

# Jobs for Native women still few

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Tundra Times

Private employers cannot or will not provide jobs in rural Alaska to Native women so the state should increase rural job opportunities and training for women in rural areas, according to a recent study of the economic status of Native Women.

The study was commissioned by the Alaska Commission on Women and found that fewer Native women work at lower level and lower paying jobs in the state than white women do.

Most of the women interviewed said they wanted to work but were thwarted by a simple lack of jobs in their area and by discrimination against them because of their non-assertive nature.

Also, in rural areas, few jobs for women were open, forcing women to find their fortune in urban areas, according to the study.

The study was conducted by C.K. Thomas & Associates in association with Chilkat Institute and the Institute of Social and Economic Research. Ninety-two women in Anchorage, Juneau, Bethel, Nunapichuk, Fort Yukon, Point Hope and King Cove were interviewed.

From those interviews was painted a picture of women

who wanted to work but were unable to find jobs that met their financial needs in the rural or urban areas of the state.

The women felt the major hindrance to a sound economic future was a basic lack of jobs on many levels but also the lack of job openings for women in traditional male jobs, primarily in the villages.

Second on the list of hindrances was discrimination against Natives and against women.

Many women said that they would be willing to commute to find work outside their home village.

The study found that village jobs tended to be limited to health and teacher aides, clerks, and store and office clerks.

Many women — 31 percent of those interviewed — said they felt discriminated against by systematic or unwritten built-in discriminatory practices.

They felt they were less likely than non-Natives to be hired for a job and less likely to be promoted or receive pay raises.

The traditional quietness of a Native woman often is interpreted as passivity and undesirable by employers and the women found they were believed to be non-assertive, a

(Continued on Page Seven)



Molly Ann Okbaak works at the Fourth Avenue McDonald's in Anchorage. She hopes to get job training in the U.S. Air Force and to seek some kind of career. For more on Okbaak and other Native women in the job market, see pages 8 and 9. PHOTO BY BILL HESS

# State should assume "moral" leadership

(Continued from Page One)  
valued character trait in Western society, the study said.

The women said that discrimination spread to Native men. The women said that even when they held college degrees they would find themselves working below a Native man with less education.

The women also reported they were routinely paid less than Native men with comparable jobs in the labor market.

In order to combat joblessness in the rural areas areas,

the state has to step in, said the report.

In order to combat joblessness for women and minorities throughout the state, state government must assume the moral position of taking the lead in employing women and minorities.

"We do not question the intent of Alaska's state and local governments, but it is nonetheless true that fewer than 400 Native women are currently employed by state and local governments in Alas-

ka — about three percent of the government's total work force," said the study.

In that vein, the state should begin working to insure that women from rural areas are considered and included in the growing rural mineral development industry and other rural industries.

And, in order to meet the needs of rural women who come to urban areas unprepared about how to deal with urban needs, the Women's

Commission should work with the Alaska Department of Social and Health and Social Services to provide information on obtaining employment, training, and support services before the women migrate to urban areas.

Other specific recommendations include:

- \* Increase contracting to local-regional organizations of state services;

- \* Stimulate "cottage industry," arts and crafts and tourism in rural Alaska;

- \* Actively recruit Native women to participate in university teacher training programs and amend certification procedures to accept teacher-aide training and experience in becoming a teacher;

- \* Establish a counseling program for those in rural areas who wish to move to urban areas;

- \* Expand local hire requirements to insure local community employment in all state jobs and projects within or adjacent to that community.

In order to combat the fact that Native women have less job experience and education than majority women or men, several recommendations were made:

- \* The state should begin on-the-job training including a focus on English as a second language, conduct career advancement counseling, career ladder programs and assertiveness training;

In order to increase educational opportunities for Native women, the state should:

- \* Expand the Graduate Equivalency Degree program;

- \* Expand the rural-based delivery system;

- \* Develop a recruitment program for Native women in teacher training programs and business administration;

- and allocate state scholarship programs for teacher training.

In order to reduce discrimination against Native women:

- \* Develop active recruitment programs for Native women;

- \* Require cross-cultural training programs for all state agencies and state-funded institutions;

- \* Have the Human Rights commission conduct civil rights training programs for employers and employees on laws against discrimination;

- \* Have the HRC analyze labor union requirements which systematically exclude women from employment in job development in specific jobs such as cooks.

In order to answer the problem faced by women needing child care when they enter the job market, the state should:

- \* certify babysitters or in-home care;

- \* and should revise day care standards to make them appropriate for village homes.

The state last April took a step to rectify its poor showing of Native women among the state work force by seeking to increase Native employees across the state, according to Kenneth Ryals, director of the state Division of Administrative Services.