

Dear Editor:

I thoroughly enjoyed reading “To Make These Tribes Understand” [Arctic 51(3): 220–230], as I served for many years as the Alaska State Trooper in northwestern Alaska, posted in Nome. I guess misery likes company, as we few “bush police” had to face the problem of showing the flag (Alaska was a new state in January 1959) and bringing a new order to the many mainly Eskimo villages we patrolled.

Every three months, I traveled in uniform to speak at the government schools and explain how our law worked and why the State Police (called that until 1962, when the new Governor Wally Hickel preferred Troopers) were there to help them with their problems.

Our district attorney at Nome finally decided there were two types of crime. As funds for trials, witness movement, and punishment were short, I should investigate murders thoroughly and consider everything else as “Disorderly Conduct.” We operated that way for some years. “DC” was punishable by 90 days in the Nome Jail with 60 days suspended on promise of “good behavior.” We were told that Natives did not survive long in prison; a three-year sentence would be a death sentence. The RCMP sentenced many to wood chopping and other labor.

Sincerely,  
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