

Special Needs of Indian Children-

Three Native Women to Conduct Interviews in State

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Staff Writer

Three Alaskan Native women members of the North American Indian Women's Association, will be conducting interviews throughout the state as part of a national study on special needs of Indian children living away from home.

Mary Jane Fate, Athabascan; Daphne Gustafson, Eskimo; and Gertrude Wolfe, Tlingit, will travel and conduct interviews to document these special needs under a grant from two agencies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs: Social Services and the Education Department.

"But this is not a BIA study conducted by BIA people," said Mrs. Fate. Under the new policies of the BIA, the data will be gathered by the members of NAIWA, a national organization established to improve the quality of home life, education, health needs, intertribal communication, awareness of culture, and fellowship among Indian people.

President Marie Cox called a seminar last April 24 - 26 to launch the project for determining the needs of Indian children living away from home.

"The needs of these children have NEVER before been documented," said Mrs. Gustafson, who attended the seminar with Mrs. Fate.

"Indian children live away from home for many reasons and sometimes for many years.

"This includes delinquent children, boarding home children, foster children, children in jails, all children that are away from home and from their natural parents."

The three Alaska women will be in contact with all regions in the state, gathering data and conducting interviews. All of the work is on a volunteer basis, Mrs. Fate pointed out and they will need support and assistance in each area.

NAIWA is greatly concerned about Indian children who are **orphans, delinquents, retarded, abandoned**, and those who have social problems.

These children are in need of special facilities such as foster parents, dormitory personnel, and personnel to aid in their development and growth.

The survey, conducted entirely by Indian women, will address these needs and make recommendations to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and seek funds

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and grants to make improvements in the present programs.

The next NAIWA conference will be held in Browning, Montana, June 21, 22, and 23. Women from every tribe in the United States, as well as Cree women from Canada and Indian people of Venezuela will be attending.

Mrs. Fate said that Indian women have discovered that their problems are "identical: alcoholism, sub-standard education, unmet needs in health, lack of communication, and cultural preservation."

At the invitation of the Alaskan delegation to NAIWA, their president, Marie Cox, of the Comanche tribe, will be attending the 1973 World Eskimo-Indian Olympics in Fairbanks July 26, 27, and 28.