



# Seldovia Gazette

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## Letters to the Editor

### *City and Tribal Relations . . .*

Dear Editor,

As a new resident in Seldovia, a mere 13 years, I cannot claim to know the intricacies and origins of long standing rivalries and conflicts that exist within this community. They certainly seem entrenched and poisonous, so I try not to get entangled. But like a drift net of hate and venom, we all run the risk of being swept up eventually.

I am amazed by how, as a community, we can continually undermine and undercut each other while everyone claims the mantle victim. The overlay of universal victimhood and my maintenance of ignorance of the longstanding conflicts, was working well for me as I was thinking about the latest City/Tribe conflict over the Senior Meals Program. The Tribe made a decision, for whatever reason, and the City is once again scrambling to adjust to that decision, for whatever reason. Now we watch as the newest under-resourced city manager tries to adjust, and the end result is that the community suffers. It is once again as lose-lose situation. Same as it ever was. I think, "Why bother, these people seem to be meeting some inner-need."

Then I heard a story on the Alaska News Nightly that outlined a study by UAA on small businesses in rural Alaska, "Viability of Business Enterprises for Rural Alaska; Community Factors and Entrepreneurial Strategies." Google it. (SVT's Tribal Cache, Crystal Collier, along with 34 or so other business owners, was interviewed for the study. So I am sure some of her input is in the study.) The study outlined challenges that small business' face in rural Alaska and how business development can be fostered. I have skimmed the study and it looked pretty familiar, but it just nailed us with the following:


“ **Community Cohesion.** Many owners talked about the business climate being influenced by the community's cohesion. If the tribal council, the city council, and the village corporation work together towards a common vision for the future of the village, it was good for business. If, by contrast, there was division,

competition and bickering among community institutions, the climate for success for businesses was eroded. The energy for expansion of entrepreneurial activity was a reflection of the level of cooperation among community institutions. Community in-fighting could undermine new entrepreneurial activity .”

We are not alone in this predicament. “ If, by contrast, there was division, competition and bickering among community institutions, the climate for success for businesses was eroded.” As I look at the businesses down on Main Street, I don’t think we need any more unfavorable climates.

This is a critical and chronic problem for this community. There are no innocents: everyone has played a role. We will continue to see little progress in developing and growing our town without cooperation and cohesion in a shared vision of this community. No one is going anywhere, we all need each other, the question is how do make it work.

Mark Janes  
Seldovia

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