

# Letters

## Alaska fish for Alaskans only

As traditional Chief, I represent the 56 villages in the Kuskokwim and Yukon areas consisting of 13,000 Natives (Eskimos and Indians), not counting the non-Natives who use the fish for their food. Also, I see that our own senators would like to open subsistence fishing in the other 11 regions besides our own, to people from out of state. If this happens and they are given the power, they will all come to Alaska and take the fish in a cou-

ple of years, leaving no fish to spawn. This is an unfair situation. What are these 12 regions to do when all the fish are gone? Our own people, including the non-Native who have lived in Alaska (some for more than 30 years), do not want outsiders to come and take over. I strongly believe that if we tried to go to lower 48 to fish, we would be run out. However, they feel it would be all right to come to Alaska to subsistence fish. I am deadly oppos-

ed to this. Our own senators who represent our people in the Kuskokwim and Yukon areas are in favor of opening subsistence fishing to out-of-state people. They were elected to help our people, not those from outside of Alaska. The other senators who represent towns such as Anchorage, should do the same. Subsistence fishing in Alaska should be for Alaskans only. Our governor should see that this does not become a law or we will be in deep trouble.

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## "Declaration of Hope"

To the Editor:

As a nation the U.S. seems to value the welfare of animals more than their people. The preservationists and/or conservationists who want to save the animals create conflicts and hardships on subsistence users. In Alaska at stake is the lifestyle of Natives who cast their nets, go hunting and trapping to get by.

While these issues are important to the welfare and survival of Alaska Natives, at risk is another concern. Alaska Native Art is a reflection of a culture and tradition that has withstood the test of time. The heritage of a culture can be found in its art, songs, dances, and legends. While mis-

sionaries in early days found Native customs and rituals pagan, they almost destroyed and erased a culture which tribes wanted so much to preserve. Each society has its own identity that makes it unique and distinct. Same as other cultures, we are separate but equals. Who in all cultures can say what is "civilized" and what is "savage?" Politics or religion can neither define nor judge. It was Native Americans who gave the U.S. the democratic framework for a nation. We could lose our land without a struggle. It is the young who have the opportunity and resources to keep what Alaska Natives value: the languages, the land, and the

people. Don't feel like you're deserting your village or relatives by seeking higher education, for you can help your people. It is a struggle to keep a way of life when "land claims" is sometimes misunderstood by both Native and non-Natives. Our elders have the wisdom which they want to pass to the younger generation if we listen and learn. It is to us, the torch is being passed. It is by seeking higher ground in education we find vision for the challenges ahead. This is my "Declaration of Hope" for I have faith. Culture is a valid expression of ourselves as a people. "1991" is a stone-throw away, the "land claims" means nothing to me. This is my last letter.

William Tilas