

"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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Editorial—

Plight of Tanacross

In these supposedly civilized times, many of our native people are sorely disillusioned. "Thou shalt not covet" and "Thou shalt not steal" don't have much meaning after they have been taught with such intensity that they had become almost second nature to many of Alaska's native population. To see them violated and grandly ignored by the members of those who taught them is sickening—a mockery of the first hand of the theologic teaching.

Chief Andrew Isaac of the United Crow Band and his people around Tanacross area are prime examples of disillusioned natives. Their lands which they have used historically and on which their ancestors lie buried are methodically being taken by the State of Alaska.

The Congress of the United States has said that the aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska were not to be disturbed in their use and occupancy of their lands and the lands they claimed would be respected. The Statehood Act has also said that it would not take those lands occupied and used by native people. Are these solemn declarations being followed by the state? The answer is a resounding, "NO!"

In the process of withdrawing lands by the State of Alaska under the authorization of the Statehood Act, the Bureau of Land Management and the agency of the Department of the Interior, seemed to have joined in a marriage of convenience. It looks as if that in order to gain that end, they conveniently lost, or forgot, claims made by native people so that they could say there were no records and used that questionable basis for continuing to withdraw lands.

Since 1917, and more urgently in the last few years, the Tanacross people have claimed their lands, reclaimed them when prior claims were supposedly lost, to protect their accustomed regions where they have always lived and roamed for sustenance. Chief Isaac had made plea upon plea—pleas of deep concern for help from the responsible people in Washington, D.C. All he has received to date are lukewarm responses. Quite often his pleas met with deaf ears.

One of the important provisions the U.S. Government gave the Secretary of the Interior was to help with the problems of natives of the Lower 48 and Alaska. As far as the Tanacross Indians are concerned, this has been strangely nonexistent. The covetous greed for Tanacross Indian lands by the state has not moved that great office. It stays strangely detached—silent—as far as Chief Isaac and his people are concerned.

Andrew Isaac has appealed to the congressional delegation of Alaska. There, too, little has been generated. In the meantime, Chief Isaac and his people are going through the agonizing feeling that they are losing their lands. Supposedly, at this time, they no longer have anyone to turn to. Their despair is worsening. And this in a country that frowns upon oppression as Alaska's native people have been made to believe.

Wainwright, Alaska 99782
January 13, 1970

Dear Editor:

I'm so enraged and so disgusted of that 'Mrs. Disgusted' that I could just wring her neck with my 'dirty' hands.

I'm just one of the 'lazy, dirty' Eskimos that's why I want to say piece of my mind to that 'Mrs. Disgusted' and for all the likenesses of her.

If it wasn't for the 'lazy, dirty' natives how would a white man like her survive this land?

It takes a fearless, courageous and strong natives from time immemorial to meet the challenge this great land of ours demanded. Although at times the burdens are too heavy to bear, but in confidence and firm belief with their fellow natives they overcome the great conflicts.

Many times a white man learned how to survive this bitter, cold land with the cooperation of friendly natives. How would a white man gain his ability to survive without their help?

How ignorant she was not to consider all these before she ever spreads mud. She thinks she's worth a million but she's worth two cents to me—that's how low she gets for being so stupid. I advise her to go somewhere like Africa to soak her head for all I care. I could go on and damn, damn her, but I'd rather not for the sake of my decent people.

With humble and thankful heart I express my deep appreciation for all the great leaders of our great land who took their time and great efforts for our own peace of mind, although at times they went into conflicts, disappointments, etc, they fought fearlessly for what is rightfully ours.

If all the natives are lazy and dirty, today we'd be robbed of our land by some greedy whites who only want to get rich. But

thank goodness there are always good and decent people, whether they are natives or whites, to stand for us who aren't so good.

I hope this letter convinces 'Mrs. Disgusted' that she's more than disgusting herself.

Sincerely yours,
Lydia Shonden

Nulato, Alaska
January 12, 1970

Dear Editor:

Fifty years ago, as I was going to school, I was just waking up and start seeing what was going on around our village. There were 18 Signal Corps men stationed here at the wireless or telegraph station. There was hospital here, marshall, mission, etc.

There was always someone in jail. As I started watching around, sometimes I see someone get arrested, seems like it's phony.

There were two guards here who would go hungry if there were no one in jail.

My uncle and his wife got arrested, just for loud argument, so my Uncle got me for interpreter. He thought I was going to help him. But when you're 14 years, and lift up your right hand to tell the truth, so help me God—I was nervous and shaky.

I tried anyway. He got 90 days and his wife got 30 days, which left six children homeless. No one thought of that but me and my mother started to help feed them kids and they had to move to some relatives houses also with bunch of kids.

It's been going the same way—no help. That's when I started bucking the marshalls and I start getting arrested myself for almost nothing, but they make something out of nothing.

I got arrested 20 times when I finally woke up. I paid a fine six times, and beat the case 13

times, but the 14th one I got \$600 fine and 8 days in jail.

So when I finally woke up I went to Fairbanks to see the District Attorney and told him my story. He moved that marshal and sent a young one here. I went up again to report him so the attorney sent another one down.

He was here for a few years when he arrested 5 old men at different times for nothing, just talking loud. So I went up the third time to see District Attorney. There were five in jail in Fairbanks and these 5 old men in jail down here, and never in jail before.

He says, "Stickman, are you sure?"

"Yes," I said.

For years, everytime the marshal wants to go to Fairbanks, he arrested me more so he can go shopping, although there were 3 stores here and 2 liquor stores. You couldn't buy bacon or ham, beef, etc.

This time they moved the marshal away for good.

Now they are starting that in Galena again. I hope I don't have to go up a 4th time.

It don't do any good to put us in jail for 6 months. If a man beat up his wife, I stopped a lot of them fights myself. That happens all the time around here. That's something you can't stop. Them women some got filthy mouths, worse than man because they have protection. I slapped a few myself that curse at me, but I paid a ten dollar fine for touching one because I hit her husband not her.

That stealing at Galena started 1945 after the big flood. Everything that floated off base if taken was stealing regardless. Since then everyone at Galena, one time or another, took something—that's stealing.

(Continued on page 7)

Translation of NAUGGA CIUNERPUT:

OUR DESTINY ?

In my youth I was free to travel anywhere on our land
Searching even the wilderness in my pursuit of game.
The world was an exhilarating place when life went on like that
And I lived happily, free to do as I pleased.

But as people say, "All good things must come to an end."
And the white man arrived saying, "Hunters must have licenses."
I wondered why these strangers came, wantonly slaughtered our game, then said,
"Without licenses you cannot hunt." They threatened our very existence.

Being uneducated in the white man's ways, unable to adjust to his cities,
And now requiring licenses for survival, what were we to do?
Jobless, lacking formal education, unable to get jobs, where were we to live?
Our harmonious way of life, our customs, our traditions, where were they now?

Since the time the Russians first came our world has been collapsing.
Other white men came and without our knowledge bought our land from the Russians.
Ever since the time our land was sold, our way of life has been eroding.
What right did the Russians have to think our land was theirs to sell?

Now we who consider Alaska ours profit nothing but to be trampled upon.
Before there were other people, we always lived happily despite the hardships.
Where is that life, the way we wished to live it?
Where are the happy customs and precious traditions?

Dear Eskimo, young Eskimo, when will you think of these things?
Are you forgetting your past traditions because you are of recent times?
Are you content to live like the white man, yet lacking something?
Remember, the challenge of shaping our future is in your hands.

—Angalegaq