

## Youngsters from Villages—

# Problems of Boarding Students

Boarding parents, families at home, young people and educators grapple with the problems of boarding home students.

Coming to Fairbanks from small rural villages, places where all faces are familiar, a school as large as Lathrop H.S. can be threatening.

Here, crammed into a large modern building, over a thousand students go their own directions. In the crowd, the Native students can become lost.

Scattered in dozens of classes, drawn together by common interests, but living miles apart, Native students at Fairbanks Lathrop H.S. usually stay apart from the rest of the school.

For many of them, coming from small villages, high school brings their first close contact with a white culture—in a white town.

In November, several of the Native students at Lathrop H.S. banded together in the Alaska Native Youth Association.

For most of them, this is their first school activity. Since early November, the club has tried to meet during lunch hours. It sponsored two school dances and an after school meeting featuring Joe Upicksoun, President of the Arctic Slope Native Association.

"Transportation is the major problem," explained Verna Westlake of Kiana, the group's treasurer. In her second year at Lathrop, Verna spent her first eight years of schooling in the village school at Kiana. Her village is in the Northwest area of Alaska, inland from Kotzebue on the Koyuk River.

"It's too much of a problem getting home after school (most students take the school bus and have no other way of getting home if they miss it) or going to evening meetings," she said.

For now, the group meets during lunch hour—but Lathrop has four staggered lunch hours. At any one time, half the students are in class—or should be.

Several of the group's officers agreed. Leonard Kriska of Koyukuk is the group's president. Robert Aiken of Barrow is vice president. Aileen Kubanyi of Fairbanks serves as secretary and

Verna Westlake of Kiana is treasurer.

Other officers are Gerald Pilot of Koyukuk, program chairman and Pamela Van Dyke of Beaver, the recreation chairman.

Gerald Pilot, the program chairman for the group, is on the lookout for prominent Native speakers to appear at an evening meeting.

It was Gerald who hunted around Fairbanks looking for speakers, spied out Joe Upicksoun—in Fairbanks for a meeting of the ad hoc committee for a Fairbanks Boarding School.

"I went around and asked Betty Magnuson (boarding home coordinator) if she knew anyone, and she told me," Gerald explained.

The program chairman, a resident of the village of Koyukuk at the junction of the Koyukuk and Yukon Rivers, transferred to Lathrop this year from Mt. Edgecumbe boarding school. He was a straight A student at Mt. Edgecumbe, a member of the National Honor Society.

"That was my club," Gerald explained.

As program chairman, his dream is to bring Byron Mallott to speak with the ANYA.

In the near future, the ANYA plans an exhibit of Eskimo arts and crafts. Bob Aiken of Barrow, their vice president, will put together the exhibit.

"I'll get the things from home," he explained. In Barrow, his grandfather carves ivory and can provide examples of Eskimo arts and crafts. Bob provided the decorating for the two successful dances ANYA has sponsored.

Three of the officers, all boarding home students, agreed they would rather live in boarding homes than a dormitory.

"In a boarding school, you have rules and regulations and curfews and all that sort of thing," explained Verna Westlake. Bob Aiken transferred to Lathrop this year from Kodiak, where he lived in a dormitory. Most of the students are bothered mainly by problems in getting together with their friends and complain about having "nowhere to go".

"They ought to have a place where we could go and play basketball," suggested one boy. The Native Welcome Center, which plans to move this month to larger quarters, conducts a program of youth activities which it plans to expand.

At present, it has only a pool table and a juke box for recreation—in a run-down tiny building downtown. Most of the boarding students live in the suburbs where houses are large and often miles from town.

For the officers, this year is the first time they have ever participated in a school club. They are learning quickly, Verna Westlake, the treasurer, already has a firm grasp on the finances of the group. The officers are enthusiastic and searching for ideas.

Mrs. Irene Cleworth, counselor for the boarding home students, serves as faculty sponsor to the native youth.

"At first," she explained, "we debated the idea of a segregated group. However, anyone who is interested can come to the meetings and join."

"The advisory board of the Boarding Home Program thought it was a good idea when it first came up, as long as it serves a purpose," she explained.

"It gives many of the students more of a feeling of self identity," explained Mrs. Cleworth.

"Whenever the ANYA no longer serves a purpose, we can drop it."

Meanwhile, according to their by-laws, the members of the Alaska Native Youth Association have pledged themselves to:

1. Promote a more active participation in the school we attend.
2. Learn more of the arts and crafts of our people.
3. Instill a pride in our heritage.
4. Promote better education opportunities of the Native Youth.
5. Provide recreational activities.
6. Create inter-st in political activities that would promote the general health and welfare of Native children and youth.