

As the town grew the Indians felt the need for a government, so they established a self-governing council. The very first mayor of Hoonah before it was incorporated was George Carteeti Sr. He was responsible for the first water system of Hoonah. Dick Ross was the first town marshal and Peter Hopkins was the first truant officer for the school. Frank St. Clair was the first judge. The second mayor of Hoonah was Sam McKinley. He started building the old town hall that burnt down in the fire. The third mayor was Sam Johnson and he worked more on the water system. James Grant was the fourth mayor of Hoonah and David Lawrence was the fifth. They both were responsible for the electricity of Hoonah. They tried to get the power from the creeks off of Elephant Mountain. They were also responsible for the BIA power plant in town.

Another important part of the community during that time and considered by many as the back-bone of the Council was the Village Improvement Society (V.I.S.). This was similiar to our present day Alaska Native Sisterhood--it was their duty to go through the village and see that each one of the community houses were clean, inside and out. Even the children were checked to see that they had been bathed and were clean. The penalty for uncleanliness was a fine. The V.I.S. also held basket socials, ball games and dances and with the money they raised from these socials along with the fines collected they were able to help get a town hall.

Hoonah was alive and growing, spreading out, the community houses were getting over-crowded and the people began building their own homes on the beach. Under James Grant's house they were smoke-drying salmon. They had partitioned off rooms under the house with canvas. However, they had neglected to fasten down the canvas and the wind caught it and blew it around causing sparks from the fire to fly all over. The sparks landed on dry wood and before long the house was burning. No one was aware that the house had caught fire and it got out of control and spread to the nearby houses. And on June 14, 1944, an unforgettable day for the people of Hoonah, the entire village burned down.

This was during World War II while the War Housing Authority was active. Among those most active in helping Hoonahians immediately after the disaster were U. S. Senator Ernest Gruening, the Red Cross, Excursion Inlet Packing Co., and the United States Army. Until Hoonah could be rebuilt the canneries at Hoonah and Excursion Inlet furnished living quarters for most of the people. The U. S. Army camp commander stationed at the Excursion Inlet Army Camp held a meeting in Hoonah with the people to determine their wishes. He offered them the entire army camp buildings and facilities if they would like to re-settle in Excursion rather than rebuild in Hoonah (the army was getting ready to pull out of Excursion). The Hoonah people asked for lumber to rebuild Hoonah.

The rebuilding of Hoonah was turned over to the War Housing Authority who let the contract to Alaska Construction Company. There were at least two sub-contractors: John Cushing with Territorial Construction Co. for the sewer and water, and Mr. Campbell for the roofing. Eighty new houses were built and after some serious disagreement over the original price the price was lowered and set at \$3500 each. Each person who lost his house was to sign a paper turning in his old property rights in exchange for a new house and lot. The Hoonah Indian Association under Bill Johnson, George Carteeti, Frank O. Williams, Harry Douglas, Edith Bean, Frank See, Hilda Schoonover, and Elsie Greenwald played an important role in this