

Letters to the Tundra Times

Need to turn the tide

Fred Lee Biflet
Huslia, AK 99746
November 14, 1979

Dear Editor:

I really enjoy reading the Tundra Times and look forward to many more interesting articles. It seems as though the "Times" has made substantial progress since it moved to Anchorage, but there appears to be one problem. When the paper was published in Fairbanks, Native issues throughout Alaska were published. Now that it's based in Anchorage, it seems as though the newspaper has devoted most of it's time and interest to south-eastern/southwestern news. As I previously stated I enjoy reading Native issues and problems regardless of ethnic background.

I personally would be appreciative if more Interior and Northern Alaska issues are printed. For example: since the pipeline has been completed the caribou herds in the Koyukuk valley no longer exist. Why? Is it a matter of low reproduction rate, because of disease problems, overly abusive harvesting practices, or is it directly related to the pipeline? I think the latter. Another problem that most Alaskans are aware of is the extremely high suicide incidents in the Native villages. The survival of our Native youth is vitally important to our Native cultures.

Once when the Native Athabascans lived in a primarily subsistence economy; in accordance with the seasons, life was difficult at times but was never to harsh for the Natives to manage.

The problems that existed then were of natural origins: flooding, lack of food, transportation problems, diseases, etc. The elders always got together to make the necessary decisions and the problems were contended with.

Now, even in the wisest of circles, there aren't any remedial answers to our suicide problems. We ask why are our young discontent with life nowadays. Some people say it's drugs, and others say it's alcoholism. Both of these are significant factors, but I personally think that the primary reason is an identity crisis. Everyone in town know the joy in their heart when someone commend them for their accomplishments, like sewing, sledmaking, hunting, trapping, dogmushing, etc. Something to identify with.

It was great when our cultural values, religion, language, and standard of living was prevalent. Sure, we were poverty stricken but we were happy. Because we had our own beliefs and customs. Now that we've become irreversibly assimilated into the dominant culture and have accepted their value system: we are depressed a great deal. We feel as though we're being stereotyped. Just a run of the mill Native. We lost our aboriginal rights to our land, therefore, we have to abide by the federal and state regulations. This angers every Alaskan Native who must turn to the land for means of subsisting, because all we have is an advisory role in decisions that will have directly effect us in everyday life. When things like this happen we get angry.

This is when we begin to see vandalism, alcoholism, drug abuse, high crime rates, and most disheartening of all is sui-

cide victims. This is because we're trying to release some of this maddening frustration that has accumulated in all of us Indians. When will we see preventive programs that will really get to the core of some of the more fatal problems, in all the villages?

Sure there are agencies that contend with these problems, but their in the cities; which is a long way from where everybody is confused, frustrated, and definitely tired of seeing our Native youth lost. We want our pride restored. I look forward to any agency involved to reach out and turn the "tide" that's breaking the backbone of our Indian, and Eskimo cultures.

Sincerely,
FRED LEE BIFLET

Unorganized Borough concerns

December 10, 1979

Mr. Thomas Richards, Jr.
Editor and Publisher
Tundra Times
639 "I" Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Tom:

Enclosed herewith is the letter I would hope that you would publish for the benefit of the people living in the unorganized borough. In reference to the unorganized borough, I would hope that you could do us a favor if you could do a study with the regional non-profit corporations on a consortium basis concerning;

1) non-profit service corporations created by the state legislature, i.e., housing authorities, school districts, coastal management, management and policy boards, boundaries.

2) Impact of pro-development legislation in unorganized borough, i.e., coastal zone, oil, and gas leasing, deadlines, fisheries, time frames, comment periods, federal appropriation acts, etc.

3) Impact on villages, short an and long range, advisory and/or policy role now and future.

4) Role of regional non-profit corporations; now and future advocacy role advisory vs. policy making, etc..

I realize that the area I am looking into is very broad and require time and deep thinking, however, by the same token, I know the state legislature will try to resolve something during the upcoming session. Many of the legislation forked out by the state legislature are unrealistic, dependent on federal appropriations and deadlines and are done to fast for the villages to respond. Even now, we have absentee representatives, senators and corporation board members, who would jump on the bandwagon for "commercial and pro-development advocacy of our natural renewable and non-renewable resources rather than take in consideration the villages concerns, capability and life-styles to cope with the situation they have created.

I realize again, that I am delving into the area of local government and while most of the State of Alaska is in the void call the unorganized borough, I think is best for me to stop now and hoe that those who deliberate will not do so with political bravado but keep pace with our

steps and our concerns. I will be looking forward to your response on this matter.

Toi Kuyana,
Noah Jack

Need time to consider

December 3, 1979

Kenneth R. Hamm,
Interim Director
AVCP Fisheries
Development Corporation
P.O. Box 634
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Dear Ken:

First of all, let me qualify myself. I am a subsistence and commercial fisherman and have been fishing in the Lower Kuskokwim since I learned how to fish. That is the basis of why I am writing this letter to you, Mr. Paul McCullum, Nunam Kitlutsi and the AVCP Fisheries Development Corporation.

You know, with the advent of television, the radio station, the Tundra Drums everybody assumes that whenever something happens in Bethel, it is known throughout the AVCP/Calista region. However that is not so. Our coastline (AVCP/Calista region) is much bigger than the coastline of California, Washington and Oregon combined. Our area could put a few lower 48 states together and Texas included. The villages in their own way are different than the next village in many aspects to name now. However, the univer-

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sal language in Alaska is subsistence and much more prevalent in the AVCP/Calista Region than in the other regions.

I understand that you are looking forward to receiving Regional Planning Authority for the AVCP Fisheries Development Corporation. Based on what I could get concerning the infrastructure of the Corporation, I don't think it is wise to pursue the planning authority now. Let

me qualify my statement:

1.) Organizationally, the corporation is nil as there have yet to name a director and staff for the corporation. The corporation in the eyes of the villages have been inactive since its inception. Other than the newly formed board, Nunam Kitlutsisti, and Paul McCullum knows what the corporation is doing.

2.) What is the basis for pursuing the Planning authority now? Is it only for monetary gains for the corporation or something else. The AVCP Fisheries Development Corporation was formed by the State Legislature so the Regional Planning Authority will come from the State of Alaska as the State Legislature is the governing body for the Unorganized borough. Therefore, the Fisheries Development Corporation was formed because of the constitutional ambiguity concerning the Unorganized borough which led to the proliferation of boards and Corporations which have Management Authority. The corporation, then is subject to the whim and will of the State Legislature at any given time. The villages, however, dependent on their status are recognized by both the Federal Government and the State Government and must deal with two legal entities.

Going back to management authority, I don't know how much management authority the AVCP Fisheries Development Corporation will have as I have yet to see and/or review the enabling legislation. However, I think that you should at least let the villages in the proposed service area know what you are getting them into by;

- 1.) holding area hearings (required by state law.)
- 2.) interpreting enabling legislation
- 3.) relationship with the Departments of Fish and Game
- 4.) what effect this planning authority will have on the subsistence and commercial harvest of the village, etc.
- 5.) Other interrelated issues and entities.

I think that in the short time that you have been here, you probably found out that we have quite a few things to do now and what I am trying to say is "Hold it, what are we getting into this time". Remember, you might leave but I will stay and when you are treading on subsistence issues you should do it with discretion, respect for the villages way of life, and please give us time to comprehend what we are letting us in for.

Toi Kuyana,
Noah Jack