

Heritage group offers summer camp

BY MARGIE BAUMAN

Cottonwood bark carving, swimming and maybe even horseback riding will be on the agenda as a federally-funded summer camp for Alaska Native youngsters opens Aug. 11 at King's Lake, between Palmer and Wasilla.

The camp is the latest project of the Athabascan-Eskimo United Heritage Association, a non-profit organization for the Matanuska-Susitna Valley area northwest of Anchorage, directed by Winnie Larson, Wasilla.

"This is only our second year (with the association) but

everything's worked out smooth for us," Larson told the Tundra Times. Using funds provided under federal Johnson-O'Malley legislation for Native education, the heritage association tries to serve youths in a 23,000 square mile area of the Mat-Su valley.

Letters inviting camp applications have already gone out to about 122 JOM program directors around Alaska and the camp, which will run through Sept. 5, will be able to accommodate up to 150 campers at a time, Larson said. Costs will run to \$3 per day per camper, plus a \$5 crafts fee.

A camp supervisor is still to

be hired for the fulltime job, but Larson said she'll be there every day too. Some 150 Native youngsters in the Mat-Su Borough have already signed up, including Larson's 13-year-old daughter, Shannon.

One program that will be emphasized is Red Cross swimming instruction. "Most of the kids, if they get swimming twice a day for five days, can get a Red Cross badge," Larson said. There will also be a local JOM horseback riding program, but it is not yet certain if it will be at the camp, she said.

Depending on whether the autumn school schedule allows

it, the best time to come to camp would be the last week of August or the first week of September, Larson said. That's when the state fair is being held at Palmer, 13 miles from King's Lake, and the camp program will include trips to the fair.

"Some campers may want to exhibit their own crafts there," Larson said. "Cottonwood bark carving, for example. That's a very simple thing and kids can carve something nice in an hour," she said. Cottonwood carving is part of the camp's program.

Began with Exchange Program
The camp is an outgrowth

of an exchange program begun last year which has proven popular with Native students in several parts of Alaska.

"Last summer we housed 87 kids in our homes in Wasilla for about 10 days during fair time," Larson said. Volunteers opened their homes to the visitors without payment and through the JOM program, the visitors took several trips, to places ranging from Hatcher Pass to the state fairgrounds.

"In August, Dillingham sent their entire junior class and in the first week of September, Barrow sent five too. This

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year, maybe we'll send a group to their whale hunt," Larson said.

The Athabascan-Eskimo United Heritage Association has also participated in student exchange programs with JOM contracting groups in New Stuyahok, Kodiak, Ouzinkie, Old Harbor, Little Diomedes and Shishmaref in the past year.

Suggestions, Applications Wanted

The heritage association is now looking for campers and welcoming suggestions for its crafts program, particularly from people who might be able to teach their crafts. Any Native youngster aged 9 through the senior year in high school may apply, but for every group of five children there has to also be a chaperone or teen counsellor, 16 years or older, Larson said.

Requests for information and suggestions may be sent to Larson, c/o Box 558, Wasilla, Ak. 99687 or by telephone, at 907-376-5419. All applications should be in by June 15, Larson said.