drawn up at that time. We were told that this boundary map was burned in an accidental fire that destroyed the BIA offices in Bethel. We would like to request that the BIA put this land into trust, so that we can have jurisdiction as a tribal government over it. I hope that you will take an effort to help us with this.

The State of Alaska has fought against the recognition of tribal governments and has been successful in getting the Federal court to agree there is no Indian Country in Alaska. Judge Holland in his ruling used ANCSA as a tool to

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THE *TUNDRA TIMES* is published bi-weekly by the Eskimo, Indian, Aleut Publishing Company, Inc., 3400 Spenard Road, Suite 9, Anchorage, Alaska 99503. Telephone (907) 274-2512. Subscription rate is \$30.00 per year or \$1 per copy. For foreign subscriptions: \$55.00 per year payable in U.S. Dollars.

POSTMASTER: Please send all address changes to the *Tundra Times*, Circulation Dept., PO Box 92247, Anchorage, AK 99509-2247.

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verify that. I hope that the Ninth Circuit Court will overturn that.

* The State of Alaska seems to consider this conflict a game by the way they have been treating this case. If they win, they are ecstatic, as if it was just another court battle won for them. It has become a very agonizing situation for us. The people that work for the State of Alaska, especially the Attorney General's office, don't understand the stress that we are going through because they don't live our way of life. It is only important that they prove their case without considering the disastrous impact it will have on our lives. Seems like they cannot have feelings or a sense of commonality when it comes to these kinds of situations.

Our only wish is to be protected from outside influences on our way of life, which is already taking its toll on our people through television, and their (western) education. The State of Alaska wants us to live the white man's way by doing away with our own way of life. They have repeatedly shown that through their unfamiliarity with our way of life.

The people that work in the State government say they understand what our problems are and that they can help us by teaching us their way of solving problems, so that we, too, can try to solve our problems the way they do it. How can they understand our way of life when they have not even lived it? We have our ways of dealing with our problems, the way that we have been taught by our elders and ancestors. Why do we need their help? I hope that you understand what we are going through. We want to have a say sometime in our lifetime of how we want to live. We don't want the State government to tell us how we can live.

The State of Alaska says, well, that's the way it's going to be. They might not say it, but the way they have been treating us sure says it all. They're saying: live the way you want to live, but do it in a way that you can do away with it under our laws. I hope that the federal government can intervene like they did under subsistence and let us live the way we want to live in harmony with the land. The Yupik way, the Inupiat way, the Aleut way, the Tlingit and Haida way, the Athabascan way. We are distinct groups of people. We want to be able to prolong our own way of life. We want a government to government relationship with the Federal and State governments.

I sincerely hope that you can help us, like you helped your people regain the recognition that the government took away from them. Thank you and be safe in your holidays.

Sincerely,

Luke Amik Sr., Traditional Chief

Paul Kiunya Sr., President

Kipnuk Traditional Council

Kipnuk, Alaska