

# **5,000 Urban Natives in Anchorage**

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The city of Anchorage, with its more than a hundred thousand people, is also the location of the largest Alaska native community in the world.

More than 5,000 Alaskan natives constitute the largest minority group in Anchorage. At the center of the political and economic pulsebeat of Alaska, Anchorage attracts the state's most educated and affluent natives and some of its most its most disposed.

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ganizations and served by a multitude of programs, Anchorage natives have no center of activities—no building to point to with pride as the center of Anchorage native life.

This month, the first steps are being taken to this goal with the formation of the Anchorage Urban Native Planning Task Force.

Funded by a one time only \$150,000 grant from the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Task Force will plan for and submit proposals for the implementation of an Urban Native Center in Anchorage.

Coordinator of the Task Force, now housed in a small office in the Kaloa building is Esther Kaloa Garber of Tyonek. Mrs. Garber, a recent business graduate of Alaska Methodist University worked during the 1960s with her late brother Albert Kaloa, Jr. in founding the Tyonek enterprises and promoting statewide native organization.

As coordinator of the Task Force, Esther Garber works with a 22 person Task Force comprised of representatives from Anchorage's many native organizations and programs.

"We want to have something for the native who lives in the city to be proud of," Mrs. Garber described her concept of an Anchorage Native Center.

As well as a center of services, the task force visualizes the Urban Center as a center of native culture, a place to display native art, serve as a repository of information about Alaska's cultural groups.

The center could also serve as a place to hold classes in native languages, the dances and music of various cultures, centralize arts and crafts.

"Services for natives are scattered around the entire city," explained Esther Garber. "This limits their effectiveness."

Among the many native services which the center may seek to coordinate are the Studio Club (a center for women alcoholics) native student groups at Anchorage's two colleges, air-

port assistance, employment assistance and other services directed towards native people.

"There's a whole group of native owned arts and crafts businesses around the Anchorage area," explained Mrs. Garber. We could provide space to centralize native industries.

Part of the impetus for the Task Force is the expansion of the Native Community Center in Fairbanks, a project which has mushroomed into a center for Fairbanks native assistance, culture, offices and arts and crafts.

Anchorage's native Welcome Center, on the other hand, has become a place where natives escape the streets and funding for its next year of operation is not certain.

Plans for the Anchorage Center are wide open as the Task Force begins to work.

Possibilities for immediate task force activity include absorbing the native welcome center downtown as an alcohol rehabilitation center and taking over operation of the successfully operating Airport Native Assistance Center.

While the idea of a centralized native center appeals to the task force as a coordinated method of delivering services, it must concentrate first on coordination of programs and the most effective method of delivering services to low income natives in the fields of education, health, economic development, transportation, family counseling and recreation, housing, etc.

If a building does come into being, one site being investigated is property adjoining the Kaloa Building, headquarters of the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tyonek Investment Inc.

Among the groups participating in the task force are the ANS, Alaska Native Brotherhood in Anchorage, Aleut League, Tlingit-Haida, Tyonek, Urban Natives United, Cook Inlet Native Association, Anchorage Native Welcome Center, Eklutka and the student groups at AMU and ACC