

I don't mind so much...

(Editor's Note: This editorial was collected and written by Bob Koweluk who decided to write what some of the people talks with say...)

Our use of lands and waters and lifestyle are coming under increasing attack from special interests groups and governments.

Many conservationists, who themselves have a bond to the earth, seem to be so caught up in politics that they cannot understand our bond to the resources that are the lifeblood of our culture.

Ours is a life and death struggle to maintain our existence. The direct link being we are the actors, the users, the successful or the unsuccessful; the ones to eat or not to eat by what we have gathered or hunted.

OF COURSE WE NOW HAVE A WAY OUR. THE WHITE MAN'S WAY. A WAY THAT WAS IMPOSED UPON US BY EXPLORERS, PERSONS OF RELIGIOUS FAITH AND CALLING, PROSPECTORS THEN TRAPPERS, THEN TREASURE SEEKERS, BY MINER, FISHERMEN TO MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS. ANNUAL TRADING VISITS BECAME SMALL SETTLEMENT. SMALL SETTLEMENTS BECAME SMALL TOWNS. SMALL TOWNS BECAME POPULATION CENTERS FROM WHICH TO BRANCH OUT TO NEW SETTLEMENTS. THE BOOM AND BUST DAYS OF ALASKA WERE REPLACED BY MORE LONG TERM BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRY.

Ours is a life which has a cultural and traditional life introduced to ours. Whether this second culture was imposed upon us, whether we were assimilated by design or not, whether we chose to adopt practices from this second culture is a topic for special interest groups to ponder, debate and argue about. As with the members of the second culture, we enjoy a second alternative. Welfare.

And why are we turning more to these ways? Perhaps elders who are now on welfare or other old age or retirement benefits have youngsters who do not have the ability, the means or drive to provide for their elders in the Native way. Perhaps these youngsters are taking the easy way out with head trips, taking advantage of the welfare system or have chosen to live in the second culture. There are so many alternatives possible.

Some things remain now. The western culture is here to stay and has touched upon all aspects of our Native culture. Unfortunately some individuals and groups, businesses and governments have put it to themselves to meddle, impose controls, impose religions, education systems, introduced another language and ways to try to acculturate us quickly.

I don't mind so much. But damned! It's alright to introduce all the good common sense stuff for whatever motive. Religion for the control of masses and salvation of souls, education to provide us the skills to make it in the world today and stores to feed the mass of people who moved into the state (who otherwise could not be fed or provided for). But I like to eat my foods like everybody else. The whites like to eat beef, vegetables, fruits as I have become used to eating. But that is their diet. My diet is seal oil, seal meat, walrus, berries, green leaves, fresh water and saltwater fishes, sea and upland ducks, and whales when we get one or when I receive some whale blubber or meat from relatives or friends.

It gets me sick to my stomach to think our lives are dictated by special interest groups instead of ourselves—especially when are told what not to eat.

But my one consolation is that we have a better track record than the whites. In our history we have not made extinct many animals like the whites have done, especially in the Americas. Whales may be our first. But I doubt it. Our eating habits are not such to condone or begin killing whales like the whites did for soap skirts supports, and perfume. Or dog and cat food.