

New job gives more access to university chancellor

By LINDA LORD-JENKINS
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Toni Jones has given up a job which had direct decision-making powers to take a job as that some might consider less challenging - as assistant to the chancellor for Alaska's Community Colleges, Rural Education and Extension (CCREE) system.

But Jones, who has been around educators since her birth, feels that her appointment as assistant to Dr. Edwin L. Biggerstaff, Chancellor of the CCREE, will give Alaska Natives a better contact with the chancellor's office.

Jones, a Tlingit born in Killesno (sp) when her father worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs

there, says her appointment to an administrative job holds challenges much different from her job as director of Student Services and Special Programs for the UA Rural Education Office.

In that job she was responsible for establishing a program to help ease students through the often difficult transition from life in small rural villages to the larger life on college campus.

"We focused on preventive measures rather than responding to crisis," said Jones. "We provided enough information so students could make enough well-informed decisions and with that, they could continue to conduct their education experience with good judgement."

She says the counselors working with the Student Orientation Services program "were a dedicated group of people who were concerned about everything the students did on campus from the dorm experience to studies to their off campus experience. They didn't isolate anything."

In her new job, Jones will work with divisionwide staff development programs, assist campuses in their programming, oversee Affirmative Action programs, and handle other special projects assigned to her by the Chancellor.

She sees an advantage to Alaska's Native community in her being in the job. "I'm hoping, aside from being respon-

sible to the University system, that the Native community also will see me as a point of access to the system. I welcome feedback. I can pass that input along and hopefully be able to respond to meet those needs.

"In keeping with the desire to be a point of access, I've tried to express to the University planners the needs they've, the rural populace been putting to me... the need for bilingual education, educational access to rural students, health science programs, business training programs are some of the major areas of concern," she said.

When Jones worked in student services on the UA, Fairbanks campus, she spent time in

the villages talking to students and educators alike about the needs. "I have tried to participate in statewide conferences that focus on Native education. I have tried to seek information, ideas and information from that network and what I have found is the sense of responsibility and sharing and a sense of having a need to be looked at."

"CCREE is the most active division where availability of services in rural Alaska is concerned. I'm hoping my personality and professional background will provide information such that ultimately will improve university services and extension of services to residents in the rural communities."

Jones said many of her ideas about the education for youngsters have been tempered by her status as the mother of five.

The matter of college education for her oldest child, Toby, has been "a strong personal wrestling match," said Jones.

As she has watched many talented Alaska Native students proceed well with their education only to drop out near the end, she felt disappointment but found that they usually returned to school.

She, herself finished her education in stages, broken up by the birth of children and jobs and says she feels she may have benefited by the outside experiences.

If Toby chooses to work instead of continuing in school, "I have to be ready. I'm ready to support his choices whether it's post secondary education or work. I think I have become more open to his options."

Jones attended Northern Arizona University and received a bachelors of science degree in psychology and home economics education in 1970. She went on to receive a masters of education in school psychology in 1971. She attended George Washington University from 1978 to 1979 and is a doctoral candidate in higher education administration.

She also has worked as director of administrative services, director of Student Orientation Services at UAF, head counselor in student orientation at UAF, and for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

She is a director of the Sealaska Heritage Foundation, a charter member of the Alaska Native Education Association, served as director of the Tundra Times from 1973 to 1978, and as a member of the CETA Youth Subcommittee in 1977.