



CLASS OF 71—Members of Ron Senungetuk's seventh class at University of Alaska gathered last week to prepare for an Anchorage art show. They are (from left) Richard Seeganna of Nome,

Wilfred Olanna of Shishmarif, William Ozenna of Nome, Samuel A. Martin Jr. of Juneau and Teddy Pullock (front).

Ron Senungetuk Heads Extension Center Arts and Crafts at University

Ron Senungetuk wound up his seventh year as head of the Extension Center Native Arts and Crafts program this semester and paused to evaluate the results.

His students were packing for the Fifth Annual Juried Native Arts and Crafts exhibition to be held in Anchorage this June. The reputation of his course is so well established they get many more invitations than they can handle.

"We try and pick one show and do it well," Senungetuk explained. "We get a lot of national invitations but we're not big enough yet to do more."

They've grown considerably, however, from beginnings in 1965 when Senungetuk and four students from Nome set up shop on the University of Alaska campus with almost no funding.

Students now come from all over the state.

"We haven't any recruitment program. It's word of mouth. I get maybe five or six letters a year," the program head said. "We still have an opening or two for next fall."

"Our students aren't necessarily high school grads. We've had as low as fourth grade level and one who couldn't speak English."

It's artistic talent that's important. Once accepted, students can brush up on special English and sign up for college courses, too, if they want to round out their training.

This year 11 were enrolled on full scholarship and nine completed the session. Earlier grads are beginning to establish names for themselves as artists and some have gone to further art in the state.

Alvin Kayouktuk of Little Diomedea is assistant manager of Alaska Native Arts and Crafts in Juneau. Sylvester Ayek of King Island is working with an Upward Bound art program. Melvin Olanna is pioneering art training in sixteen native villages.

The goal of the extension center is as Senungetuk set it originally.

"To influence for even better quality. To become an effective design center where a man might do come research in Arctic de-

sign... ethnic art, if you will."

But he's no slave to tradition. Just the opposite, in fact, which makes him controversial.

Senungetuk is internationally recognized as an artist. Not an Eskimo artist but simply AN ARTIST. Though born in Wales, he got his training stateside and in Norway, then cut his own independent swath.

"I get a little bit offended when people say my work is too Norwegian. That it should be more Eskimo. They fail to recognize I should do what I want to do."

He reserves the same privilege for his students.

"They have freedom. They learn various techniques, universal art forms. I think you have to learn universal art forms to become a good native artist. They should get involved with different materials and techniques."