12 Pioneer Native Alaskan Nurses

By: Dr. Phoebe Ann Pollitt, R.N.

Abstract
This document contains primary sources with comments and context regarding the first 12 Native Alaskan Registered Nurses.
12 Pioneer Native Alaskan nurses

Available records provide a glimpse into the lives and careers of 12 pioneer Native Alaskan nurses. These Eskimo, Haida, Indian and Aleut women graduated from nursing schools in the “lower 48” between 1928 and 1951. A few have all but disappeared from the historical record, most married and had children, and as many women and nurses did in the 1950s and 60s, most dropped out of the paid work force to dedicate themselves to their families. A small number spent their lives in service to others through nursing, education and/or cultural advocacy. Below are brief biographies of each of these brave and devoted young women who ventured to unfamiliar territory to pursue a dream of becoming a Registered Nurse. The biographies are in chronological order by graduation date.

Nan Palan and Jennie Brower

The first two Native Alaska nurses who can be documented are Nan Palan and Jennie Brower. Palan was a full-blooded Eskimo and Brower and a white father and an Eskimo mother. Both were subjects of newspaper articles when they were students but only scant information about their lives after nursing school is available.

Nan Palan

In 1928, newspapers across the country published photographs and captions about Nan Palan, a “full blooded Eskimo” who was studying nursing at the Oakland Hospital in California. The author could find no other information about Nan Palan from newspapers.com, ancestry.com or a google search. Here are two examples of the stories published in March 1928.

The Cincinnati Inquirer, 3-4-1928, p.115  The Los Angeles Times, 3-3-1928, p.8

Jennie Mae Brower Dimond
The second Native Alaskan nurse in the historical record is Jennie Mae Brower Dimond. She was born in Barrow on May 1, 1909 to Charles and Mary Ahsiangatak (also spelled as Assinatak in some records) Brower.

Salt Lake Telegram
30 Jan 1932, Page 5

The 1930 Oakland City Directory lists her as a nurse, although she was a nursing student at the time. She remained in the San Francisco area and married Albert Dimond in 1935. Both the 1940 and 1950 census lists her as the wife of Dimond who was “keeping house”. The Dimonds had two sons, one born in 1966 and the other in 1938. She died on November 26, 1995.
The Sage Memorial Hospital School of Nursing (SMHSON) Alaskan graduates

In the 1800 and 1900s the Presbyterian denomination was very active establishing schools and churches, and occasionally hospitals in rural areas and among those they deemed to be in need of evangelism and social services. Presbyterian sponsored institutions of particular interest to the discussion of Native Alaskan nurses are the Sheldon Jackson School (SJ) in Sitka, Alaska and the Sage Memorial Hospital School of Nursing (SMHSON) in Ganado, Arizona (or as many people would say, in Navajoland).

White Presbyterian missionaries opened a grade school in Sitka in 1878. Over the decades the school evolved into an accredited and respected High School and Junior College. The SJ High School operated from 1917-1967. The website SJ Voices (https://www.sjvoices.org/sheldon-jackson-high-school.html) describe the High School this way:

In 1901, white Presbyterian missionaries built a church and grade school in Ganado, AZ on the Navajo Reservation. In 1927, Dr. Clarence Salisbury and his wife Cora Salisbury, RN went to Ganado to build a modern, well-equipped hospital to replace the small 12-bed infirmary that had served the Ganado Mission, and to establish a nursing school for Native American young women. At that time, almost all nursing schools in the United States accepted either white or African American students, rarely both. Few nursing schools accepted students of other ethnicities. The Salisbury’s and the Presbyterians saw a need and provided a much-needed school of nursing for students from Native, Hispanic, Asian and other minority communities. White and African American applicants were turned away because there were other opportunities for them to study nursing. Nine Native Alaskan women graduated from SMHSON between 1934 and 1951. Most, if not all, had graduated from SJ High School. Undoubtedly, the faculty and staff at SJ were aware of the Presbyterian Mission in Ganado and encouraged their students who were interested in nursing careers to attend SMHSON.

Unfortunately, this author has yet to find any accounts left by the Native Alaskan Nurses about the “culture shock” they must have experienced going from their childhoods in rural, traditional Alaskan villages with distinct languages and cultures to the English-only SJ High School in Sitka where they studied and lived with a group of diverse students and a white Christian faculty and staff. Going from SJ High School to a nursing school in the dessert southwest, caring for a primarily Navajo population and living with students from across the country and from many different tribes and cultures must have been an eye-opening and at times jarring experience.
Brief biographies of each Sage Memorial Hospital Native Alaskan graduate are below. These nine students were (married name in parentheses): Elizabeth Hamilton, Cornelia Phillips (Hendrickson), Genevieve Evangeline Ross (Soboleff), Juanita Beaver, Harriette Loretta Young (Olsen), Anna Grace Johnson (Benton), Anna Beyer (Philbin), Hilda Charlotte Jacobsson (Severance), and Elaine Abraham (Ramos).

**Elizabeth Frances Hamilton (born as Elizabeth Kenowan) (Lund)**

Elizabeth Hamilton was born in 1911 to John and (mothers name unknown) Kenowan. Her mother died before Hamilton’s 20th birthday. The family was Haida and from the Aleutian Islands. The 1930 census lists her as a student at SJ High School in Sitka. Hamilton was the first Native Alaskan to attend SMHSON. She graduated in 1934, passed the Registered Nurse examination and returned to Alaska. Hamilton married William Lund on November 14, 1942 in Ketchikan. She is listed as a “medical technologist” on the marriage license. The 1950 census shows the Lunds with 3 small children and Elizabeth with no outside employment. Both her marriage certificate and the 1950 census list her race as white. She is mentioned in R. A. Trennert’s 2003 article *Sage Memorial Hospital and the nation’s first all-Indian school of nursing* this way:

“Elizabeth Hamilton of Alaska was the first Haida woman to become a nurse. Although how she was recruited or why she chose nursing are unclear, she elected to return to Alaska after graduation, where she undertook pioneering medical work among her own people.” P. 362

**Cornelia Esauawruk Phillips (Hendrickson)**

Cornelia Phillips was born on December 22, 1907, at Point Barrow, Alaska to Philip and Nora Aiahna Igana Paeoneo (sometimes spelled Paniunayuk and Paneonayrik). White missionaries and government officials often renamed Native Alaskans with familiar-to-them first and last names. Indian, Aleut, Haida, Tlinglit and other native Alaskan birth, family and tribal names were often “lost” as they were rarely included in official documents for many generations. The family spoke Ootkavik. She was the eldest of at least 4 siblings. She graduated from Sheldon Jackson High School in 1932 and from SMHSON in 1935. According to Robert Trennert
In addition to (?? Misspelings, Americanizations and usurptation of family names), racial identities of Native Alaskan nurses were often confused and incorrect in official documents and written accounts of missionaries, newspapers and other writings. For instance, this newspaper article describes Phillips as an Alaskan Indian while Trennert describes her as a “full-blooded Eskimo”.

The Albuquerque Tribune
14 Nov 1935, Page 5

The 1940 census lists Phillips as a 31-year-old Eskimo nurse working at the Government Hospital for Natives in Juneau. Here is an early photograph of that hospital:

On August 25, 1947, she married Ernest Walter Hendrickson (a white man) at the Memorial Presbyterian Church in Juneau. In the 1950 census, she is listed as the wife of Ernest
Hendrickson, and living with him and a step-son in Juneau and not working outside the home. She died on November 22, 1993 in San Mateo, California

**Genevieve Evangeline Ross (Soboleff)**

![Image](https://tuzzy.org/tundra_times/photographs_project/1997/186/186-680.jpg)

Genevieve Ross was born on December 17, 1914, to William Edward and Evangeline (Eva) Vandell Ross in Howkan. Her parents died before her 5th birthday and she was raised by an aunt and uncle. The family spoke Hyda. When she was 12 years old, in 1926 or 1927, she went to the Sheldon Jackson School in Sitka in 1933 and then from SMHSON in 1936. After graduation, she worked at Sage Memorial Hospital and then returned to Alaska to marry her high school sweetheart, Walter Soboleff. He was very accomplished and well known in many fields. In an oral history of Walter Soboleff he briefly discusses Genevieve’s time at SMHSON and mentions Cornelia Phillips and Elizabeth Hamilton who all graduated from SJ High School and whose time at SMHSON overlapped. See minutes 26-28

[https://digital.history.pcusa.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A285859](https://digital.history.pcusa.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A285859)
The Soboleff’s had four children. Mrs. Soboleff worked in hospitals in Juneau and later for the Juneau Police Department. In 1974, after the Soboleff’s retired and moved to Tenakee Springs, Mrs. Soboleff worked as a health aid and the local public health clinic, which now bears her name. Her life story is recounted in her obituary:
Services Scheduled for Genevieve Soboleff

A memorial service for Genevieve Evangeline Soboleff will be held 12:30 p.m. Monday at the Yaac Chapel on Sheldon Jackson College campus.

Mrs. Soboleff died Jan. 27 in Ketchikan following an extended illness.

She was born Dec. 17, 1914, in Howkan, the daughter of William Edward Ross, a Huna merchant, and Eva Skuka. She was a member of the Tlingit (Eagle) tribe of the Haida, and was a member of the Frog Clan, entitled to use the Eagle, Frog and Sealim crests.

Her parents died when she was young and she was raised by relatives in Hydaburg, Kasaan and Craig. When she was about 12 she boarded the local train to come to Sitka to attend Sheldon Jackson School. The Leslie Yaw family served as her loving guardians throughout her early school years.

During summers she worked in salmon canneries in Kasaan, Waterfall and Craig, and as a housekeeper at Goddard Hot Springs near Sitka.

She received a scholarship to attend Sayge Memorial Hospital in Canada, Ariz., following her graduation from high school. In 1935 she graduated as a registered nurse.

While at Canadá, she became fluent in the Nekang language and assisted the medical staff in translating the language.

She married Walter A. Soboleff June 1, 1938, in Sitka, and the two returned to Dubuque, Iowa, where he completed his last year of seminary. In 1940 they moved to Juneau where he became minister at Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Mrs. Soboleff worked as a registered nurse for many years, with the U.S. Government Hospital in Juneau, St. Aim's Hospital in Juneau and as a matron and nurse for the Juneau Police Department.

She became the health aide for Tenakee Springs, where she and her husband lived following his retirement in 1974. Southeast Regional Health Corporation, which had set up the health aide program, presented her with a distinguished service award when she retired. The medical care she gave her patients was considered first-rate, and she practiced conscientiously until her retirement, forced by the onset of Alzheimer's Disease.

She was a member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, Order of the Eastern Star, a life member of the National Congress of American Indians and the American Legion Auxiliary.

She often noted with pride, that she was a charter member of the Craig Presbyterian Church.

Besides her work as a nurse, she provided loving care to hundreds of foster children and others who passed through the Soboleff family home at 5003 B St. in Juneau.

She had a gift for languages and could understand and speak Ilulissat, Tlingit and Chi-nook, and one of her treasures was an old Haida Bible in the Haida dialect.

In 1971, when she and her husband were at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks where he was serving as the first director of Native studies, she worked with Dr. Michael Krauss, a linguist, in developing an alphabet for the Kaigani Haida dialect.

Using the alphabet, she helped other Haida speakers pull together some of the first Haida language symposium which led to the production by the Native American Language Project of the Haida Language of the Haida books published in 70 years.

Survivors include her husband, Juneau; sister Olive Nattle of Ketchikan; children Janet C. Burke of Monument Beach, Mass., Sasha I. Soboleff of Puyallup, Wash., Walter A. Soboleff Jr., of Douglas and Ross V. Soboleff, Juneau; and grandchildren Doreen, Deborah, Christopher and Leanna Burke, Sasha Soboleff II, Maynard M. Soboleff and Sasha Soboleff, Steven Patrick Soboleff and Nathan J., Jacob J. and Madeline M. Soboleff.

She also is survived by many nieces and nephews as well as many people who called her mother and grandmother.

Those wishing to make memorial contributions may make them to the family care of Walter Soboleff, Box 335, Tenakee Springs, AK 99881.

Contributions will go to the founding of a scholarship fund for those studying to become registered nurses or enter other health professions. The fund will be administered through the Alaska Native Brotherhood-Alaska Native Sisterhood scholarship fund.

Funeral services will be held 7 p.m. tonight at Northern Light United Church in Juneau. Interment will be at Alaska Memorial Park in Juneau.

Here is a link to a vimeo she “starred in” circa 1982 about the importance of clean water to the health of the people and environment in Alaska:  https://vimeo.com/39655386

In addition to her work as a nurse, she was very interested and well known for her language abilities:
Haida Indians try to save language

Since the contact of Europeans, the Haida, or Haidas, were among the few Aboriginal peoples in North America who maintained their own language workshops, meeting, reading and writing in Haida.

"It seems strange to be hearing your own language coming from a speaker who has no idea what it means," commented Joan Hunter, a student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks who is working with the language.

"We want to keep Haida alive in the work and personal lives of the people," said Hunter. "Our hope is to foster a language revival." The Haida language has been passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. The few speakers of the language are becoming younger and fewer, while the younger generation is becoming more dominant. The language is at risk of being lost.

The Haida language is a member of the Na-Dene family of languages, which also includes the Tlingit and Tsimshian languages. It is spoken on the islands of Southeast Alaska and the Queen Charlotte Islands.

"The Haida language is the only language that is spoken on the islands," said Hunter. "It is a beautiful language, but it is dying. We want to save it for future generations.

"The Haida language is a part of our culture and identity," she added. "We want to keep it alive and thriving."

The Haida language is spoken by about 200 people in the Haida Gwaii archipelago, off the coast of British Columbia.

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Graduated from Sage Memorial Hospital in 1939.

In 1940, she served on a committee to raise funds for a new gymnasium at the Ganado Mission.
By 1944, Beaver was working at the Presbyterian Sanatarium in Albuquerque.

This is the last record the author could find pertaining to Juanita Beaver.
Harriet Loretta Young (Olsen)

Harriet Young was born on February 6, 1919 in Hydaburg, Alaska to James and Martha Logan Young.

She graduated from SMHSON in 1941.

By 1944 she was living in Ketchican and working as a Registered Nurse. On March 28, 1944, she married Norman Olsen, a white, divorced, self employed fisherman, who was serving in the Army in Alaska during WWII. She is listed as white and a Registered Nurse. The 1950 census lists her as an American Indian and shows the Olsens living in Ketchican. She is not shown as having any employment outside the home. She died on November 28, 2003.

Anna Grace Johnson (Benton)
Anna Johnson’s birth name was “Ukla Muzluk”. She was born on April 17, 1914 in Bethel, Alaska and at some time lived at the Moravian Mission Orphanage School. Martha and Martin Johnson took her in and gave her the name Anna Grace Johnson. She graduated from the Sheldon Jackson High School in Sitka in 1938 and then from SMHSON in 1941 (with Harriet Young – see above).

After graduation she joined the Indian Health Service and worked in Tuba City, Arizona. There she met Dorsey Allen Benton, a white man who worked for an oil company. They married on April 9, 1942 and both soon joined the Army during WWII.

The 1950 census shows the Benton’s living in Albuquerque, New Mexico with three young children and Mr. Benton’s father. Anna Benton is listed as “keeping house”. The author cannot
find any records of Anna Benton working as a nurse after WWII. She died in New Mexico on

Ganado Nurses Are Graduated

(Exclusive Republic Dispatch)
GANADO, Aug. 26 — Graduation ceremonies of the Ganado School of Nurses featured the second day of the Harlow Brooks Clinic, with nine nurses receiving their diplomas.

They are Regina Donahue, Sadie Fields, Ethel Irene Jenkins, Anna Grace Johnson, Jewell S. Kay, Arlene A. Manuel, Louise Morrison, Harriet Young and Marjorie Ann Williams.

Dr. Louis S. Bishop of Bellevue Hospital, New York, gave the commencement address, which traced the career of the late Dr. Harlow Brooks, founder of the clinic. Dr. Brooks was associated with Dr. Bishop at the New York hospital.

During the day, papers were presented to the assembled physicians and surgeons by Dr. Newell Jones, Hollywood, Calif., "Problems of Nutrition", Dr. Bishop, "The Senile Heart", Dr. Nicholas Smith, Los Angeles, "Peritonitis", and Dr. W. W. Peter, Window Rock, "Wetzel Grid".

An outing bringing together clinicians from Ganado and Fort Defiance was held in the afternoon.

Graduation exercises were held in the old Ganado church for the last time, the new church having been completed and scheduled for formal dedication Sunday.

The clinic will close Wednesday with addresses by Drs. Clarence Reese, San Diego, A. E. Galant, Tracy, O. Powell, W. W. Hutchinson and Buell Sprague, all of Los Angeles, and a movie on "Tuberculosis Among the Navajos" taken by Dr. W. W. Peter.

More than 90 physicians and surgeons from 10 states have been in attendance at the clinic, including Dr. James P. Kennedy, founder of the Ganado Hospital in the 1890's.

October 6, 1992.

Arizona Republic
Phoenix, Arizona

27 Aug 1941, Page 5
Eskimo Nurse
In U. S. Army

Boca Raton [UP] Lt. Anna G. Benton, believed to be the first woman Eskimo nurse in the U.S. Army, today was serving at the Boca Raton Air Base here.

She was sworn into the Army Air Forces last week. She is the wife of Aviation Cadet Dorsey A. Benton, of Star, Tex., who is also stationed here.

Lt. Benton said she hoped soon to be able to return to her Bethel, Alaska, home to “assist the many Americans in Alaska who are defending our shores.”

ESKIMO IN NURSE CORPS.

BOCA RATON, Fla., March 8

—(A. P.)—Lieut. Anna G. Benton, of Bethel, Alaska, believed by army authorities to be the first Eskimo to enter the United States armed forces as a second lieutenant, is serving as a member of the army nurse corps here.

Lieut. Anna Benton
To Speak On Alaska

Lieut. Anna Benton, Army nurse of Eskimo birth at Boca Raton, will speak on Alaska at a meeting of the Sunday Evening Club of the First Presbyterian Church Sunday at 6:15 p.m., it was announced Friday.

Lieutenant Benton was educated at a Presbyterian school at Sitka, Alaska. She is a graduate of Presbyterian Hospital, Grandad, Ariz. The public is invited to hear her speak.
**Braille Club Has Election**

Herald Bureau

West Palm Beach, Fla., April 10.—At the annual election of the Braille club at its Howard park clubhouse, Miss Golden Conners was chosen president. Ira Bound and Lester Mayfield first and second vice-presidents, respectively; Mrs. Anna Lewis, secretary and treasurer, and Mrs. Rainsuch, corresponding secretary.

The members heard a talk by Lt. Anna G. Benton, née Ukia Muzlik, an Eskimo educated at the Sheldon institute at Sitka, Alaska. She spoke of her native country, its people, and their customs.

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**Eskimo Girl Serves As Nurse Lieutenant**

Boca Raton Field, Fla., Mar. 8—(AP)—Lt. Anna G. Benton of Bethel, Alaska, believed by army authorities to be the first Eskimo to enter the United States armed forces as a second lieutenant, is serving as a member of the army nurse corps here.

Lieutenant Benton is a daughter of Anna G. Johnson of Bethel, a small village some 400 dog team miles from Nome. She credits missionaries for her early training.

She is the wife of Cadet Dorsey A. Benton of Stark, Tex.

Peanuts were first grown in the South merely as a curiosity.

The call of a trumpeter swan can be heard as far as two miles.

—I've

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**Anna Catherine Beyer (Philbin)**
In the 1920 census, Anna Beyer is listed as born on Fairmont Island, Alaska and in the 1930 census she is listed as being born in Atha-Aleut. She was born on July 22, 1919 to William and Freda Chernoff Byer (at some point her last name took on the Beyer spelling and on the 1940 census the family name was spelled Buyer). In the 1920 and 1930 censuses she was listed as “mixed race” and was the youngest of five children. In the 1940 census her race is listed as Aleut. In the 1950 census her race is listed as white.

Anna Beyer graduated from Sheldon Jackson High School in Sitka in 1938 and from SMHSON in 1942.

She enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) on January 4, 1944 and was promoted to 2nd Lt on February 4, 1944. She was discharged from the ANC on February 20, 1946.
Hilda Charlotte Jacobsson (Severance)

Hilda Jacobsson was born on October 28, 1929 in Bethel, Alaska to Charles and Olga Stone Jacobsson. The Bureau of Indian Affairs census of 1938 lists her as ½ white and 1/2 “Native blood”

She graduated from Sage Memorial Hospital school of Nursing in 1950.

On June 22, 1951 she married Frank Severance at the Faith Presbyterian Church in Anchorage.
Elaine Abraham was born Chuu Shah on June 19, 1929 in Yakutat, Alaska to Teikweidi, one of the last traditional Tlingit clan leaders of the village, and his wife Susie Bremner, a descendent of early white explorers in the area.

Abraham was inducted into the Alaska Women’s Hall of Fame in 2011. Below is the biographical information the published on that occasion.

Elaine Elizabeth (Abraham) Ramos

Elaine was the first Tlingit registered nurse in Alaska. During her career, she worked for the Indian Health Service in Juneau, at the Mt. Edgecumbe School in Sitka, and in Bethel during diphtheria and tuberculosis epidemics. She also was instrumental in the creation of the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage in 1954. In her education career, Elaine played a major role in the expansion of rural educational opportunities. She co-founded the Alaska Native Language Center, created programs to recruit and retain Alaska Native students in higher education, and, as
Vice-President for Rural Educational Affairs of the University Alaska, she was instrumental in initiating campuses in Nome, Barrow, Tanana, Kotzebue, Sitka, Ketchikan, Valdez, the Aleutians, and Kodiak. In 1976, Elaine became the Vice President for Rural Education Affairs of the University of Alaska statewide system — she was the first Native American and the first woman to hold a senior position in the statewide administration. Elaine also served as the Chair of the Alaska Native Science Commission, which supports scientific research that ensures the protection of indigenous cultures and builds bridges between Western science and traditional ways of knowing.

Elaine was born in Yakutat of the Raven moiety, the clan of Copper River, and from the Shaman’s Owl House, and is the daughter of the Brown Bear. Mount St. Elias is her clan crest. Her mother was Susie Bremmer, whose grandfather was John James Bremmer from Scotland, the guide for Lt. Allen who explored the Copper River area. Elaine’s father was a Tlingit chief from Yakutat from the Brown Bear moiety. Her mother read to the children from the bible and her father introduced them to the world through National Geographic magazines.

Yakutat did not have a high school, so Elaine went to boarding school at Sheldon Jackson High School/College. After graduation, she went to the school of nursing at Ganado, Ariz., graduated, and returned to Alaska as the first Tlingit registered nurse. She worked with the Indian Health Service in Bethel and Sitka during diphtheria and tuberculosis epidemics. While working in Sitka, she served as the school board president during the desegregation of the village school; established the Southeast Alaska Native Health Aide Program — which became the model for the statewide Alaska Native Health Aide Program — and organized the Southeast Native Board
of Health. Later, Elaine was instrumental in the creation of the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage.

After her career as a nurse, Elaine initiated her career in education at Sheldon Jackson University and the University of Alaska. She earned a bachelor’s degree in human resources development from Alaska Pacific University; a master of arts in teaching from APU; and is currently a doctoral student pursuing a degree in natural health. At Sheldon Jackson College, she served as Associate Dean of Students, Director of Social Services, and Vice President for Institutional Development. At the University of Alaska, she co-founded the Alaska Native Language Center. In 1976 Elaine became the Vice President for Rural Education Affairs of the University of Alaska statewide system—she was both the first Native American and the first woman to hold a senior position in the statewide administration. She created innovative programs for recruiting and retaining Alaska Native students in higher education and made path-breaking initiatives to build bridges between Alaska Native communities and the university. She brought new educational opportunities to Alaskans throughout the state by establishing community colleges in Nome, Barrow, Tanana, Kotzebue, Sitka, Ketchikan, Valdez, Aleutians, and Kodiak.

Currently, Elaine is building bridges between Alaska Natives and scientists, promoting cutting-edge approaches to understanding climate change around the globe as the chair of the Alaska Native Science Commission. The commission supports scientific research that ensures the protection of indigenous cultures and builds bridges between western science and traditional ways of knowing.

Throughout Elaine’s life, she has understood the relationship between the local and the global and she is respected and influential on the village, state, national, and international levels. Her messages have global significance and have helped garner respect for indigenous knowledge and the rights of indigenous peoples. While Elaine’s impact has been global and her accomplishments numerous, they only tell part of the story. She is slight in stature but when Elaine speaks, she captivates her listeners with her messages, her humility, and her enthusiasm. Forever looking for opportunities to broaden her own knowledge, Elaine has traveled to far-flung places to meet with indigenous peoples in their native lands to help them and exchange teachings. She has helped many people see that traditional observations are critically important to western scientific analysis.

**Awards** She is the recipient of the American Indian Achievement Award, Indian Council Fire (1973). Elaine was the first Alaska Native and the seventh American Indian woman to receive this award. It was the only award of national stature given to an American Indian. She also received the Meritorious Service Award, University of Alaska Anchorage (1996); Citizen of the Year Award, Cook Inlet Native Association (1984); Alaska Native/American Indian Education Advocate Award, Johnson O’Malley Parent Committee (1978); State of Alaska Distinguished Alaskan Title (1974).
Here is Elaine Abraham’s Wikipedia page:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Abraham

Here is her obituary published in the Anchorage Daily News in May, 2016.

https://www.adn.com/education/article/elizabeth-abraham-ground-breaking-tingit-elder-dead-87/2016/05/18/
Elaine Abraham, ground-breaking Tlingit elder, dead at 87
By Mike Dunham

Updated: May 18, 2016 Published: May 17, 2016

In the Tlingit idiom, Elaine Elizabeth Abraham "walked into the woods" early Monday morning. The much-accomplished Tlingit woman from Yakutat died around 1:30 a.m. at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage. She was 87.

She was born June 19, 1929, in Yakutat, the daughter of Teikweidei, whose English name was Olaf Abraham. He was one of the last traditional clan leaders of the village. Her mother, Susie Bremner was the great-granddaughter of John James Bremmer, a Scottish guide who helped the U.S. Army explore the Copper River area not long after Alaska became an American possession.

Abraham, whose Tlingit name was Chuu Shah, was raised in a traditional household where her first language was Tlingit. In 2012 she told the Alaska Dispatch News her name meant "Little Grandmother Returns." She was Naa Tláa (clan mother) of the Yéil Naa (Raven Moeity), K'ineix Kwáan (people of the Copper River Clan) from the Tsisk'w Hit (Owl House).

She learned English at the village elementary school. But Yakutat did not have a high school. So she attended the Sheldon Jackson Presbyterian Boarding High School in Sitka. After graduating at age 17, she studied nursing at Arizona's Sage Memorial Nursing School in Navajo Country and passed her final tests with some of the highest scores ever achieved. She is said to have been the first Tlingit registered nurse.

Returning to Alaska, she worked for the Indian Health Service in Bethel, Sitka and Anchorage. She was supervisor of nursing at the Mount Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka, where she helped create the Southeast Health Aide Program, the model for providing health care in remote parts of Alaska to this day.

After retiring from nursing in her 40s, she went back to college and earned a wall-full of diplomas, including a bachelor's in human services, a master's degree in teaching in multiethnic education, a certificate in Native linguistics and an associate degree in anthropology. For the rest of her life, she continued to pursue higher education, working on a doctorate in her 70s.

She served in several key positions at Sheldon Jackson College, including associate dean of students and vice president for institutional development. She co-founded the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska and became the first woman and the first Native American to hold a senior position in the statewide administration of the University of Alaska system when she became the vice president of rural education affairs in 1976. In that position, she helped establish community colleges in previously underserved parts of the state with large Native populations, including Nome, Barrow, Tanana, Kotzebue, Sitka, Ketchikan, Valdez, Kodiak and the Aleutians.

She served on numerous commissions, boards and other organizations, including the Yakutat Native Corp., the Yakutat Tlingit Tribes Council and the Alaska Native Science Commission. Throughout her life she was the recipient of prominent awards. She was the first Alaska Native to receive the American Indian Achievement Award, Indian Council Fire, in 1973. The Cook Inlet Native Association named her Citizen of the Year in 1984 and the University of Alaska...
bestowed its Meritorious Service Award on her in 1996. She was elected to the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame in 2011.

She was a lifelong member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, Yakutat Camp No. 13, an Anchorage delegate to the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, an Elder of the Yakutat Presbyterian Church and a General Council Member of the Presbytery of Alaska. She performed with the Mount St. Elias dance group, once led by her father, one of the oldest Alaska Native performing groups in the state.
Elaine Abraham

Elaine Abraham, BS, MA, PhD candidate, was born and raised in Yakutat, Alaska, where she now resides. Her father was a traditional Tlingit chief and Elaine was raised in the traditional Tlingit manner. After earning a nursing degree and working for several years in Arizona, she returned to Alaska as the first Tlingit registered nurse. She served at hospitals in Juneau, Mt. Edgecumbe and in Bethel during a diphtheria epidemic. She assisted in the opening of the Alaska Native Health Service Hospital in Anchorage in 1954.

Ms. Abraham moved to Sitka where she worked as a nurse; served as school board president during the desegregation of the village school; organized the Southeast Health Aide Program with Dr. Justice from Mt. Edgecumbe, which became the model for the statewide Alaska Native Health Aide Program; and organized the Southeast Native Board of Health.

At Sitka's Sheldon Jackson College she served as Associate Dean of Students, Director of Social Services and Vice President for Institutional Development. She developed the Tlingit and Haida Language Teachers Training program and helped in the creation of the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska.

In 1976, Ms. Abraham began her service at the University of Alaska, serving as Vice President for Rural Education Affairs, Coordinator of Native Student Services and Associate Professor at the Anchorage campus.

Her educational credentials include a Masters of Arts in Teaching, Alaska Pacific University; a Bachelors degree in Human Resources Development, APU; a Certificate in Native Linguistics, University of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Associate of Arts in Anthropology, Sheldon Jackson College; and she received the highest recorded score for the Psychiatric Nurse Evaluation in Arizona.
Ms. Abraham is a revered Tlingit elder and serves as Chairperson of the Board of Commissioner's of the Alaska Native Science Commission.

An oral history and photographs from the Jukebox Project at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks:

Elaine Abraham was born and raised in Yakutat, Alaska, where she now resides. Her father was a traditional Tlingit chief and Elaine was raised in the traditional Tlingit manner. After earning a nursing degree and working for several years in Arizona, she returned to Alaska as the first Tlingit registered nurse. She served at hospitals in Juneau, Sitka - Mt. Edgecumbe, and in Bethel during a diphtheria epidemic. She assisted in the opening of the Alaska Native Health Service Hospital in Anchorage in 1954. Ms. Abraham moved to Sitka where she worked as a nurse, served as school board president during the desegregation of the village school, organized the Southeast Health Aide Program with Dr. Justice from Mt. Edgecumbe, which became the model for the statewide Alaska Community Health Aide Program, and organized the Southeast Native Board of Health. At Sitka's Sheldon Jackson College, she served as Associate Dean of Students, Director of Social Services, and Vice President for Institutional Development. She developed the Tlingit and Haida Language Teachers Training program and helped in the creation of the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In 1976, Ms. Abraham began her service at the University of Alaska, serving as Vice President for Rural Education Affairs, Coordinator of Native Student Services, and Associate Professor at the Anchorage campus. Her educational credentials include a Masters of Arts in Teaching from Alaska Pacific University (APU), a Bachelors degree in Human Resources Development from APU, a Certificate in Native Linguistics from the University of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and an Associate of Arts in Anthropology from Sheldon Jackson College. She received the highest recorded score for the Psychiatric Nurse Evaluation in Arizona. Ms. Abraham is a revered Tlingit elder and serves as Chairperson of the Board of Commissioner's of the Alaska Native Science Commission. For more about Elaine Abraham see the Alaska Native Science Commission website or an article in the Alaska Dispatch News published on May 17, 2016. Elaine Abraham passed away on May 16, 2016 at the age of 87.

Grace Elizabeth Lincoln
Grace Lincoln was born on February 12, 1931 to Abraham and Blanche Mills Lincoln in Kotzebue, Alaska. In the 1920 census the family name was Chilook and they spoke Noatak. It is not clear when the family name was changed to Lincoln, but in the 1940 census (the first in which Grace is listed) the family name is listed as Lincoln. She graduated from the Philadelphia Hospital School of Nursing in 1951 and passed her Registered Nurse Examinations the same year. She returned to Alaska and became a nursing leader for many decades. Lincoln was active in the Planned Parenthood Association. She had a special interest and expertise in treating alcoholics. In 1976 she was named Director of the Alaska Native Commission of Alcohol and Drug Abuse. She gave presentations from rural Alaskan villages to the Sorbonne in Paris, France. She was a leader in the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. Due to her expertise in substance abuse issues, she was a consultant to Chief Justice Burger’s Commission on Pipeline Inquiry. A 1980 study titled Resource Guide of American Indian and Alaska Native Women by Owanah P. Anderson and Sedelta D. Verble reported Grace Lincoln was working as the Coordinator/Instructor of the Community Health Aid program for the Mauneluk Association. She promoted native heritage programs for young people and taught skin sewing skills.

On September 2, 1988 she testified before a Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs about health issues for native Alaskans. Her testimony is on pages 104-106 in this link:

https://books.google.com/books?id=o96v0igha-cC&pg=PA104&lpg=PA104&dq=%22Grace+Lincoln%22+Nurse+Alaska&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwis5R6XtnKME_4rQGQIHCaQAygQ6AF6BAgPEAM

https://books.google.com/books?id=o96v0igha-cC&pg=PA104&lpg=PA104&dq=%22Grace+Lincoln%22+Nurse+Alaska&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwis5R6XtnKME_4rQGQIHCaQAygQ6AF6BAgPEAM

https://books.google.com/books?id=o96v0igha-cC&pg=PA104&lpg=PA104&dq=%22Grace+Lincoln%22+Nurse+Alaska&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwis5R6XtnKME_4rQGQIHCaQAygQ6AF6BAgPEAM

https://books.google.com/books?id=o96v0igha-cC&pg=PA104&lpg=PA104&dq=%22Grace+Lincoln%22+Nurse+Alaska&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwis5R6XtnKME_4rQGQIHCaQAygQ6AF6BAgPEAM
Grace Lincoln, Nurse Alaska
Grace Lincoln died on April 30, 2001 and is buried in the Saint Francis Xavier Cemetery in Kotzubue.
Grace Lincoln to head ANSAP

George Bush, executive director of ANCADA (Alaska Native Cooperative Development Association), announced the recent appointment of Grace Lincoln to lead the Alaska Native Special Assistance Program (ANSAP). She replaces Charles Dinnell, who resigned, last fall to take a position with the Office of National Health of Native Americans.

Prior to her new duties at ANSAP, Project Director, Miss Lincoln headed the ANCADA needs department, which jointly in charge of developing multi-media public information and educational materials in association with the National Council on Alcoholism – Alaska chapter.

She has been associated with the health care field for 15 years, having held positions in Portland, Oregon, California, and Alaska. In 1974, she assisted in Oregon in a study with the Alaskan International Academy.

Her first priority will be to enhance the coordinated activities of ANSAP’s regional technical assistance with their respective regions and also with other appropriate organizations. This is the primary reason for being named as a program grant director, which will be headquartered in Washington, D.C., to begin January 1, 1976. ANSAP’s ongoing activities in the coming year are

Grace Lincoln, ANSAP’s new director, will be in charge of program grants in the coming year.

This project is supported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).
Reference List