

Remembering & Honoring Bernice Joseph



Bernice Joseph (left) with Doyon Foundation alumna Tracy Snow and Executive Director Doris Miller.

On behalf of the Doyon Foundation staff, board and students, I would like to honor the late Bernice Joseph, and extend our deepest condolences to her family and friends.

Bernice was a leader and mentor to many, and I am proud to say how much I looked up to and learned from her. She was a huge champion for the Foundation. As a previous employee and member of alumni association, she was always here when we needed her. We could count on her support.

In addition to the Foundation, Bernice was a champion for Native language revitalization, education, and development of culturally sensitive curriculum – all of which are near and dear to our hearts as well.

In her 2005 Alaska Federation of Natives keynote address, Bernice spoke of “the importance of education, while maintaining our cultural identity,” “the development of curriculum sensitive to our cultures,” and “programs that incorporate indigenous and western values.” She also stressed the importance of growing our own policymakers and leaders. “It’s all about Native minds shaping our future,” she said.

She was also a strong voice for Native language revitalization. “We face a huge challenge with the loss of Alaska Native languages. Until it is as common for students to be able to choose their own Alaska Native language in the schools as it is for Spanish, Russian and

French, to name a few, we are a long ways from having equity,” she said in her keynote address.

Bernice didn't just talk about the changes she wanted to see – she actively worked toward them and accomplished much, especially in her role at the UAF College of Rural and Community Development. Her desire, dedication and drive are an inspiration to us all.

With her passing, the world has lost a great woman. But her legacy lives on, and it is up to us, all of us, to carry on her vision. Because, in her own words, “we have done a lot, but we have only just begun.”

- Doris Miller
Doyon Foundation Executive Director