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Anchorage, Alaska

November 1992
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Native American Heritage Month

November 1992

The Congress, by Public Law 102-188, designated 1992 as the **"Year of the American Indian"** and authorized the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this year.

On March 2, 1992, the President proclaimed 1992 as the Year of the American Indian, and encouraged Federal, State, and local government officials, interested groups and organizations, and the people of the United States to observe this year with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

The month of November will be observed as **Native American Heritage Month** throughout the FAA.

Working with the Civil Rights Office, volunteer employees in the Anchorage commuting area have organized and scheduled activities that will provide opportunities to enhance our awareness of the contributions that Native Americans made to our Nation's history and culture.

Listening for Native Voices
(Native Writers' Workshop, Nome, Alaska)

--for Joy Harjo

Trapped voices,
frozen
under sea ice of English,
buckle,
surging to be heard.
We say
"Listen for sounds.
They are as important
as voices."
Listen.
Listen.
Listen.
Listen.

--April 14, 1984

* Poems in this issue are reprinted with permission of **Nora Marks Davenhaver** (author). Copies can be obtained from Blackcurrent Press or Sealaska Heritage Foundation.

Intercom

Office of Public Affairs
222 West 7th Avenue, #14
Anchorage, Alaska 99513
(907) 271-5296

EDITOR
Ivy P. Moore

Regional Administrator
Jacqueline L. Smith

Public Affairs Officer
Joette Storm

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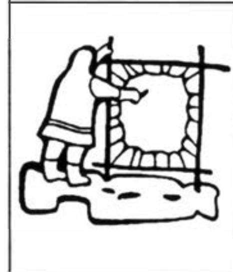
If you have questions, suggestions, or complaints, please call the Editor at 271-5169.

Native American Heritage Month

November 1992

Calendar of Events

Date	Event
Nov. 2-6	Arts & crafts and information display, Anchorage Federal Office Building
Nov. 3	Celebration opening ceremony, Anchorage Museum of History and Art
Nov. 9-13	Information display, Anchorage Center
Nov. 16-20	Information display, Anchorage FSDO
Nov. 19	Pot luck, 11:30-12:30, Regional Office, executive conference room
Nov. 23-27	Information display, South Alaska AF Sector



Alaska Federation of Natives

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) was formed in October 1966 when more than 400 Alaska Natives representing 17 Native organizations gathered for a 3-day conference to address the need for a settlement of Alaska Native aboriginal land rights. Natives in different parts of Alaska had worked independently on the land claims issue; but, by the mid-1960's, it became clear that a united, consolidated effort was needed.

Though different in cultures and history, the various Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut groups shared several important things:

* a traditional and fundamental reliance on the land and its resources for their survival;
* cultures based on the welfare of the community; and
* growing concern about Western encroachment on lands on which Natives had relied for centuries.

Between 1966 and 1971, AFN worked to attain passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which was signed into law on December 18, 1971. With ANCSA in place, AFN provided technical assistance to Alaska Natives as they began to implement the Act.

Over the years, AFN has evolved to meet the changing needs of Alaska Natives and respond to new challenges as they emerge.

The 37-member Board of Directors includes representatives of the Native non-profit regional associations, Native regional corporations, and the Native village corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Since1966, the AFN Convention has been a traditional meeting place for more than 3,000 Alaska Natives. Each October, the convention provides delegates from each community with an opportunity to discuss current issues, establish AFN priorities for the coming year, renew old friendships and strengthen common bonds among the diverse ethnic groups of Alaska.

Mission

Alaska Native people began as members of full sovereign nations and continue to enjoy a unique political relationship with the Federal government. We will survive and prosper as distinct ethnic and cultural groups and will participate fully as members of the overall society.

The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic,and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community. AFN's major goals are to:

* *Advocate for Alaska Native people, their governments and organizations, with respect to Federal, state and local laws;*
* *Foster and encourage preservation of Alaska Native cultures;*
* *Promote understanding of the economic needs of Alaska Natives and encourage development consistent with those needs;*
* *Protect, retain, and enhance all lands owned by Alaska Natives and their organizations; and*
* *Promote and advocate programs and systems which instill pride and confidence in individual Alaska Natives.*

Far North Mask Collection

Among your silent faces
I still hear
your song,
in many different voices,
grandfathers of mine.

Cross Talk

When asked by the
census taker
how old she was
Gramma replied,
"*Tleil dutoow, tleil dutoow.*"
The census taker says,
"*Fifty two.*"

--February 25, 1982

Note: Tleil dutoow: Tlingit, "It's not counted."

Pussy Willow

Tiny fluff balls
with huge brown eyes:
no wonder
we call the pussy willows
"seal pups."

Egg Trading

Story and photo by Karen A. Tennessen
(Background information provided by Father Michael Oleksa)

At Easter time in Old Harbor, Alaska, a custom comes knocking at the door, an old custom perfect in symbolism, health, and fairness. This is the custom of egg trading.

I first learned of this tradition as an unprepared participant. When a group of children knocked at our door early on Russian Orthodox Easter Sunday, I was surprised to see three smiling faces peering from under fancy Easter hats. When I didn't respond to their greeting, "Khristos VosKrese," we stood in uncomfortable expectation for a moment until they realized my ignorance. Tucking their beautiful eggs back into their baskets, they eagerly explained what was expected of me on this special day.

After sharing this delightful bit of their culture, my miniature teachers skipped away in their white dresses, swinging their baskets and giggling. Hoping I'd be prepared for the next group, I immediately began boiling eggs.

All day children came to the door to trade one egg. An egg for an egg, giving and receiving at the same time. The egg might be nestled in an old basket woven of sea grass, a bright new plastic basket from the store, or just in a pocket. Some eggs were all one color, some had special messages drawn with wax crayons, some had decals, and others had been decorated with hot wax and dye.

All a person really needs is one egg to begin trading, and then he may continue trading all day. Of course an egg may drop or be eaten, so I learned to have a few extra on hand.

The person knocking at the door has more than an egg; he has a message. His greeting is, "Christ has Risen," and the response from the person opening the door is, "Indeed He is Risen." In Russian it would be, "Khristos VosKrese," with the response, "Vo istinu VosKrese." In Aleut it would be "Kristuussaaq Ungwirtuq," with the reply, "Ilumen Ungwirtuq."

Customs and traditions have to be taught. Young children learn about egg trading by watching others come to their door or going out with older children. By observing and participating, the young folk gain understanding.

One Easter Sunday I was visited by one such egg trader who thought she had learned enough to venture out on her own. Her family had been at church all night, so they were ready to rest, but she wanted to trade eggs. To her, being five seemed big enough.

Sinking to her ankles in mud, she plodded through the mist and morning shadows up the path, swung an unbalanced kick toward our barking dog and climbed the steps to knock at the door as she remembered doing last year. Thinking better of the gum in her mouth, she spit it over the railing, and straightened her hat. Looking up at me sideways out of the corner of her eye, she stood proudly in her faded red dress coat which had already seen a generation of egg trading.

As she had buttoned only the middle button of her coat, her everyday red sweatshirt and wrinkled blue jeans were hardly concealed. One damp pant leg was tucked into the black rain boot while the other had worked its way out and was rimmed with mud. Her new white hat reminded

me that she was trying to look her Sunday best, but she had forgotten to comb her hair or wash the chocolate off her face. That new frilly hat with flowing ribbons, plopped flat on top of her head, only accented how comical she looked. Her shocking pink plastic basket seemed to be more of a prop for a shopping bag lady than a reflection of an old custom. When I asked her what she was supposed to say, she wrinkled her nose, lifted her eyebrows, and asked, "Trick or treat?"

As the children handle the eggs, there is a sense of caring and respect. The egg itself has been a symbol for springtime and renewed life in many cultures. It has been a Christian symbol for centuries, dating from at least the fourth or fifth century. The egg symbolizes the resurrection of Christ—something that appears lifeless on the outside but with life within, something to show life emerging from death as springtime blossoms from winter.

The egg trading activity was so different from the Easter bunny image I grew up with that I began to wonder how it had all started. From the encyclopedia I learned that early Christians of Mesopotamia were probably the first to use colored eggs at Easter, dyeing them red to represent the resurrection. Father Michael Oleksa helped me trace the evolution of this custom to Alaska. As it spread to other countries, the addition of messages, colors, and dates evolved. Although most places continued to exchange one-color eggs, the people of the Ukraine, in southwestern Russia, created elaborate designs for their eggs. With hot wax and dyes, images from nature or from religious symbols made each egg unique. Often an egg was designed for a person, and this egg would become a present for the friend on Easter. Even when the open practice of religion was prohibited in Russia, the egg trading survived as a way to pass along religious messages.

Thus the egg trading custom not only survived but spread to Alaska with the Russian Orthodox faith. Although some customs don't transfer easily from one culture to another, the egg was a comfortable symbol among the Aleuts. Things are barren and dead here in winter, but new life bursts forth in the spring. With spring the many waterfowl come back to nest. With them come the eggs, a much needed source of protein when dried fish supplies are low or gone. With the eggs comes the reassurance of survival.

Even today the custom continues to bring smiles to faces and meanings to hearts. Tradition lives.

*If you would like to see one of the real Russian eggs, **Jean Mahoney** has one in her area in the Assistant Chief Counsel's Office, AAL-7. This egg was made by **Anna Petrashak**, who worked in the Alaskan Region stockroom/mailroom until her retirement.*

Reprinted with permission from *Alaska Magazine*, April 1983.

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was passed in 1971 to settle the long-standing claims of the Aleuts, Eskimos, and Indians, based on aboriginal use and occupancy. For extinguishing the aboriginal claims, Alaska Natives were compensated fee simple title to 44 million acres of land and $962.5 million.

ANCSA required individuals with one-fourth or more Native blood to be enrolled as shareholders in corporations organized to administer the land and money received under the Act. Twelve regional corporations were formed, along with more than 200 village corporations, four urban corporations, and a few Native groups. ANCSA also provided for selection and classification of national interest lands, and required village corporations to convey land to municipalities for growth and expansion.

Other provisions in ANCSA included creation of a short-term Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission to assist in the process of land use planning; a study of all federal programs designed to benefit Alaska Natives; and a 1985 report on the status of Alaska Natives and summaries of action taken to implement ANCSA.

Due to the complexity of ANCSA, numerous clarifying and technical amendments have been enacted.

Alûx the Sea

Alûx the sea,
a droning shaman,
puckers spraying lips
cleansing St. Paul
with mist.

Note: Alûx is the Eastern Aleut word for the Bering Sea, where St. Paul Island is located.

Flying Home

The sight of
Cape Fairweather
and Glacier Bay
beneath me
warms my spirit.
North Pacific to Icy Strait,
the sea floods me with its glow,
and memories of youth
shimmer on the mind.

"1991" Amendments to ANCSA

Few pieces of federal legislation are without flaws, and ANCSA was not one of them. Congress amended ANCSA several times since 1971, but those changes were primarily technical in nature.

At the AFN Convention in October 1982, delegates directed AFN to make "1991" its top priority in order to protect Native corporations from the changes due to occur beginning in 1991.

There were three major problems with ANCSA under the sobriquet "1991 Amendments." "1991" refers to the year that stock restrictions were to be removed. It came to stand for the three most important problems that Alaska Natives as a community had with ANCSA as enacted.

To most Alaska Natives, traditional land is much more than an economic asset. Traditional lands are used for subsistence hunting, gathering and fishing. The land also has tremendous cultural value and, for many Natives, their ties to the land and reliance on its resources represent the survival of their people.

To view the land as merely an economic asset would put enormous pressures on development and provide no protection against loss of land through corporate takeovers or to pay bad debts or back taxes. Traditional lands needed something more. AFN argued that undeveloped lands on which shareholders relied on for subsistence should remain protected from taxes and most other forms of involuntary seizure.

The second problem was that ANCSA represented a birthright to Alaska Natives. Yet, if stock restrictions were removed, Natives might be offered tremendous amounts of money

to sell their ownership — their shares of stock — in the corporation. Life in rural Alaska is not easy. Jobs are few and cash is short but indispensable, even in rural villages.

If the stock restrictions were lifted, Native shareholders would face a terrible dilemma: whether to sell their birthright, their stock in the corporation, or to resist an offer of much-needed cash. AFN argued to Congress that Alaska Natives should at least have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether their corporations would go public.

The third problem was that only Natives alive on the date the Act was signed, December 18, 1971, were enrolled as shareholders. Natives born after that could inherit stock, but they had no claim to it in their own right. AFN urged Congress to clarify that Native shareholders could empower their corporations to issue shares of stock to Natives born after the 1971 cut-off date.

AFN worked for several years to develop a consensus within the Native community about the amendments that would be proposed. In January 1987, the 1991 bill was introduced by Rep. Don Young of Alaska. The 1991 bill was passed by Congress in late December 1987. President Reagan signed it into law on February 3, 1988.

Whaling in Kaktovik

Watching Villagers Divide Up the Whale

Story by Scott Banks

I knew they had a whale when I looked out the window and saw them erecting a white wall tent on the beach. A small smokestack poked its head out of the roof, waiting for the fire that would cook the food and heat the coffee as the crew butchered the whale.

Fall is whaling time In Kaktovik, the only village on Barter Island. Flat and windblown, Barter Island lies east of Prudhoe Bay, about 75 miles from the Canadian border. Its 165 residents were allowed a quota of three whales by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) this year, and this was their first.

After the tent was up, the villagers brought out a large assortment of knives to sharpen. Some were large kitchen knives lashed to ax handles or pieces of two-by-two lumber. Ulus, traditional Eskimo knives, were also brought out. Many people consider the crescent shaped ulu the most useful knife made. The mood was festive as kids played on the beach, climbing and sliding on the beached icebergs. Parents walked up and down the beach, pointing and waiting for the first glimpse of the whale.

Suddenly a boat raced out of the fog carrying a bucket of muktuk, two-inch-thick pieces of boiled skin and blubber. It had been cut off the whale and cooked on a stove right in the boat. Everyone swarmed to the boat, laughing and screaming for the first fresh piece of muktuk of the year.

After what seemed like endless hours of waiting, a high-pitched whine of laboring boat engines filled the air and then the small boat armada loomed out of the mist, whale in tow behind them.

One boat carried a flag marking it as the boat that had killed the whale. Cheers and screams of delight filled the beach as the crowd waved to all the boat crews and strained to see how big the whale was.

The whale was very big so the boats had made slow progress. As soon as they got the whale close to shore, they attached a three-inch-diameter rope to the tail and then to a tractor on the beach. But when the tractor tried to pull the whale ashore, it spun its tracks in the sand. So a second tractor was brought in. The two tractors managed to pull the whale partly ashore before the rope snapped. The villagers then decided that the whale would have to be cut in half to be pulled ashore. The weight is estimated by giving a ton per foot of whale and this whale was 57 feet long. Not surprising then that the two tractors couldn't get it ashore.

The whale, a female bowhead, was eventually cut into three sections before it could be brought completely on the beach. The skin was rubbery and black, with tiny white streaks in it that looked like comets. It was hard to tell which side was up as the villagers started to cut it up.

The foot-thick blubber was cut off first. The villagers cut 1 1/2-foot-wide strips while others wielding meat hooks pulled the strip back, exposing more blubber. The strips were thrown in the back of pickup trucks .

The meat, which was dark red, almost purple, was cut off in the same way. Large chunks were cut off and thrown in the back of the pickups to be taken to a central place for distribution later. The villagers worked in shifts, going home to sleep and then coming back to relieve others. After everyone slept, the whale was divided among the villagers with everyone getting a portion. The captain of the boat that killed the whale got the choicest pieces.

One of the last things to be removed was the baleen. Like a hundred sieves, baleen is what the whale uses to strain food out of the sea water. Rows and rows of it line its mouth. Baleen has a consistency of fiberglass, and on the edges are long hairs that strain out the plankton and shrimp.

After 12 to 16 hours of work, most of the butchering was finished. The bones were left on the beach where they will be pushed on the ice in the winter and by spring carried away to sea. The people were tired, but after resting they'd be out in the boats again searching for another whale.

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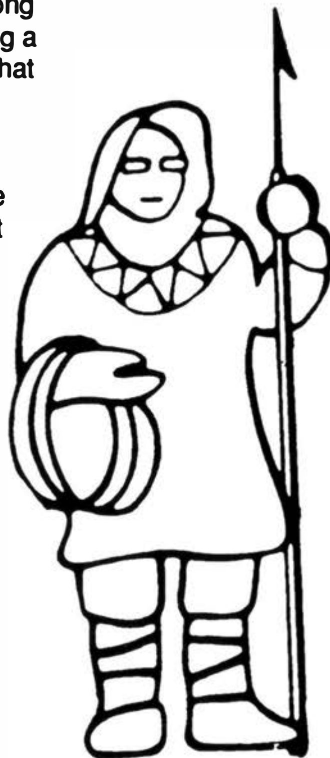

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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

March 2, 1992

YEAR OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, 1992

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Half a millennium ago, when European explorers amazed their compatriots with stories of a New World, what they actually described was a land that had long been home to America's native peoples. In the Northeast part of this country and along the Northwest coast, generations of tribes fished and hunted, other nomadic tribes roamed and foraged across the Great Basin. In the arid Southwest, native peoples irrigated the desert, cultivating what land they could. Each tribe formed a thriving community with its own customs, traditions, and system of social order.

The contributions that Native Americans have made to our Nation's history and culture are as numerous and varied as the tribes themselves. Over the years, they have added to their ancient wealth of art and folklore a rich legacy of service and achievement. Today we gratefully recall Native Americans who helped the early European settlers to survive in a strange new land; we salute the Navajo Code Talkers of World War 11 and all those Native Americans who have distinguished themselves in Indian descent — such as the great athlete, Jim Thorpe, and our 31st Vice President, Charles Curtis — who have instilled pride in others by teaching the heights of their respective fields. We also celebrate, with special admiration and gratitude, another enduring legacy of Native Americans: their close attachment to the land and their exemplary stewardship of its natural resources. In virtually every realm of our national life, the contributions of America's original inhabitants and their descendants continue.

During 1992, we will honor this country's native peoples as vital participants in the history of the United States. This year gives us the opportunity to recognize the special place that Native Americans hold in our society, to affirm the right of Indian tribes to exist as sovereign entities, and to seek greater mutual understanding and trust. Therefore, we gratefully salute all American Indians, expressing our support for tribal self-determination and assisting with efforts to celebrate and preserve each tribe's unique cultural heritage.

The Congress, by Public Law 102-188, has designated 1992 as the "Year of the American Indian" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this year.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim 1992 as the Year of the American Indian. I encourage Federal, State, and local government officials, interested groups and organizations, and the people of the United States to observe this year with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and sixteenth.

GEORGE BUSH