

Originally from Dillingham

Lopez selected for national radio training

by Steve Pilkington
for the Tundra Times

Michelle M. Lopez, an Alaska Native originally from Dillingham who works for the Alaska Public Radio Network, has been selected in nationwide competition as one of nine people to take part in a radio training grant program.

The one-year training will begin in June. It will enable her to become an assistant technical director at APRN.

As part of the program, Lopez will study in St. Louis, as well as San Francisco and other cities.

Lopez had her first introduction to public radio during her sophomore year at Dillingham High School when she was elected as a representative to the KDLG programming committee.

It was then that she began to enjoy her part as the "voice of the younger community," and in the following year she enrolled in a radio class offered by the station. Her instructor was Les Robinson, the station manager of KDLG.

Lopez still had three years of high school to face when in the summer of 1980 her daughter, Maelenn Rae, was born. Lopez said her parents helped

her raise the baby so that she could finish school.

"My parents were always there helping me and encouraging me to do the things that I wanted to do," she said.

After her graduation from high school, Lopez worked as a board operator for KDLG for one summer.



Lopez works for the Alaska Public Radio Network.

Lopez then found that she did not have enough money to attend the college of her choice, so she began working at the National Bank of Alaska. She still kept in touch with the station, sometimes broadcasting basketball games.

When she was offered a full-time

job at KDLG, she couldn't accept. Her daughter was in pre-school, and she wanted to spend more time with her.

It was then that Robinson brought her an application for a fellowship at the Anchorage-based APRN. After a couple of months, the committee had narrowed the choices down to two — Lopez and another. She remembers feeling excited and scared when Diane Kaplan, APRN executive director, asked her if she would accept the position.

Her first year was mostly training, supported by grants from The Grotto Foundation in Minnesota, the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission and Cook Inlet Region Inc. Through training, Lopez found that her interests were in technical and operational fields.

During her first year, Lopez and Steve Heimel received two awards for their coverage of Native Youth Olympics. Lopez also became a full-time employee at APRN after her training.

Since then, she has been in operations, which include satellite scheduling, engineering and communications. She attended college part time last year, and she will be going again this summer and next year.