

Alaska Native Sisterhood Started in Fall of 1914

By Josephine Ukas Wrangell Camp
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I have been asked many times to tell just how Alaska Native Sisterhood was first started. I am the only one living now to tell the story. My mind goes back to 1913.

In the fall of 1914 in September or October about 8 of us met at Mrs. Louisa Bradley's home. We asked Judge William Thomas to help us organize. He told us we need a book of rules and the following women were elected to office:

President, Mrs. Eva Blake, Vic. Pres., Louise Bradley, Secretary, Mrs. Jo Ukas.

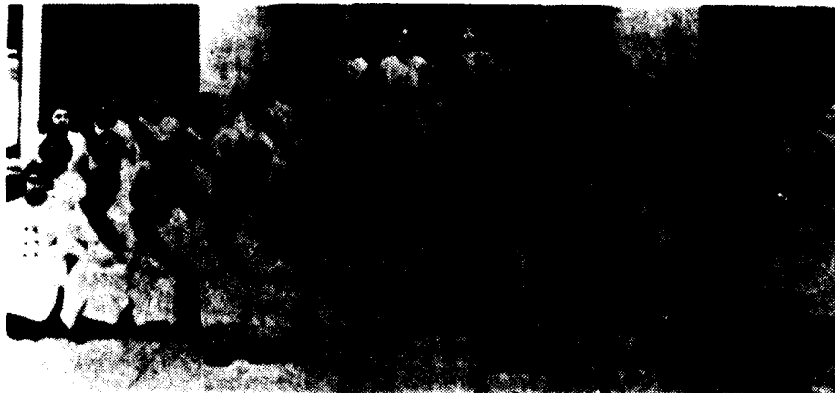
We had to have a name. Our first choice was Alaska Daughters Home Leagers and North Star. George Blake said, "Why don't you pick Alaska Native Sisterhood then it will be an auxiliary to an organization already organized in Wrangell." So the Alaska Native sisterhood was being born to give a helping hand to our brothers the "Brotherhood." We met from house to house. We took care of the old and sick members. We charged each member 25 cents, then 25 cents a month and \$1.00 to join. Then 50 cents a month and \$2.00 to join. Now I am a life member of the Sisterhood.

I have never forgotten my first convention in 1925 at Hydaburg and at Angoon 1927, in Ketchikan 1930.

I have the report of 1925 convention held at Hydaburg, where I met Wickersham, who named the Wrangell Institute School for the education of native children. I can recall meeting Sam Davis of Hydaburg. My brother William Louis was also there. This was a great gathering.

ANS Camp No. 1 Wrangell, Alaska is going ahead with the leadership of our younger generation. We lost our first record book.

When I was 9 years old I attended the Sitka Training School in 1890 to 1895. I traveled over the Dyea trail in 1897 and lived 3 years in Dawson. My first husband Alex Choquette passed away in 1906. In 1909 I married Tom Ukas.



ANS in Convention—year unknown.

HURTELL BASTIME

The American Legion and Literacy Test for Voters Bill

In their recent convention at Wrangell, the American Legion endorsed the movement to recognize the principle of community property in Alaska. They even went so far as to advocate such a law to the next legislature.

We wish to commend the American Legion for their recognition of the wife. There is today no such thing as community property in Alaska. In nearly every case, it is the wife who does the saving, who cooks for the workman, and makes possible the prosperity of men now called "leaders of industry." But these wives are not recognized by the law. Alaska recognizes no community property.

When the efforts of the American Legion become successful, and the intelligent citizens of Alaska give to the white mothers of Alaska their just rights, then, and then only will Alaska regain for womankind the rights which have been a part of the common law of the Indians who lived here. Long ago, the Indian mother had the first right and property was enjoyed "in common."

Of course, if the Indians of long ago had a literacy test, such as was recommended by the American Legion, they too might have shown their "intelligence" and their "civilization" by discriminating against womankind by giving the MAN the right to sell the very homes out from under the feet of the "inferior sex." "By their fruits shall ye know them."

FISH TRAPS

The Salmon Trap is a wonderful invention and a great money maker for the man that owns it.

Some traps when in full operation have caught as high as twenty tons of fish a day. One Company alone in Southeastern Alaska has twenty three traps. How long will the supply last if trap fishing is allowed to continue as it is at the present time? We must not discourage business enterprise and fishing is one of Alaska's two great industries. We need the canneries, we cannot market our fish without them and the men with capital operating them are a great help to the country at large when the business is operated in a legitimate manner but the trap is not a reasonable business proposition. It is simply a means of taking all the wealth of Alaska's salmon away from the people and placing it in the hands of the few men, shortsighted enough to put in traps. On the other hand the native population of Alaska must be taken into consideration they are an industrious independent loyal set of people, they have always been selfsupporting and will continue to be so, but they have lost so much of their means of livelihood. The sea otter is almost extinct and the seal are becoming scarce and if the salmon trap is used it is only a matter of a few years until the salmon of Alaska will be a thing of the past.

Louis Shortridge

Louis Shortridge is a native Alaskan who is engaged by the University of Pennsylvania, of which he is a graduate, to study the history, language and legends of the Thlingit people. This is a worthy work and deserves the support of the Alaska Native Brotherhood.

HURTFUL PASTIME

The white man's dance, the "respectable" dance, as some of the native people are wont to call it, has certainly aided in the rapid retrogression of a large number of natives in many Alaskan towns during the past two or three years. In Sitka although many people became infatuated with this form of amusement and some lives were as a result heading downward both physically and morally, a halt was called before the people reached the point where their minds were wholly given up to the dance and its progeny. A number of natives here never participated in this respectable(?) pastime and just lately many more, who have had a part in it having seen some of its evil results as well as tendencies in the lives of their people, have determined to put it out and spend their time in recreation less dangerous to their general welfare.

One of these people recently said to the writer "Our dances are making trouble among our people. Some people get jealous because of dance. Some of our young folks get crazy in their heads. Pretty soon our dances be all the same as Juneau dance halls. I don't want no more of it." This sentiment has been repeated by many others.

We honor the Sitka natives for the stand they have taken. It is a well known fact that the native village here is the cleanest and most progressive village in southeastern Alaska where the communal house still exists. It is also well known that its people in general are industrious and law abiding, beyond that of many other similar villages.

An Indian Views the Mysteries of Civilization

What is civilization? What does the word mean?

Does it mean robbing banks and taking part in hold-ups? Or does it mean making moonshine and having redlight districts where women sell themselves?

A man told me that inventions were civilization. Look at the automobiles! Yes, but look at the robberies that are done with the automobiles, look at the girls that are drunk, look at the girls that are ruined, and the lives lost by such new inventions. What about the flying machine! Is that civilization? Or the picture show, or the radio? That may be what civilization means, but I am not satisfied yet.

Then a man told me that the way people dress is civilization. I see a woman with bare arms, low-necked dresses and skirts above her knees. Is that civilization? My good friend, when the U.S.A. bought Alaska, they found the Indians in that state. You white men called them barbarians. Now because the white man does it, it is called civilization.

What about bobbed hair, the latest fashion in civilization. The bobbed hair was the fashion among the Alaska Indians many years ago. Whenever a woman's mother or brother died, her hair was bobbed. When I was a child in Wrangell, I heard a white man say, "I look at the savage woman with her hair cut short." And now because the whites do it, it is called civilization.

the hearty support and cooperation of the Alaska Native Brotherhood. We do not know Mr. Shortridge's entire program but that part above outlined is good. All that is past is not bad. We would preserve the good only for the present generation.

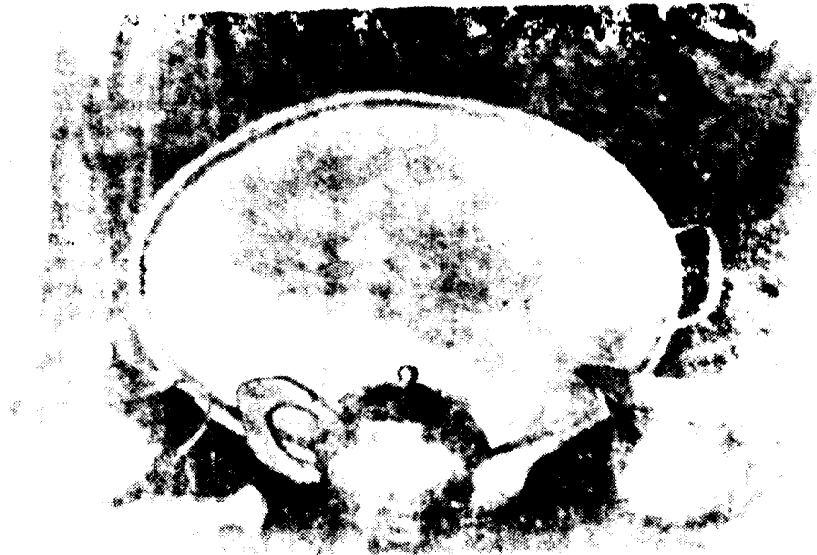


Photo by Merrill

Tea Set Made At S.J.S.

Alaska is a land of minerals. Long years before the white man came here the aborigines made many of their cooking utensils from the country's metals in their crude state. One sometimes, even to this day will find kettles and such things in the natives' homes, although practically everything along this line has been gathered in by the curio hunter.

This art has become almost a lost one and now follows altogether the making of native jewelry catering to the tourist trade. In Sitka we have two of these metal workers, or jewelers, as they are called, Silversmith Jim and Ah-ta-sene, whose American name is Rudolph Walton. These two men spend a part of the winter months in making spoons, bracelets and rings, ornamenting them with their grotesque designs, typifying their totemic emblems.

We have felt that in a land where the mineral resources are so great and where every day sees them being further developed, it would be the right thing to keep this in mind in arranging our curriculum, and with such boys as seem competent to take up this work, our equipment be such that any talent showing itself may be cultivated.

We reproduce a photograph of a five-piece tea set made in this recently inaugurated department of our school work. The set was made by Andrew Johnson, a pupil who has shown a truly remarkable talent in this work. The pieces were beaten or hammered from flat sheet copper and required nearly a year of shop time.