

Extraordinary Meeting

Political Power One Purpose

October 28, 1966

The largest gathering of Native leaders ever held in Alaska ended in Anchorage last weekend with the formation of a statewide Native organization.

There were few dissenting voices heard against the action according to the new group's chairman Flore Lekanof and representatives for each of the organized Native associations throughout the state spoke in favor of the move.

Lekanof, a Pribilovian now living in Fairbanks, said the group was "primarily to exert political pressure."

The chairman said the organization would be non-partisan.

"We will support the people who support our programs."

The 22-member board of directors will probably meet two weeks before the state legislature opens, Lekanof said.

"We already have a commitment from Alfred Fothergill, temporary director of the Alaska State Community Action Program, that transportation costs of the board will be paid under the Grassroots Program."

Lekanof said the action to form the statewide organization came as a natural consequence of the Natives realizing their voting power and the need for them to solve their own problems.

"When any group of people can pull one-fifth to one-sixth of the total votes in a state then they can exert power and the Natives in this state are becoming more articulate in their desire to help themselves," Lekanof said.

"Certainly there are a lot of young Native Alaskans who are college graduates or who are attending the University of Alaska who are conscious of their ability and the importance of being able to speak up."

Lekanof said there would "certainly be discussion" on whether or not non-Natives would have some type of membership in the organization and said that unorganized areas would be represented "with the understanding that they form their own association."

"Eventually we hope to have a paid, permanent staff and are investigating the possibilities of financing now. The American Association of Indian Affairs is supported by private foundations and the AIAA is helping us to contact foundations that may be interested in supporting us."

The chairman said the different Native groups meeting in Anchorage "found they have some common problems" and the organization has set up a number of standing committees.

Robert Peratrovich, President of the Tlingit-Haida Association, is chairman of the Education Committee; Charles Edwardson of Fairbanks chairs the Native Employment Committee; Lloyd Sutton of Anchorage chairs the Health and Welfare Committee; George Olson, president of the Chugach Native Association chairs the Transportation and Communication Committee

William Hensley of Kotzebue chairs the Land Claims Committee; Emil Notti, president of the Cook Inlet Native Association chairs the Housing Committee and Howard Rock, editor of the Tundra Times, chairs the Public Relations committee."

Lekanof said the idea for a statewide group has been advocated by several Native leaders for many years.

"When the Alaska Native Brotherhood organized 50 years ago I am sure they intended to include the entire state but their interests were mainly in southeastern Alaska and they were unable to capture the interest of the rest of the state. This latest development was spearheaded by the Fairbanks Native Association with the help of Nick Gray who also helped to organize the Cook Inlet and Kuskokwim Native Associations.

"The Tundra Times did a lot to let the people know of this movement—the newspaper you might say carved the way."

Directors of the new organization include: Emil Notti, Richard Frank, Tanana Chiefs Conference; Jules Wright, Fairbanks Native Association; Robert Peratrovich, Tlingit-Haida Association; Tony Lewis, Kuskokwim Valley Native Association; Paul Gunderson, Port Moore, unorganized; Frank Degnan, Norton Sound; George Olson, Chugach Native Association; Lloyd Sutton, Tlingit-Haida Anchorage Association; Paul Grube, McGrath, unorganized; George Allen, Tatitlek Village Council; William Hensley, Northwest Native Association; Oscar Craig, Copper Center, Jerome Trigg, Arctic Native Brotherhood, Nome; Tom Riley, Ugashik, unorganized; Andrew Isaac, Tanacross; Markle Ewan, ANB Copper Center Camp 3; Abel Akpik, Arctic Slope Native Association; Rike Murphy, Kenai.

Nick Gray was named honorary chairman.

★ September 7, 1965 ★

Senator Bartlett Sets Hearings On Pribilofs

Sen E. L. (Bob) Bartlett is scheduled to hold hearings tomorrow on St. Paul Island regarding his proposed legislation to ensure that residents of the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea full rights of citizenship.

The legislation provides for several major reforms, chief of which is a provision whereby for the first time the Pribilovians would be allowed to own land, houses, and property.

It also provides for the State of Alaska to assume the responsibility for conducting public schools on the islands.

An archaic regulation making a pass necessary to visit the islands would be eliminated, and another provision would give the Pribilovians civil service retirement for their length of service than just from 1950.

BIG LITTLE PAPER

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Why the Ravens Are Always Black

Tundra Times, Wednesday, October 20, 1971

By GRACE SLWOOKO

Eskimos on St. Lawrence Island, an island in the Bering Sea, used to believe the stories that were told by their parents to be true. These stories are now like fairy tales we now read in the books. As we Eskimos don't have written language, they were told and told for ages by any one that is interested enough to remember them and keep them in memory: generation after generation. Many many thanks to the education we can now keep them without forgetting parts of them.

But this is the story of Raven and the Owl, and how the Raven got black.

Once upon a time, the ravens and owls were all white. Now Mr. Owl was setting so quietly on the rock, when Mr. Raven came flying by and making a few rounds over his place and landed right by him. He was very lively, and seemed to be full of some very exciting plans.

When Mr. Owl finally gave him some evidence of greeting, he told him of his idea. When asked, Mr. Raven replied, "Planned a point for us." How do you like to be painted?" he asked. "If you give me mine, I would give you yours and we will be spotted all over, instead of plain white."

When Mr. Owl agreed, he flew away for a while. Then he came back with a bucket of black paint. "Here, we will be nicer with some design, on us," he said as he landed. So, Mr. Raven got to work while Mr. Owl sat so quietly. He put spots all over Mr. Owl, some very tiny and some large, all so pretty. With a feather, he painted Mr. Owl, dipping it in a black every once in a while.

He was so excited over his work. He also was real proud of his idea. Mr. Owl was beginning to look very pretty. When he got him done, oh he was so beautiful. "Alright, you are done." "It is my turn to be

painted," Mr. Raven said as he sat down before Mr. Owl.

So, Mr. Owl got to work after limbering up for a while. He worked and worked so carefully. Mr. Raven was beginning to be very beautiful looking bird now with spots tiny and large. But Mr. Raven never kept his mouth shut, he always liked to say something, until sometimes he got so aggravating.

And this time he kept bragging of his idea, and how the other birds could set so long a time without doing anything and all that was always in his tune. Mr. Owl couldn't stand it any more. He was getting so hateful. And oh, what a terrible thing Mr. Owl did!

Poor Mr. Raven, he should just not talk so much of how smart he was. Mr. Owl dumped the whole black paint on Mr. Raven! Poor Mr. Raven, should just not talk so much of how smart he was. He flew away so silently, now he has a shiny black coat with some feathers in deep shiney blue.

So, up to this day the ravens are black and the owls are spotty.

Tom Richards, Jr.'s Column--

Author Recalls Poignant Grandparental Relationships

(c) 1973 by THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.
April 11, 1973

OLONGAPO CITY — Every man must meet some individual during his lifetime with whom he develops a very special relationship, one which is of great value at first and one which provides memories which are cherished even more each time they are recalled. Some people must wait an entire lifetime to discover such a relationship.

I was very fortunate to find three of my best friends among my memories of my grandparents, and to have known them very well until they were gone. Many people like to remember those they have loved who are now dead. In this column, I want to include recollections of my grandparents from a book which is now in preparation. The first, "Attatah" is excerpted from one chapter. The second, "Ahnah" is from a collection of poetry.

ATTATAH
Events in my life have rarely occurred as I planned. Three weeks before Christmas, my Attatah (grandfather) dies in the Fairbanks hospital. He was Dad's father and the last of my grandparents to die. His body was returned to Kotzebue for the funeral.

The flight home was the longest of my life. I am reminded of it every time I hear Sioux singer Floyd Westernman's song about the return of his mother's body home for burial. "Only thirty-five more miles and you'll be free," sings Floyd. I knew that I would not return to school. I knew I did not want to be a lawyer.

Attatah's body rested in the newly-built Friends Church near the center of the village. Outside, the ground was brown and grassy. Kotzebue did not get much snow that winter. The wind blew cold and dry air from the Chukchi Sea across the village. It was refreshing, but the reason for my return spoiled my homecoming.

I was disappointed that the funeral could not take place in the old church where Attatah had played his violin during services for most of his adult life. He looked completely at rest, as if ready for death. I remember admiring that distinguished crop of white hair

and his hands.

My earliest memories are of his hands. He would call me to him with them, to his rocking chair. With his big hands, he would lift me to his knee. And with his hands, he would see how much I had grown. When he saw that I was still growing, he would grin and laugh. When he laughed, his hands would laugh too on my shoulders.

His hands were those of a netmaker. Skilled and strong, they appeared ready to stitch another sturdy knot. Attatah became blind as a young man. His hands were very important to him. And, to me, they were like his grin or his voice. I watched his hands like other people watched eyes.

Toward the end of his life, after his wife died, many of his friends were gone. When he found an old friend, they talked about the way of life in the north. Few were left who knew stories of the days of Kotzebue Eskimos.

I can hardly remember what sounds came from that house before Effie died. After she died, and he was alone much of the time, the only sounds were of his rocking chair, and the chimes from his clock, or the wind if it was blowing.

Attatah's was the most peaceful house in the village toward the end. Sometimes, he liked to play his violin. He would play a jig or a hymn that some old trader taught him many years ago. It always sounded good. As he played, his fingers danced and his head nodded and his face would grimace.

When he finished, he would grin and laugh, and I would ask him to play some more. I always loved to ask him to play for me.

He stopped when he got tired, and rocked in his chair, and sometimes he would fall asleep. When I was small, I would shake him awake to ask for the money he always gave me for cracker jacks.

Actually, I never really did shake him, I just made a noise and he would tell me to wait while he opened his coin purse to give me a quarter. When I got older, I let him sleep. I would sneak out and fix the wooden latch. Now his house is boarded up.

Sometimes, as I stop while

passing, I try to fool myself into thinking that I could hear the violin or the chair or chimes of the clock. But I always stop as I pass. I wish that I had asked him more about the old times in Kotzebue, and I wish that I knew how to sing his songs.

His death was more than the loss of a relative. He had a very special wisdom which I shall spend the rest of my life trying to define. The gravel and dirt of beautiful Kotzebue earth was lead in my hand when I threw it on his coffin. From him, I have something that must always be a great part of my life. Kotzebue villagers knew him as Johnny Richards. To me, he is Attatah.

AHNAH

No sacred song
or pretty sunset
ever soothed my soul
as much as watching
Ahnah comb her hair.

No skin
many decades younger
ever felt so soft and warm
as from the firm
gentle grasp
from Ahnah's hands.
No laughter
was such love and truth,
heard abundantly
as Ahnah's mirth.

No smile
was ever so generous
from eyes, lips, and wrinkles
and so easy to return
as Ahnah's smile.

No life
was ever as beautifully
summed
in such a peaceful visage
as Ahnah's death.

When in sorrow
I remember her laughter
and her smile
in spite of tears.

Thank you for your life,
Ahnah,
for none can live as
you did ever again.

Thank you for your love
My Ahnah, my grandmother.
I remember you
and love you
always.