

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire



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Native Education A Cause to Rally 'Round

By Dennis Demmert

Editor's Note: This week marks the first appearance of a column by Dennis Demmert which will focus on matters relating to Alaska Native education. Demmert is Director of Native Studies at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. The column will be featured twice monthly in the Tundra Times.

One of the great side-benefits of the land rights fight was the statewide Native unity that it created. Never before in history had all Alaska Native people joined together for a common cause, but the land claims effort required unity, and for the first time we stood united—and together, we won! Simply learning how to work together may prove to be as useful as the actual winning of the settlement act. With unity we gained the power to shape our own destinies.

The settlement act is five years old this month. The Native coalition created for the land rights has never been dismantled, but neither has it been fully brought to bear on the many issues and problems still facing the Native community. The Native leadership has had their hands full with trying to make the settlement act work for the benefit of Native people. In the meantime, critical issues which are shaping the lives of Native people require intensive action.

Item: The land rights settlement act requires administrative and technical skills still not adequately developed in the Native community. Many important jobs in the regional Native corporations and their subsidiaries are, by necessity, filled by non-Natives. Sixty-one per cent of NANA Development Corporation's staff, for example is non-Native. The manpower study by Judy Kleinfeld and Karen Kahout under-estimated the need but still indicated immense educational need.

Item: The state-operated school system was dissolved on June 30, 1976, and village residents now exercise local control over their schools. For many newly-elected board members it is a new experience, and an important one which requires new skills. Village residents are responsible now for the quality of education in their schools, but they must still use an educational system which is not entirely aware of village needs.

Item: Native students are entering high school and college in greater numbers than ever before. More are succeeding, but still the drop-out rate is higher and the achievement rate is lower than for other Alaskans. Teacher testimony to the Governor's Commission on Cross-Cultural Education (1970) indicates that many certified teachers feel inadequately prepared to meet Native educational need. Education, as provided to Native people, has not served us well and the failure is not entirely a Native failure.

Item: Alaska's population is one of the fastest growing in the nation. As resources are being developed, many things that Native people value, from subsistence living to cultural retention are in jeopardy.

The one issue that is common to the items listed above is education. The need for development of Native education is so immense that no segment of the population can alone address the needs. The challenge to the Native community is to revive the unity that served us so well in the land claims effort and rally around Native education as an overriding need.

Letters from Here and There

Bilingual cuts protested

November 2, 1976

Jañ Molino
Director of Bilingual Education, Title VII
U.S. Office of Education
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Molino:

We, the students of the Title VII Bilingual Teacher Program at Quinhagak are very distressed with recent reduction in funds for this program. As teachers using our language (Yupik) and as aides to the regular teachers we bridge the gap between teaching and educating in both languages.

The Title VII Program gave us the opportunity to acquire and work toward college degrees at our village. We were able to pursue our need for college course work while at the same time acquiring practical experience on the job. Employment is vital in the village and this program was a breakthrough in providing both the opportunity to sustain our village life and acquire a college education. We feel, at least, educational opportunities are reaching out to us instead of us begging for it.

We are asking the Office of Bilingual Education Title VII in Washington, D.C., to reconsider their drastic action in cutting back our program activities.

With Best Regards

Pauline Small
Carrie Pleasant
John Mark
Frank Matthews
John T. Roberts

c: Tundra Times

Y-B chiefs ask investigation

November 23, 1976

Dr. Juan Molino
Director of Bilingual Education
Title VII Dept. of Education,
DHEW
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Molino:

The Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. (AVCP, Inc.) is the Native organization representing some 57 villages in the Kuskokwim-Yukon area with the total of 13,500 people enrolled as its constituents.

As the Executive Director of AVCP, Inc., I am writing this letter in support of the constituent of AVCP and subsequent results in the cut back of Title VII, Bilingual teacher program recently. As explicitly pointed out by the students, Title VII has provided a new avenue of providing collegiate education in the villages, as well as practical teaching experience instead of a sterile classroom academic curriculum. The need for Federal support is extremely important for this type of program at the maintenance level plus mandatory costs to take into account of inflationary price, not cut backs.

It may be easy for you and your colleagues to make arbitrary cut backs from your office in Washington, D.C. without prior field trip/hearings or consultation with the field personnel to assess the impact of the program.

I strongly recommend to you that in the future that before any capricious and arbitrary action is taken to further cut back any program, that it be established as a standard operating procedure to conduct field hearings to assess the impact of the program. I strongly recom-

mend to you to reconsider your action cutting back Title VII funds.

Further, as a starter, on behalf of AVCP, I am, herewith, extending a personal invitation for you to make a special field trip to Bethel area to assess the success of the program. I see no other way that in order for the program be responsive to the needs of the people that the person (s), such as yourself, to make an effort to see first hand at the grass roots level how the program is functioning to determine its progress prior to any actions taken to increase or decrease the Federal support of the program. Thank you for your help.

With respect,
AVCP, INC.; EDWARD
HOFFMAN, SR. PRESS.

Carl Jack
Executive Director

TT is small

The Tundra Times has been referred to at times as the biggest little newspaper in the world, this week, that description is entirely appropriate. Due to the hectic pace of a shorter holiday, workweek, confusion of orientation of new staff, a much needed internal audit of our books and numerous similar distractions, the Tundra Times publishes an eight page edition today.

Beginning next week, the newspaper will move to a more spacious sixteen page format.

The Tundra Times is pleased to announce appointments for key staff positions. Bonnie Mayo and Renee Staud joined the Tundra Times team November 29. Bonnie is our composition and layout artist. Renee fills the job of circulation manager.

The Tundra Times will receive a much needed boost in our advertising department with the association of Michael Jennings with the newspaper. Jennings has agreed to represent the Tundra Times in developing schedules for annual contract requirements. Jennings, who has extensive experience in managing numerous contracts for the Fairbanks Native Association, is active on the political scene in Interior Alaska.

On Monday, the Tundra Times opened its first Anchorage Bureau.

Our Anchorage Bureau Chief can now be found in room 316 at 429 "D" Street in an office shared with Kish Tu, Inc., an Anchorage public affairs company, phone 274-8661.

BBNA protests

(Continued from Page 1)

"The FCC, by virtue of its rule-making authority, clearly has the authority to waive the regulations," said BBNA president Marlene Johnson. "We are contacting Gov. Hammond, the congressional delegation and the Chairman of the FCC. If that doesn't work, we'll send a telegram to President-elect Jimmy Carter.

MY LIFE

By Flo Ellers

The snow-capped mountain standing alone
Without life, lonely, cold, rigid
Unmoving, except for the storm that rages on the crest.

The season passes,
The sun bursts forth!

The passivity of the snow and ice changes as streaks of
rippling streams flow down her face
Cleansing, purifying—
Carrying away with it the garbage of accumulated filth
of past season.

As the pleasant turmoil of change is over
Another begins

Heaving, pushing, lifting the burden,
In thunderous travail
A blade penetrates
Then—liberty!

Bending, bowing in submission
The winds carry past my nostrils the beauty of the flower,
It touches me,
I gaze at the wonder of this transformation of New Life,
And stand in awe of the Creator!

As with the land rights settlement, we would probably find that the positive development of Native education would serve not only Native people, but would benefit the entire Alaskan community. We must remember, however, that no one will bring about the needed improvement and development in Native education unless Native people demand quality education and keep up the pressure until we have the education we need and want.