

ALASKA LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE FILES 1981-1982 8672

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**STATE OF ALASKA**  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ALASKA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
338 DENALI STREET, SUITE 850  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501

March 8, 1982

Honorable Charles H. Parr  
Alaska State Legislature  
Pouch V  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Senator Parr:

The Alaska Commission on the Status of Women has been directed by the legislature to recommend legislative and administrative action on equal opportunity and treatment for women. In order to provide you with an overview of the Commission's positions, we have attached a summary statement of legislative actions which the Commission supports or opposes.

The Commission attempts to maintain reciprocal communication with individual women and women's organizations throughout the entire state. Our bimonthly newsletter, containing articles on legislative and administrative actions and other events pertinent to women, currently reaches more than 2,000 Alaskan women and organizations. Our "Legislative Report" has been used extensively by organizations such as the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the American Association of University Women, the Anchorage Women's Political Caucus, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Alaska, and the Anchorage Feminist Network. Produced for the first time in November, 1981, the Legislative Report contained the first complete summary of state legislation especially relevant to women and its widespread reception and use is an indication of the serious interest that Alaskan women take in these matters.

During the past two years the Commission has funded regional and topical conferences for women in Bethel, Kotzebue, Galena, Fairbanks, Hoonah, Kenai and Anchorage. Hundreds of women have attended these meetings and have conveyed their concerns to the Commission through this mechanism. At the present time more than 100 Alaskan women are actively involved in helping the Commission develop a statewide women's conference for March 19-21, 1982 in Anchorage. We expect 500 women and men to participate in 60 workshops and panel discussions. Candidates for

Page Two  
March 8, 1982

governor have been invited to discuss their positions on issues of special concern to women.

As you can see from this brief discussion, Alaska's women are active and informed participants in the legislative process. Their interest in legislative matters and in legal and civil rights has been demonstrated not only by their interest in the Commission's conferences and reports but by their overwhelming demand for the handbook which the Commission produced entitled "Women's Legal Rights in Alaska." Now going into its second printing, this booklet has been distributed to almost 5,000 Alaskan women to date.

The Commission on the Status of Women has unique access to Alaskan women. Through public hearings, meetings, conferences and specially tailored reports, we can communicate extensively with them concerning those issues which directly affect the quality of their lives.

On the basis of this reciprocal communication and the research and study that the Commission has conducted, we have taken positions regarding legislative and administrative actions which we believe to be of significance to Alaska's women. We hope you will review the enclosed information not as the expressed viewpoint of a handful of Commissioners but rather as the distillation of opinions expressed by hundreds of Alaskan women in their interactions with the Commission over the past several years. If we can provide you with any additional information we would be happy to do so.

Thank you for the time and consideration you have shown in dealing with these matters, many of which are of such vital importance to the women of the state.

Sincerely,

*Barbara L. Schuhmann*  
Barbara L. Schuhmann  
Chairwoman



**STATE OF ALASKA**  
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338 DENALI STREET, SUITE 850  
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# Legislative Report

March 3, 1982

Prepared by: Christine Callahan, Research Analyst

The following positions on bills now pending before the Alaska Legislature have been taken by the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women. These positions are based upon reciprocal communication that the Commission maintains with hundreds of women throughout the state via public meetings, hearings, Commission-sponsored regional conferences and newsletters. The Commission has also conducted and reviewed extensive research on the needs and concerns of women.

## ALCOHOL

The problems of alcohol abuse and alcoholism are of serious concern to the Commission. These problems have an enormous impact on all of the people of the state and rural women in particular have expressed the high correlation between alcohol abuse and the rate of domestic violence and sexual assault that occurs in Alaska. Because of this the Commission supports legislation which attempts to address these problems or which represents a reasonable effort to control the substance. For instance, we oppose HB 178, which would allow grocery stores to sell beer and wine, because we believe that such a measure increases people's access to alcohol as well as deceptively displaying alcohol with necessary foodstuffs.

We have also attempted to work with the Governor's Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and the Public Broadcasting Commission to prevent beer and wine commercials from being broadcast over the state satellite to communities that have voted to ban the sale and distribution of alcohol.

## ABORTION

Several bills and resolutions have been introduced in the House of Representatives during this session which would limit women's right to reach a decision about childbearing within the privacy of the doctor-patient relationship. The Alaska Commission on the Status of Women has continually reaffirmed its opposition to legislation which would destroy the constitutional right to privacy which is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, or which would intrude political judgements in the intimate physician-patient relationship. We further oppose and urge the Legislature to oppose legislation which would bar abortions in hospitals funded by the State, substituting political judgements for medical ones. We favor and urge the Legislature to favor continuation of funding with respect to abortions for the poor, who are often least able to cope with unintended pregnancies and whose unwanted children often become society's unsolved problems.

ABORTION (Continued)

HB 185 Martin	An Act relating to the regulation of abortions	OPPOSE HB 185
HB 247 Martin	An Act relating to civil liability arising from the birth of a child	OPPOSE HB 247
HB 500 Martin	Limiting the use of state money to pay for abortions	OPPOSE HB 500
HB 550 Martin	Relating to the killing of a fetus	OPPOSE HB 550
HJR 9 Martin	Relating to a "human life amendment"	OPPOSE HJR 9
HJR 21 Martin	Relating to a "human life amendment"	OPPOSE HJR 21

CHILDREN

Child Care:

HB 347 Duncan	Establish child care centers in State Office Buildings	SUPPORT HB 347
HB 706 Rogers	Finance day care assistance program adequately	SUPPORT HB 706
SB 517 Parr	Day Care Assistance	SUPPORT SB 517
SB 518 Parr	Day Care Assistance	SUPPORT SB 518

The Commission approves the general concept of day care funding that will make quality child care available to all families who need it. It supports allocation of funding to day care assistance programs that would provide for operation of programs at least until June, 1982; that would provide assistance to low and moderate income families; and that would serve to fund those families currently on waiting lists.

Child Custody:

HB 210 Rogers	Presumptive joint custody	OPPOSE HB 210
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Child Support Enforcement:

HB 167 Rules;Gov.	Agency to enforce support obligations	SUPPORT HB 167
HB 175 Clocksin	No payment of fee by obligee	SUPPORT HB 175
SB 181 Ray	Passed into law. Had Commission support.	
HB 529 Malone	No fee to be required of obligee	SUPPORT HB 529

Child Welfare

The Commission is concerned that the Indian Child Welfare Act be implemented in Alaska in a way that is consistent with the cultural, personal and societal needs of Alaska Native families. This issue is one of serious concern to many of Alaska's Native women and has been discussed among them at Commission-sponsored regional conferences.

Pregnancy and Child Rearing:

HB 497	Monetary compensation for carrying a pregnancy	OPPOSE HB 497
Beirne	to full term	

DISCRIMINATION

HB 356	Prohibits non-rental to parents	SUPPORT HB 356
Malone		
SB 248	Establish EEO in executive branch of state	SUPPORT SB 248
Ferguson	government	
SB 266	Use of neutral pronouns	SUPPORT SB 266
State Affairs		

DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS

(HB 26, now)		
HB 287	Establishes a displaced homemaker program	SUPPORT HB 287
Buchholdt/ Clocksin		
SB 169	Same as above	SUPPORT SB 169
Stimson		

The Commission supports full funding for Displaced Homemaker programs, statewide; and expansion of the definition of a "displaced homemaker" to include those persons who maintained an intimate relationship over a period of time without the legal sanction of marriage.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

(see also, VIOLENT CRIME)

HB 345	Repeals prohibition against payment to relative of	SUPPORT HB 345
Clocksin	perpetrator of violent crime	

The Commission supports the concept of providing adequate and accessible legal remedies for incidences of domestic violence; the expansion of the definition of domestic violence to include those residing in the same household or those related to each other by blood, marriage, adoption, or maintenance of an intimate relationship; and to include those persons who formerly maintained an intimate relationship but who are not now residing together.

EMPLOYMENT

SB 621            Tax credits to employers of persons over 60 years        SUPPORT SB 621  
Bradley           of age

FISHERIES

At regional women's conferences serious concern has been expressed by rural women about fisheries development and regulation. The Commission continues to review legislation relative to this topic.

HEALTH

HB 41            Resident participation in a comprehensive health plan    SUPPORT HB 41  
Buchholdt

LEGAL SERVICES

Rural women and those struggling on low or fixed incomes are seriously affected by the curtailment of legal services available at a low cost. The Commission supports action to have a state operated legal services program.

MARRIAGE

SJR 15           Repeals the "marriage tax"                                    SUPPORT SJR 15  
Parr

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

HB 174           Raise AFDC maximum to dependent child and parent        SUPPORT HB 174  
Clocksin

HB 176           Raise General Relief maximum                                SUPPORT HB 176  
Clocksin

SEXUAL ASSAULT

HB 451           Mandatory treatment for sex offenders                      SUPPORT HB 451  
Clocksin

HB 473           Toughens prosecution of rape                                SUPPORT HB 473  
Barnes

HB 576           Permits videotaping testimony of young sexual            SUPPORT HB 576  
Rules            assault victims

SEXUAL ASSAULT (Continued)

The Commission supports legislation which would permit the videotaping of testimony of ALL victims of sexual assault.

HB 578 Rules	Prohibits release on bail after conviction of certain violent crimes. <u>Commission supports prohibition of bail after conviction OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.</u>	SUPPORT HB 578 as indicated, in cases of sexual assault only.
HB 633 Anderson	Prohibits release on personal recognizance when the offense is among certain violent crimes. <u>Commission supports when the offense is 1st, 2nd, or 3rd degree assault or 1st or 2nd degree sexual assault.</u>	SUPPORT HB 633, as indicated.
SB 485 Parr	Permits videotaping of testimony of young victims of sexual assault or abuse. <u>Commission supports videotaping of testimony of ALL victims.</u>	SUPPORT SB 485, as indicated.
SB 547 Bradley	In addition to the above (SB 485) this bill would also permit the exclusion of the public from the trial.	SUPPORT SB 547

SUBSISTENCE

Alaska Native women have expressed deep concern about the issue of subsistence at the regional women's conferences which the Commission has sponsored. While no position has been taken yet, the Commission continues to follow legislation concerning this matter.

VIOLENT CRIME

HB 451 Clocksin	See "Sexual Assault" above	SUPPORT HB 451
HB 473 Barnes	See "Sexual Assault" above	SUPPORT HB 473
HB 573 Rules	Increase penalty for tampering with a witness	SUPPORT HB 573
HB 575 Rules	Relates to culpable mental states as elements of criminal assaults	SUPPORT HB 575
HB 576 Rules	See "Sexual Assault" above	SUPPORT HB 576

VIOLENT CRIME (Continued)

HB 578 Rules	See "Sexual Assault" above	SUPPORT HB 578
HB 633 Anderson	See "Sexual Assault" above	SUPPORT HB 633
SB 108 Bradley	Raises limits of payments to victims of violent crime	SUPPORT SB 108
SB 620 Bradley	Repeals limitations on awarding compensation to victims who are relatives or members of the household of the perpetrator of the crime.	SUPPORT SB 620

JAY S. HAMMOND  
GOVERNOR



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**DRAFT**

STATE OF ALASKA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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ALASKA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
338 DENALI STREET, SUITE 850  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501

FIVE YEARS LATER

A REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN

A PRELIMINARY STUDY:

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN ALASKA, 1977

JANUARY, 1982

PREPARED BY: CHRISTINE CALLAHAN, RESEARCH ANALYST



# Having A Voice

*First  
Regional  
Women's  
Conference*

**Yukon-Kuskokwim  
Region of Alaska**

The First Regional Women's Conference  
Held in Bethel, Alaska  
October 9-11, 1980

This booklet was funded by the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women

Photos by Barb Knapp ©1981  
Text edited by the Tundra Women's Coalition  
Layout by Tundra Press, Bethel, Alaska  
Printed by Anchorage Printing, Anchorage, Alaska



*"But, I wasn't raised for the life I'm living..."*

# Dedication

One of the main concerns of this conference has been violence against women, and how common this violence is and how lightly it is looked upon.

This week a young woman, Annunciata Akaran, of Kotlik, was handcuffed and beaten to death by her husband. The husband was charged with manslaughter, not with murder. He was not only her husband but the village police officer.

Many other women are in the same danger.

Let us dedicate this conference to the memory of this young woman and other women who have died the same violent way.

Let us work and pray together to end this needless violence. We women are the only ones that can stop this and say, "No more."

Written and Presented by:  
Alice Wardlow  
October 11, 1980



**Keynote speaker Billie Nave Masters presents Della Keats with a ceremonial shawl.**

# Introduction

Over 200 women from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region have met together for the first time. At the First Regional Women's Conference held in Bethel, Alaska on October 9, 10, and 11, 1980, women gathered to express their concerns and organize themselves for action.

The theme of the conference was "Having A Voice". The purpose was to give women an opportunity to discuss their problems; to learn about resources and options; to support each other in becoming more active in personal, family and community problem-solving; and to spearhead needed action on priority issues affecting their lives.



# Conference Workshops

## Workshop

**The Family Problems of Women Who Work Outside the Home**

**Youth Yesterday and Today – Changing Values and Problems**

**The Changing Roles of Men in the Family**

**Women and Health**

**When One Member Drinks, the Effects on the Whole Family**

**Safety for Women Workshop – Part I**

**The Effects of Agencies, Laws, and Institutions on Personal and Family Life**

**Getting the Job You Want and Getting Paid What You're Worth**

## Issues

Child care, finances, sharing household tasks and responsibilities, relationship problems, and job pressures such as travel; conflicting priorities of family members.

Pressures affecting youth; decisions on education, jobs, traditional lifestyle, communication with elders, social pressures toward drug use, changing sexual attitudes.

How men express anger, feelings about parenting, communication patterns, changing priorities in men's lives, anxieties about losing authority.

Women's health care systems, holistic health; natural ways of healing; current health care issues.

How can the family cope with the alcohol-abusing male? Why women abuse alcohol.

Safety for women when a male family member drinks; situations and feelings that encourage the abuse of alcohol; how village women can be safe.

How agency rules, regulations, policies and programs shape and dictate our lifestyles, economic decisions, and family priorities. Deals with laws, welfare agencies, school systems, and other bureaucracies.

Barriers to women's equal employment and promotion; inequality in Alaska hiring; what women can do about discrimination in job advancement.

## **Workshop**

### **Women and Leadership**

### **How to Avoid Legal and Financial Problems for the Spouse Left Alone**

### **Family Law**

### **The Single Parent**

### **Communication Skills**

### **Safety for Women Workshop - Part II**

### **Developing Leadership Skills**

### **Action Meeting**

### **Film Fair**

## **Issues**

Barriers to being a leader; stereotyping by the community against women leaders; leadership skills that women already have; pressures on women leaders; conflicts that cause women to refuse leadership roles; cross-cultural problems and roles.

Estate planning for couples; wills, Native Corporation shares, adoptions, individual credit, child custody, property rights, and records.

Restraining orders, divorce, separation, child custody, provisions of HB 392 which details rights of battered women and other related family issues.

Many aspects of fathers and mothers raising children alone; balancing needs of parent and children; financial problems; parent-child communication; dealing with guilt; displaced homemakers.

Communicating in the family, dealing with conflict; problem-solving; active listening; stating needs clearly; win-win methods of resolving differences; negotiating.

Group decision-making processes; how to function as an effective community leader; how formal meetings are run.

Recommendations and priorities discussed in workshops brought to the floor; resolutions and a plan of action.

Films, slide shows and filmstrips on a variety of topics of interest to conference participants.



## Family



## Women Speak Out on the Family

### *Their recommendations:*

Better counseling and rehabilitation services.

Parents need to work out compromises with other family members on sharing responsibilities.

Support system for single parents to share ideas on raising children and sharing child care responsibilities.

The Commission on the Status of Women should assist in bringing together resources and information to help village women start their own discussion groups.

### **Recent Actions**

An organization for single parents has been started.

A workshop was held in Bethel that focused on the working parent and stress.





## Children

## **Women Speak Out on Children**

### ***Their recommendations:***

Make child abuse laws known - it is everyone's responsibility to report child abuse or neglect.

Support social service agencies in implementing the Child Indian Welfare Act, to help children maintain a good sense of Native identity and family strength.

Provide reimbursements of child care costs for employees who must travel.

### **Recent Actions**

A workshop on Sexual Abuse of Children was held in Bethel in September 1981. An inter-agency task force identified resources and planned to coordinate a team approach for case management and increased community education.





## Safety for Women

### Women Speak Out on Safety for Women

#### *Their recommendations:*

Workshop for clergy members on the subject of domestic violence.

Contact village councils and advise them of the problems within families and the resources that are available for help.

Hold a workshop for village people who want to learn more about getting shelters and helping women who have been beaten or raped. Offer continuing support to those who start village programs.

Talk with other women about problems such as: assaults, threats and being afraid.

Write to legislators and make them aware of the need for more money to fund village shelters, sleep-off centers, and better phone systems.

### **Recent Actions**

Established women's groups have become more active, and more support groups have been started.

A three day workshop on "Violence in the Family: A Community Concern" was held, which included participants from six different religious denominations representing Bethel and several villages.

Shelters and safe homes are being established in many villages.

A new shelter facility was funded for Bethel in the 1981 legislature.

The Alaska Legislature established the Governor's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.





*"I am very, very happy I came to the conference because now I can go home and share what I've accomplished."*





*“If we are going to make any significant changes, we have to learn to talk to each other.”*





## Education



## Women Speak Out on Education

### *Their recommendations:*

Include cultural awareness in career orientations.

More emphasis on career education in the school curriculum, especially for women.

Inform people about employment discrimination against Natives, women and senior citizens.

### **Recent Actions**

Lower Kuskokwim School District hired a career counselor for the villages, and has made more information on employment opportunities available.

Human Rights Workshops were held in the fall of 1981, sponsored by the Association of Village Council Presidents.

Discrimination claims are being filed and investigated by AVCP.





## Legal Issues

## Women Speak Out on Legal Issues

### *Their recommendations:*

Local people should develop criteria for selecting village police and public safety officers; then support those officers so they receive good training and pay, and are respected in the community.

Inform people of the new domestic violence injunction law and how it can be used to protect women and children.

Recommend a simpler way to deal with voluntary adoption procedures.

### **Recent Actions**

Tundra Women's Coalition has received a large number of requests for technical assistance and has provided educational services on the Domestic Violence Injunction to the public, social service agencies, legal systems and village groups.

The Department of Public Safety is providing training to public safety officers throughout the state.



# Alcohol and Drug Abuse



## Women Speak Out on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

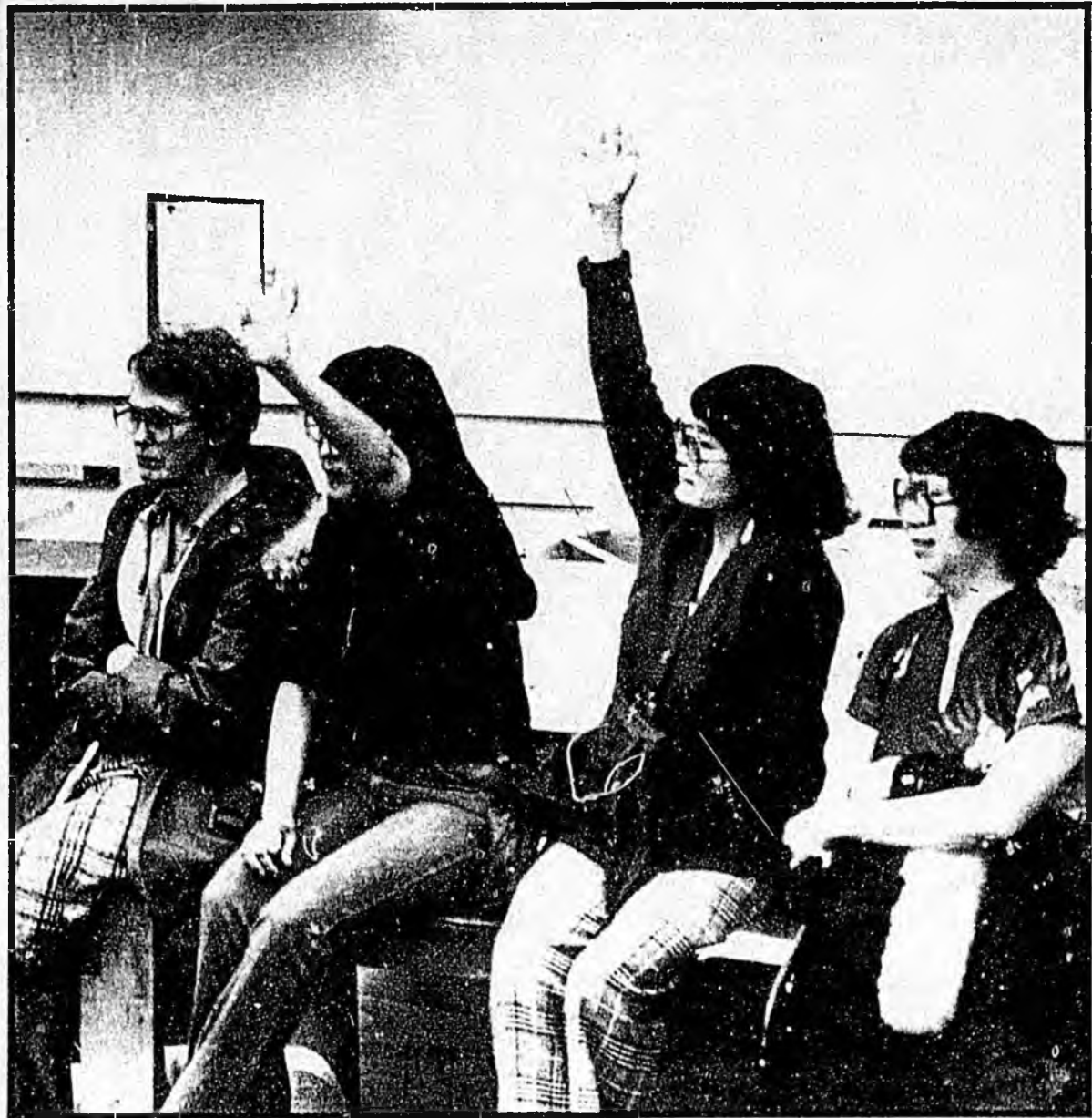
### *Their recommendations:*

Develop a means to help teenagers address alcohol and drug abuse problems.

More counselors are needed in Bethel who are knowledgeable about the consequences of drug abuse.

Education and support services for drug abuse should include all family members.

Prevention of abuse of alcohol and drugs should be as high a priority as helping those with active problems. Programs should be started to teach people coping skills.



## Recent Actions

An inter-agency group identified needs of youth 10-18 years of age. A grant to fund services for this group has been submitted to the National Institute of Mental Health. There has been an increase in coordination of services between PATC and other community agencies.

Drug abuse counseling has focused more on rehabilitation than maintenance.

Hooper Bay, under women's leadership, instituted one of the first ordinances prohibiting the importation of alcohol into a village. Other villages have also acted to prohibit alcohol importation.



# Leadership





## **Women Speak Out on Leadership**

### ***Their recommendations:***

Regional and local boards should encourage women to become active participants on boards.

Support qualified women for positions of responsibility.

Educational institutions should develop workshops and courses on leadership and communication skills.

### **Recent Actions**

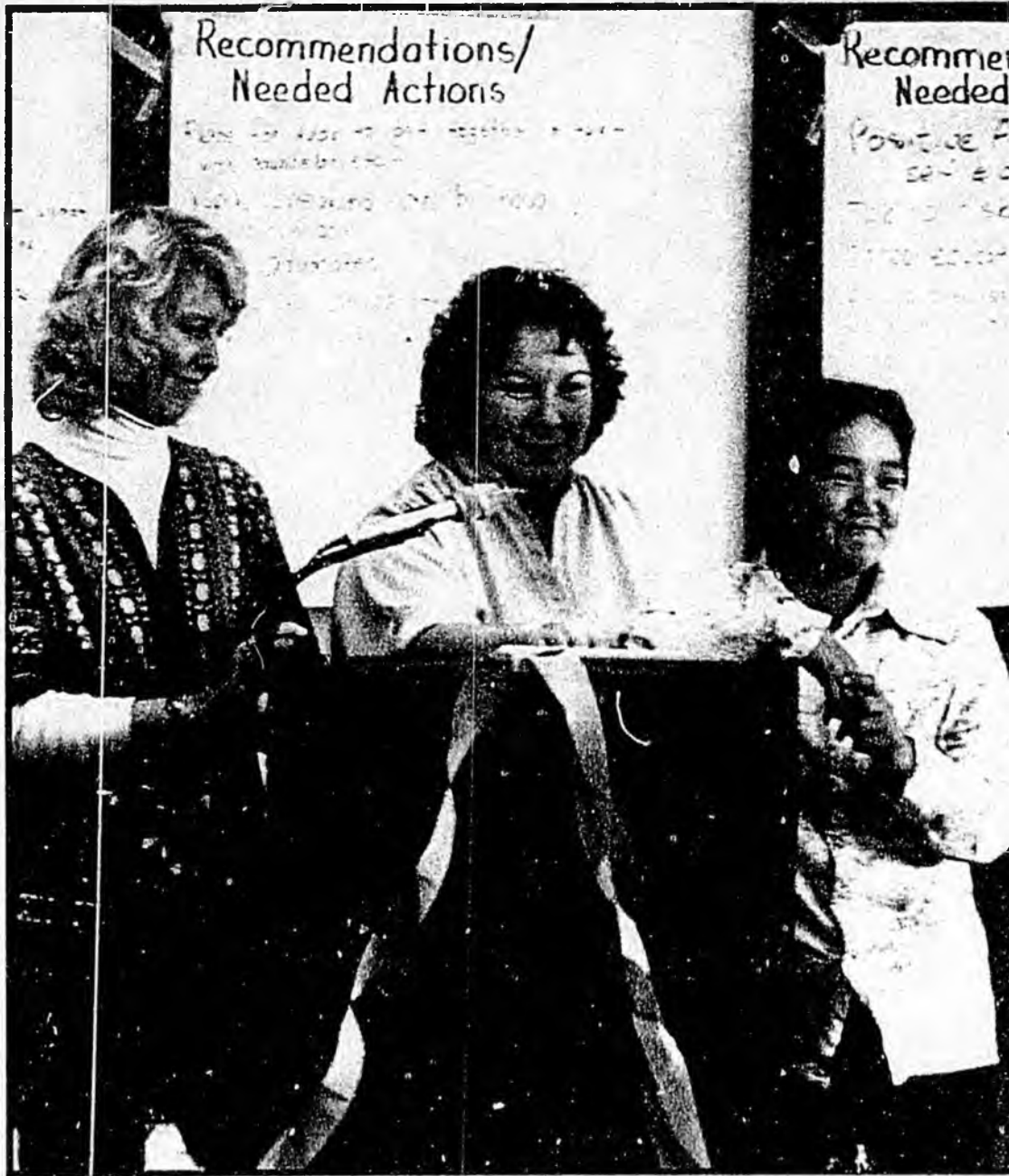
More women are seeking election to and being appointed to community and regional boards.

TWC (Tundra Women's Coalition) continues to recommend and support women on state and local boards.

Recommendations from this conference were introduced by women at major regional and state political meetings. These included the annual meetings of Calista, the Association of Village Council Presidents, the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Alaska Municipal League, Future Frontiers Regional Meeting, and the Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization.

Kuskokwim Community College continues to offer course work in communications and leadership.





***“Women should take an active role in their communities by voting in elections, participating in meetings, encouraging each other and speaking up for the needs of women and families.”***

***“Now when you go back to your village,  
don’t put all this in your pocket....***

***Take it home and share.”***





FINAL REPORT PRESENTED  
TO THE  
ALASKA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

"Piqatigiich"  
NANA REGIONAL  
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE  
October 1, 2, 3, 1981

PRESENTED BY:  
CINDY WATSON  
SKELTER JEPSON  
AND ALL PARTICIPANTS WHO SHARED WITH US

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***Piqatigiich***  
***Women Sharing***  
***Together***



***NANA Regional***  
***Women's Conference***

## I. "Piqatigiich"

### WOMEN SHARING TOGETHER

Some of us were busy. . .  
Some of us didn't know what we were coming here for. . .  
Some of us came here at the last minute. . .

I think the most important thing we need to understand is we should have confidence in ourselves to realize that we can do a lot of things. Some of us think we can't do certain things, but when we come together, Piqatigiich, sharing what we know together, working together and organizing instead of just sitting back and letting things happen, maybe we can come up with some things . . . that's what they're doing in all the different regions.

Some of you women are good at one thing and some of you are good at something else but the important thing to remember is that you are OK for who you are and what you can do. . . just because you might not have a job or you might not be able to understand what we're talking about, you don't have to feel like you don't belong here; because of our woman(hood), that's why we're all here and our potential is unlimited.

I admire a woman who has a lot of confidence and because of certain circumstances or because something happened she pushes herself to do things that she would think she wouldn't normally do.

Some of you are expert in tanning hides; some of you can write grants to the government.

Some of you can sew real good even stitches; some of you can write curriculum guides.

Some of you can make delicious sourdough hotcakes; some of you can deliver a baby.

Some of you can travel from village to village on a snowmachine or boat by yourselves.

Some of you can teach; some of you are real good leaders in the villages.

We all have different talents; we are all women and it just shows that we can do all of these if we wanted to. It just depends on what we want to do.

We're here to share what we know and just because you might not be able to do some things that other people do, doesn't mean you can't talk about what you know, so let's Piqatigiich and try to help each other.

This is our first conference and we'll do the best we can.

Ruth Ramoth-Sampson  
NANA Regional Women's Conference  
October 1-3, 1981  
Kotzebue, Alaska

## II. INTRODUCTIONS

In the spring of 1981, a group of women consisting of staff and volunteers of the Kotzebue Women's Crisis Project and members of Native Women of NANA, met to discuss the possibilities of holding a Regional Women's Conference for Women of NANA Region. The group decided to undertake the project as a joint effort between the two largest women's organizations in the Region. Together, the group discussed plans for a possible conference and wrote a proposal to the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women.

Later in the summer, a steering committee was recruited to begin actual planning for the conference. The committee, consisting of 15 local women, met over bowls of soup throughout the summer to plan different aspects of the conference. The conference was planned around the theme "Piqatigiich", the Inupiat word meaning "Sharing" or "Being Together".

The Regional Women's conference, originally planned for September 24-26, was rescheduled to October 1-3 when an autumn snowstorm threatened the skies of Northern Arctic Alaska. The snowstorm threatened the travel plans of 22 village delegates from 11 villages in the NANA Region; the conference would not be a Regional conference, if village women could not attend.

So on September 30, 21 village delegates, women selected by the other women and women leaders in their villages, arrived in Kotzebue for the first Regional Women's Conference.

More than 100 women attended the conference, held in the Kotzebue Senior Citizen's Center. The conference agenda included general assemblies of all participants each morning of the conference and three different workshops held each day, plus informal activities held each evening. All the general assemblies were aired over KOTZ radio, so that many of the women both in the villages and Kotzebue, who were not able to attend the conference, could still be involved in the Women's Conference. All the general assemblies were bilingual. Ruth Ramoth-Sampson, the conference MC from Selawik, Alaska, translated all speeches, remarks, and even announcements into English from Inupiaq and into Inupiaq when spoken in English.

Among the highlights of the conference was the overwhelming support and involvement of some of the Region's elders: Della Keats, Amy Jones, Louise Wood, Clara Lee and Pauline Harvey. These women continually encouraged the younger women to speak out, and to become strong women of good mothers.

Another conference highlight was the Assertiveness Skills workshop, which many women participated in on the first day and then put into practice throughout the rest of the conference by speaking out and sharing their experiences and common concerns as women.

The guest speakers for the conference general assemblies were chosen by the conference planning committee because of their leadership roles in the NANA Region Community. These speakers were Della Keats, June Nelson, Pauline Harvey, Amy Jones and Rachel Craig. Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry from Shaktoolik, Alaska, is a Commissioner on the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women and represented the Commission at the conference.

Della Keats opened the conference with these remarks translated to English by Ruth Ramoth-Sampson. We should "unite together" so we can go back and tell what we know to the other women. We can "work together with enthusiasm; teach our children what we learn from this conference". "We will learn and not forget, just as we never forget where the best berries grow."

Cindy Watson

SPEECH GIVEN BY TERESA SOCKPEALUK-PERRY, COMMISSIONER  
TO THE  
NANA REGIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE IN KOTZEBUE  
OCTOBER 2, 1981

GREETINGS

Greetings from the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women. My name is Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry and I am from Shaktoolik. In 1978, when the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women was formed, the Governor appointed ten commissioners; I was the only Alaska Native appointed. As of the end of October, there will be three vacancies on the Commission; if interested, I urge you to send a resume to the Governor in Juneau.

HISTORY

In 1977, the State Legislature authorized a Preliminary Study on the Status of Women in Alaska; in 1978, the Commission was formed and charged especially with implementing the recommendations of the Preliminary Study, and improving women's status in this State.

The Commission has dealt with numerous issues and concerns: sex discrimination, homemakers' concerns, welfare, abortion, domestic violence and a seemingly endless number of other issues. Some of the recommendations of the Commission have become law.

The 1977 Preliminary Study did not address Native women's issues and concerns. However, the study did contain 1970 census figures; from those I learned that Native females comprised 18% of the female population of Alaska, and that 27% of the female head-of-household families in Alaska were Native; 39% of those families below the poverty level were Native. Our working women are much more likely to hold low-paying service positions. Native head-of-household families had an average income of \$14,363.

Since 1978, the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women has barely touched on Native women's concerns, in my opinion.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST NATIVE ALASKAN WOMEN

To date, the Commission has had inter-agency cooperation with the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Alaska State Troopers on cases involving violence against Alaska Native women. Violence against Native women is alarming and all too common. Last year I attended a Calista Women's Regional Conference. The conference was dedicated to the memory of a Calista Region woman who was murdered by her husband. Her husband was a village public safety officer.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Last spring a man shot his wife, several of their children, then shot himself, in one of the Norton Sound villages. How can we stop such violence? This conference I know will be making recommendations for the betterment of our lives to the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women and the newly-formed Alaska Council on Domestic Violence. We have held Commission meetings touching on this concern in Nome, Kenai, Juneau, Fairbanks, Sitka and Anchorage. We have helped sponsor the Statewide Native Women's Organization conferences since their inception. Workshops on this subject have been held in Barrow and Nome. Most recently, we have helped sponsor five women's conferences in Kotzebue, Hoonah, Kenai, Fairbanks and Galena.

### NANA WOMEN'S CONCERNS

The Commission is sponsoring a statewide Alaska Women's Conference to be held March 19-21, 1982, in Anchorage. I urge NANA women to contribute your input on issues and concerns. This may not seem like a big matter to you, but spousal abuse, or a woman's need for financial resources, or for a safe house for the night are important sources of stress for women.

### SUBSISTENCE HUNTING AS AN EXAMPLE: A CONCERN OF ESKIMO WOMEN NOT LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED

Just recently I heard on the news that non-Natives in Alaska can now hunt marine mammals. What becomes of our main source of diet when non-Native and man-made environmental hazards deplete the resources of our subsistence way of life? Muktuk is the main source of protein for coastal Eskimos.

### CLOSING

This conference has been well-organized, and it is a great pleasure for me to attend, as one of my last duties as a Commissioner. I am one of the three commissioners resigning, since I will be moving to Oregon temporarily due to an illness in the family.

### III. WORKSHOP SUMMARIES

Approximately 100 participants attended the different workshops. They came from an area that spans 38,000 square miles. They all came from diversified backgrounds but all shared a common bond that affects us as women. The workshops all had a facilitator or recorder, who gave a report to the general assembly. In some cases there were certain questions asked to get the discussions going. Also, the workshops were held three times a day so that all participants could attend all three. They made recommendations and gave input to the resolution committee.

#### A. Assertiveness Training/Leadership Training

Speaker Lisa O'Brian - Growth Company

Approximately 25 people attended each of three workshops. There was an intensive evening workshop which 30 people attended including both male and female participants. Along with an agenda and classroom handouts, Ms. O'Brian defined assertiveness: "the act of standing up for one's basic human rights without violating the rights of others." She listed the meaning of passive, assertive and aggressive as follows and explained each.

##### Passive:

Not expressing your own feelings.  
Ignoring your own rights.  
Allowing others to choose for you.  
Anger, hostility turned in.  
Non-verbal slump; apologetic; turn away; soft tone.

##### Assertive:

Expressing feelings, needs and ideas directly and clearly.  
Standing up for your rights without violating the rights of others.  
Making your own choices.  
Feeling good about self.  
Self-confident; good eye contact; not blaming.

##### Aggressive:

Expressing feelings and ideas at expense of others.  
Standing up for your rights but violating the rights of others.  
Trying to dominate or humiliate others.  
Anger, hostility turned toward others.  
Use body to invade other's space; loud; interrupting; attacks.

Traditionally women have been taught to be passive. One of our Elders, Amy Jones, told a story about this couple going up the Noatak river in a skin boat. Her husband was very jealous; he kept hitting her with a pole or stick, even though she was carrying her baby on her back. She did not say or do anything back to him. When they stopped at this one place where there was a cliff, she got out of the boat and began climbing. Her husband kept telling her to come back. While she was climbing and at the top of the cliff, she started to sing this song in Inupiat "You hit me with a pole so don't cry for me". She jumped off the cliff. Both her and the baby were killed instantly. There is a cliff on the Noatak river where this happened and a stain on the cliff that looks just like blood. Amy said this story was passed on by the elders to teach them not to be jealous and not to be like that man. She said that talking and coming to an understanding with your mate is the way it should be.

The first step in becoming assertive is be aware of situations that prevent you from self expression. Set yourself some limits; learn how to say "no" and mean it. There was a lot of interest in having more workshops on assertiveness.

#### B. Traditional Health for Women

Speaker: Della Keats, Traditional Doctor  
Facilitator: Auggie Hoffman

All three of Della's presentations were well attended. She not only talked about traditional medicine, she demonstrated techniques of traditional medicine in how to manipulate the different parts of the human body.

For nearly 60 of her 74 years, Della has been meeting her people's medical needs. She has traveled throughout Northwest Arctic Alaska to treat patients living in remote and isolated villages. During the workshops she talked about how she started her own career from reading anatomy books and relying on her own experience. She discussed some of her own work and compared traditional health to western medicine.

Besides a few traditional herbal remedies, Della's only tools are her hands, heart and mind. With her hands she can feel into and manipulate the abdominal cavity, touching stomach, liver, intestines, gall bladder, pancreas and uterus. She can feel kidney and gall stones. She has worked on fetal positioning, dislocations, sprains and respiratory problems. She has delivered countless babies. She relies heavily on the touch and sensitivity of her hands. "My hands have feelings and I pray to God to give me knowledge in my mind and hands. I do it just by having faith in God and believing."

She has trained two other women and one man of her skills and are all working as she does. They are called to villages upon request of Health Aides. There is no competition between Della and the local IHS doctors. A former Public Health Service physician, Dr. Vandenburg, has said "Della is separate, but equal".

C. Banking for Women

Speaker: Drue Pearce

This workshop was led by Drue Pearce, an officer and the manager of the Bank here in Kotzebue. She described the types of services and accounts her bank and other banks offer. Drue explained at length about cheques, chequeing accounts and the process by which cheques clear the bank. She also pointed out the problems people in villages frequently encounter with the use of cheques and suggested solutions for these problems.

Loans were also explained. Actual loan applications were distributed and each item and question was examined. Drue explained why many of the questions were asked. She also described the procedure banks follow in processing loans.

Women obtaining credit was another topic which was briefly touched upon. Drue explained the reasons for which a bank could reject a loan application and discussed the reasons which were not legal. Information as to recourse was also provided, if a woman felt she had been discriminated against and unlawfully denied a loan.

The workshop was excellent. It provided basic information about banking which was very useful to all the participants at the conference.

D. Violence Against Women

These workshops were well-attended. There was no leader per se, but the discussion was centered around the following five questions:

1. Have you ever experienced violence against yourself or your family? What kinds of violence?
2. How can we village women and town women protect ourselves against rape and family violence?
3. What kind of help should we expect from Public Safety Officers, City Councils and men in general?
4. How can we organize safe homes and protection for women?
5. If alcohol is part of the problem, what is the solution?

In response to the first discussion question more than half of the participants had been victims of violence. The group tried to define violence and felt that there were two types, physical and verbal. Frequently the verbal was more devastating than the physical.

A great deal of discussion centered on the question of whether domestic violence and sexual abuse occurred in the Eskimo culture prior to the influence of White or western culture. Several of the elders in attendance discussed it with us. They told us a story about a woman whose husband did abuse her and how she solved the problem. The consensus was that violence and sexual assault occurred but rarely. When things of that nature did happen the elders would have meetings and talk about the problem and then talk to the instigator and that would usually solve the problem.

There was a general bewilderment as to why men committed these violent and abusive acts. The common, nearly universal response, was that domestic violence is a product of substance abuse, particularly alcohol. Participants felt that, if these products could somehow be eliminated, many of the problems would also be eliminated. To this end there was a brief discussion of the state local option law.

Another concern expressed was the ability of the Village Public Safety Officers to enforce laws in the village since village inhabitants are frequently related. Participants felt that if VPSO's came from other villages they could be more effective law enforcement officers.

Finally, once the problem had been defined and explored the discussion centered on solutions. Two had been mentioned previously; one, control of alcohol and two, VPSO's from outside villages. Along that line it was decided that more training and higher salaries would improve the quality of the VPSO's and hopefully this would provide better and more effective law enforcement in the villages. Resolutions to this effect were drafted and later passed.

Another solution, although really just a stop-gap measure, would be to establish in every village several safe homes, places where women who felt threatened or had been abused could run to and feel safe. A resolution to this effect was also drafted.

Although no actual, tangible solutions or facts came out of these workshops one important thing did. That is they served to create a common bond of unity between the women and served to break some of the isolation that battered and abused women frequently find themselves in. The workshops and discussion emphasized to all the participants that this abuse is inherently wrong and not something they "deserve".

E. The Single Parent and Working Mother

The discussion group was attended by approximately a dozen women. Many of the single parents and working mothers expressed their concerns on:

1. Problems in answering their children's questions in regard to their father.
2. Working as "men" in men's jobs. (i.e., hunting and fishing.)
3. Their children being left out by not being able to learn traditional skills such as hunting, fishing and trapping

Two of the elder women present, Della Keats and Louise Wood, shared with the group their experiences in raising their children singly. Some of the advice to the younger generation was:

- Respect other people's property.
- Do not get into trouble and get blamed for things as this hurts the parents.
- Teach the eldest child more:
  - Talk and explain things to them.
  - Teach them to care for the younger ones.
  - The younger tends to follow the elder brother's or sister's example.
  - When the eldest child learns to help care for the the younger children, it makes it easier to raise a family.
- For younger children:
  - Care for each other.
  - Advise them on who to play with and give reasons for keeping good company.
- Go to church - you can receive unending help there.
- Attend and finish school. This is important for children in the modern day world.
- Older children are harder to handle.

The two elder women broke with tradition by raising their children alone, by hunting and fishing and not depending on anyone but themselves for their well-being. It was advice that you can get by on your own when faced with difficulty. Just don't give up trying.

As working mothers in this day and age, three problems were brought out and resolutions were written:

1. The need for day care centers.
  - a) in Kotzebue
  - b) in the villages
2. The need for employers to grant sick leave to both parents when children are ill and need care at home.
3. The need for employers to understand and grant time off for mothers who nurse their babies. (Discussed but no resolution written.)

Two resolutions were passed by the general delegation on the last day of the conference.

F. Women in Transition

Facilitators: Skeeter Jepson and Suzy Savok Erlich

I. The workshops focused around two different forms of transition: One where the indigenous community's intergrated pattern of human behavior (custom, beliefs, etc.) is no longer static or stable but is abruptly and forcibly changed by outside influences. The second form is where an individual willfully leaves a familiar community for one that is strange and unfamiliar.

The sessions were designed to impart the following:

1. Although the two definitions above are to be elaborated upon, it must be emphasized that transition is a constant occurrence, (e.g., from being a single person to that of being married) and should not be feared.
2. It is critical that an individual knows him/herself so that the "strangeness" of a different surrounding does not threaten his or her identity.
3. Identifying resources for support will help in coping through the transition period.
4. Racism is an unavoidable ingredient in the transitions discussed herein. It is important to know how to constructively deal with it.
5. Sensitivity and open communications are important when a family is involved in the transition.
6. Not everyone involved in the workshop will be confronted by the latter definition of transition, however, it can be expected that a person or persons in a close relationship will make such a move. Therefore, it is important to have an awareness of this so that some help can be provided when needed.

The two groups indicated interest and understanding of the topic by active discussion and identifying problems with transition. Alcohol and its related problems was conceived as a harmful method of transition.

II. There are two different transitions. One is when you live in your hometown and a different culture moves in. The other is when you physically move to another town. Both have their problems and good things.

The reason for this class is so we can pass our knowledge to our relatives and children who want to move and:

1. So many of us from the villages ended up in the gutter, or being harmed in some way. We all have to pass from one stage of life to another, no matter what. We are what we are, be proud of it!
2. The 13th Regional Corporation does meet. There are many Indian organizations that can help you get used to life in the big city. It's easy to use the police for good things, as well as bad. There will always be racism, no matter what. It can be helped by meeting with the school board and such.
3. Many people take the best of two cultures. There are others who make the transition harmful to themselves.
4. The values you have will be passed on to your kids. We have a choice we can make about how we make our transition. We can make the most of it or be mad at the whole system, or you can be embarrassed because you're from a different culture.
5. You have to come to a point where we can't put off learning the old ways of our culture because by the time we want to learn they will already have been gone.

We have the right to have our history remembered. When we are young mothers is when we should learn the Eskimo way of things.

IV. RESOLUTIONS

The Native Women of NANA and the Kotzebue Women's Crisis Project wrote a joint proposal for the first annual women's convention called "Piqatigiich" The following resolutions were passed at the convention by the delegation unanimously.

RESOLUTION # 1

- WHEREAS: Life in the NANA Region is daily becoming more complex; and,
- WHEREAS: Communication problems within this region are extremely numerous and serious because of the clash between different cultural values, standards, and expectations; and,
- WHEREAS: Traditionally, people in this region are taught not to "talk back" and this teaching makes it extremely difficult for people to verbally express their feelings, wants and desires and exercise their rights and thus complicates their lives further; and,
- WHEREAS: People can be shown how to express their feelings and ideas without violating the rights of others through Assertiveness and Communication Skills Training provided to all interested people throughout the region; now,
- THEREFORE: The delegates of the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" request the Maniilaq Association Human Services Division to seek the means and support to provide Assertiveness and Communication Skills Training to all interested people throughout the Region.

RESOLUTION # 2

- WHEREAS: Residents of the villages are frequently interrelated; and,
- WHEREAS: Close family relationships make it difficult for Village Public Safety Officers to enforce laws impartially; now,
- THEREFORE: The Delegates to the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich", although mindful of the fact that this may take employment from the village, recommends that City Councils hire Village Public Safety Officers from other villages in the region; and,
- FURTHERMORE: We ask the City Councils to encourage their law enforcement personnel to be more aware of and sensitive to the problems of intrafamily violence.

RESOLUTION # 3

- WHEREAS: There is a high incidence of rape and other sexual assault in the villages of the NANA region; and,
- WHEREAS: Immediate medical attention is necessary for all victims of rape and sexual assault and for proper collection of evidence needed for later trial and conviction; and,
- WHEREAS: Inclement weather and irregular airflights frequently prevent timely travel into the Public Health Hospital at Kotzebue; and,
- WHEREAS: The Community Health Aides are often the first and only health professionals who provide medical attention to victims of rape and sexual assault; now,
- THEREFORE: The Delegates to the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" ask Maniilaq Association to instruct all Community Health Aides in the techniques of administering a rape examination; and,
- FURTHERMORE: The Delegates to the NANA Regional Women's Conference ask Maniilaq Association to stock all village Health Clinics with "rape kits" to provide for collection of the proper physical evidence necessary for the arrest and conviction of perpetrators of sexual assault.

RESOLUTION # 4

- WHEREAS: Women in the villages are frequently victims of domestic violence and sexual assault; and,
- WHEREAS: There are no shelters or safe places for women in the village; and,
- WHEREAS: Women in the villages need a safe place to run to when they are afraid to stay at home or when they have been sexually assaulted; now,
- THEREFORE: The Delegates to the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" ask Maniilaq Association to provide funds and other necessary support to the Women's Crisis Project in order to establish at least two (2) safe homes in every village in the region.

RESOLUTION # 5

- WHEREAS: A vital link in the prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault and in the protection of our lives and property are the Village Public Safety Officers; and,
- WHEREAS: The Village Public Safety Officers must be properly trained to function effectively and safely within our communities; and,
- WHEREAS: Currently Village Public Safety Officers must frequently wait long periods for adequate and necessary training which is only available outside our region; now,
- THEREFORE: The Delegates of the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" encourage the Northwest Arctic School District to institute a vocational program to train Village Public Safety Officers and Peace Officers on a regular and frequent basis.

RESOLUTION # 10

- WHEREAS: The Inupiat language was prohibited to be spoken in schools for a generation of people; and,
- WHEREAS: The number of elders who know best the Inupiat language and heritage is diminishing; and,
- WHEREAS: Cultural identity is important to today's young people and for generations to come; now,
- THEREFORE: The Delegates of the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" request that all families in the NANA Region make an effort to learn Inupiaq and speak Inupiaq at home; and,
- FURTHERMORE: We request that Inupiaq skills and traditions be taught to young parents and their children by their elders.

RESOLUTION #11

- WHEREAS: The purpose of the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" is sharing common concerns and working together; and,
- WHEREAS: The concerns and recommendations discussed at the Women's Conference were not fully addressed due to time constraints; and,
- WHEREAS: It is important that village women provide input and follow-up on recommendations and resolutions; and,
- WHEREAS: Travel and living expenses necessary to bring women together for this work are costly; now,
- THEREFORE: The Delegates of the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" request the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women for support in seeking funds that will enable village women to come together to continue to work and follow-up the recommendations and resolutions; and,
- FURTHER: We respectfully request Senator Frank Ferguson and Representative Al Adams for their support in providing funds to the Commission on the Status of Women for follow-up to the 1981 Women's Conference and for future conferences for women in the NANA Region.
- NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the NANA Regional Women's Conference "Piqatigiich" delation passed unanimously RESOLUTIONS # 1 to 11 on October 3, 1981 at Kotzebue, Alaska.

ATTEST:

Eva S. Kowunna  
EVA B. KOWUNNA, SECRETARY  
NATIVE WOMEN OF NANA

Dorothy McDowell  
DOROTHY McDOWELL, DIRECTOR  
KOTZEBUE WOMEN'S CRISIS PROJECT

DATE:

10/3/81

Aketer Jepsen  
AKETER JEPSON, PRESIDENT  
NATIVE WOMEN OF NANA

V. CONFERENCE AGENDA

OCTOBER 1 - THURSDAY

9:00 - General Assembly of all Participants  
Guest Speakers:

- \* Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry, Shaktoolik, Ak.
- \* June Nelson, Kotzebue, Ak.
- \* Pauline Harvey, Noorvik, Ak.
- \* Della Keats, Kotzebue, Ak.

10:30 - Workshops:

- \* Assertiveness Training/Leadership Training
- \* Banking for Women
- \* Traditional Health for Women

12:00 - NOON LUNCH BREAK

2:00 - Workshops: Same as morning

3:30 - Workshops: Same as morning

5:00 - SUPPER BREAK

7:00 - Evening Activities:

- \* Informal Sharing
- \* Recipe Exchange
- \* Pattern Exchange
- \* Eskimo Stories about Women
- \* Assertiveness Training (fee \$25)

V. CONFERENCE AGENDA

- OCTOBER 2 - FRIDAY
- 9:00 - General Assembly of all Participants.  
Reports from Thursday Workshops.
- 10:30 - Workshops:
- \* Violence Against Women
  - \* Family Life Planning
  - \* Being a Single Parent and Working Mother
- 12:00 - NOON LUNCH BREAK
- 2:00 - Workshops: Same as morning
- 3:30 - Workshops: Same as morning
- 5:00 - SUPPER BREAK
- 7:00 - Evening Activities:
- \* Museum Show
  - \* Eskimo Dancing

V. CONFERENCE AGENDA

OCTOBER 3 - SATURDAY

9:00 - General Assembly of all Participants.  
Reports from Friday Workshops.

10:30 - Workshops:

- \* Traditional Role of Women
- \* Women in Transition
- \* Concerns with Childcare

12:00 - NOON LUNCH BREAK

2:00 - Workshops: Same as morning

3:30 - Workshops: Same as morning

6:00 - POTLUCK/FFAST

7:00 - Evening Activities:

- \* General Assembly of all Participants
- \* Reports from Saturday Workshops
- \* Evaluations and Resolutions Completed
- \* Identifying Women Leaders

VI. CLOSING REMARKS

Aarrigaa Tailuu! Piqatigiichsetta!

(Translation: It is very good, thank you! Let us share and work together.) That was our theme for our first regional women's conference. We would like to acknowledge the following for all their help and contributions that made our conference a success:

All our elders for their guidance.

Kotzebue Women's Crisis Project.

Kotzebue Senior Citizen Center.

Maniilaq Association.

Alaska Commission on the Status of Women.

Kotzebue Broadcasting Inc.

Local Businesses that made it possible to publish our brochure.

Northwest Arctic School District.

Native Women of NANA.

NANA Regional Corporation.

and, especially to all the unnamed participants that attended and/or contributed to the conference. Unfortunately, we were unable to get reports from all the workshops. If you have any questions or comments you can contact Skeeter Jepson at Maniilaq Association, Box 256, Kotzebue, Alaska 99752.

A feeling of self-awareness and accomplishment, as well as a togetherness, was felt by all the women at the closing of our conference. Quoting one of our elders "We are all sisters helping sisters".

FINAL REPORT PRESENTED  
TO THE  
ALASKA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

STATUS AND PROBLEMS  
OF THE  
ASIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN ALASKA  
NOVEMBER 30, 1980

PRESENTED BY:  
YOSHIKO OKAMOTO

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## INTRODUCTION

A six-member steering committee applied to the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women for monies to run a conference on Asian-American Women in Alaska. The steering committee members were Yoshiko Okamoto, chair, Fei Yen Harding, Marilyn Keiko Motonaga, Sook Hee An, Tohsook P. Chang, and Yvonne Wu Goldsmith.

In organizing this conference on the status of Asian-American women in Alaska, we experienced two major hurdles:

(1) Just who are Asian women? Do we include all non-white peoples on and around the Eurasian continent and Southeast Asia? Impossible. We decided to make a modest start with a clear limitation of scope. We focused our attention on the three Asian national groups: Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. They are geographically grouped together as East Asia. These three nations have traditionally shared the common religious heritage of Buddhism and the common writing system based on the Chinese ideograph.

(2) There is a universal resistance to the idea of holding a public hearing by most Asian and Asian-American women. They do not want to discuss their problems in a public forum. It is not at all difficult to understand the cause for such negative reaction when we view the long history of discrimination--particularly the wartime memory of forced relocation of the West Coast Japanese-Americans. All this has caused the Asian-Americans to combine their old world's conservative attitude in life with a new instinct that "speaking out" is often akin to "troublemaking." The best thing to do is keep silent and work hard. Indeed the steering committee's view was that such a formal hearing would not draw a crowd larger than can be counted on one's fingers. Our steering committee finally decided (after discussions with the Commission's executive director, Lynne Woods) to do away with all public meetings. Instead, we held much more informal, smaller, and private gatherings as a means of obtaining raw data on Asian-American women in Alaska.

Now then, the task before us was summed up as follows:

1. Draw an articulate and qualitative perspective on the present status and conditions of Asian-American women in Alaska by focusing on the three East Asian peoples, Chinese, Korean and Japanese.
2. Attempt to identify their salient problems within the present socio-cultural and institutional context of our society, and develop a suitable method of analysis.

3. Develop a blueprint of projects which will address the roots of these problems, define the goals to be accomplished, and project the suggested methods by which to reach them.

We have worked to accomplish our objectives in these three areas and feel reasonably satisfied with the results presented in this report.

## CHAPTER I

DISCUSSION ON METHODOLOGYSection One: Structures of the Ethnic Population in Question.

The Chinese, the Korean, and the Japanese, (whether born Americans, naturalized citizens, immigrants, or resident business representatives on tour of duty) tend to live in three respective, and distinctively different patterns in Alaska.

This is not caused by reasons peculiar to the culture of each people, but rather by the circumstances which brought them to the United States and to Alaska in more recent years.

The qualitative characteristics and the occupational patterns of each ethnic group dictated us to use different methods of communication with them.

## 1. OUR COMMUNICATION WITH THE CHINESE POPULATION:

The Chinese-Americans are generally well educated, born-American citizens. They are the smallest of the three groups (a few hundred) and most live in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Having acculturated themselves into the mainstream American society even before coming to Alaska, they are usually much less discernible except for the ubiquitous Chinese restaurants which are generally operated by the first-generation Chinese and their kin. Outside the restaurant trade most Chinese-Americans are in high-paying professional occupations, government service, or other private businesses. They live a quiet, undisturbed life of a nucleus family and seem to have little problem adjusting to American society at this time. Besides, whatever problems they might still have, their old tradition of mutual help within the Chinese community seems to fortify this apparent tranquility.

We have been able to establish contact with people in the restaurant trade, medical profession, government service, and education without any problem; they participated in our project as active individuals, not as a group.

## 2. OUR COMMUNICATION WITH THE KOREAN POPULATION:

The past decade has shown a steady increase of Korean immigrants in the United States, including Alaska. In 1960, the Chinese were the largest group in Alaska with a few hundred; a few Japanese and very few Koreans lived here. By 1970, the Japanese population in Alaska exceeded the Chinese. Several hundred Japanese were living and doing business in Alaska. During the 1970's, the Korean population surpassed the Japanese. In 1980, the semiofficial Korean population is 2,000.

Undoubtedly, the majority of these late-coming Koreans have had a difficult time finding jobs because most cannot speak English and are without other special skills for easing the pains of transition. The large majority of them eventually found their way into the unskilled labor market, i.e., janitorial and custodial work. The peculiar structure of the Korean Alaskan population is that in addition to those in the unskilled job market we find a small number of individual Koreans active in various professional, business, educational and other skilled technical fields. The lack of comparable opportunities in Korea is often cited as a reason for their immigration to the United States. Whatever the reason, these well-educated Koreans tend to provide a natural leadership for the Korean community (although they tend to splinter into competing subgroups). We attempted to communicate directly with the rank-and-file Korean women residing in Anchorage by sending flyers asking for their response. The result was near-zero reply. Then, we reached out and developed a preliminary working relationship with the select representatives of the professional, or otherwise well-situated, already acculturated Koreans as the spokesmen of the "silent" majority Korean immigrants. We were unable to entice any significant number of them to our meetings.

It is obvious that the large number of unskilled Korean workers and their families presents considerable social and family problems. Their educated leaders are concerned about how solutions can be found-primarily within the Korean community.

### 3. OUR COMMUNICATION WITH THE JAPANESE POPULATION:

There have been relatively few Japanese immigrants to the United States in recent decades. The mainstream Japanese population increase has been that of businessmen and their families taking up residence for a limited period of time. Of this "trade" category, the largest group is the employees of Japan Airlines; they account for approximately 250 to 300, while another 100 or so are spread among several other Japanese business firms. In addition, there is a relatively small number of Japanese in the professional category like their Korean counterparts; also, a small but significant number of Japanese-Americans and permanent immigrants (a few hundred) are in a variety of semiprofessional and technical occupations.

Thus, the Japanese population in Alaska is unique in that the predominant subgroup (the Japanese corporate segment) is not really the integral part of the American society. They represent the Japanese industry and are stationed here for a limited period of time; nevertheless, their children are enrolled in the Alaska public school system and experience the same acculturation as that of the permanent immigrants' children.

Once integrated far enough into our system of education and social life, there is a natural tendency for some of these children to want to come back to American society at a later date; but, most go back to Japan with their parents to stay.

We experienced some resistance from the Japanese corporate segment (as we did from the Japanese-Americans for different reasons already cited) to participate in a public meeting as individuals. They preferred to speak anonymously or through their spokespersons, i.e., the wives of their husbands' superiors in respective Japanese companies.

There would have been little participation if we insisted on public meetings; however, by going along with the Japanese channel of communication, we were able to obtain letter-reports by individuals and groups written in Japanese.

#### Section Two: Immigrants and Acculturation in Historical Perspective

In spite of the differences in their population structures, the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese immigrants do share the problem of acculturation. All immigrants from Asia experience essentially the same process of having their old values and norms rejected and a new life-style imposed upon them in the early stages of their struggle.

What historians call the "Melting Pot" for the Anglo-European immigrants is not exactly true for the less fortunate Asians. When one's cultural heritage is essentially denied, one's identity and sense of belonging destroyed, one is left a deprived and uprooted member of the society, feeling entrapped in a hostile environment. Thus, a deprived person has relatively little to contribute to his society. Whether it worked well for the Asians or not, we feel this concept of the melting pot is a viable representation of the positive and productive interactions among divergent races and cultures in our nation throughout the past few centuries. We would like to believe that this concept still remains a valid and viable one in our time-especially for the Asians. If we make it work for the Asians just as it worked for the Anglo-European immigrants, we can use it as a means to find and create our own place in the mainstream American society; thus becoming its proud and competent members.

#### Section Three: Redefinition of the Melting Pot Concept

POSITIVE ACCULTURATION: The process of "Melting" is one of acculturation in the positive sense. It is a process of one culture losing its original identity by "melting" into another, i.e., enriching and broadening it by adding new values and dimensions. In the melting process the immigrant (who is the carrier of the melting culture) is bound to feel proud and happy to become part of the new synthesized culture (America) because she has made positive contributions from her old world to the new. She can rightfully feel the new society is indeed partly hers.

These new citizens and their descendants are likely to become willing and productive members of the society they helped create.

NEGATIVE ACCULTURATION: On the other hand, if the actual process of acculturation is not a positive one, it often results in a tragic and painful loss of the values that had bound the immigrants' families together, i.e., self-identity, self-confidence, and above all, parental authority. Under such adverse conditions, the ground is ready for the next generation of Asian-Americans to grow up isolated, uprooted, and lonely. These minority citizens will feel confused and uncertain about themselves, and negative about (if not ashamed of) their own parents' cultural backgrounds. It is not difficult to see why these people can fall short of being full productive members of the society. This is not what was meant by the melting pot in our history.

#### Section Four: Immigrants' Family Unit as the Essential Element of the Melting Pot Mechanism

In theory, an immigrant family (parents, children, sometimes grandparents, uncles, or in-laws) is the likely place in which the most important chemistry of synthesis of cultures takes place on a personal level. This is where parents transmit cultural values and life norms to their children, which often results in clashes with the new values and life-style the children bring in from the outside world.

Indeed, the interaction between the children (U.S.-born Asian-Americans) and the outside world (dominant American society) will happen and comes to them through school and neighborhood contacts. It traps them in personal value confrontation at home where they normally need parental reassurance and encouragement. In this family situation the parents are the givers of the old heritage and the children are the receivers/synthesizers of the old and the new. Through this process of often painful self-adjustment, the children must seek out their own new self-identity as Asian-Americans. This results in (1) some being proud of, (2) some indifferent to, and (3) still others negative about their Asian heritage. Needless to say, the same process also produces (1) happy parents, (2) confused ones, and (3) some frustrated and unhappy ones. Given the East-Asian pattern of family life, the role of mother in this value interaction with her children is profoundly important; it is almost the key to the successful functioning of the melting pot mechanism.

The four sections in this chapter identified the frame of reference we used in our analysis in this report. In Chapter Two we will venture our own interpretation of the tape transcripts of the meetings held in Anchorage in October, and Fairbanks in November, 1980. Yoshiko Okamoto, the chairperson of the steering committee, is responsible for the interpretation of, and quotations from, the original transcripts.

## CHAPTER II

### QUALITATIVE PERSPECTIVE: A PRELIMINARY

#### ATTEMPT OF PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

To discuss the status of Asian-American women in Alaska, we will not repeat the often used familiar approach in the analysis of so-called women's problems in recent years. These points have been well taken in the past by many reports prepared for the Commission; it is self-evident that Asian-American women share the same problems of most American women today, i.e., education, day care, battering, employment, alcoholism, single parenthood, etc.

Throughout the two main conferences (in Anchorage and Fairbanks) and smaller "home" meetings, the following topics emerged most frequently among Alaska's Asian-American women.

1. Language Problems: The largest percentage of the Asian-Americans living in Alaska are the Korean immigrants and their families totaling approx-

imately 2,000. This is more than twice the number of all other Asians, i.e., 500 Japanese, 200 Chinese, and various splinter groups. Most of these 2,000 Koreans have arrived in the U.S. in the past decade. They have a variety of problems, many of which stem directly from their lack of English proficiency.

Most of the wives and children of the Japanese businessmen stationed in Alaska share a similar language problem although they are situated differently in the socio-economic viewpoint (see Chapter III, Section 3). In both cases, these women come in contact with Alaska's Basic Adult Education and Bilingual programs at some point. Many of the participants in our conferences expressed the opinion that, "We have this bilingual education program to accommodate the problem, but it's not enough."<sup>1</sup>

Participants also stated, "Money is a problem," and the teachers are often not "certified."<sup>2</sup> They are mostly underpaid Asian-American women. Because of the unusual language skill requirement, the available teachers are often without college degrees which keeps their status and pay scale at a low level. Some said, "They should have some kind of program which will give them (teachers) the same status as other regular teachers."<sup>3</sup> For most Japanese and Korean families, the predominant language at home is their own. The mothers are often too busy and/or too old to learn English quickly so as to maintain good communication with their children. Under these circumstances, the children's rapid advance at school often creates both a language and a culture gap between mother and children, disrupting in-family communication and harmony. Ideas were suggested by the conference participants to overcome this frustration. Almost everyone recognized that, "There is a lot of room for improvement, and the more effective vehicle is some sort of "language training center."<sup>4</sup> It should be specially noted that these Asian mothers placed a special stress on the clear realization that the problem is not just language, i.e., attention should be given to the cultural conflict and family dislocation as part of the same problem.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that the conference participants recognize the usefulness of the State's bilingual program but also see the need to have a community cultural center to cope with their transition problems. This is especially true for the Korean immigrants.

2. Women and the Problem of Generation Gap: The following categories exist according to family and social circumstances:

- 1) Immigrant mother without child.
- 2) Immigrant mother with foreign-born child(ren).
- 3) Immigrant mother with U.S.-born child(ren).
- 4) U.S.-born mother without child.
- 5) U.S.-born mother with child(ren).
- 6) Single women/Single mother.
- 7) Daughter of immigrant.

The great majority (nearly two-thirds) of Asian-American women in Alaska fall under categories 2 and 3; namely, the young Korean couple

with small children.

We will attempt to identify the problems confronting this group of Asian-Americans. Essentially the same thing applies to the young Japanese couple with children but to a much lesser degree. Between the Koreans and the Japanese, the sum of categories 2 and 3 is as high as 2,300 Asians and Asian-Americans out of the approximate total of 3,000 in the State. We feel, therefore, that their problems should be given our serious attention as the high-priority subject for all Asian-American women in Alaska.

It is indeed, on this subgroup that we had postulated the basic justification of using the concept of the melting pot as the pragmatic tool of analysis in defining the transitional process of Asian-American women in the sometimes rough sea of acculturation.

The definition of the nucleus family (described in Chapter I, Section 4) applies to all Asian immigrant families of categories 2 and 3.

Another important factor of the Asian immigrant family is marital status, i.e., whether an Asian-American woman is married to an Asian or Caucasian. In the first case, the wedlock tends to preserve, if to a diminishing degree, the traditional Asian relationship of man and his wife, and therefore, the norms of the traditional family life that apply to every one of its members. In the second case, the wedlock with a Caucasian husband may create a considerable degree of intercultural tension between husband and wife which is likely to produce an impact on their children relating to racial identity, sense of belonging, and, in the end, confidence in themselves.

Our view of the transcript quotations follows:

A. CASE OF JAPANESE IMMIGRANT MOTHER WITH A DAUGHTER (Category 2)

"I do know a family who are immigrants from Japan, and the father does speak English very well because he is the provider. He has to go out in the world and earn his keep. However, mother doesn't speak English very well. They have one child and when the daughter started school -- until then she was under her parents' protection -- the parents, of course, communicate with each other in Japanese only -- until she started school she always talked with her mother, she preferred to talk with her mother. However, as soon as she started school she preferred to speak with her father in English." <sup>5</sup> Thus, the English-speaking daughter begins to drift away from her mother creating a cultural generation gap. Daughter's new American values, which are bound to come with her learning of English, begin to clash with the old traditional values of her immigrant mother and, "She's going to be more often left out in the future unless she builds up her English skill." <sup>6</sup>

Daughter says, "She (mother) is trying, but she is an older person than I am and it's very difficult...you never really gain the proficiency of your children. My own mother, for example, went

to night school and worked very hard, got her citizenship papers, passed the test and everything, and she speaks English as well as can be expected for someone her age.<sup>7</sup>

"However, there's a lot of times when you are talking in English and her English proficiency isn't up here yet. And we will be talking my mother and I--I can speak in Japanese too, but when she is talking in English I prefer to speak to her so that she can learn more English--but we are talking in English on this level and halfway through our conversation it will dawn on me that what she and I were talking about didn't meet. She is saying something and meaning something and I am saying something and meaning something else. And her English didn't quite click, so we weren't even really communicating."<sup>8</sup>

#### B. CASE OF CHINESE IMMIGRANT MOTHER WITH DAUGHTERS (Category 3)

An elderly Chinese mother, an immigrant with an advanced American education in the field of medicine said, "I have six daughters and none of them speak Chinese. The problem is, when they were little, I was working and they had a Swedish babysitter and a German babysitter, and all different kinds of foreigners babysitting, and they teach them Swedish, they understand that, they teach them German, they understand that, but they don't understand Chinese. I mean, before she goes to school, and before she goes to kindergarten, she gets everything all mixed up, German, Swedish, English, and Chinese all mixed up, so we have no other choice but to drop the Chinese. So, this is a sad story... she (my daughter) writes home and says, 'Mother, I am sorry I didn't learn Chinese...,' but it's too late then."<sup>9</sup>

Again, a cultural generation gap. Another participant observed, "As long as you are in an American environment, when you have children the other language is going to be very hard to maintain because English will be the primary language and they are exposed to it in school. Their friends or their peers will be speaking English. It's tough to teach them the other."<sup>10</sup>

#### C. CASE OF A SECOND-GENERATION CHINESE WITH AN IMMIGRANT MOTHER (Category 7)

Referring to the same cultural gap, she says, "I can understand the conflict between what you are being taught at home and at school. And that there are personality and behavioral, meaning psychological transitions and problems that we are not aware of. And as a child, they are having difficulties coping. I think this will continue on into their adolescence and young adulthood, and even through their adult years, because of the importance of parents in an Asian-American life. This is in conflict with those choices that you have to make on an individual basis, being an American. Because in America, the individual choice and freedom is much stronger

than having parental approval. And I think that will continue through a person's life." 11

#### D. CASE OF A KOREAN MOTHER MARRIED TO A CAUCASIAN HUSBAND

We have not been able to establish a good contact directly with the Korean women married to white American husbands in Fairbanks; however, many remarks have been made by those other Korean women who should know what's going on. They say, "Many Korean women in this town have American husbands. And they have not only an individual level of conflict, they have also different cultural backgrounds and they are having some kind of struggle you know, to live with a strange person all your life...it seems like they have, in general, kind of a difficult time." 12

### 3. Question of Acculturation

After reviewing the individual cases of select Asian women's family problems, we attempted to apply our Asian concept of the melting pot as a tool with which to explain the process of acculturation of Alaska's Asian immigrant mothers and their children. Since we were unable to undertake a full field survey on the subject, we used quotations from the transcripts of our meetings.

#### A. MOTHERS AND CHILDREN AS THE PRINCIPAL AGENTS OF THE PROCESS OF MELTING POT

1. MOTHERS: The immigrant parents generally remain busy earning a living for their families which leaves them little time for improving their English. Thus, "Last year was the first time we had a training session. We advertised in the paper, we sent letters to schools and to the children's parents, inviting Korean parents--tutors and teachers sent those letters to Korean parents. The coverage was pretty good, I think, but participation wasn't up to expectations. Like anything else, parents always working nights, or whatever..."

"I think a lot of parents feel that they don't want to be subjected to any kind of a group meeting." 13

Such a language barrier tends to perpetuate and further intensify value conflicts between the generations--especially when the lack of acculturation by the parents turns their home into an "Asian cultural pocket" isolated from the outside world of American society. Lamenting on the lack of parent (mother) participation, one speaker said, "All of the letters that we mailed out...the representation was very, very small. We are talking about 2,000 Koreans and I don't know how many hundred Japanese, I don't know how many Chinese. With all that, the percentage right here is very, very small." 14

2. CHILDREN: The general materials used in our elementary and high school education programs (especially in social studies and history) are, for good reasons, not at all well bal-

anced from our Asian viewpoint. Thus, a Chinese mother says, "My kids come home and study all Europe and Scandinavia, but nobody studies Asia. By the time I find out, it's too late... I think the teacher can give a little advice on their ethnic group...because the kids will listen to the teacher but they will sure not listen to the parents." 15

The young students, born of Asian parents, find it hard to acquire a balanced knowledge of their own heritage and culture either at school or home. Generally, the situation is the opposite for most Caucasian children because their parents' heritage is readily identifiable with that of the American main society. This is a cultural factor for the children of elementary school age. If they are not exposed to the Asian culture and life-style during these formative years, they tend to grow up an Asian-American youth who can only think and act in accordance with the Western values and norms of conduct. One might say, "What's so wrong about your kid being all American?" No, there shouldn't be anything wrong there; but, things are bound to go wrong, certainly as soon as a child reaches school age. To illustrate this most eloquently, let us quote a statement by a Japanese mother, whose son had never seen Japan, or been a Japanese citizen.

"This wasn't any problem with him inasmuch as his own psychological self was concerned. He was very well adjusted. He was happy, a good boy, and he never realized that he was different until he went to school. When he went to school, the children, more or less, didn't really pointedly do this, but they would come up to him sometimes and say 'Hay, you're Chink,' or some other kid would say, 'Hay, you're a Jap.' And another kid would say, 'Hay, you're a foreigner.' And he would come home very confused. And he would say, 'What am I, Mother?' I would say, 'Well. Number one. You are Japanese. That's what I am, okay? Number two, however, you are, first of all, an American citizen. You have never belonged to another citizenship. That will not change..'" 16

#### B. HOW CAN ASIAN "MELTING POT" WORK FOR ASIANS?

Under such conditions, the interaction between these two generations of Asian-Americans takes place as the children come out and go back into this isolated cultural pocket of their family life. It is not at all difficult for us to appreciate how hard the transition is for the immigrant Asian mothers when a well-educated second generation Japanese mother and her American born son still have the identify problem cited above.

Now that we have seen a "negative" aspect of the process of acculturation, let us look at the more positive implications of the same process.

When Asian children go into the outside world, they are acting as the carrier of the values of the old Asian culture from whom other children can learn something about Asia. These same children bring new American values into their family enabling their parents to learn something about the American way of life.

The concept of melting pot can be successful in this context if both the parents and the children can somehow find the way to blend the best of the old with the new values, i.e., adding to and enriching the American culture and social life.

In our tradition the blending process of races and cultures is expected to produce an amalgam, not only different from, but also more than the simple sum of what had gone into the "Pot." In fact, this was and still is one important aspect of the historical process that underlines the advent and growth of our highly productive and resilient American society.

It has become obvious to us that our Asian model of melting pot can function well through the parents (especially mothers) and the children at the roots of the society if we can prevent the cultural gap between them from destroying the family. The melting pot function can help ease the parents' transmittal process and the children's digestion and internalization of the old world's heritage.

From this emerges the following framework of things that we must do:

- a. Immigrant parents' orientation and specialized assistance to help them better communicate with their children.
- b. Children's exposure opportunities to things Asian both as supplementary educational materials for classroom as well as after-school cultural projects.
- c. Civic projects which will provide support to both the Asian parents and their children through the transition period.

We see that mothers and their children play a major role in influencing the direction of this crucial interaction which significantly determines which basic elements of both the new and old cultures may or may not be available (and in what manner) to the children for their own independent, if mostly subconscious, internalization through a long period of adoption, application, selection, and slow but productive hybridization.

This particular process of interaction must be given our further analytical light, but due to the scope and limitations of this project we decided to postpone it until we can obtain separate funds.