

# Ayek Heads Arts Co-op

Sylvester Ayek has been named to manage the Neuvaneavik-Hoonda Kahit Cooperative at 411 W. 4th Avenue (the A-frame arts and crafts sales unit). Ayek, a King Island Eskimo, was picked by NHK's board of directors during a recent meeting.

Ayek has been long involved in Native Alaska arts and crafts. In 1968 he helped organize NHK, a Native operated store which was created as a part of the Anchorage Native Welcome Center.

He managed the Native Village at the Alaskaland exposition in Fairbanks, and acted as Native activities coordinator at the Alaska Centennial "Igloopuk" attraction in Anchorage.

Ayek was a public relations liaison at the Alaska contingent of the Los Angeles Trade Fair in April of 1969; he also demonstrated and lectured on Eskimo dances, games and culture.

Ayek is widely known as an Eskimo dancer, athlete and ivory carver, and is a popular Native emcee (Tundra Times banquet, Eskimo Olympics, etc.)

The board of directors for NHK is currently in the process of applying for funds from the Community Enterprise Development Corporation. They hope to obtain funds for a permanent building, personnel salaries, equipment, and other operating needs.

"One very important change we will make if we can get the

money," Ayek stated, "would be to make immediate payment to the villagers when they send in their products. Right now we don't have the ready cash and this hurts our business because other stores can make immediate payment. We do, however, pay higher prices to the craftsmen because our overhead and profit margin is low."

Ayek continued, "You can see how the economy of the villages would be stabilized if these people had an immediate, year-around source of income.

"Through an intensive advertising and promotion program we expect to attract and purchase only the best work, thereby perpetuating and maintaining standards of excellence in true Native art and contributing to the economic independence of our people.

"The board will also explore Stateside sales outlets in their efforts to expand."

"The possibilities are exciting," Ayek concluded. "We can do so many things. We have even discussed the idea of going into the sale of Native foods at some future date; teaching more Natives how to carve, do beadwork, etc.; providing space for artisans to work in our shop so the public can see the actual product develop.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this venture."