

Den Nena Henash - Our Land Speaks
Ut Kah neek - Informing and Reporting
Yupiit Qanlautciat - The Way Eskimos Talk
Unangan Tunukun - The Aleuts Speak
Inupiat Paitot - People's Heritage

Indigenous people own the land

To the editor:

My name is Patricia Kohler. I am a 17-year-old tribal member and resident of Aleknagik.

Subsistence is the issue I would like to speak out on. Subsistence is a way of life for the indigenous people of Alaska. It always has been and always will be.

On July 1, I will be participating in the subsistence FISH-IN at Kenai in order to assert my rights as an indigenous individual of Alaska.

It is my belief that the land and all resources belong only to the indigenous people and that we have every right to use and control them as we see fit. We, as indigenous people of Alaska and the leaders of tomorrow, do not need laws that tell us when, where and how to eat our food from the lands and waters of Alaska.

On a different note, I would like to

see the truth taught in our schools pertaining to Alaskan history. The Koslitzov Memorandum of 1867 addressed to Secretary of State William Seward proves that the United States bought only a few hundred acres of land with trading posts.

We are not taught that in school, and I want that to be changed. School is a place to learn, and that is the place where we students should learn the truth about our "Great Land."

We, the youth of today, need to come together and take a stand in order to live a better tomorrow for ourselves, our children and grandchildren. I ask for your support in this matter, and if you have any questions or comments please write to me at Box 191, Aleknagik 99555. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Patricia Kohler
Aleknagik

'Tumbleweeds' is demeaning

To the editor:

The images of Indians and Eskimos in the popular media has not always been flattering, as everyone knows. Indians, more than Eskimos, have been the recipients of negative imaging through the popular arts: comics, TV Westerns, films.

Even today, at this more or less enlightened stage of American history, old movies still are shown on cable networks depicting the stereotyped "Injun" who speaks in clipped English and projects a brutal, sub-human world view that is shown as being inferior to the "manifest-destiny" toting pioneers.

Imagine an Indian or Eskimo child who today turns on his or her TV set and must face these out-dated and

racist images of their own ancestors. The responsibility for showing these insulting movies lies with the owners of the cable networks, as well as the owners of the local franchises that transmit the cable shows.

There appears every day in the *Anchorage Times* a terribly insulting and racist comic strip called "Tumbleweeds" by the cartoonist Tom Ryan.

This comic strip has been in the newspaper for years, and despite my protest here, I doubt that the owners and editors of the *Times* will see fit to take that comic strip out.

Why? Because their "reader surveys" probably don't show anything wrong with the comic strip in question.

• *Racist comic*

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But let me point out a few things. Any comic strip that regularly portrays Indians as half-naked, pidgin-English talking stereotyped caricatures marked by ugly, hideous faces would be judged racist and offensive by any civilized person. This is exactly how "Tumbleweeds" portrays American Indians, day after day, on the so-called "funny pages" of an Alaskan newspaper.

After repeated protests, the editor of the *Juneau Empire* finally took "Tumbleweeds" off the comics page and replaced it with a different one. But the *Anchorage Times* persists in printing racist images of Indians, even in a state where there are many Indian residents.

I fail to see the logic behind carrying an insulting comic strip, and I hope my protest in this letter will help raise consciousness around the *Times* newsroom and in the editor's chair. "Tumbleweeds" must go someday. The sooner the better.

In a recent comic strip published, one of the "Injuns" calls another Indian by the name of "Chief Running Nose." That really is not funny.

The names Indians gave to themselves in the past were Indian names, based on spiritual links to their own people. "Chief Running Nose" may be a running gag in comic strip history, but it's no longer funny.

And to continue the insult, another character replies, in broken English, just like on those old TV movies, "Me not remember what you told me."

Excuse me, but Indians do not talk that way and never did, except in the fevered imaginations of Hollywood scriptwriters. Should this disgraceful practice continue?

Should the *Anchorage Times* be a party to such racism, direct or indirect? The answer is a big resounding "No!"

"Tumbleweeds" is a throwback to ignorance and stupidity. There is no longer a place for it in American newspapers and especially not in Alaskan newspapers. By being sensitive to the images that cartoons and comics portray, newspaper editors can wield far-reaching power.

The editor of the *Juneau Empire* used his education and sensitivity to throw out a bad comic strip. Now is the time for the *Anchorage Times* to stand up and be counted as a newspaper that shows respect for all people in this state.

Daniel Bloom
Juneau