

Editorial

Tatitlek finally sees small measure of justice

To many residents of Prince William Sound, life has not been the same since the disastrous oil spill of 1989. This is especially true of Natives in Cordova, Tatitlek and Chenaga (and those living in the Cook Inlet villages of Port Graham, Nanwalek and Seldovia).

Their very existence was compromised as crude oil permeated entered every corner of the ecosystem; poisoning fish, shellfish, marine mammals—everything in its path.

As if this weren't enough, victims have had to endure years of waiting in a legal system that heavily favors corporate giants in lawsuits challenging industrial negligence.

Now some of that waiting is over for the people of Tatitlek. The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council has voted to purchase title or easements on 66,600 acres of land owned by Tatitlek Corp.

This win-win arrangement provides important habitat protection in the region without infringing on the economic mandate of the corporation as set forth in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

It is at least partial justice for a people devastated by carelessness and indifference.

Let's do better next time around.

The primaries are over. Next time we step up to the voting booth, it will be to elect our local and statewide officials as well as those officials that will represent us in Washington, D.C.

We can make a difference in the issues before us and in who we send to the mayor's office, Juneau and Washington. With a statewide turnout under 30 percent and one race was decided by under 10 votes, our vote counts that much more, so let's make each vote count.

What do they expect?

Recent reports from Mexico suggest that, far from being over, social unrest may be growing as guerrilla attacks spread from Chiapas to four other states. The heart of this discontent—which left the government and the peso reeling—lies in the decades of corruption, abuse of power and neglect by the longtime ruling party.

Among the victims of this dark legacy are the nation's indigenous peoples, whose suffering dates back half a millennium.

Violence is a dubious vehicle, at best, for social change. The violence should come as no surprise after years of frustration. The real crime is that this group felt they had to resort to violence just to be heard.