

Fifty Native People Taking Teacher-Training for Head Start

By JILL SHEPHERD
Times Staff Writer

In answer to a teacher shortage for the Head Start program in Alaska, nearly fifty Natives, elected by their respective villages, are enrolled in a special teacher-

training school at the University of Alaska.

When these people have completed an eight-week course of intensive study, they will return to their remote villages to embark on

(Continued on Page 5)

Head Start Teacher-Training . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

careers as teachers of four and five-year-old children in a nationwide program called Head Start, part of the Poverty Program.

Head Start is an effort to assist children from deprived families all over the nation to enter kindergarten or first grade this September.

Even though 12,000 qualified teachers had been trained for Head Start, village councils all over Alaska were unable to find teachers last year. Through the combined efforts of the Alaska State Community Action Program, village council action and other agencies, a plan—unique in the nation—was formulated.

Over 45 villages elected one or more representatives, depending upon the size of the community. These selections were based on who the people wanted to teach their children. These representatives, none of whom have had previous teaching experience, have educations ranging from those with only fourth grade training to those who have had some college experience.

Once this group had gathered on the campus of the University of Alaska they were faced with a formidable task—acquiring enough know-how in eight weeks to return to their villages this fall as bona fide pre-school teachers. Attesting to the zeal with which these Native teacher-trainees have tackled the job before them is the fact that they have now completed five weeks of the course.

While the task of absorbing so much knowledge in so short a time might seem almost impossible to most people, the actual course of study has been designed with the time element in mind.

Besides the actual classroom instruction which consists of arts and crafts, nutrition and other subjects related to actually teaching children, the students are being exposed to a variety of things.

When this writer visited a discussion group, the subject of the day was law. The class planned an on-the-scene visit to a law court. These seemingly unrelated topics are all part of a master plan to acquaint each teacher with facets of life not found in the typical village situation.

An ordinary school day runs for eight hours, with school in session all week. The curriculum includes an observation and practice teaching schedule conducted at Hunter School, a grade school here in Fairbanks which has a Head Start program currently in session.

The teacher-trainees, who

are divided into groups of ten, are studying under the expert guidance of experienced teachers such as Linda Badten, herself an Eskimo formerly from Gambell; Connie Griffith, for many years a kindergarten teacher and now in charge of the Head Start teacher training; Mable Cartier, Coleen Redman, Jack Bartlett, Leslie Salisbury and others. The teaching staff is assisted by several aides, one of whom is Betty Westcott, an Eskimo from the lower Kuskokwim and a graduate in anthropology.

The lunch program is an important part of Head Start and the teacher-trainees are being well-schooled in nutrition. They also observe the lunch kitchens at Hunter School. Some teachers plan to serve breakfast to the children of their villages as well as the regular lunch and two snacks provided for under the program.

The breakfasts will be served particularly in those villages where a food shortage exists. The actual funding for the lunch program is \$1.00 per day per child.

The economic impact of Head Start may be considerable. All the toys used by the children will be made in Nome by local craftsmen. This possibly could launch a new Alaskan industry.

Employment of Native people in each village to conduct the Head Start will certainly bolster the economy. Besides the salaried teacher, for each 15 children an aide will be hired and trained. A cook will be hired. The village stores, which will be encouraged to stock more food than they normally would, should grow and profit from the lunch program.

Head Start classes will not be held in the schools but in community halls, churches or any large room. Each school will have a tape recorder and an allotment of \$15 per month per child is made for school supplies. The program will run all year.

According to Mrs. Connie Griffith, periodic, follow-up visits will be made to every village after Head Start begins to assist the teachers.

It is also planned to have an in-service training program sometime in the winter for the Native teachers, possibly in Anchorage for a week or so.

Participating villages are Beaver, Stebbins, New Stuyahok, Manokotak, Nondalton, Mountain Village, Ruby, Wainwright, Angoon, Fort Yukon, Togiak, Point Hope, Chalkyitsik, Kotzebue, Kiana, St. Michael, Yakutat, Mekoryuk, Hooper Bay, Galena, Emmonak, Pt. Graham, Teller, Nanapitchuk and Kwethluk.

Other villages are Kwigilingok, Hydaburg, Nulato, Selawik, Anaktuvuk Pass, Noorvik, Akhiok, Koyukuk, Kalskag and Huslia.