

# CITC to administer Native Head Start in Anchorage

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council has announced it has assumed administration of the Native Head Start Program in Anchorage as of January.

Previously operated by Cook Inlet Native Association, the Head Start Program most recently was managed by the Rural Alaska Community Action Program.

According to CITC, in order to prevent disruption to the children currently enrolled in the program, no changes are expected until after the completion of the current school year. During this transitional time, the CITC staff will review the needs of the children and their parents and begin to refocus the cultural orientation of the program.

Currently serving 40 pre-school children, CITC's Head Start Program will focus on the children's health and nutrition, and social, emotional and physical growth, as well as their cognitive development. Under CITC's guidance, the program also will look at incorporating the Elder's Program in order to offer value strengthening for the children.

The overall goal of CITC's Head Start Program will be readying Native children to enter the Anchorage school system at a level of preparedness that equals that of non-Native children while promoting the understanding of tradition and heritage.

Of great concern to CITC, for the purposes of improving the effectiveness of the CITC Native Head Start Program, is the initial difference between Native and non-Native students beginning in the first grade.

In the 1987-88 school year, Native students tested in the first grade were at the 49 percent level, compared to white students in the first grade at 68 percent.

By the time the students reach 11th grade, no significant improvement occurs, according to CITC. Native students in the 11th grade tested at the 50 percent level, compared to white students at 70 percent.

CITC officials said another disturbing finding was that scores for Native students declined significantly between 1984 and 1988, while during the same period, scores and ranks for white students increased significantly.

Also alarming is the difference in the drop-out rate for Native students com-

pared to white students above the ninth grade. During 1987-88, 30.4 percent of the Native students dropped out, compared to 17 percent of the white students, which represented a difference of 78 percent.

One immediate change scheduled for the beginning of the 1990-91 school year will be the physical location of the Head Start Program. Currently, it is located on Fort Richardson, which has the lowest Native population in Anchorage, according to CITC.

The current location creates problems for many of the eligible families, largely because of the need to transport children to and from the base. By moving the location of the program, CITC said more families will find it accessible.

Possible expansion of the program, depending on funding, also will be considered. Last fall when enrollment was closed, there were 65 children signed up and eligible for the program, but room for only 40.

Spokesmen said other objectives for the CITC Head Start Program will be to promote a culturally appropriate learning environment, develop and implement a multicultural education program, identify the individual needs of children and families, along with promoting and encouraging parent participation and involvement in the planning, development and implementation of educational activities.

CITC's sister corporation, Southcentral Foundation, which represents the health "arm" of the Cook Inlet Region Inc. tribal organization, will be a partner with CITC in implementing health services for the Head Start Program.