



A RECOLLECTION OF
Civil Rights Leader
Elizabeth Peratrovich
1911-1958

Compiled by
Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
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Dedication
To the children
of the
Alaska Native People

Sponsored by:

Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

Alaska Native Brotherhood Grand Camp
&
Alaska Native Sisterhood Grand Camp

Sealaska Corporation

Elizabeth Peratrovich

Civil Rights Leader

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Ultimate Civilization

1741 ~ 1867

By 1867, RUSSIA had possessed “Russian America” for 126 years, their claim coming by right of discovery in 1741. Evidence of Russia’s presence exists even today as many Native Alaskans still cling to the Russian Orthodox faith. The Russians established a trade that extended from New England to the Orient. New Archangel, their capital, today called Sitka, was the first seaport in western America, North or South, and it remained so for many years. New Archangel populated a thousand people before San Francisco had a hundred. It came to have a cathedral, a seminary, a college, and such other distinctions as two institutes for scientific research. It also had a shipyard, the only one north of Hawaii, from which the first steam vessel built in the Pacific was launched in 1841.

Russians caused the Pacific to become a busy sea

with their discovery of the vast wealth in fur seal and sea otter. The British soon brought in their trading ships followed by the Yankees, some of whom went into virtual partnership with the Russians. Furs were like gold, silver, or precious stones—wealth itself. The Chinese proved ready to pay high in tea and silk for sea otter fur. The Russians were actually the catalysts of our history in the Pacific, accounting even for the fact that we and not the British have Hawaii. The Natives of Archangel comprised two thirds of the citizens during the “Russian” period. Alaska Natives could read and write two or more languages and were considered civilized citizens by Russia. The Russian colony relied heavily on the Native’s knowledge, talents and expertise. Natives who worked for the Russian American Co. often held responsible positions in the trade operations.

In a 1923 news article entitled "Man Never Too Old To Learn" written by Samuel C. Davis, a Haida and past Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) Grand Camp President, says

"We have been told one time Russia owned Alaska, just how true this statement is no Haida has ever known, although I have heard the Haidas say something about the Russian-American Trading Co. having a post at Sitka, the same as the Hudson Bay had their Fort at Port Simpson, British Columbia, but I don't believe or no one can make me believe that the Hudson Bay Co. owned British Columbia, because of having a Fort at Port Simpson, B.C. Neither do I believe the Russian-American Fur Co. owned Alaska, because they had a fort at Sitka.

One thing I could not understand, is this: Why was it if Russia owned Alaska she made no laws to rule Alaska by? The only laws that I ever knew was the Thlingit and the Haida laws. I have been told that Russia did have laws, but those laws were only for inside of her forts and every Thlingit and Haida who entered that fort must obey those laws, but the moment he passed the gates on his way out his fear of obeying Russian laws ceased.

Someone may ask: What were the Thlingit and Haida laws? EYE FOR AN EYE. The law of equality. No one man or family could ever do a thing when the salmon came to the streams. Each family dried as much as would do that family for the winter. Otherwise when the salmon are ready to spawn the wooden traps were taken out of the streams and the spawning salmon were let go up the streams, to the lakes.

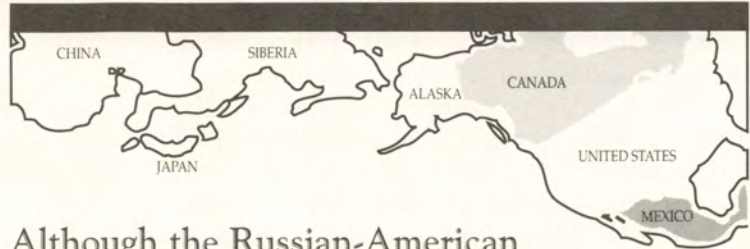
There were seasons for animals, there was a season for deer, season for mink, otter, bear, there were seasons to trap furs, hunting season for fur seals, sea otter. We were free to go as we liked, but we never spoiled this freedom.

But now a great shadow hangs over the Thlingit and Haidas in this great land of Alaska,

"Ask those rocks. They know because they are the only rocks that were here before the Haidas'."

There were seasons for animals, there was a season for deer, season for mink, otter, bear, there were seasons to trap furs, hunting season for fur seals, sea otter. We were free to go as we liked, but we never spoiled this freedom.

it's the shadow of the white man's greed. The Thlingits and Haidas never suffered for want of food until the white man came and greed and degeneration set in; dance houses set up; women and rum and dancing; sickness and dying. Did Russia do these things? Why in the world didn't they do all these things the white man did unto our people. You told the Thlingits and Haidas the Russians owned Alaska. If they did, Russia never came and took our streams and trapping grounds from us; they never told us how we might catch salmon and when we might stop; and if we wanted a stick of timber, Russia never gave us permits. No, we never saw a Russian on Prince of Wales Island; yet, come to think about it, I saw one Russian at Karta Bay and he lived with Chief Scowel's slaves at Kasaan Klakes and Takoo (now Hunter's Bay), where the two streams from which the Koak-lannas, the Khaquan Village on Prince of Wales Island harvested their salmon every summer. These streams were as good as a farm to the natives. To these streams, men, women, and children went every fishing season. Those were happy days. Those were days when we were free; there were no judges to take our canoes from us, there was no "thou shalt not" in Alaska those days. One day I asked my old grandfather how long since the Koak-lannas had been getting fish from these streams. The old man looked at me and said, "Ask those rocks. They know because they are the only rocks that were here before the Haidas'."



Although the Russian-American transaction was official, the transition for Alaskan Natives was a painful one.



A Transaction A Transition 1867 ~ 1905

The U.S. purchases Alaska

Under the treaty ceding the Russian possessions in North America, concluded March 30, 1867, and ratified May 28 of the same year, Alaska was sold to the United States for \$7,500,000 in gold. Under this treaty all inhabitants who did not reserve their natural allegiance to Russia, with the exception of members of uncivilized native tribes, were “admitted to the enjoyment of all rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States.”

Alaska was under the rule of the War Department until June, 1877 when troops were withdrawn, until then Alaska had been designated as a military district. The Treasury Department ruled until the arrival of the civil officers, appointed by President

Arthur under The Organic Act of May 17, 1884 which granted limited self-governance. The Organic Act served as a quasi-constitution for the territory. Since 1884, the governors of Alaska have reported annually to the Secretary of the Interior, whose jurisdiction in Alaskan affairs continues to predominate even today.

Although the Russian-American transaction was official, the transition for Alaskan Natives was a painful one. Utilizing the federal courts to seek justice proved futile for the Native people. Finally, in 1897, a petition from the Tlingit Orthodox Chiefs to the President of the United States pleaded for relief from barbaric treatment brought on by Presbyterian missionaries and government officials. Another petition was sent to the Imperial Russian Ambassador in Washington D.C. from Sitka’s Orthodox residents.

These appeals were written in both Russian and English, their names signed in Cyrillic Russian alphabet. When the Russian-American treaty was written the word "civilized" unfortunately was not defined and Natives who had previously enjoyed the freedoms of citizenship went unrecognized as American citizens. Their pleas went unheeded.

In 1898, Bishop Nicholas of Alaska sent a letter to the U.S. President, William McKinley, imploring him to tend to the innocent suffering of the citizens as well as the country's hunting and fishing resources. Bishop Nicholas pleaded that at least Articles II and III of the Declaration of 1867 be honored.

They read as follows:

ARTICLE II

In the cession of territory and dominion made by the preceding article, are included the right of property in all public lots and squares, vacant lands, and all public buildings, fortifications, barracks, and other edifices which are not private individual property. It is, however, understood and agreed, that the churches which have been built in the ceded territory by the Russian government, shall remain the property of such members of the Greek Oriental Church residents in the territory, as may choose to worship therein. Any government archives, papers, and documents relative to the territory and dominion aforesaid, which may be now existing there, will be left in the possession of the agent of the United States; but an authenticated copy of such of them as may be required, will be at all times, given by the United States to the Russian government, or to such Russian officers or subjects, as they may apply for.

ARTICLE III

The inhabitants of the ceded territory, according to their choice, reserving their natural allegiance, may return to Russia within three years; but if they should prefer to remain in the ceded territory, they, with the exception of uncivilized native tribes, shall be admitted to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages and immunities of citizens of the United States, and shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property and religion. The uncivilized tribes will be subject to such laws and regulations as the United States may, from time to time, adopt in regard to aboriginal tribes of that country.

The unofficial criteria for American citizenship was Christianity as a religion and fluency in the English language.

The unofficial criteria for American citizenship was Christianity as a religion and fluency in the English language. The bilingual, Russian Orthodox grass-root Native inhabitants of Alaska did not qualify nor were they compelled to join a Protestant denomination that forbade the use of Tlingit language and traditional Tlingit customs. Natives were forced to petition the highest in U.S. Authority and bring suit in federal court. However, many businesses and schools were segregated and the powers that be were not ready to change this.

A classic example in 1905 involved an Aleut girl living in Sitka who wanted to attend the white public school because of their music program. Her father was an American named Jones and hers was a bilingual Christian family. She asked the judge to declare her an American citizen making her eligible to attend the Anglo-American school. The judge denied this privilege because she was not "sufficiently" civilized. She went to a fish camp every summer with her Aleut grandmother to put up food. This was considered uncivilized.

This was, however, inconsistent with Judge James Wickersham's 1904 decision in the case of Minook, a Native at Fairbanks, that Minook was a U.S. citizen by virtue of the third article of the treaty with Russia, either as one of those inhabitants who accepted the benefits of the proffered naturalization, or as a member of an uncivilized Native tribe who has voluntarily taken up his residence separate from any tribe of Indians and has adopted the habits of civilized life. Through this raised the hopes of Native Alaskans, whites in general continued to disapprove of natives and disregard their rights.

One Indian, claiming fishing rights in a certain small bay which all other Indians had recognized as belonging to him as it did his forefathers, was rudely told by the white fishermen that the whites now owned all the fishing privileges, and that he was not a citizen and could no longer fish there. Flagrant abuses of Native interests by unprincipled whites occurred all too frequently.

PETITION FROM THE TLINGIT ORTHODOX CHIEFS TO THE U.S. PRESIDENT, 1897

In part: The reason for this (petition) is following; because here we cannot get any satisfaction to our just and lawful demands. We know that the Russian Government at the time of the transfer of Alaska to the U.S. did not sell us as slaves to America, but left us some rights and privileges which were later made lawful and firm by the U.S.

Congress. The Organic Act, providing a civil Government for Alaska in section 8 provides that the Indians or other persons in said district shall not be disturbed in the possession of any lands actually in their use or occupation or not claimed by them. On the strength of this law we always understood that every Indian has a right to dispose of his own life and liberty and his own property whether it consists in personal possessions or real estate for instance: lands, forests, lagoons, some small bay and rivers in which we could procure for ourselves the necessary food and other things for existence.

We always thought and surmised that the civil Government sent from Washington would punish criminals equally whether white or native, if a white man spills the blood of an Indian or an Indian spills the blood of a white man, the justice would mete out equal punishment. But in reality this equality was never practiced. It is true at the first four years of the protection of the American Eagle remained in our minds clear and unsullied cloud of the misunderstanding between a white man and Indian. In our minds' eye there rise 28 souls of our friends and relatives that innocently perished from the hand of white men. Of course we always made complaints to the U.S. Courts, and in Courts every where received from the Authorities only promises and never satisfaction. Not a single white murderer...ever received retaliation and now enjoys full liberty. With all this we never lost faith in the Government at Washington. This sorrowful reality only made us lose faith in persons sent out here by the government.

...We offer our petition which is follows:

1) Not allow Mr. Brady (& Co., workers with the Presbyterian Mission) a right of way through the centre of (our) village along the narrow beach which is situated between the water and our houses, where we keep our boats, canoes, and other things. To forbid him to destroy buildings and other property while building this road. We do not offer pretensions to the land that he now possesses, which was from time immemorial the property of our ancestors, and serves us as cemetery. It is enough for him that he unlawfully took possession of this land, and with the bones of some he banked his ground and some he threw into the water. We do not wish to have such work going on, and do not wish other white men to follow Mr. Brady's example.

2) We beg to have the superintendent of the Baranoff Packing Co. forbidden to take way from us our bays, streams and lagoons where we fished long before white man came. We want him to do such fishing as necessary for him with our consent. We demand that he stop throwing bars and traps across the streams, where by the fish cannot enter the lakes for the purpose of spawning. His method of fishing in the last 8 years in Redout, cross Sound, Hoonah, Whale Bay, Nika Bay, Red Fish Bay, compels us to see very plainly that the places mentioned are becoming empty.

Now the Thlingits are compelled to put up their fish in distant places, which with the canoe is reached only with great deal of hardship.

3) We do not want American saloons. We beg the Government to close them... We have brought cases to the local authorities here and the result is that the white man goes free and unpunished, but the Native suffers fines, imprisonment and punishment. We do not want the civilization that only does not stop saloons but encourages them...

We could go on without end to our petitions. We have shown facts and beg the Government to allow us some recognition. The answer to former petitions was never received by the Indians perhaps through the fault of the mediator, in the petition, and we beg the Government to the answer to this to Khlantich, head of the Sitka tribe.

PETITION FROM THE ORTHODOX RESIDENTS OF SITKA
TO THE IMPERIAL RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR, VON
KOTZEBUE, IN WASHINGTON, D.C., 1897

In part: We all, the undersigned Orthodox residents of Sitka, as well of Russian descent as of Native races, take the liberty of addressing you with the entreaty that you may extend your protection to the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, and defend it against oppression and violence of Presbyterian missionaries and other persons, not infrequently even at those of Government officials...

The Orthodox Natives, Indians, numbering 482, are continually subjected to vexations of every description. Nor can they obtain redress in the courts and other official replaces, where missionaries influences reign supreme...

Not a year passes but tidings of similar and even worse outrages are received from remote Alaska.

LETTER FROM BISHOP NICHOLAS OF ALASKA TO U.S.
PRESIDENT WILLIAM MCKINLEY, 5 OCTOBER 1898

In part: Alaska stands in need of radical reform in all direction. This I wrote to you now. It is not enough that certain rights were secured to the country in the treaty of 1867, by which it was ceded to America by the Russian Government; those rights should be protected with firmness by the law and authorities. A limit must be sent to the abuses of the various companies, more especially those of the Alaska Commercial Co., which for over 30 years has had there the uncontrolled management of affairs and has reduced the country's hunting and fishing resources to absolute exhaustion, and the population to beggary and semi-starvation. A limit must be set to the abuses of officials who, as shown by the experience of many years, are sent there without any discrimination and exclusively on the recommendation of Alaska's immovable guardian...

Our church allows us only to remonstrate with the highest authority on behalf of the oppressed and innocently suffering...but never allows us to incite citizens to sedition or treason... And so, Mr. President, be indulgent and gracious to poor, hapless Alaska and show the Orthodox Church there is respect to which it is entitled, if not by its whole record in that country, yet at least by Articles 2 and 3 of the Declaration of 1867.

The U.S. Congress
granted American
citizenship to all
Native Americans in
1924. Though recognition
was official, equality was
far from a reality.



Struggle for Democracy

Elizabeth Wanamaker was born on Independence Day 1911 in Petersburg, Alaska. She was the adopted daughter of Andrew and Mary Wanamaker, Presbyterian Church missionaries for Angoon, Klawock, Kake and Klukwan.

In 1912, Alaska gained a territorial legislature of eight senators and sixteen house of representatives. The senate was apportioned into four divisions based mainly on regional locations. The first division was Southeast (S.E.); the second the Nome area; the third was Southcentral Alaska; the fourth was Fairbanks area. The house's proportional districting was inconsistently based on population rather than region. Also in 1912, a group of progressive Natives from various S.E. villages formed the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB). These young men were attending an education conference in Juneau at the Indian Affairs Office. Their ultimate objective was the right to U.S.

citizenship and their slogan was "No Taxation Without Representation."

The Alaska Native Sisterhood (ANS) was founded in 1915 and has worked with and walked side-by-side the ANB, on all roads standing firm on all Native issues, since.

The U.S. Congress granted American citizenship to all Native Americans in 1924. Though recognition was official, equality was far from a reality. Signs in businesses and stores read "No Natives Allowed," "We cater to white trade only," "No Dogs, No Natives," or advertised "Meals at all hours - All white help." Natives in Juneau could only buy homes in certain parts of town, could only attend Indian schools..

William Paul Sr. of Wrangell was the first Native Alaskan elected to serve on the Alaska Territorial legislature during the 1925 and 1927 sessions. His election alone held no real influence being a sole

minority amongst legislators who represented primary outside interests, known as "absentee ownership." The ANB and ANS became active in fighting discrimination against Natives. The matter came to a climax in 1929 when the Natives openly resented "For Natives Only" signs in the balconies of a motion-picture house in Juneau. A boycott organized by the ANB was effective in having theaters desegregated.

In 1934, Ernest Gruening began working for the Division of Territories and Island Possessions as their director. In the spring of 1936 he visited Alaska for the first time. During his initial trip through Juneau he observed some fine residences in town except around the mine and mine entrance, the waterfront and even the central portion of the city was plainly slummy. One series of habitations under a single roof, called Robert's Row, were man-sized kennels. When Gruening asked why the shacks were not condemned as health and fire hazards he learned that some of the worst shanties were owned by the capital's leading

citizens and were lucrative sources of income for them. Most of the dwellings in the Indian village on the flats just above the high-tide level was plainly visible from many of the surrounding and more loftily perched homes, including the porticoed Governor's Mansion.

In 1939 Ernest Gruening was appointed as Governor for the territory of Alaska. By this time the efforts of the ANB and ANS was beginning to be recognized by the officials of the Alaska Territory. On February 3, Hugh J. Wade, Territorial Director for the Social Security Board, wrote a letter to the ANB Grand Camp urging them to pass a resolution to amend the Mother's Pension law so that Natives could be included in the benefits and therefore put the territory in a position to receive whatever benefits were due under the Social Security Act. Gruening's appointment and the official request for the ANB to become actively involved in the political process served to accelerate the movement to come.



Juneau Indian Village

Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library



Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library

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Preparing for Battle

In 1940, Roy Peratrovich was elected as ANB Grand Camp President. Bob Martin Sr., in a 1986 *JUNEAU EMPIRE* interview with Vern Metcalfe, remembers attending the 1941 convention in Hydaburg where the initial movement was made to bring about equal rights. A white woman, who was an honorary member of the ANS camp from Kake, brought to the attention of the convention that she had been denied service at a Juneau beauty parlor because she was mistaken as a Native. Henrietta Newton, a teacher living in Kake, married to a Tlingit man, had gone to Juneau for groceries and winter supplies. While she was in town, she called a local beauty parlor and made a hair appointment for a perm. Later, the owner of the shop saw Mr. Newton walking down the street with her Native sister-in-law and two children.

The next day, when Mrs. Newton arrived at the

shop for her appointment, the owner told her, "I'm sorry, we don't cater to Indian trade." The owner had mistaken her as a Native. She angrily told the shop owner that she was 100% Swiss and wouldn't take her perm if she gave it to her free. As Mrs. Newton strode out of the shop, the owner followed behind her trying to apologize. This was not acceptable to Mrs. Newton and her testimony to the ANB and ANS convention brought the discrimination issue to the front line and got attention. "The convention didn't know what avenue to take to pursue all of this," Martin recounted, "but we finally decided to make a resolution to the legislature asking that some remedy be found." It was during this convention that the grand officers were ordered to take the issue of race discrimination to task.

On December 30, 1941, ANB Grand President Roy and ANS Grand Vice-President Elizabeth, wrote

a letter to the Governor of Alaska calling attention to the un-American signs on the Douglas Inn which read "No Natives Allowed." The letter reminded the Governor that Natives pay the required taxes to the territory—even the unjust school tax—to a system that excluded Native children from the public schools. And, the fact that World War II was a part of everyone's lives without discrimination. Native men were called to war to protect the very freedom the Douglas Inn proprietor enjoyed without thought. It was a compelling objection complete with a resolution, simple yet respectful and a challenge to the concept that all men are created equal. Simply put, "If our people misbehave, send the parties concerned out but let those that conduct themselves respectfully be free to come and go."

Coincidentally, Governor Gruening had begun

to wage his own battle against discrimination. He too was disturbed by the offensive signs he saw throughout Alaska. As a result, Gruening and representatives of the ANB met with proprietors of businesses where the signs were displayed, while the problem seemed to only worsen.

Discrimination against Native Alaskans was not confined to restaurants and movie houses and its most blatant expression came with the war as it was brought to the attention of Governor Gruening first hand during a visit to Ketchikan. A delegation of three young Native women reported to him that Native girls were being excluded from the USOs, the recreation centers provided for members of the armed services. Gruening contends, in his book Many Battles, that the absurdity, as well as the cruelty, of this practice lay in the fact that while Native young

men in uniform were admitted freely to the USOs, their sisters were not. And this discriminatory practice was carried so far that if a Native GI and a white GI were walking or talking together on a street corner, and a Native girl—perhaps the sister of the Native soldier—joined them, an MP would come along and order them to 'break it up.'"

Unable to change the policy of the Alaska Defense Command in Anchorage, Gruening flew to Washington, D.C. to resolve the USO matter with President Roosevelt. The President promised to have the Alaska Defense Command overruled and the practice of excluding Native girls from the USOs stopped. It soon was, on an order from the Secretary of War.

A few weeks later, Governor Gruening received a telegram from a seventeen year old Nome girl, half-white, half-Eskimo, who went to the movie with a friend, a sergeant in the Army. She had been ultimately thrown out from the theater for sitting on the wrong side of the aisle. When she struggled, she was arrested and spent the night in jail. The Governor immediately sent a telegram to the Mayor of Nome, Swedish-born, Edward Anderson, denouncing the incident and asking for an explanation. Mayor Anderson wired back that he considered it

<p>LOUIS F. PAUL, D.D. Peratrovich Vice-President</p> <p>WILLIAM EARL Albert Brown Vice-President</p> <p>LORETTA HARRIS-DON Miller Vice-President</p> <p>FRANK BOOTE Vice-President</p> <p>A. J. WANAMAKER Vice-President, Alaska</p>	<p>ALASKA NATIVE BROTHERHOOD</p> <p>ESTABLISHED 1913</p> <p>Juneau, Alaska. December 30, 1941</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE COM</p> <p>Frank D. Price</p> <p>Frank Anderson</p> <p>Edith Young</p> <p>Andrew F. Hays</p> <p>S. G. Davis</p> <p>Frank Smith</p> <p>Lois F. Paul</p> <p>Wm. A. Paul</p> <p>Cyril J. Zieff</p> <p>P. G. Johnson</p>
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Hon. Ernest Gruening
Governor of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Mr. Gruening,

My attention has been called to a business establishment in Douglas, namely, "Douglas Inn," which has a sign on the door which reads, "No Natives Allowed."

In view of the present emergency, when unity is being stressed don't you think that it is very Un-American? We have always contended that we are entitled to every benefit that is accorded our so called white brothers. We pay the required taxes, taxes in some instances that we feel are unjust, such as the school tax. Our Native people pay the school tax each year to educate the white children, yet they try to exclude our children from these schools.

In the present emergency our Native boys are being called upon to defend our beloved country, just as the white boys. There is no distinction being made there but yet when we try to patronize some business establishments we are told in most cases that Natives are not allowed.

The proprietor of "Douglas Inn" do not seem to realize that our Native boys are just as willing as the white boys to lay down their lives to protect the freedom that he enjoys. Instead he shows his appreciation by having a "No Natives Allowed" on his door.

We were shocked when the Jews were discriminated against in Germany. Stories were told of public places having signs, "No Jews Allowed." All Freedom loving people in our country were horrified at these remarks yet it is being practiced in our country.

To us Indians consider this an outrage because we are the real Natives of Alaska by reason of our ancestors who have guarded these shores and woods for years past. We will still be here to guard our beloved country while hordes of uninterested whites will be fleeing South.

When a Norwegian, Swede or an Irishman makes a fool of himself in any of these business establishments he is asked to leave and it is not held against all of the Norwegians, Swedes or what have you. We ask that we be accorded the same considerations. If our people misbehave, send the parties concerned out but let those that conduct themselves respectfully be free to come and go.

We know that you have the interest of the Native people at heart and we are asking that you use your influence to eliminate this discrimination, not only in Juneau or Douglas, but in the whole Territory.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Elizabeth Peratrovich
Grand Vice Pres., A.N.B.

Roy Peratrovich
Grand Pres., A.N.B.

most regrettable and that it would not happen again.

Meanwhile, the Alaska Native Sisterhood was doing their part in bringing anti-discrimination to the forefront. Mrs. Cecelia Kunz, a distinguished Tlingit woman of Juneau relates that during this time members of the Juneau ANS went to the local selective service office and demanded to see a "No Indians Allowed" sign in their window. This action demonstrates how the ANS did not miss an opportunity to make the anti-discrimination point clear.

Elizabeth Peratrovich had gotten five young ladies to lobby a Senator from Nome who was against the anti-discrimination movement. In those days, the legislature met every other odd year and for sixty days only. According to Connie Paddock, who was one of the lobbying ladies, they used Elizabeth's strategy to get into Senator Frank Whaley's office. Evelyn Ridley, from Ketchikan, was the spokesperson for the group. Evelyn called the Senator and explained that she wanted to talk to him about the anti-discrimination bill that was coming up in the current session. He invited her to his office and was overwhelmed when he greeted five visitors instead of only one. The other three ladies were Nellie Peratrovich West (Roy's niece), Jenny Corrigan-Adams and Helen Davis, both from Bethel. The ladies proceeded to tell Senator Whaley what it felt like to be discriminated against—not being allowed to join the USO, the signs in the businesses. In a recent interview with Connie Paddock, she related that the only place to go then was Percy's Cafe. The Senator could not believe that good-looking young ladies like them would not be allowed in USOs. Connie had been working for the Indian Affairs Office then and was not even aware of the legislature until Elizabeth had gotten them involved. Connie's husband, Tom, was Elizabeth's first cousin. Part of Elizabeth's strategy was utilizing friends and relatives as power-driven tools in the anti-discrimination movement.

Additionally, Governor Gruening sat down with the Grand Presidents of ANB and ANS, Roy and Elizabeth, to work out further strategy. Anthony Diamond, Alaska's Representative to the U.S. House, supplied sample bills from around the country and information to the ANB to help frame anti-discrimination legislation. On their own tab, the Grand Presidents traveled around educating, convincing, taking note of the slightest example of discrimination, and starting up new ANB and ANS camps. The fact that the Grand Camp met in late fall and the legislature in mid-winter was a strategic advantage in itself.

In the 1943 legislature, Governor Gruening's reapportionment bill enlarged the territorial legislative body from eight to sixteen Senators and from

In the 1943 legislature, Governor Gruening's reapportionment bill enlarged the territorial legislative body from eight to sixteen Senators and from sixteen to twenty-four representatives. This was a major turning point in making the legislature more for the people, by the people.

sixteen to twenty-four representatives. This was a major turning point in making the legislature more for the people, by the people. The absentee ownership representation would greatly weaken as a result.

The draft legislation to outlaw discriminatory practices in Alaska was introduced in the sixteenth legislature, sponsored by Senator Norman R. Walker, it was entitled: "An Act to provide full and equal accommodation within the jurisdiction of the Territory, and to provide penalties for violations, and declaring an emergency." This bill was defeated after a bitter floor fight. Roy Peratrovich said that an Anchorage legislature taught him his first lesson in "double cross politics" when he promised to support the bill and changed over the last minute. The bill was defeated with a tie vote.

In the House, Speaker Jim Davis also sponsored a bill eliminating all discrimination based on race, but only "by request." This bill not only prohibited discrimination in public places but also opened the local schools to Native children, thus going beyond what Governor Gruening felt was attainable at the time since the Office of Indian Affairs had an established system of separate schools. It was doubted that this could be changed all at once especially since it involved federal policy which the legislature was powerless to alter. During the hearing on Davis' bill before the whole House, it was opposed by R.R. Robertson, president of the Juneau School Board, on the grounds that it would place an unwarranted burden on the Juneau School System. The bill was defeated 9 to 7.

Governor Gruening always used what influence he could to fight incidents of discrimination, however, he knew that the final outcome of the battle rested with the Native people themselves.

Interestingly, 82 year old Cecelia Kunz recalls that a Juneau school board president requested that Indian Affairs filter Johnson- O'Malley money to the school district to pay the white teachers who had to teach Native children. JOM money had become available in 1929 or 1930 specifically for the benefit of Indian children. By this time, Natives could go to the white schools in Juneau after they graduated from the eighth grade. Mrs. Kunz remembers Elizabeth Peratrovich as Grand ANS President addressing the education issue to the conventions. She described Elizabeth as crying as she talked about the Native children being counted by "the head, like cattle."

Governor Gruening always used what influence he could to fight incidents of discrimination, however, he knew that the final outcome of the battle rested with the Native people themselves. He so presented his views in late fall at the thirteenth annual ANB and ANS convention in Hoonah. Gruening was called to Washington on business and asked Bob Bartlett, Territorial Secretary, to present

his address in his absence. Mr. Bartlett, who shared the governor's views, made the presentation.

The Governor's address declared his views that Native people, who comprise about three-sevenths of Alaska's population, are entitled to and should play a large part in the political and economic life of the Territory. He related happenings of discrimination, the set-back of the effort, and the need to rectify it.

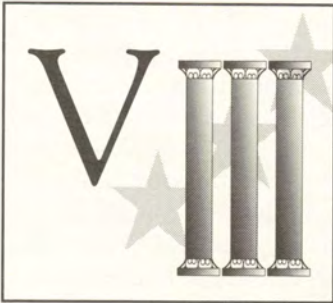
Gruening called attention to Delegate Diamond's success in getting Congress to amend the Alaska Organic Act that enlarged the Territorial Legislature. He pointed out that this also provided proportional representation in the House with a new apportionment based on population after each decennial census. The Native population in S.E. Alaska then was about 6,000 out of 24,000. On a proportional basis, this entitles two out of eight seats in the House and one out of four seats in the Senate. He urged the Native community to nominate and elect worthy and well qualified candidates and to take part in the effort to end the discrimination against Natives in Alaska. And that is exactly what the Native community did.

The 1944 primaries nominated the worthy and well qualified Frank Peratrovich, a merchant from Klawock (and Roy's brother), and Andrew Hope, a boat-builder from Sitka. They came in first and third out of fifteen candidates. In the general election, they ran second and third out of sixteen candidates, which was evidence that racial prejudice was not as considerable as it was in the legislature. These results showed that the majority of Alaskans were willing to judge and elect men on the basis of merit.

The annual ANB and ANS convention was held in Kake in the fall of 1944. Resolution No. 2, entitled: DISCRIMINATION, was passed. Everyone was poised and ready for the battle to come...

Governor Gruening... urged the Native community to nominate and elect worthy and well qualified candidates and to take part in the effort to end the discrimination against Natives in Alaska. And that is exactly what the Native community did.

It was after the bitter realization and full impact of discrimination had hit that the Peratrovich's went to work with force.



The Battle

Roy Peratrovich was from Klawock, Alaska, and there he and Elizabeth lived until moving to Juneau with their three small children in 1941. They thought there would be advantages of a larger city, nice homes, conveniences, a public school system. Instead, they found that Natives were not welcome in Juneau. Roy Peratrovich Jr., who was seven at the time, remembers that there had been signs of discrimination even in Klawock but it wasn't until their move to Juneau they became fully aware of how blatant hatred from whites was. The Peratrovich's found a home in a nice neighborhood where they could envision their children playing and establishing lasting childhood friendships. But when the owners realized they were Indian, the lease agreement was not let. As for school, that was another disappoint-

ment. To say they were hardly encouraged to feel comfortable was putting it nicely, according to Roy Jr.

Elizabeth was a well educated woman, a mother, a member of the Presbyterian Church, and Grand Camp President for the ANS. Elizabeth was an effective leader who managed her husband rather than herself into powerful positions during their life together. Roy once quoted his wife saying to him early in their marriage, "This is your home and your people. Why don't you go out and help them?" Further, he added, "She got me started and suggested we move where we could be of more use (Juneau). She was the manager. She saw the possibilities. She never once stepped out in front...(but) made it look as if I made my own way."

It was after the bitter realization and full impact

**On a cold and bleak
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of discrimination had hit that the Peratrovich's went to work with force. They began by joining the strength of each others perspective titles as officials of ANB and ANS Grand Camp and wrote a letter to Governor Ernest Gruening (exhibit 4). This letter combined the forces Alaska needed to make an impact and began many a productive meeting with each other. Territorial officials and the Native people joined together in a common allegiance to make discrimination an illegal matter in Alaska.

ANS members did not stop at confronting the selective service office. There was also a visit to the *DAILY ALASKA EMPIRE* to formally object to their practice of publishing names and ages of Indian children as front page news whenever they got into trouble with the police. ANS demanded that Indian children be treated the same as the white children in the same situation. Cecelia Kunz recalls that part of the movement as she has been an active member of ANS since she first joined in 1925. She now holds the high office of Grand ANS President Emeritus. Though retired from active service she retains rank within the ANS and provides advice and guidance in helping others maintain the organization's purpose.

World War II put Alaska on the map. Its new highways and airfields were the tools of postwar progress, and many GIs who had served stayed. The Governor's message to the enlarged legislature in January 1945 was directed at the need of taking care of returning veterans by transforming Alaska into a land of opportunity that would benefit all its citizens. It was hoped that, at least, the necessary social and economic reforms would not fall on deaf ears in the legislature.

The Governor urged the legislature to enact veteran's benefits, to create a development board (as every state in the Union and the territory of Hawaii had long done), a Department of Health with a full-time health commissioner and appropriations to combat the shocking incidence of tuberculosis, a Department of Agriculture, a Department of Taxation to

ensure that the few taxes levied were collected (they had been largely evaded, especially the \$5 so-called school tax—the only contribution non-resident fishermen, placer miners and construction workers were asked to pay), a teacher's retirement act, a housing agency, a recompilation of Alaska laws, a referendum on statehood, labor legislation improvement, increased salaries for territorial employees, and revenue reforms—a progressive fish-trap tax.

All that optimism from the governor when lobbyists still exerted a powerful influence over members of the Senate, although their influence in the House was waning. A case in point was the fate of Representative Stanley McCutcheon's bill "to provide benefits for returning veterans." It passed the House 16 to 8, but the Senate referred it to the Committee on Finance and Corporations—composed of chairman Allen Shattuck, Frank Whaley, Ed Coffey, and Leo Rogge—which reported a unanimous "do not pass" and kept the bill buried in the committee throughout the session.

Fortunately, the anti-discrimination bill fared better. On a cold and bleak February afternoon in 1945, the legislative gallery was packed to the rafters. Juneau citizens turned out in force. According to Cecelia Kunz, who was present that day, the gallery doors were both open, even the hall was full of people. The ones in the back stood on chairs. There were quite a few Natives, especially men, ANB, ANS, and other Indian spectators. Seated among them was Elizabeth Peratrovich, a determined 34-year old ANS Grand President. Stylishly dressed in the fashion of the 1940s, her hair neatly coiffured, she waited patiently, her hands busily knitting as she listened.

The anti-discrimination bill was introduced by Edward Anderson, the Swedish-born former Mayor of Nome. The bill passed the House with little debate by a vote of 19 to 5. When it came up in the Senate, a two hour discussion followed where it was violently opposed by Allen Shattuck. "Far from being brought closer together, which will result from this bill," he said, "the races should be kept further apart. Who are these people, barely out of savagery, who want to associate with us whites with 5,000 years of recorded civilization behind us?" Senator Frank Whaley, a bush pilot and gold miner from Fairbanks, also opposed the bill. Declaring that he had an amendment to propose to the measure, Whaley read a lengthy prepared address to the assembly. He labeled the measure "a lawyer's dream and a natural in creating hard feelings between whites and natives." Whaley said he did not want to sit next to an Eskimo in a theater, they smelled. Declaring their opposition to the law, unless amended, Senators Tolber Scott and Grenold

Collins also spoke their feelings. Senator Scott declared, "Mixed breeds are the source of trouble, it is they only who wish to associate with the whites. It would have been better had the Eskimos put up signs 'No whites allowed.' This issue is simply an effort to create political capital for some legislators. Certainly white women have done their part in keeping the races distinct, if white men had done as well there would be no racial feeling in Alaska.

Senator Collens spoke in support of Senator Scott, "The Eskimos are not an inferior race, but they are an individual race. The pure Eskimos are proud of their origin and are aware that harm comes to them from mixing with whites. It is the mixed breed who is not accepted by either race who causes the trouble. I believe in racial pride and do not think this bill will do other than arouse bitterness. Why we should prohibit the sale of liquor to these Natives, that's the real root of our trouble. Mrs. Kunz recalls one Senator getting so upset he jumped up knocking his chair over and stomped out. The crowd booed his actions.

Senator O.D. Cochran declared himself "personally assailed" by Senator Whaley's remarks and raised his voice in favor of the bill citing instances of discrimination which came from his own knowledge. Senator Walker also held firm in favor of the bill, Senator Joe Green was chairman of the hearing.

Elizabeth Peratrovich listened quietly as witnesses called for separation of the white and Native races in Alaska. She heard a church leader sermonize that it would take thirty to one hundred years before Alaska Natives would reach the equality of the whiteman.

Senator N.R. Walker asked Roy Peratrovich, as ANB Grand President, to stand and, following questions that established his education, background and right to speak for the Indians, he was then invited to express his views on the bill. Mr. Peratrovich pointed out that the Governor, in his report to the Secretary of the Interior, as well as in his message to the legislature, recognized the existence of discrimination. He quoted the plank adopted by the Democratic Party at its Fairbanks convention, which favored action on the Natives' behalf. A "plank" is stated principles that make up a platform or program of a political party. He read the names of the committee who helped frame that plank and pointed out that among them were members of the present Senate body. "Only Indians can know how it feels to be discriminated against," Peratrovich said. "Either you are for discrimination or you are against it accordingly as you vote on this bill," he added.

According to established legislative custom during the debate on the bill, an opportunity was

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Her plea could not have
been more effective.

offered to anyone present to voice their views. Elizabeth Peratrovich, Grand President for ANS, rose in the gallery and said she would like to be heard. She came to the floor, crossed it and sat next to the Senate President on his raised platform. Elizabeth was a beautiful woman with the ability to maintain her composure in even the most heated debate. As she stood before the all male, predominately white legislator's, the packed gallery was tense with expectation. Clearly, the passage of this bill would spell profound social change in Alaska.

"I would not have expected," Elizabeth said in a quiet steady voice, "that I, who am barely out of savagery, would have to remind gentlemen with five thousand years of recorded civilization behind them of our Bill or Rights. When my husband and I came to Juneau and sought a home in a nice neighborhood where our children could play happily with our neighbors' children, we found such a house and had arranged to lease it. When the owners learned that we were Indians, they said 'no.' Would we be compelled to live in the slums?" Her intelligence was obvious, her composure faultless. After giving a potent, neatly worded picture of discrimination against the Indians and other Native people, Mrs. Peratrovich said, "There are three kinds of persons who practice discrimination. First, the politician who wants to maintain an inferior minority group so that he can always promise them something. Second, the Mr. and Mrs. Jones who aren't quite sure of their social position and who are nice to you on one occasion and can't see you on others, depending on who they are with. Third, the great superman who believes in the superiority of the white race." Discrimination suffered by herself and her friends, President Peratrovich told the assembled body, "has forced the finest of our race to associate with white trash." There was an awesome silence in the packed hall, you could hear a pin drop.

Asked by Senator Shattuck if she thought the

proposed bill would eliminate discrimination, Elizabeth Peratrovich queried in rebuttal, "Do your laws against larceny and even murder prevent those crimes? No law will eliminate crimes but at least you as legislators can assert to the world that you recognize the evil of the present situation and speak your intent to help us overcome discrimination."

When she finished, there was a wild burst of applause from the gallery and senate floor alike.

There was tears, crying. Her plea could not have been more effective. Opposition that had appeared to speak with a strong voice was forced to a defensive whisper at the close of that senate hearing by a five foot five inch Tlingit woman. The Senate passed the bill 11 to 5 on February 8, 1945. A new era in Alaska's racial relations had begun.

Of Elizabeth Peratrovich, the *DAILY ALASKA EMPIRE* wrote, "It was the neatest perfor-

TERRITORY OF ALASKA

Juneau, Alaska

CHAPTER 2

AN ACT

To provide for full and equal accommodations, facilities and privileges to all citizens in places of public accommodation within the jurisdiction of the Territory of Alaska; to provide penalties to violations.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Territory of Alaska:

Section 1. All citizens within the jurisdiction of the Territory of Alaska shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of public inns, restaurants, eating houses, hotels, soda fountains, soft drink parlors, taverns, roadhouses, barber shops, beauty parlors, bathrooms, resthouses, theaters, skating rinks, cafes, ice cream parlors, transportation companies, and all other conveyances and amusements, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all citizens.

Section 2. Any person who shall violate or aid or incite a violation of said full and equal enjoyment; or any person who shall display any printed or written sign indicating a discrimination on racial grounds of said full and equal enjoyment, for each day for which said sign is displayed shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment in jail for not more than thirty (30) days or fined no more than two hundred fifty (\$250.00) dollars, or both. Approved February 16, 1945.

TERRITORY OF ALASKA

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR

Juneau, Alaska

CHAPTER 21

AN ACT

To amend Section 20-1-4, Alaska Compiled Laws Annotated 1949, prescribing penalties for discrimination in providing full and equal accommodations, facilities and privileges to all citizens in places of accommodation within the jurisdiction of the Territory of Alaska.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Territory of Alaska:

Section 1. That Sec. 20-1-4, Alaska Compiled Laws Annotated 1949, is hereby amended to read as follows:

Sec. 20-1-4. Violation as misdemeanor: Punishment. Any person who shall violate or aid or incite a violation of said full and equal enjoyment; or any person who shall display any printed or written sign indicating a discrimination on racial grounds of said full and equal enjoyment, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment in jail for not more than thirty (30) days or fined not more than \$250.00 or both. Approved March 2, 1949.



Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich stand with officers of the House while Governor Gruening signs the anti-discrimination bill.

Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library

mance of any witness yet to appear before this session and there were a few red senatorial ears as she regally left the chambers.”

That evening, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Peratrovich could be seen at the Baranoff Hotel, dancing all night long. Dancing amongst people they did not personally know, dancing in an accommodation where the day before they were not welcome. They celebrated. They were happy. They belonged.

While all accounts of lobbying efforts verify Elizabeth Peratrovich’s speech-writing ability and knowledge of the political process, those who knew her say her most effective leadership was her “presence.” “She was forceful, but never intimidating,” remembered Ellen Hayes, a family friend. “No one could out talk Elizabeth eye ball to eye ball. It’s hard to understand how she did it. No one could out talk her,” says Henrietta Newton. Stella Martin appropriately described Elizabeth as “a fighter with velvet

gloves.” After three years of rallying, Roy Jr. says it was again his mother’s style that made her testimony the key presentation of that day. “At first everyone expected my father to be the one carrying the guns,” he says. “They weren’t ready for my mother.”

Ernest Gruening recalled, “Had it not been for that beautiful Tlingit woman, Elizabeth Peratrovich, being on hand every day in the hallways, it (the anti-discrimination bill) would have never passed. He quipped that her husband also performed nobly. Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich were the only two who testified in support of their bill. There is a picture that hangs in the Juneau ANB offices depicting Roy and Elizabeth along with officers of the House standing by while Governor Gruening signed the landmark bill. It was the first such document passed by any state or territory since the Civil War.

Elizabeth Peratrovich did not withdraw from the public eye once the equal rights bill was passed.

Her personal commitment to the World War II effort and her alignment of this effort with those of her people seeking equality was sincerely demonstrated in a letter seeking money for the American Red Cross War Fund. In the letter addressed to her "Sisters and Brothers of all ANB and ANS Camps" she painted a portrait of the prisoners of war whose only hope came in the form of a weekly package from the Red Cross. She eloquently wrote, "You and I have done a lot of talking about the rights of each and everyone of us. Let us show that we adequately take care of such rights by first backing our Armed Forces through the American Red Cross."

During the 1945 ANB and ANS Grand Camp Convention held in Angoon, Grand ANS President, Elizabeth Peratrovich, presented a letter from the Territorial Chairman of the Red Cross War Fund which was read by the Grand Secretary. The letter contained a citation — a honorable mention of the ANB and ANS on official report for meritorious service provided for the Armed Forces.

Further, Elizabeth reported that during the 1944 convention the ANS had declared a Health and Sanitation Month which was honored the following

April and received favorable comment from many sources, although the Office of Indian Affairs and the Territorial Health Department did not cooperate much. She outlined the program that occurred during the Health and Sanitation month and noted that the Sitka Camp had the best report. She called it "the biggest drive we have ever sponsored" and requested the ANB Executive Committee to support the effort and go on record continuing April as Health and Sanitation Month. She not only received ANB's support but also congratulations from the Indian Affairs General Superintendent on her progressive thinking.

By Special Order of the Chair, it was announced that the next order of business of the 1945 Convention was the address of Governor Ernest Gruening, who was directed to be escorted to the rostrum by ANS Grand President Elizabeth Peratrovich and Andrew Hope. The Grand Camp is noted for its magnificent pomp and circumstance and, in light of the recent hard won victory, this was another such time. Governor Gruening's reception by ANB and ANS was heartfelt.

The Governor addressed the Convention and visitors as follows:

"Two years ago I spoke of the need of your taking more part in Territorial affairs to combat discrimination. After partially successful attempts, we found it necessary to try to eliminate discrimination in public accommodations by legislation. Your people had responded magnificently at the polls by electing Frank Peratrovich and Andrew Hope by striking majorities. Although we cannot by legislation eliminate racial prejudice in public places from the minds of men, legislation is useful to stop acts of discrimination.

Other discriminations were eliminated by the past Legislature, such as the case of delinquent children and mother's allowance. Other constructive legislation was enacted with the help of those two fine legislators: Creation of a Health Department, now headed by able Dr. Albrecht, now the Commissioner of Health, whose proposal for getting additional appropriations to fight tuberculosis has so far resulted in 35 petitions to the Governor for a Special Session. A Dept. of Agriculture was created to encourage a most basic industry. A Land Registration Bill was passed requiring patent holders to register land. An Unemployment Compensation Act Amendment was passed extending protection to all employees of classes formerly not protected simply because less than 8 were employed by one employer.

A Housing Authority was established to meet a real need for housing. An example of this kind of housing that is needed is at Hoonah where a modern town is being built to replace the houses destroyed by fire. Jake Cropley was found to be a competent person and I appointed him as a member of this Authority. Whenever I find qualified persons among the Native people, I will make appointments without regard to race. (Applause).

A legislative approach to our problems is now and has always been necessary. The people in the long run got the kind of government they deserve — good or bad as they elect good or bad officials.

The past 2 years have been ones of tremendous achievement much due to the vital part of the ANB and ANS. We are practicing democracy in fighting discrimination. In the early days of our country, we sought political liberty. Nowadays we know that is not enough! We must also sock economic liberty such as the improvement of the Women's Compensation Act. This was one of 39 bills passed by the House which the Senate failed to consider.

As to economic problems generally, we are faced with a possibility that freight rates might be increased possibly as much as 100% and against this I have already protested strongly. The annual Alaska freight bill is now about \$8,000,000 for 20,000 families. The present Alaska tax system is inadequate — for instance the steamship companies have never been taxed at all.

Another problem relates to health and school facilities. Our late President (Roosevelt) stated that 1/3 of the nation is ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed. We are not getting out of the Federal and Territorial Governments all we are entitled to and will not get adequate Federal aid while we are a territory. I favor statehood. We should elect two senators and a representative, all with votes and the governor. The general election is now advanced to the second Tuesday in October with the purpose of making it easier for more people to vote. The legislature wisely provided for a referendum on statehood on that date. It is desirable that you inform yourselves on the arguments for and against statehood so that you will be able to vote intelligently.

The isolated communities are in need of more businesses that will give year round employment. Incidentally, our ship could not get into Angoon; I have discovered that you need a harbor.

The fish trap tax bill which failed in the Senate after passing the House, would in my judgement, have helped our territorial economy. While I personally do not favor reserves or reservations, the determination of aboriginal rights, where established, making a settlement for the aboriginal peoples, has long been a policy sustained by Congress and the Courts, and now that is a live issue in Alaska. I hope your aboriginal claims will be settled soon so that you can receive practical economic benefits therefrom.

In conclusion, I am happy to continue in the cooperation of the ANB and ANS officers.”
(Applause).

Grand President, Roy Peratrovich, in his report to the convention said:

“We have increased our prestige since 1940. We are now stronger than ever, but we must not throw our weight around. We must use our strength carefully for effective use and undivided organization. Some of you have come to this convention with personal ambition. To you I say, do not lose sight of the fact that this organization was started to promote

the welfare of all of our people, not for just one or two, but for all our people. It will be well for us to refer to the Preamble of our constitution. It begins, and I quote, ‘The purpose of this organization shall be to assist and encourage the Native in his advancement from his Native state to his place among the cultivated races of the world.’ It is a preamble that we should be proud of.”



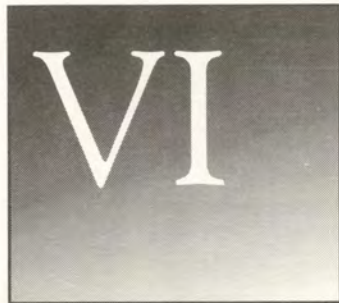
Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich stand center as she is installed as ANS Grand Officer and he as ANB Grand Officer in Sitka.
Photo courtesy of the Roy Peratrovich family



“Had it not been for that beautiful Tlingit woman, Elizabeth Peratrovich, being on hand every day in the hallways, it (the anti-discrimination bill) would have never passed.

Governor Gruening

Portrait of Elizabeth Peratrovich taken when she was in her mid -forties. Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library



Elizabeth Peratrovich Civil Rights Campaign Leader

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is remembered as the great civil rights movement leader during the 1960s. Elizabeth Jean Wanamaker Peratrovich is remembered as Alaska's great equal rights campaign leader for Alaska Natives in the 1940s. Elizabeth's moving and dramatic presentation before the Alaska Territorial Legislature on February 8, 1945 was responsible for changing the views of biased senators on the "Equal Rights" bill. The bill passed and immediately became law, thus beginning a new era in Alaska's racial relations.

Elizabeth Peratrovich has been described as a well-groomed modern woman possessing a great charm and an eye for the practical. She presented a striking appearance with high-boned facial planes, alive black eyes and shining dark hair swept up and away from her forehead and temples. She spoke with unique gestures and with much facial expression which makes

her eyes and ears appealing. She made her listeners vitally aware of all these facts. Just as a delicate hand with a carved Alaskan bracelet (which she wore) is symbolic of a highly cultured and sensitive nation of people, so is Elizabeth Peratrovich symbolic in that she forged ahead welding good relations and the thought that her glorious Alaska will one day come into its own. Alaska, a land with unlimited possibilities, had yet to disclose secrets hugged close to its frigid heart, such as the yet undiscovered mineral deposits, gas and oil, great expanses of ancient forests yet untouched by destruction, and its icy waters still abundant with many species of edible fish.

One possible explanation for Elizabeth's success, according to an old friend, Harriet Roberts, was her "outstanding public relations" and the fact that she was "not hesitant to circulate" and "appear at many functions." Furthermore, when Elizabeth spoke

before the public “she had natural vocal tone, (was) quite forceful, spoke extemporaneously and was never reticent to get up and talk. She had a presence about her.”

Elizabeth Jean Wanamaker attended elementary grade school in Petersburg, graduated from the Ketchikan High School and attended Sheldon Jackson Jr. College in Sitka. She furthered her studies at Western College of Education in Bellingham, Washington. Elizabeth met and later married Roy Peratrovich on December 15, 1931. After college the Peratrovich’s moved to Klawock where they lived until moving to Juneau in 1941.

Henrietta Newton met Elizabeth shortly after she and her husband, Richard, moved to Klawock in 1940. Mrs. Newton, newly married the year before, was the only white woman in Klawock, an outsider experiencing new people and foods and strange surroundings. Elizabeth became her best friend. It was tough in those days because of negative attitudes. She swears she would not have made it if it weren’t for Elizabeth and her friendship. Henrietta Newton describes Elizabeth as a very unusual woman. “We wouldn’t have integrated schools without Elizabeth. She was always talking about education. She did a lot for children, she opened doors for them — doors that had been closed to them — the doors of public schools,” recalls Henrietta.” And the freedom! Freedom from seeing degrading signs rejecting Natives. Freedom from the rejection I myself felt when the beauty shop owner mistook me for an Indian,” she adds emphatically.

“My mother had very strong feelings about right and wrong,” remembers Roy Peratrovich Jr., the oldest child of Elizabeth and Roy. “She was appalled by just seeing these signs and wondering why they were there.” He believes it was his parent’s love for their children — their “desire to protect us and help us so much” — that initially triggered their involvement in working for equal rights for Alaska’s Natives.

The couple’s three children, however, were too young in the 1940s to remember much of what their parents were doing or to recognize its significance. Their only daughter, Loretta Montgomery of Moses Lake, Washington, recalls accompanying her mother to legislative hearings as a small child. Her mother would knit as she listened to the proceedings; Loretta would run between the seats. She was five when the civil rights bill became law.

The couple’s younger son, Frank, worked as the Area Tribal Operations Officer for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Juneau. He remembers his parents spending many hours around the kitchen table as they worked to get anti-discrimination legislation passed.

“...when Elizabeth spoke before the public she had natural vocal tone, (was) quite forceful, spoke extemporaneously and was never reticent to get up and talk. She had a presence about her.”

Harriet Roberts

He was nine when the bill was approved.

The Peratrovich’s shielded their children from much of their work — and the discrimination they were fighting, says Roy Jr., who was eleven when the bill was approved. The Peratrovichs were one of the first Native families in Juneau to live in a non-Native neighborhood and Roy Jr. was one of the first Native children to attend public schools here, he says. “As a young boy I didn’t know that much about what was going on. I was more interested in playing cowboys and Indians and I wanted to be a cowboy. I was no different than any other child” he says. He remembers, however, that his parents were careful “not to alienate us against anyone.” As a result, the Peratrovich children’s friends could have been the children of their parents’ “political enemies,” says Roy Jr., a partner in the engineering firm of Peratrovich, Nottingham and Drage, which has offices in Anchorage, Juneau and Seattle.

The Peratrovich children remember growing up in a happy, comfortable, busy home. “Mom and Dad

“Elizabeth was... a wonderful friend who always spoke her mind. She told it like it was. She didn’t scream and holler. She was always gracious, and she was a wife and a mother first.”

Stella Martin



Governor Cowper signs a bill designating February 16 as Elizabeth Peratrovich Day. From left to right: Edward K. Thomas, Dorothy McKinley, Roy Peratrovich, Sr., Governor Steve Cowper, George Miyasato, and Richard Stitt.

Photo courtesy of Richard Stitt

were always good providers. They didn't have a lot of money, but we always had something to eat and an open door for friends," remembers Roy Jr.

Visitors were common, including whole basketball teams that had traveled to Juneau. Frank remembers his mother as a "gracious" woman who expected her children "to try a little harder than anyone else...It was hard to pull something off on her." She was a woman with a "wide range of interests. Her main concern, of course, was helping Alaska Natives," says Frank.

Elizabeth was a personal friend of Stella Martin. Stella related that, while she and her husband, Robert Sr., lived in Kake, they contacted Elizabeth if they ever needed anything from Juneau. Travel from the village to Juneau was not as easy as it is today. Elizabeth was always full of practical tips for her friends and relatives to use when traveling to the city, either Juneau or Seattle, where the discounts were, mail order catalogs, basement sales in Seattle (travel was by steamer then), which hotels were inexpensive but good.

Elizabeth showed the ladies the best way to make recipes from scratch utilizing what was available, waffles with tamales was an example. She showed her friends how to serve a nice spread that was

inexpensive, feeding a large crowd with a small allowance, i.e. spaghetti and non-traditional-type dishes. She introduced the ladies to color coordination, how not to be afraid to ask sales girls for advice in the stores, tips on how to make inexpensive clothes tailored to their individual style. She informed people on the way of things because things that are taken for granted today had to be learned in those days. Stella describes Elizabeth as a "wonderful friend who always spoke her mind. She told it like it was. She didn't scream and holler. She was always gracious, and she was a wife and a mother first."

Elizabeth had been on the clerical staff of the Alaska legislature a number of years in the Territorial Treasurer's office and the Territorial Vocational Rehabilitation Department. She represented both the ANS and ANB in the National Congress of American Indians and became a member of their executive council in 1955. She also served on their Constitutional Committee. At the time she became ill, she was employed with the Juneau Credit Association and she was a member of the Juneau Business and Professional Women's Club.

Elizabeth Jean Wanamaker Peratrovich died on December 1, 1958, after a lengthy battle with cancer. She is buried in Juneau's Evergreen Cemetery one of

the most beautiful and historic sites in the Juneau area. Located on 8.5 acres of gently sloping land under the shadow of Mount Juneau, a walk through the grounds is a visit to people whose legacy is a rich history of life in the Northland.

It was not until many years later that Elizabeth's efforts to secure equality for all Alaskans won recognition. In 1988, the Alaska Legislature established February 16 as "The Annual Elizabeth Peratrovich Day," the anniversary of the signing of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Born on the Fourth of July, 1911, her birthday was already a national holiday. The first celebration came exactly forty-four years after Governor Gruening signed the Anti-Discrimination Bill into law. Every year since that day, Alaskans pause to remember her, dedicating themselves to the continuation of her efforts, to achieving equality and justice for all Alaskans of every race, creed, and ethnic background.

Elizabeth's husband, Roy, who had been looking forward to the first Elizabeth Peratrovich Day celebration, died the week before his wife's day of honor. Her children say their mother would be honored that a day has been established recognizing her work for equal rights in Alaska. She would also be quite surprised. "She wasn't into personal stuff very much," says son Frank.

"My mom would probably say 'Roy should be here with me (being honored),' " says daughter Loretta. "And you know what my dad would say? 'It was all your mother.'...they were strictly a team. Dad was right alongside her. It was never just mother. They complemented each other. What one thought, the other usually just felt the same way. They backed each other up and said, 'Let's do it.'"

Each of the children are quick to point out that their parents were not alone in their battle for equal rights for Alaska Natives. During the 1940s, their mother was Grand President of the ANS and their father was Grand President of ANB. "They represented the ANB and the ANS. There were a number of people that Mom and Dad contacted that should be given credit too" says Loretta.

Dorothy McKinley, Grand Secretary of the ANS, and President of the Douglas ANS, was greatly instrumental in the passage of the Elizabeth Peratrovich Day by the Alaska State Legislature in 1988. February 16 has been officially recognized as Elizabeth Peratrovich Day. Not only is official recognition appropriate for the great contribution of Elizabeth Peratrovich, but also serves to remind contemporary Alaskans that equality is a cause which must be pursued constantly.

In June 1988, Carol Jorgenson became the first

Dad was right alongside her. It was never just mother. They complemented each other. What one thought, the other usually just felt the same way. They backed each other up and said, 'Let's do it.'"

Loretta Montgomery

woman to receive the Elizabeth Peratrovich Award for her achievements in developing and providing cross-cultural communications training curriculum for the Department of Fish and Game and for using her skills in positions she held with the State and the ANS. Carol was the Grand ANS President in 1985 and 1986 and still remains involved with ANS and Native issues. Commissioner Collinsworth for the Department said, "Carol's knowledge of rural Alaska and her ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds to open channels of communication have greatly contributed to state government and to the people of Alaska." Today, Carol lives in Pelican with her husband, Peter, and continues providing cross-cultural training for the university, Federal government, and Native groups. Interestingly, Carol is Elizabeth Peratrovich's second cousin, her father being Ray Paddock Sr., Tom Paddock Sr.'s brother. Carol, as gracious and determined as Elizabeth, was properly honored as a positive role-model for ANS and all Alaskans.

On February 16, 1989, the ANB and ANS honored the first annual Elizabeth Peratrovich Day through celebration. In 1990, the Juneau ANS camps held an Elizabeth Peratrovich Day Banquet at the ANB Hall where ANB and ANS members acted out a skit of that famous day in February 1945.

Today, our children can hardly imagine the society in which blatant discrimination occurred. For this, we can be thankful as it reflects true progress. In an effort to increase student's awareness of the discrimination which Native Alaskans were, and sometimes still are, subjected to, Juneau ANS camps and Juneau teachers conducted poster and essay contests in honor of the 1991 Elizabeth Peratrovich Day Celebration. Juneau School District elementary students

STATE OF ALASKA



Executive Proclamation by Steve Cowper, Governor

The Legislature of the Territory of Alaska during the Seventeenth Session, passed House Resolution 14 on February 8, 1945, entitled, "An Act to provide for full and equal accommodations, facilities and privileges to all citizens in places of public accommodation within the jurisdiction of the Territory of Alaska; to provide penalties for violations."

This was the first anti-discrimination bill introduced and passed in Alaska.

The Tlingit and Haida Indians through Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood have worked continuously to advance the civil rights of Native people.

ANS Grand President, Elizabeth Peratrovich, worked tirelessly to overcome the prejudice and discrimination toward Alaska Natives. Her work and testimony were instrumental in the passage of the anti-discrimination law.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Steve Cowper, Governor of the State of Alaska, do hereby proclaim April 21, 1988, as:

ELIZABETH PERATROVICH DAY

in Alaska in recognition of the contributions of Elizabeth Peratrovich.

DATED: April 20, 1988



Done by

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Steve Cowper".

Steve Cowper, Governor,
who has also authorized
the seal of the State of
Alaska to be affixed to
this proclamation.

discussed the struggle to change Alaskan society and eliminate discrimination. From these discussions, the students formulated their posters or essays. At the 1991 celebration held at the ANB Hall, the winners were announced and introduced, and the prize-winning creations presented for public view.

Students were asked to write a compelling speech from the perspective of Mrs. Peratrovich's feelings on the Anti-Discrimination Bill of 1945. The following essay was written by Londi Tomaro, grade 6 in the Marie Drake Middle School and was the 1991 Elizabeth Peratrovich Essay Contest winner:

Fellow Alaskans, why do we push down Alaska Natives? Why shouldn't they get equal rights? Would you say, "Hey sir, you can't go in there, you have blue eyes?" No, of course not. What difference does it make what color your eyes are, or your race for that matter. All human beings must be respected for that fact alone.

We should not push their culture down, for every culture is different. They each have something different that they can share. So I think that the Native cultures of Alaska are maybe the most important part of Alaska. For you can't have wilderness without having miles and miles of land. So you can't have a state without many, many different kinds of people.

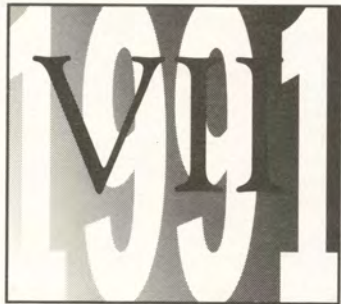
You can't get rid of something by passing a law against it, but you let other people know what you think and that you will fight for it. It's important that they know that because if they don't, things will never get changed. One person can do nothing but a group can do much. So if we each try to outdo the other people nothing will get done. But if we work together we will solve our problems.

Roy and Elizabeth's oldest son, Roy Jr., while working for the Alaska Department of Highways, designed a bridge at ten mile Glacier Highway in Juneau—aptly named "The Brotherhood Bridge" in honor of the ANB which was organized in 1912 for the "preservation and advancement of the Alaska Native Culture." The bronze plaques on the bridge symbolize the two great clans: Raven and Eagle, standing firmly on a rock, the foundation of the ANB and ANS. And today, the Eagle and Raven still stand firmly on the rock symbolically and in reality.



Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library

A landmark still
recognized with pride by
all Alaskan Natives who
witnessed or participated
in the many, many meet-
ings are the ANB Halls
that have stood in the
Juneau Indian Village.



Where we are today

Since Governor Ernest Gruening's reapportionment bill enlarging the territorial legislative body from 8 to 16 Senators and 16 to 24 Representatives, Alaska Natives have served in every Alaska legislature. From 1944 to 1950 the number of representatives in Southeast (1st Division) went from four to eight. Following his 1945 term in the House, Frank Peratrovich, Sr. was elected to the Senate and was succeeded in the House by another Tlingit, Frank L. Johnson of Kake. An Eskimo, William E. Beltz of Nome, was elected to the House in 1948 and later elected to the Territorial Senate, becoming president in the first legislature after statehood. When Beltz died, he was succeeded in the senate presidency by Senator Frank Peratrovich, Sr. The performance of the legislatures notably improved with the participation of Alaska Natives.

The progress of the equal rights act was watched

closely without rush to impose its provisions and Alaskans saw, slowly but surely, the integration which followed to where we are today. Where are we today? From the Bureau of Indian Affairs operated schools in virtually all villages — Juneau and Douglas included — which offered only elementary education, to fully operated state-run schools complete with university and vocational education opportunities. From the oppressed confinement of the Juneau Indian Village to integrated housing throughout all of Alaska. Village Street is the oldest one in Juneau and still holds the proud distinction as the Juneau Indian Village. A landmark still recognized with pride by all Alaskan Natives who witnessed or participated in the many, many meetings are the ANB Halls that have stood in the Juneau Indian Village. Many meetings that impacted the destiny of Juneau and all of Alaska were held in the ANB Halls. Every village in S.E. Alaska

has an ANB Hall and Hoonah and Klukwan each have an ANS Hall.

In 1929, the ANB convention at Haines resolved to pursue the Tlingit and Haida claims and a resolution to sponsor a bill permitting Tlingit and Haida tribes to seek entrance to a court of claims was passed unanimously. In 1935, Congress passed the Jurisdictional Act legalizing the Tlingit and Haida's pursuit of a land claims settlement from the U.S. government. In 1939, the ANB passed a resolution establishing the Tlingit and Haida Central Council to serve as the vehicle which brought about the first Native land settlement in Alaska which was successfully filed on October 1, 1947 in the U.S. Court of Claims.

In 1959, a quantum judgement by the U.S. Court of Claims awarded \$7.5 million to the Tlingit and Haida Indians for the federally withdrawn lands in Southeast Alaska. The "judgement fund" was deposited into the U.S. Treasury until such time Congress approved Tlingit and Haida Central Council's expenditure plan. On July 31, 1970, Congress accepted the Central Council's "Six Point Plan" and passed P.L. 91-335 giving Tlingit and Haida Central Council access to the judgement fund. The Six Point Plan calls for programs in the areas of education and skills training, industrial and commercial training, services for the elderly, community development, housing assistance and financing, and, now, human services and special tribal programs. Today, Tlingit and Haida is Central Council to twenty-four Community Councils from Anchorage, Alaska to Southern California representing and serving 18,554 Tlingits and Haidas.

The Tlingit and Haida lawsuit provided valuable lessons to the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) in their successful attempt to

secure passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) in 1971.

Just as Elizabeth predicted, racial discrimination has not been totally eliminated. There have been only two cases tried under the Equal Rights Law, both by Blacks who were denied equal accommodations. The proprietors were both found guilty of violating the anti-discrimination laws. Though discrimination cannot be eliminated in the minds of man, it can be controlled and punished as unacceptable behavior through the anti-discrimination law. Roy Peratrovich rightly boasted that the bill is the best in the U.S. and was 20 years ahead of its time.

"TERO 2000 • Today's Strength, Tomorrow's Future"

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Not only is official recognition appropriate for the great contribution of Elizabeth Peratrovich, but also serves to remind contemporary Alaskans that equality is a cause which must be pursued constantly.



Quotes by and of Mr. Roy Peratrovich

...It behooves us all to take a little time and reflect on our customs and culture, we have lost and continue to lose the fine culture that our people enjoyed. For instance, the respect we were taught to have for our elders is now becoming a thing of the past and we are losing the close clan ties we have had in the past. Under our clan system we were either a brother, sister, or mother, and this cemented us together as a family unit. Because of this closeness, we did not know a thing about social services. We took care of each other as the need arose.

*Roy Peratrovich
ANB Convention Address*

Every organization, government and country has a history. In U.S. schools, we are taught the subject of history. This is done for the purpose of sharing the hardship, difficulties and accomplishments experienced by our country, so, if this can be done by others, I see no reason we cannot do it in our organizations. Our elders, too shared with us the history of our clans, etc.

*Roy Peratrovich
Observation and Comments*

A person officiating in an executive legislation or judicial capacity should be free as is humanly possible from prejudice or provincialism.

Roy Peratrovich statement urging the removal of a U.S. Commissioner because of his opposition twice to enactment of the Equal Rights Bill plus other legislation.

There is no doubt in our minds that Roy Peratrovich, his team mate Elizabeth, were significant events in the lives of Alaska Natives and the State of Alaska. Roy make a difference in our lives. Roy is a proud man and he wants us to be proud also.

*Richard Stitt
1987 ANB Convention Address
as Grand President*

Laws must be equal in their benefits as well as equal in their in their burdens and anything else is not "equal protection of the laws" guaranteed by the Constitution.

(unknown)

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PERSONAL INFORMATION, RESEARCH, ASSISTANCE FROM THE FOLLOWING:

Roy Peratrovich, Jr.
Father Michael Oleska, Sealaska Heritage Foundation
Dorothy McKinley, ANS Grand Camp Secretary
Connie Paddock, Lobbyist for Elizabeth Peratrovich, Juneau
Stella Martin, Personal Friend, Juneau
Henrietta Newton, Personal Friend and Honorary ANS member, Seattle
Edith Bean, ANS Grand Camp Vice-President, Hoonah
Esther Clark, Tlingit Language Interpreter, Juneau ANS Camp 70
Cecelia Kunz, ANS Grand President Emeritus, Juneau ANS Camp 2
Bessie Vasia, ANS Grand President Emeritus, Juneau ANS Camp 2
Connie Munroe, Alaska Department of Education, Juneau
Mike Travis, Alaska Department of Education, Juneau
Maxine Richert, Sealaska Corporate Secretary, Juneau
Carol Jorgenson, Recipient of Elizabeth Peratrovich Award in 1988, Pelican
Richard Stitt, Past ANB Grand Camp President