

Peter Simpson--prophet, father of the Alaska Native Brotherhood

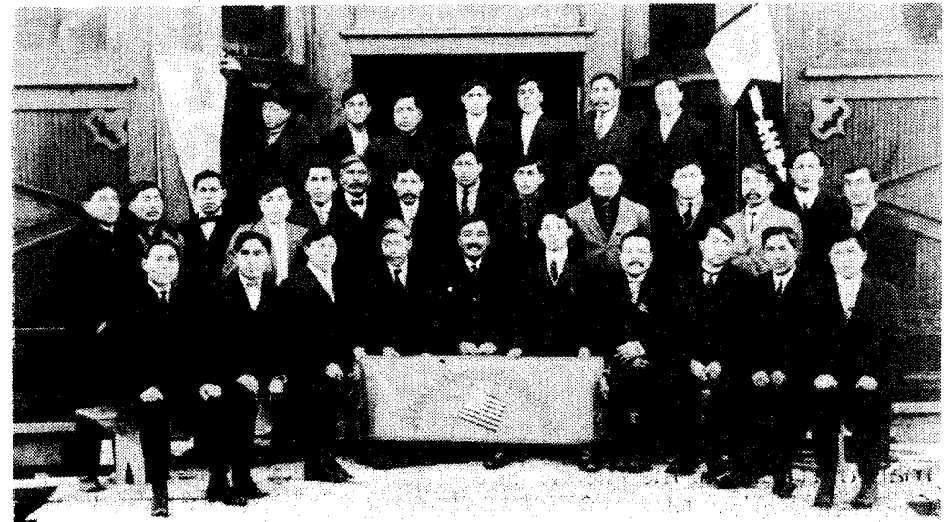
Peter always maintained that he was born on the 4th of July, about 1874, whether this is true is debatable. He said everyone celebrated his birthday. The birthplace was in British Columbia, he migrated to Metlakatla with Father Duncan. He died on December 27, 1947 in Sitka, Grand President ANB Emeritus.

He owned a sawmill on Gravina Island which burned and because he was not a citizen he could not rebuild. He went to Juneau where he had his own little ferry service between Juneau and Douglas. Edward Marsden (first Tsimpshian ordained as a minister) and Peter Simpson were related and good friends. Edward was at Sitka training school and Dr. Sheldon Jackson was going to Juneau, Edward asked Sheldon Jackson to look for Peter and bring him to Sitka training school which he did.

Peter met a Tlingit, Mary Sloan, a Raven and Kiks.adi at the training school. They were married and lived at the cottages on land given to them by the school. It was a project to have a Native Christian settlement. Peter and Mary had 15 children but he outlived everyone, including his wife. The illnesses were: quick consumption, pneumonia, heart disease, and several deaths were at childbirth. Two children, Jenny and Louie, survived long enough to marry and have children. Jenny and Peter Sing have three surviving children, Sam Sing of Seattle, Isabella Brady of Sitka and



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le, Isabella Brady of Sitka and Lucille Maxeey of Walla Walla, WA. Louie Sr. and Esther (Kasakan, Simpson) Littlefield have four surviving children, Louie Simpson, Jr. of Sitka; Evelyn Johnson of Sitka, Fred Simpson of Mt. Vernon, WA, and Peter Simpson of Ketchikan.

Peter owned a boatshop at the cottages and built rowboats, trollers, sealing boats and seine boats. He worked at Sheldon Jackson High School as an instructor in boatbuilding.

Peter is referred to as the "Father of the Alaska Native Brotherhood." He served as the first Grand President and served from 1913-16 and again in 1923-24. Some of the concerns were: race prejudice, citizenship, education, integration in schools, to abolish the use of fish traps and by the actions of Grand Grand Camp these were eventually resolved. A statement made by Peter that is well-known, "When I die if you cut my heart open you will see ANB written on it."

Because he could not own land in British Columbia and the loss of the sawmill on Gravina Island, land ownership was very important to Peter. Peter made this statement to William L. Paul, "the land is yours, why don't you go after it?" The suit was begun at the 1929 Convention



FAMILY PORTRAIT 1932--(front l-r) Evelyn Simpson Johnson, Mary Simpson, Louie Simpson, Jr., Peter Simpson, Arlene Didrickson Haven, Isabella Sing Brady, Lucille Sing Maxeey. (back l-r) Sam Sing, Esther Kasakan Simpson Littlefield, Louie Simpson, Fred Simpson (in arms), Henry Sing, Ann Ridley Didrickson Perez, Cherry Didrickson Booth (in arms), Jenny Simpson Sing, Peter Sing.

in Haines. He always felt ownership of land was important and thus the seed for the land claims was planted and started.

Peter Simpson is regarded as one of the most inspired prophets produced among the Native People in modern times.

Peter received his wisdom from

the Bible, which he loved to quote verses and particularly from Proverbs. "Whosoever loveth instruction loveth knowledge." He believed that formal education was part of the solution to problems of our Native People.

Information from: As told by Peter Sing to his daughter Isabella Brady;

William L. Paul taped several years ago; Leslie Yaw, Sitka; Andrew Hope III's book "Founders of the ANB."

Special thanks to the Tsimpshian Tribal Association for the suggestion of honoring Peter Simpson in this issue of the **Sealaska Shareholder**.