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March 1979-1980 Minto, Alaska

(These paragraphs were written by Minto People during the village planning meeting held March 4-6, 1980)

1. FUR TANNING AND TRAINING

These past few weeks, we've been working on learning to operate machinery for tanning wild fur, in Anchorage, where the factory is. The person who owns it is Ralph Ring. He has been at this for twenty years and is very good at it. We are now in the process of getting the machinery into Minto and finding a place to set it up. After this is completed, Ralph Ring will come from Anchorage to help set up the shop and teach some more people to operate the machinery. By setting this industry up in Minto, it will bring jobs and money into the village.

2. TIME LOST AND REGAINED

Carlos Frank won his appeal to the courts for the killing of moose for use in potlatches. This bringing back the traditional potlatch for the deceased is good for all the villages. This incident also brought out recognition of the native traditional religion and rights.

3. PLANTING GARDENS

Years ago, in the old village, people planted gardens every summer. When the new village was built, people forgot about gardens. This past summer Tanana Chiefs provided a roto-tiller and seeds and 30 families plowed land for family gardens for the first time in 10 years. Gardens were a great success with people getting potatoes, carrots, Turnips, cabbage, lettuce, beets and peas. Some families had enough vegetables to last half the winter.

4. MINTO MEMORIAL POTLATCH

Last September, Minto had its first Memorial Potlatch in 5 years, put on by families of people who had died. It lasted 7 days and people came from all over, both white and native, to see how a Potlatch is done. During the Potlatch, the traditions were preserved and passed on to young people. The Potlatch is to honor and show love to the families whose loved ones passed away, and has a long history among the people.

5. BURNING WOOD IS BETTER

More than half the village burns wood because it is too expensive to use oil. A few weeks ago, the general meeting decided to change the hall from burning oil to burning wood to cut down the cost of the hall. Thirtyfive men came out to cut wood for the hall and put in the wood stove. At the end of the day, a covered dish was held to celebrate the new stove and warm hall. This was just like the years ago in the 1930s when all hands work and celebrations were the way things were done.

6. WELCOME TO MINTO

The welcome sign at the air strip in Minto tells people that they are in Minto and welcome to be there. The Indian way of treating other people is to invite them to come and eat with them and warm up before they go on their way. Signs on people's homes with their names and house numbers tell who lives there and invite people to drop in.

MINTO VICTORIES CONTINUED

7.

MINTO'S NEW STORE

This last year in Minto, a store was built by the Seth-de-ya-ah Corporation. Minto store brought to the village many kinds of groceries as well as hardware, traps and dog food. Besides the benefits of fresh foodgoods, it has become a gathering place for the village. The new Village council bulletin board is there for all the people to see and know what activities are going on. This is the first time a store has been in Minto in the last five years. The success of the store will ensure the continual providing of a needed service and help keep village money in the village.

8.

VILLAGE USES NEW SCHOOL

Last Fall, a new school building and gym was opened. Six people from the village had jobs working on the construction. And when the gym was done, the school board made sure it was opened to the village in the evening. There is now Men's basketball and women's Games and showers.

9.

LAUNDROMAT CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

The Minto Laundromat materials arrived in August. After the potlatch building began by ten village men who received G.A. for their work or volunteered. A local young man, Dale Riley, was the foreman of the construction crew. The foundation is built and the materials for the frame are waiting for warm weather. The money for the materials was donated by the American Lutheran Church, East Anchorage Methodist, and Fairbanks Methodist Church. Women in the village now must haul water, use Maytag wringer washers and hang clothes in their houses or outside in 30 degree below zero weather, or take their clothes to Fairbanks which is 130 miles away. The new laundromat will also have showers and hire a village manager.

10. MINTO SPEAKS

Minto is now the only village in all of Alaska with its own newspaper "The Minto Messenger". This shows our people of the whole state how we have progressed and teaches all people we have journalistic inclinations.

11. THE MINTO CRAFTS COOPERATIVE

Twenty-two women in Minto formed an incorporated crafts marketing and sales cooperative, with elected officers and regular meetings. They have a bank account, keep auditable books, records of crafts sales, and have made four marketing trips to Fairbanks, Anchorage, Seattle, and Chicago with grant money from TCC and other places. Total sales for the first nine months was around \$6,000. The co-op has encouraged the teaching of Athabaskan crafts, including birch bark baskets, beadwork, and moose skin crafts to the younger women. The women sell only top quality crafts at both wholesale and retail prices. The coop operates on 20% of the sales. The co-op created a trademark. The trademark looks like this. They also have recently opened a Fairbanks branch, for women who have to be in Fairbanks for different reasons.

12. HOLDING UP ATHABASKAN TRADITIONS

Dancing is an old time Athabaskan custom. It tells the stories of the past. It is also fun for all ages from babies to elders. Dancing shows the love that people feel for one another in the dance and in the story it tells. Many villages have forgotten their customs. To keep these customs alive, Minto people have traveled across the state of Alaska to show their friends of all cultures the traditional dances. Everyone at a dance participates and has fun. This year the dancers have been to Anchorage, Kenai, Fairbanks, Fort Greeley, Copper Center, Nelchina, Sastochina, Tanacross, Northway, Tanana, and Nenana, to name a few. As a result, of all this travel, Minto Dancers are being called on to dance by many organizations and groups.

VICTORIES CONTINUED

13. HOLIDAYS ARE GETTING BETTER

Again, Minto people did not drink at Christmas and Thanksgiving like they have in the past years. This has helped to learn better ways of celebrating the true meaning of those holidays. It has also helped them to remember the village traditions around Thanksgiving and Christmas.

15. VILLAGE GAME WARDENS

This last hunting season, Minto was one of three villages that had local villagers working as game wardens. It was a quiet season without the troubles between the villagers and hunters of the past seasons. It also showed the state and federal agencies that the local villagers can successfully manage the hunting in their areas. It was also beneficial to the village income and provided better protection for the wild life of the area.

16. SLOW CHILDREN AT PLAY

Speed limits at the entrance of the village read 5 miles an hour and warn visitors to the village to drive carefully. During the tourist season, the village game warden warned speeders driving too fast by jumping on his bicycle and pulled them over, telling them to respect the village. Villagers especially are now careful to watch their speed.

17. IN SENATOR SEES CHANGED VILLAGE

In the spring, Senator Mike Gravel visited Minto. The village has just cleaned up and painted garbage cans and the Senator was impressed with how the village looked. He came to the village to see what life was like in villages all over Alaska, and how they had changed. Minto is the only village he had visited in many years.

18. MINTO WOMEN'S CLUB

The women's club was reorganized in December, 1979, about 20 women attended the first meeting since moving over from old Minto, 10 years ago. The purpose of reorganizing the club again was to work together and do things together. In December the women got together and held a bake sale to raise money to help pay for fuel for the hall. The women's club had a fund raising Spaghetti-Turkey dinner. The money raised is used for any good cause involving the village. Also we are planning to have a rummage and craft sales March 20, 1980.