

One difference.

by Joseph James

I have often wondered if there is anything that the gussuks do that no Native does, if there is any difference besides skin color.

The gussuks migrated from Europe, and we have migrated. They had slaves and so did we. Some of them have told lies just as some of us have. They stole our land, we stole hunting and fishing territories. They made war just as we did. There isn't much that the gussuks have ever done that we haven't, in our own way, except for one thing: I have never read nor heard of any Native taking a child from its parents and letting someone else adopt it, **FOR A PRICE.**

At one time, not long ago, over 40 percent of all Native children were adopted out to gussuks or in gussuk foster homes (at some time during their childhood). I was adopted out to gussuks and was in several foster homes. All three of my natural children have been in gussuk foster homes. On the Oregon Indian reservation I lived at for a time, **EVERY** Indian kid I knew spent some time in a **WHITE** foster home.

I think that of all the things the white man has ever done to us, that this is the worst. Under the color of law, by flimsy pretext, for profit and gain, our children have been taken and sold to anyone with the price to pay.

The white man steals our land and our livelihood, then takes our children because we are too poor to support them. He sells us alcohol, then takes our children because we have become alcoholics. He tells us that our ancient customs and traditions are "bad," teaches us his, and when we naturally fail at being "white," then he takes our children.

Always, there is an excuse. Any time it is worth a few dollars, our children are taken. And it is always in the "interests of the child." Well, this "child" was adopted by a gussuk who had \$500.00, in this "child's" best interest, and this "child" has spent 11 years in prison, for one thing or another, and has 21 more years to go. Everything I know was taught to me by the gussuks. I went to their schools, to their churches, and everything else "white," and all in my best interests.

Face it, any child is adorable when little, but when they get older they become just another Indian or Eskimo. When you run out of "cute" the white community gets rid of you any way it can.

Per capita, there are more Natives in prison than all other groups combined (in Alaska). Per capita, there are more Natives living below the federal poverty level than all other groups combined (in Alaska). Per capita, and by any other measurement, there have been more Native children adopted by white families or in white foster homes than all other groups combined (in Alaska or the "South 48").

Look at all the time, effort and worry we have been putting towards saving our land, our fish, whales, and everything else and hardly an ounce to save our children.

It is as if the white man had told us that he is naturally a better parent than we could ever be, and we believed him.