

A very simple plan

For years Alaska Natives have endured an education and work system that was either unresponsive to their needs or simply failed to recognize the potential of Native students and workers.

Stories told by Native women included in this issue of the Tundra Times have recounted lives of indifference to family needs, indifference to educational needs or outright discouragement of the potential that Native women have to function in a business or educational world.

The study on the Economic Status of Native women points to the effects of those years of indifference and unresponsiveness.

It tells of women who are earning far less in lower grade jobs than their white counterparts. It tells of women who are not considered for job or salary advancement because of misunderstanding about their basic gentle nature or because of outright discrimination.

But the study also tells of a gradual improvement of the economic lot of Native women.

In 1970 the average white family income was 2.28 times greater than the average Native family but by 1980 the white family income had dropped to 1.75 times greater than the average Native family income.

There is no doubt that that is not enough and the study points to that.

The study also makes recommendations that point directly to the State of Alaska to carry out because the state is often the only major job provider in rural areas.

There are those who would immediately dismiss the recommendations because they do seek state help at a time when "private sector" answers are being sought on a national and state-wide level.

But the recommendations are not that outrageous or costly, a little encouragement for women here in the form of job recruitment programs, and there in job training and a very cheap way to help a woman care for her children when she does enter the work force.

That is what seems to be so simple and wise about the recommendations from this study. They seem to recognize beforehand that much can be accomplished with little.

These are all very sensible recommendations that we feel the state should look at seriously and institute as soon as possible.