Red Cross Auxiliary of Native women, Yakutat, Alaska.
Alaska State Library Dwight Dorough Keystone Photograph Collection, ca. 1912-1941

While World War I raged on the Western Front, the Tlingit women of Yakutat organized into their own Red Cross chapter, determined to aid the war effort despite rampant discrimination on the home front. Countless women have sat on councils, and they continue to participate in the important decisions of their communities, protect and serve their interests, and ensure prosperity for future Alaskans.

15. A trained Eskimo teacher has school out-of-doors in a remote summer camp for eager children who have no other chance to learn the three R's.
Alaska State Library, Evelyn Butler and George Dale Photographs and Papers, 1934-1993, Photographer George A. Dale

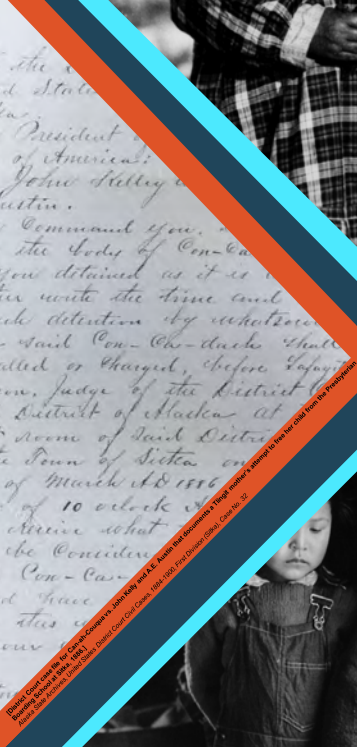
Education is integral to ensuring that future generations of Alaskans shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, promote cultural identity and cross-cultural understanding, and improve the character and quality of the world around them. Educators come in many forms. Whether as family members, community leaders, or classroom teachers, women have played an important role in the education of Alaska's youth.

Elsie Alexie and Mrs. George Green by their screens drying king salmon, Eek fish camp, July 1956.
Alaska State Archives, Department of Environmental Conservation, Village Safe Water Project, Inc. photographs, 1959-1961

Activism, whether performed individually on a day-to-day basis or as a collective action, is crucial to righting injustices and enacting reform. Women throughout history have fought to make Alaska a better place for all through social and political justice, and the preservation of Alaska's resources and traditional knowledge and cultures. In courtrooms, picket lines, and their own communities and households women have made a difference by standing up for their beliefs and challenging the status quo. Equally important are those who every day honor the tradition of a subsistence lifestyle, consciously living with respect for and appreciation of the natural resources around them, serving as responsible stewards of the land by sustainably hunting, fishing, and foraging as their ancestors have for millennia.

Mary Sattalook ("Sinrock Mary") was nicknamed the reindeer queen.
Alaska State Library, Nome Airlines Photograph Collection, 1926-1969

From the tundra to the slime lines, underwater or soaring about the mountains, women of Alaska have pushed boundaries and contributed to a variety of industries from the most remote villages to the largest cities. Beginning in the late 1800s, Changunak Antisarlook Andrewuk (Sinrock Mary) helped grow the largest reindeer herd at that time in Alaska. When her husband passed away in 1900 she successfully fought the legal system to keep the herd. Not only a skilled herder and savvy businesswoman, Mary took in orphans from her village and provided jobs in her community. Upon her death in 1948, newspapers across the country mourned the passing of the "Queen of Reindeer".



District Court Ruling in Case of Consuelo vs. John Kelly and A.E. Austin, Incl. documents a Tlingit mother's attempt to free her child from the Presbyterian
Alaska State Archives United States District Court Civil Cases, 1884-1900, Port Dickson (Sitka), Case No. 32

Diver holding King crab.
Alaska State Library, Western Airlines Photograph Collection, 1926-1969

WOMEN OF ALASKA

Women have played a significant role in shaping Alaska into the state it is today. The Alaska State Archives recognizes and celebrates the many women who have not only survived, but thrived in times of hardship and discrimination, paving the way for future generations. We invite you to explore the stories of these women and their contributions to the economic, academic, social, cultural, and political fields within our communities. While there have been many firsts, it is up to us all to uphold the rights of justice and equality for all generations to come.

To see the full online exhibit visit: http://bit.ly/womenofalaska

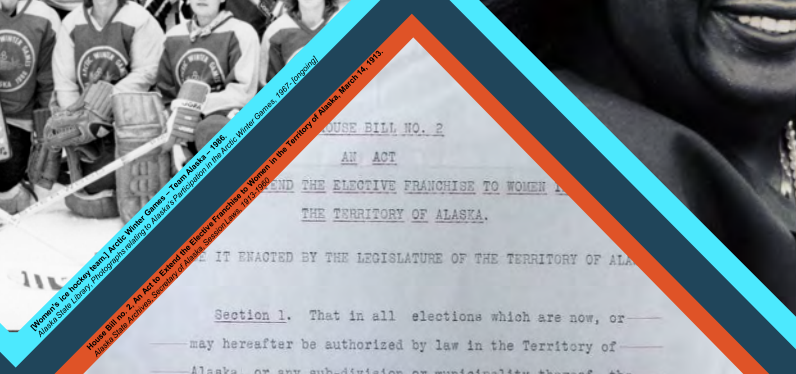
Elderly Athabascan woman stitching birch bark basket for us a widow, with a young girl at her shoulder (PCL)
Alaska State Library, Evelyn Butler and George Dale Photographs and Papers, 1934-1993

Women of Alaska have supported the ongoing health and enduring strength of communities across the state. Invaluable in the preservation of traditional knowledge and cultures, the revival of Native languages, and champions for the arts and humanities, women have advocated for the values and sustainable practices that enrich the fabric of our society.

[Women's Ice Hockey team.] Arctic Winter Games - Teen Alaska - 1986
Alaska State Library, Photographer Marty Mahlo, Alaska's Participation in the Arctic Winter Games, 1987-[ongoing]

Bettye Davis (member of the Alaska State Senate, Anchorage K District 2008 through 2013. In 2008, the first African Americans to be elected to the Alaska State Senate.)
Alaska State Library, APA Convention Film Photographs

For generations women have participated in civics. Through politics and governance, law enforcement and the military, and as doctors and nurses in the field, women have stepped up and served when called upon. Bettye Davis, longtime Anchorage school board member and the first African American to be elected to the State Senate, dedicated her life to improving the lives of her constituents, advocating for school funding and aiding in the reestablishment of the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women.



House Bill no. 2, An Act to Extend the Elective Franchise to Women in the Territory of Alaska, March 14, 1913.
Alaska State Archives, Secretary of Alaska, Enrolled Laws, 1913-1959

HOUSE BILL NO. 2

AN ACT

TO EXTEND THE ELECTIVE FRANCHISE TO WOMEN IN THE TERRITORY OF ALASKA.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE TERRITORY OF ALASKA:

Section 1. That in all elections which are now, or may hereafter be authorized by law in the Territory of Alaska, or any sub-division or municipality thereof, the