

STUDENTS MUST FLY AGAIN

Parents Are Sought As Boarding Program Has Shortage of Homes

By MARGIE BAUMAN

FAIRBANKS — From villages of the Arctic Slope, Northwest and the Interior of Alaska, they arrived this week with suitcases in hand — boarding home students in pursuit of an education far from home.

Alice, a slim girl in a fur-trimmed black velveteen parka, wondering what it's going to be like going to school so far from home.

Danny, armed with a basketball and looking forward to school in Fairbanks, as a sophomore.

Agnes, worried that she'll go to live at a home where she really doesn't want to go.

Alice, Danny, Agnes and 1500 other Indian, Aleut and Eskimo teen-agers made the mass exodus from their villages this week because state law requires that they attend school, but there are no high schools in their villages. The forced migration, which separates these students from their families nine months of

the year, has been bitterly attacked by spokesmen for Alaska's Native people, especially young men and women who have been through the boarding home program themselves and found the situation far from satisfactory.

Still the practice continues, with hundreds of Native teen-agers being filtered through boarding home and boarding school programs via Fairbanks, Anchorage, Nome, Dillingham, Kodiak, Sitka, and as far as Chemawa, Oregon.

The Fairbanks boarding home program, under supervision for

(Continued on page 6)

Students Must Fly Again . . .

(Continued from page 1)

the first time this year by the Tanana Chiefs Conference, is an interesting case in point.

"The boarding home program has never been very satisfactory anyway and because of the late start, it will be even less so," said Clara Carroll bluntly. Carroll, a consultant for the Tanana Chiefs Conference, is working on the boarding home program with Virginia Dowes, coordinator for the program at Fairbanks.

Theirs is the responsibility of finding homes for nearly 300 students from more than 30 villages, arranging their travel and keeping check on the students and boarding home situation throughout the year. Funding for the program is coming from federal Johnson-O'Malley education monies, "because the state has not and will not assume its responsibility to educate rural students."

(One top State Department of Education official, asked about the lack of finances during the height of a recent dispute over use of Johnson-O'Malley funds, said the state had an obligation to provide educational facilities, but not to get the student to those facilities. So the state has continued to spend thousands

of dollars on transportation and board of Native students, leaving most village teen-agers with no option but to leave home to attend high school.)

Coordinators of the boarding home programs, like Dowes, and Carroll, have to deal on the spot with a number of problems, because school is starting this week.

"Some students appear anxious to get started," said Carroll, but others seem hesitant about leaving their villages. But they are coming, clad in bright trimmed parkas sewn back home hugging old friends they meet at the Fairbanks International Airport and then scattering to homes at Fairbanks, Delta, Nenana, and Tok. Other students are being routed by the Tanana Chiefs Conference to high schools and homes at Kivalina, Selawik, Galena, Nulato and Fort Yukon.

They come from as far as Point Hope, Aniak, Buckland, Gambell, Savoonga, and Scammon Bay. Others are from Arctic Village, Wales, White Mountain, Chevak, Rampart, Beaver, Minto, Huslia, Koyukuk, Chalkyitsik, Anaktuvuk Pass, Wainwright and more than a dozen other villages.

Those accepted as boarding home parents have been very patient, said Carroll, who was still interviewing boarding home parent prospects this week. She talked as she drove toward a home outside Fairbanks, to speak with a young couple who asked to have two students stay with them.

Boarding home parents are still being sought, especially because of the influx of students who might have attended Nome Beltz High School or other unavailable boarding school programs. Anyone interested in being a boarding home parent is asked to contact the Tanana Chiefs Conference immediately for details.

Most Fairbanks families who participate in this program are doing it out of a community need, and Army families have been really good, since they are often uprooted and young themselves, Carroll said.

Still, the basic question behind the boarding home program — and the boarding schools is unanswered — how long will this practice prevail as a state solution to the education of Native village teen-agers in Alaska?