

Unalakleet elder passes

Respected Unalakleet elder Ada Johnsson Degnan passed away Jan. 4, 1996 at home in Unalakleet.

Born in Unalakleet Feb. 10, 1910, to Agnes Anaktayuk Ryan and Eric Johnsson, she attended the Unalakleet BIA School through the 8th grade. She went to Duncan Beauty College in Olympia, Wash., and received her diploma Aug. 26, 1930. After returning to Unalakleet, she took several courses from the University of Alaska Extension Service.

Ada married Frank A. Degnan on June 24, 1934, and supported and assisted him in his duties as president of the Native Village of Unalakleet. Their combined efforts brought many benefits to the community. She was always thankful for the electricity and running water in Unalakleet.

Ada was a charter member of the Eskimo Mothers' Club and its president for many years. She was a strong supporter

of education and the Native lifestyle. She volunteered as a cook for BIA for 10 years, providing nutritious meals for children. She organized and led the Girl Scout program in Unalakleet for many years.

Ada, the first woman to serve on the Native Village of Unalakleet Council, served as its treasurer. She was an election judge for two terms.

In 1960, Ada was elected as treasurer at the Inupiat Paitot Conference. She served on the Unalakleet Native Corporation Appeals Committee from 1983-1987. In 1988, Ada was recognized as the Senior Mother of the Year by the City of Unalakleet.

Ada was a true homemaker. Her home was filled with love and laughter. She enjoyed gardening and sharing the harvest. She loved the outdoors and admired the beauty of nature through fishing, berry-picking, camping, and calling geese.