



**ALASKANS AT CHILOCCO**—Through the years, many Alaskan youngsters have been going to Chilocco, Okla. to go to high school there. The three young people shown in the picture are, left to right, Marie Charles of Kasigluk; Agnes Rose Inakak of Tununak; and Jesse Chime Galrea of Napakiak, all from southwest are of the state.

—LAEL MORGAN Photograph

## Program at Chilocco Progressing

By LAEL MORGAN

**CHILOCCO**—Learning English as a second language is never easy but the teachers at Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma are trying to make it more fun.

In February they began pioneer reading improvement project in cooperation with the Wichita State University College of Education. It's funded for \$29,000, involves a lot of hard-

ware and machinery and also the whole faculty.

Eighty-nine students were selected from a list of 200 eligible for the program.

"Our kids are very leery of reading programs because usually they involve the village dumb dumbs," observes Miss Joy Spicer, acting supervisor of Language Arts at the school. "But for this one we took youngsters of average or above intelligence."

"We tried to take kids with a wide range of ability," explained Dr. Raymond Kimble, director of the Wichita State Reading Center who is helping set up the project. "We also

have a special English class for college bound students. It's a crash course in study skills. Two weeks followed by a refresher course."

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# Chilocco Program...

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Everybody admits the first day of the course was a disaster. They began with little explanation and heavy testing to find out the reading weaknesses of each student.

"I had 20 kids a period walking through my office saying 'I'm not going back to that class!'" Miss Spicer recalls. "Some of them were scared by the testing. Some just don't like to do things when they can't see a reason for it."

The educators explained the program was to help each student individually, teach them how to study more easily and help them wrestle with the differences between their own languages and English.

They produced high interest reading materials at low vocabulary levels. Offered reading and writing games, cross word puzzles and a good number of audio visual machines for youngsters use.

The school also offered prizes for reading improvement. Most of the students are from 2 to 2.8 years deficient in reading skills. Now if a student moves ahead a year in reading ability he is to win a transistor radio.

If there is two or three years improvement a camera is the prize. For a three to four year jump an unusual table radio is given. And there's a portable television set for the boy and girl who show the most improvement.

Today the program is one of the best attended in the school.

"The kids are finding some of the things we do are fun," Miss Spicer reports. "We're trying to get more high interest material, too, but there's not too much available relating to Indian culture."

Of the Alaskans interviewed in the class, three out of four liked the course and felt they were learning from it.

One is Joe Willie of Stebbins Village. He is a senior who, according to his teachers, is one of the top in his dry cleaning class.

He's doing well enough with reading to count on winning a transistor radio and—with a little luck—may capture the television set.

Also enthusiastic are senior

Jesse Chime Galrea of Napakiak and Marie Charles of Kasigluk, a junior. Jesse hopes his improved vocabulary will help him with flight training. Marie is working towards nurses training in Anchorage.

Agnes Rose Inakak of Tununak thinks the program is "really good for some things but not too good for others." She's decided, at the moment, she'd rather be in her regular English class but she's still paying attention.

Educators concede they have a lot to learn about the class. In fact 20 teachers in the school have volunteered for a course taught by Wichita State on helping students with reading problems.

Also in connection with the program, the school held a Human Relations Seminar to explore ways of closing the understanding gap between students and teachers. Fifty-four of the 57 member staff attended and are looking forward to a second session.

Daniel E. Sahmaunt, a Kiowa Indian who heads the school, hopes the program can be funded yearly.

"We've tried a number of reading programs that did well till the people involved with them left," he said. "This is a program we hope we can keep in regular operation."

As for Alaskan students at Chilocco, Sahmaunt and his staff claim they are among the best students in the school.

After the school made headlines in an investigation of student treatment, Alaskan enrollment dropped from 200 to 44.

Now Sahmaunt hopes the school can attract the youngsters back. (He has been at his job 2 years, the other director, I believe, was let go after the investigation).

"We have hopes of becoming a school that meets the needs of the students rather than developing programs and trying to fit the students into them," he said.

"We really like the Alaskan kids and we wish we had more of them. They seem to have a purpose for education. They see the need and they're willing to work towards improving themselves academically."