

# *The Alaska Native Brotherhood: A Centennial Celebration*



Founding fathers of the ANB: left to right: Paul Liberty, James Watson, Ralph Young, Eli Katinook, Peter Simpson, Frank Mercer, James C. Jackson, Chester Worthington, George Fields, William Hobson, Frank Price. Not pictured: Seward Kunz. Photo courtesy of Brian Wallace.



# ANB & ANS

## Fighting for Equal Rights



Founding fathers of the ANB: left to right: Paul Liberty, James Watson, Ralph Young, Eli Katinook, Peter Simpson, Frank Mercer, James C. Jackson, Chester Worthington, George Fields, William Hobson, Frank Price. Not pictured: Seward Kunz. Photo courtesy of Brian Wallace.



Founding mothers, Juneau ANS: back row, left to right: Mrs. Frank Mercer, unidentified, Mrs. Layton, unidentified, Mrs. Seward Kunz, Mrs. James Kunz, Mrs. Jimmy Hanson. Front row, left to right: Kitty Howard, Elsie Mercer, Mary Rudolph, Sadie Campus' sister, Alaska Daughters President Mary Watson, Clara Barlow Wilson, unidentified, and Sadie Campus' mother. Photo courtesy Sealaska Heritage Institute.

When the Alaska Native Brotherhood formed in 1912, its secretary, Frank Mercer of Klukwan "...suggested the name Alaska Native Brotherhood for the organization. Its declared objectives were 'to afford mutual help, to encourage education among the Indians, and to secure for themselves more of the benefits of civilization.'" [see *Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, Haa Kusteeyí, 1994*].

Over the past 100 years, the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the Alaska Native Sisterhood have been central to accomplishing citizenship for Alaska Natives, voting rights, equal education, land rights, subsistence rights, and ending discrimination in housing and employment. Alaska Natives were not considered citizens until the federal Citizenship Act of 1924 was enacted. Blatant discrimination prohibiting Native children from attending school with white children and limiting Native access to businesses ended when the Alaska Legislature passed the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945. The landmark Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 that provided Alaska Natives with 44,000,000 acres of land and \$962,000,000 had its beginnings at the 1929 ANB Grand Camp Convention in Haines when the ANB decided to go forward with the "land suit." The ANB and ANS have much to celebrate in their centennial year.



# ANB & ANS

## On the Front Lines



The Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood have embraced their rights as citizens—rights they had to fight for—particularly free speech. Tlingits, who traditionally conducted business by consensus, quickly adapted to the new way of doing business by first mastering Robert's Rules of Order, and then becoming active in both major political parties.

The ANB & ANS drew upon a talented cadre of leaders that included, over the last 100 years, people like Peter Simpson, Marie Orson, William Paul, Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich, Walter Soboleff, Bessie Visaya, Cecilia Kunz, Andrew Hope, Frank Johnson, Stella Martin, Ethel Lund, Ed Thomas—leaders who rose to the occasion when called upon to advocate for issues of importance to Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Indians of Alaska.

Photos, clockwise from top left: Amos Wallace as a child, demonstrating his status as an "Original American" (courtesy Brian Wallace); 1998 ANB & ANS demonstration on Capitol steps in support of landless Natives (Juneau Empire, Michael Penn); 2001 "We the People" subsistence march and rally (Juneau Empire, Michael Penn); ; Wanda Culp and Jackie McLean set a subsistence beach seine net, August, 1999, across a small lake near Mendenhall Glacier, as an act of civil disobedience (courtesy Brian Wallace).



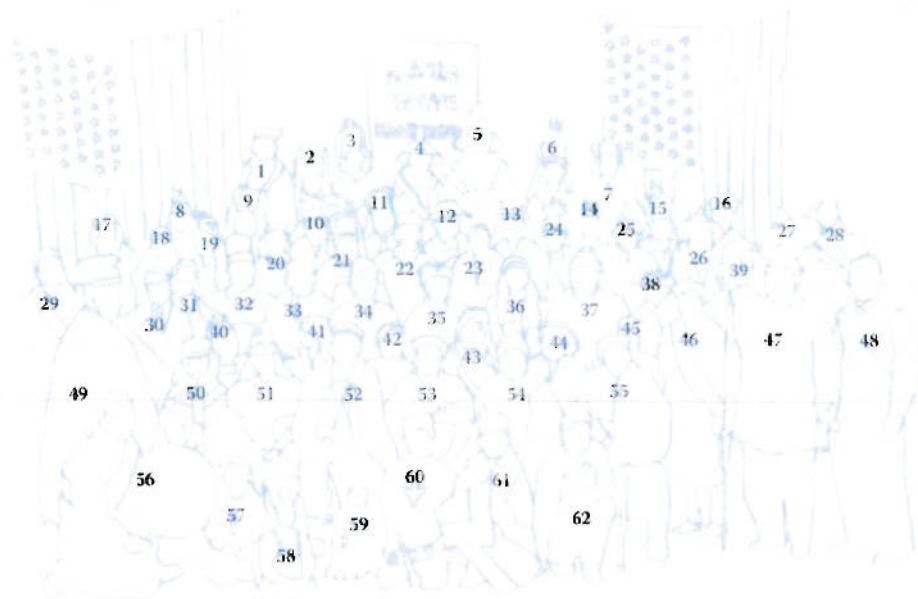
# ANB & ANS Contributions to Community



The Juneau Tlingit dance group (pictured left) was formed in 1950 to raise money to help build a new city library. According to Walter Soboleff, the group, which included clan members from Klukwan, Sitka, Hoonah, Taku and Douglas, performed before a sell out crowd at Juneau's Twentieth Century Theater. The group's success in fundraising, said Soboleff, marked the beginning of a resurgence of the Tlingit culture in Juneau. Song leader Jack Gamble (far left, in Chilkat blanket) led the performers. The library, built in 1951, now houses the Juneau-Douglas City Museum. Photo courtesy Walter Soboleff.

Juneau Tlingit dance group (photo identification by Walter Soboleff):

1. Walter Soboleff, 2. Sally Hopkins, 3. John Wise, 4. Willis Peters, 5. Mr. Morris, 6. Bessie Visaya, 7. Miss Jackson, 8. Henry Anderson, 9. Ed Kunz, Sr., 10. unknown, 11. Sam Hopkins, 12. John Jacobs, 13. Maggie Anderson, 14. John Wilson, Sr., 15. Jessie Wilson, 16. George Wilson, 17. Mrs. Morris, 18. Mrs. Marshall, 19. unknown, 20. Mary King, 21. Margaret Cropley, 22. Mrs. Peters, 23. unknown, 24. unknown, 25. Jenny Manton, 26. Mrs. James, 27. Mary Rudolph, 28. unknown, 29. Henry Cropley, 30. unknown, 31. Mr. Jackson, 32. Mr. Johnson, 33. Henry Phillips, 34. Fritz Willard, 35. James Jackson, 36. Cecilia Kunz, 37. Frank James, 38. unknown, 39. Jimmie Fox, 40. Susie Shorty, 41. unknown, 42. Mrs. Henry Phillips, 43. unknown, 44. unknown, 45. Mrs. Dave Wallace, 46. Marge Cropley, 47. William Kunz, 48. Jake Cropley, 49. Jack Gamble, 50. unknown, 51. Jackie Schoepert, 52. Susie Michelson, 53. Mrs. Cora Jackson, 54. Mrs. Jack Gamble, 55. Mary Johnson, 56. James King, 57. unknown, 58. unknown, 59. unknown, 60. unknown, 61. Fred Hopkins.
- Photo illustration by Sue Kraft.



From "In Sisterhood: The History of Camp 2 of the Alaska Native Sisterhood," Edited by Kim Metcalfe



# Native Education *Breaking Racial Barriers*

The first government school for Native students in Juneau was built in 1883 on the present site of the Governor's Mansion. In 1927, a new government school was built along Willoughby Avenue (pictured here). It was where most Juneau Native children were educated until area schools were desegregated following passage of the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945. Breaking the racial barrier in schools was a major victory for the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the Alaska Native Sisterhood. Roy and Elizabeth Peratrovich served as Grand Camp Presidents at the time. In 1941 they appealed to Governor Ernest Gruening to do away with signs in business establishments in Juneau that read, "No Natives Allowed."



Juneau's Government School where Juneau's Native students attended school until passage of the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945. Photo by Amos Wallace.

In 1971, the Juneau ANB and ANS were finally successful in introducing Native education into the classrooms. In the photo to the right, Juneau educator and first Native member of the Juneau School Board, Judy Franklet, is presented the 1982 Educator of the Year award for her efforts on behalf of Native education. Alfred McKinley, Camp #2 President, and Tlingit and Haida Central Council President, John Hope, present the award. Native studies programs and Tlingit language immersion programs are now a regular part of Juneau's education curriculum.

The Peratrovichs complained that Natives paid taxes, and young Native men were called upon to defend their country, and yet Natives were forced to endure blatant discrimination. With the help of newly elected Tlingit legislators Frank Peratrovich and Andrew Hope — and an eloquent speech by Frank's sister-in-law Elizabeth— Governor Gruening signed the anti-discrimination bill on February 16, 1945. The date is now Elizabeth Peratrovich Day, a state holiday.



Photo by the Tundra Times Photography Project.

From *"In Sisterhood: The History of Camp 2 of the Alaska Native Sisterhood,"* Edited by Kim Metcalfe



# Native Health Care

# Overcoming Epidemics



The 1954 *Parran Report*, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Interior, was the first official report to describe the health status of Alaska Natives. In 1946, 43% of all Alaska Native deaths resulted from tuberculosis. Infant mortality exceeded 10%, and life expectancy for an Alaska Native in 1950 was 46 years. The report was a scathing indictment of a feeble effort by the federal government to provide medical service to Alaska Natives, who were victims of "...sickness, crippling conditions, and premature deaths to a degree exceeded in very few parts of the world." The eventual defeat of epidemics like tuberculosis and polio raised the credibility of medical services, and set Alaska Natives on the path to self-determination in health care.

Left: the United States Indian Service Hospital in Juneau, 1938. Hospitals, like schools, were segregated prior to passage of the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945. Juneau's Native population was treated at the "government hospital." The hospital was located near today's Federal Building. Photo courtesy Peter Metcalfe.



This 1950s era photo shows Camp #2 Sisters in their white nurses uniforms. The uniforms signify the emphasis the Sisters put on cleanliness. Left to right: Olga Wilson, Cecilia Kunz, Bessie Visaya, Ruth Willard, Jessie Collier Wilson, Lizzie Wise, unknown, and Dave Willard. Photo courtesy of Rosa Miller.

Camp 2 of the Alaska Native Sisterhood had a "Clean Committee," to help raise awareness of the benefits of keeping germs at bay.

In a 2002 interview, Dorothy Wallace, a life member of Camp 2, talked about Camp 2's Clean Committee, a group of Sisters who went house to house, inspecting homes to ensure their cleanliness:

*"We raised money. If there was any dirty dishes it would cost, if we found dirty dishes they had to pay a quarter. Some of them left their dirty dishes in the sink just to pay a quarter. That was how they helped, you know? ...And every little bit of money would help. Sometimes we collected about three dollars and it went to the Senior ANS Treasurer. We helped them."*

*From "In Sisterhood: The History of Camp 2 of the Alaska Native Sisterhood," Edited by Kim Metcalfe*



# Urban Renewal

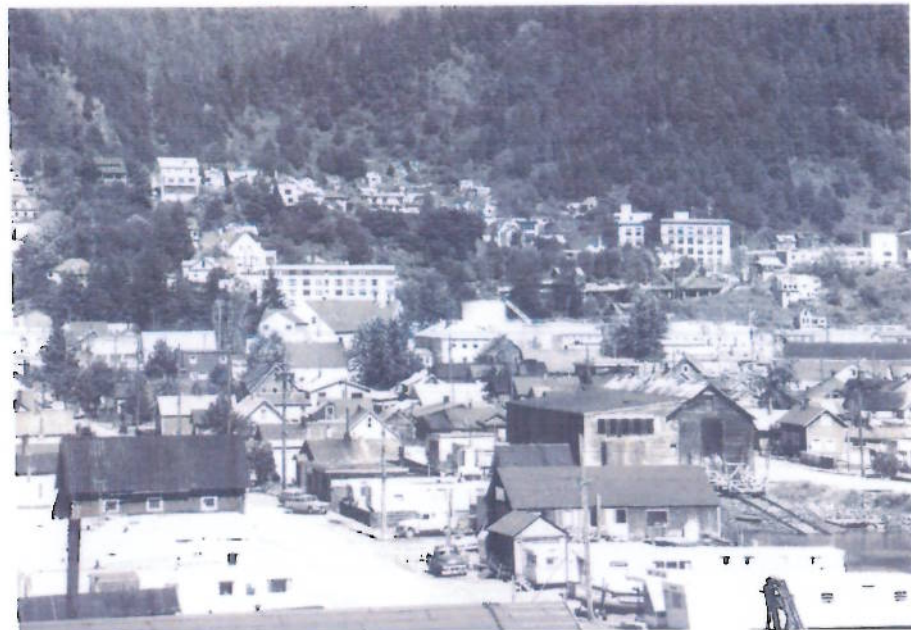


Sam Hopkins (pictured above with nephew Andy Ebona) and his wife Sally were displaced from their home on West Seventh St. by urban renewal. Sam suffered a heart attack and died on his way to KINY radio station to speak against urban renewal. "Sam and Sally are remembered as activists for Native rights, and perhaps it is fitting that Sam literally died in battle, and went down fighting." (*Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, Haa Kusteeyi*). Photo courtesy Andy Ebona.

# A Battle for Housing

Urban renewal became an issue in Juneau in the early 1960s, following letters to the editor, and the appearance in the *Juneau Empire* of articles and editorials lamenting the state of the neighborhood bordering Juneau's Indian Village. An area of town from Harborview School to the Subport was chosen for urban renewal, threatening 156 homes, many of which were owned by members of the ANB and ANS. In October of 1967, the Juneau City Council passed an ordinance giving the go-ahead to displace hundreds of low-income residents. The ballot issue failed on the first attempt, but four months later, in April 1968, a second attempt passed.

Promises were made that residents would be provided better housing, but the area was rebuilt with luxury condos (the Parkshore) and office buildings. The area as it appeared in 1968 is pictured below.





# Urban Subsistence *A Tradition that Endures*



Kookwásx, pictured left, grandmother of Ike Cropley of Juneau, had a fish camp near what is now the Juneau International Airport. She and Ike's Grandma Susie rowed around Douglas Island to get to their camp. They caught chums and cohos to dry and smoke. The two women also had smokehouses and camps at Hilda Bay and Tee Harbor. Juneau Tlingits depended on traditional foods for much of their diet well into the 20th century.

The Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood's ties to the land and its resources and their 1929 decision to sue the U.S. government, were the impetus that led to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Photos like this are clear evidence of customary and traditional uses. Photo courtesy of Ike Cropley.

Traditional Native food continues to be a popular addition to the local diet. Each year during the Gold Medal tournament, Camp #2 of the Alaska Native Sisterhood serves a traditional Native foods luncheon. The buffet includes deer and seal meat, salmon, halibut, cockles, herring egg salad, dry fish, and "Sisterhood stew." Pictured right: Elizabeth Martin, Eunice Akagi, Dorothy Wallace, Alberta Aspen. Men in line include Herb Mercer and Ralph Knutson. Photo courtesy of Peter Metcalfe



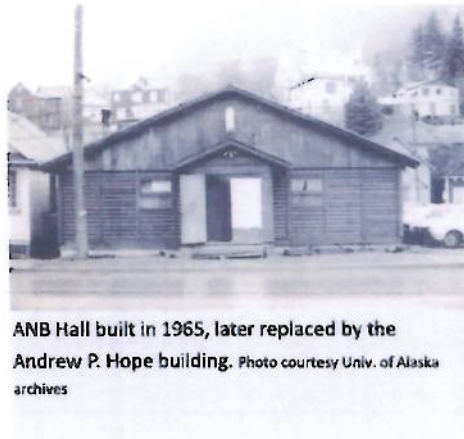


# Juneau's ANB Hall

# A Gathering Place



Juneau's original ANB Hall (large building with arched roof) seen on the beach side of Willoughby Avenue. The building was floated across Gastineau Channel from Douglas by members of ANB Camp #2. Photo by Amos Wallace



ANB Hall built in 1965, later replaced by the Andrew P. Hope building. Photo courtesy Univ. of Alaska archives



For generations, the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall has been a gathering place for the Juneau Native community. According to Cecilia Kunz, the Alaska Daughters purchased the first ANB Hall from a fraternal order of Serbian miners for \$400 following the Treadwell Mine cave-in. The original hall, like today's Andrew P. Hope Building, was used for ANB & ANS meetings, Christmas parties, dances, dinners, wedding receptions, funerals, 40-day parties, and koo.eex' (ceremonial gatherings).

On October 29, 1921 *The Alaska Daily Empire* reported:

**BIG BUILDING MOVED TO NEW LOCATION HERE**  
*Native Brotherhood Bring Hall from Treadwell to Willoughby Avenue*

Two scows, with five gasboats conveying them and with a 40 by 70-foot building on the scows, moved majestically up the channel today and the building was taken to a site on Willoughby Avenue and placed on piling prepared for it. The work was all done by members of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the building in the future will be the headquarters for that order in Juneau.

The building was formerly the Serbian Hall that stood on the waterfront at Treadwell between the Mexican and 700 mills. It was formerly used as a meeting place for the Serbian people at Treadwell. The Natives bought the building some time ago and have been preparing it for its trip across the channel. They furnished all the labor and the engineering and it is said that the building was moved from its old site to the new without damage of any kind, not even a window being broken....

Left: The Andrew P. Hope building, constructed in 1983, houses the offices of the Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. The Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall on the ground floor is used for events similar to those held in the original ANB Hall over 90 years ago. Photo by Kim Metcalfe



# Cecilia Kunz & Family

# Strong Family Ties



Cecilia Kunz, an early organizer of the Juneau ANS, and her husband, Ed Kunz, Sr., were active members of ANS Camp 2 and ANB Camp 2, respectively. Although Mr. Kunz died in 1987 and Mrs. Kunz in 2004, the tradition of membership in the ANB and ANS continues. Their son, Ed Kunz, Jr., has long been active in ANB Camp 2; their granddaughter, Micalyne Kunz McGhee, served as Camp 2 president, ANS Grand President, and is currently a member of the Grand Camp Executive Committee; and their daughter-in-law, Priscilla Martin Kunz, has served as ANS Camp 2 President. Many of the Kunz's extended family are also members of the ANB and ANS.

Throughout Southeast Alaska, Native families have similar traditions of membership in local camps. Children were often added to Camp rolls by their grandparents, who paid dues for them until they joined the Camp as adults.



Pictured top left, front row, Ed Kunz, Sr. & Cecilia Kunz (seated far left of photo), and members of Juneau's Tlingit community, 1950 (photo courtesy of Rosa Miller). Bottom left, Cecilia Kunz (center) with her "Juneau Tlingit Dancers" (Ed Kunz, Jr., far left of photo, Micalyne Kunz McGhee far right of photo, photo by Dale McGhee). Above: Priscilla Martin Kunz and Ed Kunz, Jr. (photo by Peter Metcalfe).



# Walter Soboleff

## A Lifetime of ANB



Walter Soboleff, ANB Grand President Emeritus

Photo by David Sheakley

Walter Soboleff, born November 14, 1908 in Killisnoo, Alaska, died May 22, 2011 in Juneau at the age of 102. Walter joined the Alaska Native Brotherhood in 1930 in Sitka and later became a member of Juneau's ANB Camp #2. He graduated from Sheldon Jackson School and received a bachelor's degree from the University of Dubuque in Iowa in 1937. Rev. Soboleff received a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1940, and served for twenty-two years as the minister of Juneau's Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Soboleff, Jake & Margaret Cropley, Henry and Maggie Anderson, Johnny & Lizzie Wise, and others revitalized Camp #2 in the early 1940s after a period of decline following the Great Depression.

Rev. Soboleff was president of the State Board of Education, a director of the Sealaska Corporation, and a Lion Monarch. Held in the highest regard by his people, the community of Juneau, and the State of Alaska, he received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Dubuque University in 1952 and a Doctor of Humanities degree from the University of Alaska in 1968.

*"We took [the ANB and ANS] seriously because it was a means of a transition into a different way of living. And it was a good tool. It helped bring people together whereas before that the clan was the working force. ...It helped in the transition period. They talked about school, they talked about medical problems, they talked about transportation problems. And pretty soon they talked about political problems, becoming a part of the political system as well. The Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood just seemed to bring us all together to work as a united group."*

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# Bessie Visaya

## ANS Founding Mother



Bessie Visaya, ANS Grand President Emeritus

Photo by David Sheakley

Bessie Edwards Miller Visaya was born July 17, 1898, in Juneau at Norway Point. Bessie's Tlingit name was *Kaachgun*. Bessie was the *naa tláa* (clan mother) of Juneau's Aak'w Kwáan clan. She was a Raven, L'eneidí of the Téeł' Hít (Dog Salmon House). Bessie was married to James Miller, a miner, and later to Ted Visaya, a Filipino immigrant who was a fisherman. She died January 9, 1996, in Juneau.

Bessie was a member of the Alaska Daughters, the organization that was a precursor of the Alaska Native Sisterhood. She attended the 1926 ANB Convention in Klukwan, and upon her return, Bessie organized Camp #2 of the Alaska Native Sisterhood. She belonged to the Sisterhood for 70 years.

In addition to being a Life Member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, Bessie was also an active member of Alaska's Republican Party, the Salvation Army's Home League, and a lifetime member of Juneau's Filipino Community. Bessie's daughter, Rosa Miller, continues as the matriarch of Juneau's Aak'w Kwáan.

In a 1986 interview with Emma Widmark and Sue Koester, Bessie recounted how she joined the Alaska Native Sisterhood at the Klukwan convention:

*"And William Paul got up on the floor "I have some good news to tell you, Brotherhood. The delegates are going to be happy. Bessie Miller is going to join the Sisterhood." The whole house clapped. And that evening, they make me join right away. I joined. ... I said that time I came for good. "No matter what you give me," that was my speech, "No matter what you give me, expensive things, pearls, diamonds, I don't care for it. But now the most precious thing for me is my children, and I'm going to fight for my children." The whole house stand up and clap their hands. That means I'm going to fight for my children and I'm still fighting. I'm 87 years old. I'm still fighting."*

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# *The Brotherhood & Sisterhood: All in the Family*

I was invited to join Camp 2 of the Alaska Native Sisterhood in 1997 by Marie Olson. I was eager to join because my father, Vern Metcalfe (pictured below), had been a member of Camp #2 of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, and his stories of the historic significance of the ANB were part of my upbringing.

Dad served in the 1951 and 1955 Territorial Legislature and was influenced by Governor Ernest Gruening and Native legislators, Andrew Hope and Frank Johnson, all of whom fought to end the racism that plagued Alaska, a fight that culminated with the passage of the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945.

Dad first became known to the Native community as an announcer of the Gold Medal Tournament basketball games. After the games he and our mother would socialize with the ballplayers and their wives. Mom and Dad became fast friends with Jeff and Cecilia David, Tommy and Stella Atkinson, Buddy Lang, brothers Gim and Sam Taguchi and many others who came to Juneau each year for what Dad called Southeast Alaska's "family reunion."

In 2001, Doloresa Cadiente, Alberta Aspen and I decided to produce an oral history of ANS Camp 2's elders. Seven years later, with grant funding from the National Park Service, Historic Preservation Fund and the Rasmuson Foundation, the project became a reality, a book titled "In Sisterhood: The History of Camp 2



Kim Metcalfe, Editor of "In Sisterhood"



Vern Metcalfe, inducted into the Gold Medal Hall of Fame in 1987 as "Voice of the Gold Medal."

of the Alaska Native Sisterhood."

Many of the photos for this exhibit are from the Sisterhood project. As editor of the project I was fortunate to interview many elders, some of whom have now "walked into the forest." It is an honor and a privilege to have known them.

I was especially honored in 2002 to be adopted by my friend, Stella Martin. Stella gave me her own Tlingit name, "Yaan da yein." Through my adoption I am an Eagle and member of the Tsaagweidi, Killer Whale Clan, of the Yellow Cedar House (Xaay Hít).

Thank you to everyone who helped on the "Sisterhood" project, and thank you to the Juneau-Douglas City Museum for honoring the Alaska Native Brotherhood on its 100th anniversary.

—Kim Metcalfe