

# Alaska Native women organize

Alaska Native women, meeting during the AFN convention, voted to formally organize, and to seek AFN recognition and input, and laid plans for an Alaska Native Women's Convention. Four officers of the new group were elected: Denise Bousley, president, and three vice presidents: Sandra Borbridge, Esther Kaloa, and Tiny Phillips.

Several meetings and workshops were held during the AFN convention to discuss special concerns of Alaska Native women. The workshops were open to all to talk about changes which are affecting both Alaska Native men and women. The workshop addressing the "Changing Roles of Alaska Native Men and Women" enjoyed an especially good turnout of both men and women.

The organizational meetings concluded that Alaska Native women are ready to formally organize to address their special concerns. The officers were charged with the responsibility of planning and organizing a convention of Alaska Native women. At this convention an Alaska Native Women's Organization will be formally created. Some of the suggestions brought up about such an organization included the involvement and endorsement of the profit and non-profit corporations and AFN and the organization of statewide and regional women's groups.

At the AFN convention the officers formulated a resolution asking for AFN's recognition and support for the Native Women's Convention. The resolution

was passed with support from the floor by Mr. William "Spud" Williams and Mr. Al Kookesh.

Since the convention the officers have met and are seeking funding to begin moving on plans for the convention. Possible funding sources at this time are our Native organizations as well as ARCO EEO, the Women's Equity Act and the Human Rights Commission. Once funding is committed, work on specific convention plans can begin, especially plans to have as many Alaska Native women as possible attend the convention. Although no definite dates can be set yet, tentatively the group is aiming for a convention immediately before the Fur Rendezvous.

Wrote Denise Bousley, pre-

sident: "Alaska Native women, as well as American Indian Women, have for the most part been very reluctant to join what has been called the 'Women's Movement.' As Alaska Natives we have questioned our ability or need to identify with these women, or them to identify with us.

"However, much concern has been expressed about the failure of the Report on the Status of Women in Alaska to address the special needs and concerns of Alaska Native women. Native women are becoming increasingly involved in women's issues. Since the International Women's Year Conference held in Anchorage in Spring 1977, attended by at least 40 Alaska Native women, there has been talk about a convention for Alaska Native Women.

"Several Native women participated in the National International Women's Year Conference in Houston, Texas and a Native woman Teresa Sockpealuk of Nome, now serves on the Governor's newly-formed Commission on the Status of Women. At last year's AFN Convention there was an Alaska

Native Women's Caucus which introduced a Resolution for the Chairperson, Rosita Worl, to have input into this year's AFN convention.

"As a result of these efforts Alaska Native women have met during the recent convention and made this decision to have a convention and look at the possibilities of forming an organization.

"As Native women become more active in women's issues the intent is not to separate Alaska Native men and women. It is to address women's issues which will relate to many concerns of Alaska Natives as we deal with accelerated change in our lives and work more closely with a society which does not seem to readily value and respect women in the ways that traditional Native societies have done."

As the women's group gets funding, they will be setting up an office and have a mail and phone contact. In the meantime, any questions and concerns can be addressed to Alaska Federation of Natives, 550 W. 8th, Anchorage, 274-3611 or Denise Bousley, 333-6335.