

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

Tundra Times



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Sources of Strength...

(Continued from page 1)

unequivocally disagree with this concept because it is one way of weakening the will of the native people. To force the native youngsters to forget what they are, or what they were, is to undermine their very spirit of being. It is more probable that if the native child has a thorough knowledge of his own background and heritage, he would be more equipped to learn the new concepts of life he will be subjected to from here on in.

Spain was never quite able to make Mexico exactly like Spain. Great Britain made a dent in India. Nor was France able to contain Vietnamese. The United States itself failed badly in Americanizing the American Indians. All of these are rather dismal failures. If cultural spiritual wars were written, these would have to be recorded as spiritual defeats. Cultural spirit of man anywhere in the world is a formidable opponent. Its defeat by force only creates shells in human forms that are pliable as putty. These types of people are miserable examples of mankind who neither have a spirit of their own nor will of their own.

A native Japanese, despite his particular culture, can become a superbly educated man in an American university. Frenchman, Chinaman, Russian, German, Korean and other nationalities can do the same. Why not an Aleut, Indian or Eskimo in Alaska.

We do not believe that a cultural heritage of a people is a deterrent to proper education. The deterrent would be when the native student has been divested of his identity in which case he would be partially alienated to his own people nor would he altogether feel that he belongs to the new culture he is studying.

During the recent World Eskimo Olympics at the University of Alaska's Patty Gymnasium, the Upward Bound native students performed their Eskimo and Indian dances. Their dance performances might not have been as artfully done as their elders might have done them, but what stood out was their obvious spirit, pride and confidence with which they performed. They had something more than fun in doing what they did. Those persons who have been in charge of their orientation toward college studies should be warmly commended because, no doubt, the students will enter college with a little more courage than they would have been if their heritages had been ignored.

We will say again that the strength, spirit, will and courage to persevere is the cultural background of a people. Time proven heritage is one of the finest equipment a native person can have because the system has enabled his ancestors to conquer untold dangers and pitfalls that constantly faced them in their severe environment. This strength properly infused into the learning processes can be a source of pride in the venture of education that our young people will be seeking from now on. It cannot be a deterrent because it was, also, an achievement intricately and profoundly established by our ancestors which gave them will to persevere in facing some of the greatest odds ever faced by man.

Kongignak, Alaska 99559
August 17, 1969

Mr. William Allen
Vista Co-ordinator
P.O. Box 1957
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Dear Mr. Allen,

We are sorry to hear you denied our request for re-enrollment for another year for our present Vista Volunteer, Blanche Andrews. She awakened a lot of interest in the people in the Adult Education program she started here last year and she was very understanding and a real source of encouragement, especially to the young people.

Although the time is late, we are writing to you again asking you to change your decision. We are best qualified to judge whether or not the Vista Associates can take over the Adult Education program in this village at this time.

Starting this fall, we wanted Blanche to work very closely with Associates tutoring and working with them as much as she could so that possibly by summer, 1970, they could perhaps take the high school equivalency exam and in the fall, 1970, they would have enough knowledge and experience to take over the Adult Education program here. We also wanted Blanche to work particularly with young married people, teaching them on specific grade levels and helping them to prepare themselves to eventually take the high school equivalency test sometime in the future.

If we can carry through with our plans for Adult Education in this village for this year, by fall, 1970, we will not need the services of lower 48 Vistas. We want to be as self-reliant as possible and to a great extent we already are. We are looking forward to the day when we can run our own programs without outside help. But we have to be prepared first and in this particular village at this particular time the Associates are not yet ready to take over the Adult Education at the level we want the various subjects taught. Hopefully, by next fall they will be, but all of us still have much to learn and the Associates want and need guidance and direction so they will be well prepared for next year.

The Anti-poverty programs in Alaska designed to help the native people would be a lot more effective if program administrators and directors learned to listen to, respect, and heed the suggestions and advice of the native people of Alaska. We are tired of other people making decisions for us that directly affect us. It is very unfair and it must end NOW.

MEDICAL

A proposal by Alaska Senator Ted Stevens to insure that Alaska Natives will be able to receive immediate medical attention in Indian Health Service facilities outside of the state is another step closer to becoming implemented.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare had advised the senior senator for Alaska that every effort is being made to see that Social Security numbers are assigned to Alaska natives for use in Health facilities outside Alaska.

The procedure proposed by Stevens would also facilitate the compiling and maintenance of the medical histories of Indians who seek medical treatment in various facilities.

Letters to the Editor

We are enclosing a petition signed by the people of Kongignak asking that our present lower 48 Vista be allowed to re-enroll and work with us for another year.

We hope to hear from you soon, at least by August 28.

Respectfully,
Peter J. Daniel, Sr.
Vice President
Kongiganak Village Council
Walter Wallen - Marshall

Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indians of Alaska
1675 C St.
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
August 15, 1969

Dear Howard:

As the Alaska natives continue their efforts to assert the land rights of their people before the Congress of the United States, it is of more than passing interest to note that travel to Washington, D.C. relative to this vitally important matter, had its beginnings many years ago. The following extract from the case of the Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska v. the United States clearly indicates that our efforts to protect our lands began before Statehood and before the discovery of oil—contrary to mistaken efforts to assign a sense of recency to these efforts.

The message is a tribute to the vision, courage, and eloquence of these wise men.

Sincerely yours,
John Borbridge, Jr.

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF CLAIMS
No. 47900
(Decided October 7, 1959)
THE TLINGIT AND HAIDA INDIANS OF ALASKA
v. THE UNITED STATES

100. In 1899, the chiefs of certain of the tribes of south-eastern Alaska selected Chief Johnson of the Taku tribe as their representative to go to Washington, D.C., and deliver a message on behalf of the Indians. The message was delivered to John M. Thurston, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, who referred it to the Secretary of the Interior with a request for a report thereon. The message read in part as follows:

I have come a long ways from my home in Alaska to see you and tell you of the condition of my people. I was sent here by the Chiefs of the principal tribes to represent them, and have brought with me a petition signed by them.

We find our country Alaska over run by white men who have crowded or driven the Indians from their fishing grounds, hunting grounds, and the places where their fathers and grandfathers have lived and been buried.

Russia came and took possession of our land without consulting the natives of Alaska, the real owners of the country, and later on sold it to the United States. The Indians never knew anything about this sale until years afterwards, altho' it was our land and country which was sold. We have never tried to make any trouble over it, and this is the first time we have ever brought the matter to the Washington Government to consider, altho' Russia stole our country and sold it to the U.S.

We do not ask anything unreasonable of the U.S. Government. We do not ask to be paid for the lands which were ours by rights. We do not ask that the whites be prevented from coming to Alaska.

We do ask and pray that the good white people who have true and kind and just hearts will listen to our words and assist us in protecting us by good laws, and requiring the same to be enforced.

There are four principal things which the Indians desire the help of the government viz:

1st. That the fishing and hunting grounds of their Fathers be reserved for them and their children, and that the whites who have driven them off of the same be ordered by the government to leave them. The Indians chief method of support is by fishing and hunting and that is the only way the most of them can live, as only a small number are educated sufficiently to go out in the towns of the land and compete with the whites.

2nd. The Indians of Alaska pray that the U.S. Government will set apart certain reservations for them and their children where they and their children can each have a home allotted to them, the same privileges as the Indians of the United States enjoy. We ask this in return for all of Alaska which has passed into the hands of the whites without a murmur from us. We have given up a great deal and now only ask the great and good Father at Washington to give us back a little of the land, in return for the much we gave him, and protect us from the encroachments of greedy white men who would drive us into the Sea in order to advance their own interests.

Therefore I have come to Washington to speak and to lay our case before the Congressmen of the government, to implore their aid in giving the Alaska Indians homes and schools, and protecting them by law from the encroachment of avaricious white men.

ARTIFACTS WANTED! If you are going to sell old-time objects, please contact the Alaska State Museum first. If you have old-time things that need special care, you can lend them to the Museum for safe-keeping and display. If your things are in the Alaska State Museum, they stay in Alaska. Contact: Jane Wallen, Director, Alaska State Museum, Pouch FM, Juneau, Alaska 99801, phone 586-1224.

