

Kalifornsky passing a loss for Kenaitzes and all Alaskans

by Paul Swetzof
for the *Tundra Times*

Last Monday, I called the Kenaitze Indian Tribes office to see if anyone knew where my friend, Kenaitze Tribal Elder Peter Kalifornsky, was at, I wanted to speak with him because I needed his advice.

Pete and I didn't get to talk often, I regret, because he was in Kenai and I am in Anchorage. He was hard of hearing so it was difficult to hold a conversation over the phone. But I long ago learned

when I needed someone to advise me on some critical aspect of my life, Pete was the person to ask. His wisdom spanned the ages and his uncanny ability to listen and apply what he had heard to fashion a total solution to a problem was remarkable. Another words, Pete had the wisdom of untold generations and knew how to pass it on and apply it to everyday living.

I was told that Pete had died over the weekend. I didn't know what to say. A grief like I have

rarely felt flooded my entire being. It still does. Fortunately, Pete died only after living a long and full life. Unfortunately, for the rest of us, particularly Native people, and more specifically the Kenaitze people, Pete had a lot more to teach and pass on. If he had lived another 30 years, I know that he would have just scratched the surface of the layers of knowledge and wisdom he had to share with all of us. Knowing all of this brings some consolation and yet, for some reason, I can't shake an

incredible sense of loss.

Peter Kalifornsky has been sharing his wisdom, in writing, for over a decade. His books are published and the Kenaitze Tribe had the foresight to record much of what he had to share. It would be a good thing for everyone to read what "Uncle Pete" has written via the knowledge which he carried from uncounted generations. His works will be especially valuable for Alaska Natives, and of course, of special meaning to the Kenaitze people.

I don't know what else to say except that I know Pete is in a better place, and I'm sure he's watching over us with great interest. Pete took his wisdom with him, but I believe he managed to leave enough of it with us to propel the Kenaitze people into the future and to inspire other Alaska Natives to protect the future of the cultures. Pete is one of the chosen few whose name will be remembered and wisdom will be repeated through the generations.

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It has not been a good month for the Kenaitze people. In addition to Pete, Tribal Elder Ike Johannsen died after a lengthy illness. Ike was another friend, and I'm blessed to be able to call him a friend, who carried the wisdom of his people and did his best to pass it on to the Kenaitze people. He was a member of the Kenaitze Tribal Council until his deteriorating health forced him to leave that position.

I join others in expressing my sorrow to Pete and Ike's family and to the citizens of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. Pete and Ike blessed the tribe and just because they have passed on does not mean they don't continue to do so.