

Senator Lyman Hoffman

Alaska State Legislature



Sponsor Statement

SB 141 Raymond and Esther Conquest Bridge

Senate Bill 141 renames Bridge 1902, the Aleknagik Wood River Bridge to the Raymond and Esther Conquest Bridge.

On March 22 2023, the Aleknagik City Council and the Aleknagik Traditional council adopted a joint resolution 23-02, requesting the Legislature change the name of the Wood River Bridge to the Raymond and Esther Conquest Bridge.

Raymond Conquest was born in a little village called Apqa, in the Bethel region. His mother passed when he was a young child. He was raised by an elderly couple and later ended up in the Catholic orphanage at Holy Cross. He ran away at the age of 11 and at age 13 or 14, caught a steamship from Bethel to Dillingham. Raymond was a hard worker and lived in a one-room shack with friends. Later, Raymond was employed as a heavy equipment operator for the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Building Facilities, building a State highway from Dillingham to Aleknagik named the Lake Aleknagik Road. The highway is better known as the Gateway to Wood Tikchik State Park.

Raymond later worked as a caretaker at the Nerka Lodge known as the Second Lake. During that time, he met his wife Esther, who would assist him with caretaking the lodge. Raymond's next venture was in commercial fishing. He purchased the "Ricky T" and shortly after purchase a second boat the "Gypsy". Raymond and Esther would fish full seasons starting in Nushagak and Kwichak, and would later in season transfer to Togiak. Raymond was also an avid hunter and trapper, after the fishing season the two would hunt for moose. In the spring Raymond would snare squirrels. Esther was famous for her parkas and dolls. She was well known in the Bristol Bay Region for her craft.

Esther and Raymond showed kindness and generosity to all. They are remembered for transporting hundreds of people back and forth from Aleknagik to Dillingham. If there was an emergency, it was always the Conquests taking people to the hospital any time of day or night. In the tragic case of a loss of life, the Conquests were there to comfort people and buy groceries for them for weeks in times of need. Raymond was instrumental and played a very big part in getting the Aleknagik Wood River Bridge complete in October 2015. Raymond was quoted as saying "I will fight for that bridge until I die". During the City of Aleknagik 2015 Bridge Ceremony, Raymond was honored by being the first one to cross the bridge in his old blue Chevy truck. Raymond and Esther's presence forever shaped the community of Aleknagik.

Please join me in supporting Senate Bill 141, naming the Raymond and Esther Conquest Bridge.