

# High School Dropout Natives' Major Problem

High school dropout is a major problem among Native youngsters in the Fairbanks schools, according to Jerry Norum, Director of Pupil Service in the North Star Borough.

"I have trouble in talking to Native people who are in high school and take a notion to drop out," Norum admitted in an informal talk at the Feb. 1 meeting of the Alaska Native Youth Association in Fairbanks. "Too often I don't succeed - or anyone else doesn't in talking them into staying in school."

Norum asked the group for suggestions on ways to reach the potential dropouts among the Native students. "To be honest, a lot of these kids just clam up when they see me," he said.

When a member of the group asked Norum why it is so important to stay in school, he replied, "... people think it is, for almost any job in town." He added that many people without high school diplomas who have managed to get good jobs come back to get more education.

An ANYA member asked if it is easy to get back into school if a student does drop out and realizes his mistake. Norum replied that it is. The oldest graduate of Lathrop High School was 35 at the time of graduation, he pointed out. This year a 40-year-old man will receive his diploma, Norum said.

Of particular interest to the ANYA, Norum suggested are the 200 Native students who are educated in Fairbanks but who do not normally live in Fairbanks area. He said that the ANYA could be an excellent source of activity to help these young people adjust to living in Fairbanks.

Norum also talked about the various adult education courses available, some for high school credit. He ex-

plained that a high school diploma is also available on an equivalency basis to people who pass a test. The student must pass the test with a rank in the top 50 percentile group, Norum said.

The test means that the person possesses an education equal to minimum high school requirements, Norum stated. "That doesn't down grade it," he stressed. "In some people's eyes it upgrades it, if someone is an adult and goes and studies, maybe fails once or twice, but keeps on studying and retakes it and passes."

Norum said that he is currently working with about 75 who desire to quit school for some reason. He expects 100 to 150 before the end of the year.

An education committee was formed to study some of the problems presented and report back to the membership. The committee will be a standing committee on education, which is one of the primary areas of interest of the ANYA.

The next regular meeting of the Association will be Wednesday, March 1.