

Native women plan June elections

By DENISE BOUSLEY

The 1980 Alaska Native Women's Statewide Convention, with the theme, Understanding Our Heritage for Tomorrow, was held last weekend at the Travelers Inn in Fairbanks. Nearly 200 women from throughout Alaska attended.

The Convention adopted organizational by-laws, elected a new board of directors, and discussed issues of concern to Alaska Native women.

Among the new directors of the Alaska Native Women's Statewide organization are: Ida Olemaun, Arctic Slope, Lydia Gerton, Bering Straits; Mary Freeman, Bristol Bay; Gladys Jung, Calista; Mary Jane Peterson, Cook Inlet; Sharon Sonnyboy, Doyon; Alyce Bethel, Sealaska; and Agnes Griffith, At Large member.

Several regions voted to elect a representative once they returned to their regions. The new board of directors will elect officers at its first meeting in Anchorage, on June 14. Mary Jane Peterson, will serve as the interim president.

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The Keynote speaker was Mary Natani, a Winnebago Indian, President of the Association of American Indian Women, and employed by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.

Other speakers included Loretta Helle, originally from Nome, the first Eskimo to become a physician; Della Keats of Kotzebue, a traditional Eskimo healer; Esther Combs, an Athabaskan, Personnel Director for Cook Inlet Native Association; Ellen Hays, past president of Alaska Native Brotherhood, Native Liaison Officer for the National Park Service; and Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry, an Eskimo from Shaktoolik, and Commissioner to Alaska Commission on the Status of Women, and homemaker.

Resolutions passed by the Convention seek to:

- Increase the number of Native women leaders by training through workshops in the regions.

- Develop a Talent Bank of Alaska Native Women.

- Inform people about what will happen to Native lands when they become non-restricted.

- Develop education programs about legal rights and resources for people in the region or village.

- Increase day care assistance in the villages and region.

- Encourage the Indian Health Service and the State to be more responsive to needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and rape.

Women from particular regions were given support for their regional concerns as well. Support was expressed for funding the alcoholism program in Fairbanks and in protecting subsistence resources and Native cultures.

The Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization was created last year at the first statewide Convention of Alaska Native women.

The purpose of the organization is to retain and strengthen traditional culture and strong family unity by advocating Native and Native women's social, education, and economic issues.