



**RECEIVES "MADONNA"** — One of the best-known photographs of the State of Alaska's late staff photographer, Fred Belcher, is "Eskimo Madonna". A print of the famous photo has been made available, by permission of Mrs. Fred Belcher, of Juneau, to the Urban Native Day

Care Center. Here, Commissioner Irene Ryan of the Department of Economic Development, makes the presentation to Mr. Richard DeWeil, Director of the center. The facility is located on Mountain View Drive in Anchorage.

## Outline of Claims History

### Taking of Lands by Conservationists, Etc.

**SETTLEMENT — PART FOUR**  
By THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.  
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**OLANGAPO CITY, P.I.**  
The taking of Native lands in Alaska began with the conservationists, who set aside lands used by our people for the "public good." Only, the public for which it was good was a half continent away, and the people who have always made wise use of it, never considering destroying it, could now only gaze upon it.

Next came the military. Alaska has always been a strategic military location. But its resources made it more so, and when it became known that oil existed on the north slope, Naval Petroleum Reserve No. Four was created without regard to the Eskimo whaling villages located there. Those residents had a hell of a time even getting natural gas, from land they have

always lived upon, to heat their homes. World War II firmly established Natives as a minority in Alaska, but it also created a multitude of inaccessible reserves across the entire territory.

In considering the land claims issue, the question of statehood cannot be ignored. By 1950, the majority of those living in the territory of Alaska had been born and raised in one of the United States. They grew to love Alaska, but missed that old familiarity of statehood. They eagerly sought after this, little realizing that a state of 300,000 residents would never be afforded a large degree of self control as it became assimilated into a nation of over 200 million people, and within a territory where over 99 percent of the land remained in the federal domain.

Since Alaska was a non-contiguous possession, beyond state-side interests more distant than Seattle, and viewed by many as costly to the federal budget, the possibility existed that independence might be an idea worthy of entertaining, if assurances could be made that the military would stay, or if world tensions lifted. Should that have occurred, the recent discoveries of vast oil reserves on the Arctic Slope of Alaska would have made the region the wealthiest republic, per capita, in the world. But, there are a great many "ifs" in the history of a people, and these can lead one to speculate into infinity. Yet to some, alternatives in infinity may be intimately better.

The statehood dream persisted, and with stubborn Alaskan statehood advocates streaming through Washington during the 50's the President and Congress finally became persuaded to accept the idea. With the passage of the Alaska Statehood Act in 1959, we became number forty-nine. Protection of aboriginal rights remained a clause in that act, although it was offset by the right of the new state to select a total of 10<sup>3</sup> million acres from the open public lands of the federal domain, which consisted of anything not yet snatched up. And, Natives had not yet been given a chance to select their share, the size of which is dependent upon which side of the fence you are on.

At statehood, the Alaska Natives who were to latter lead the battle to claim a share of the remnants were still in training. Emil Notti, the first president and emeritus of the Alaska Federation of Natives had just become an electronics engineer. Willie Hensley, Alaska State Senator from Kotzebue, was in school in Tennessee. Howard Rock, Tundra Times editor, was receiving acclaim as an artist. John Borbridge, T.H. Central Council president, was coaching basketball in Juneau, Al Ketzler, of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, was a Nenana businessman. Eben Hopson was a member of the territorial legislature. Flore Lekanof taught school in the bush. Charles "Etook" Edwards, Jr. was on his way to boarding school at Sitka. This writer, to set the record straight, had just completed the fourth grade at Nordale Elementary School in Fairbanks, and he had no idea of what was happening.

Except for what has been written in the Tundra Times about the unification of Alaska Native groups for the purpose of settling the land issue, the history of our fight has largely been unrecorded.

**NEXT:** The Native organizations.

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