

Bering Straits Corp.—

Childhood Development Program

By JENNY ALOWA
Planning Coordinator

Bering Straits Native Corporation, Early Childhood Development Planning Program had their second meeting in Koyuk, Alaska on December 12th, 13th, and 14th.

All the villages in the Bering Straits area were represented on this Early Child Development Program with the exception of Diomed.

The ad hoc advisory representatives were selected by the school board members during their village public meeting.

A variety of representatives came to the meeting from school board members to parents, teachers (pre-school), village council members, high school graduates, young and old — a good combination of people.

The following villages who attended the meeting were: Leonard Olanna, Brevig Mission; Bessie Saccheus, Elim; Alice Fagerstrom, Golovin; Abraham Kaningok, Gambell; Lolita Nasuk, Koyuk; Margaret Seeganna, Nome; Jeannette Alowa, Savoonga; John Cheemuk, St. Michaels;

Henry Sookiayak, Shaktoolik; Albert Olanna, Shishmaref; Timothy Snowball, Stebbins; Mary Alexander, Teller; Rita Ivanoff, Unalakleet; Mrs. Mary Alexander, Wales; Tom Brown, White Mountain.

Bering Straits Native Corporation got a contract from Alaska State-Operated Schools to conduct a planning program for the Early Child Development Program.

This is a first in history that an agency gave the people in rural Alaska a chance to do their own future planning for their children's education.

These ECD representatives from the villages proudly accept

the "grant" and came out with fantastic recommendations to Bering Straits Native Corporation, State-Operated Schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs, etc.

Jenny Alowa was hired to be a planning coordinator for Early Childhood Development.

Out of our 16 villages, there are ten BIA schools and six SOS schools. There are three Headstart Programs and three Children Cache Programs. At this meeting also the villages with "no" pre-school program were considered.

Brevig Mission, Diomed, Elim, Golovin, St. Michaels, Shaktoolik, Wales and White Mountain were all priority villages to implement a program. Other villages with a present pre-school program gave their full support to these villages.

These villages decided whatever pre-school program they will have should include Eskimo Culture (Eskimo dialect, respect and obey, etc.), Elementary Skills, Safety Regulation, Hygiene, and Swimming.

They want their children to be taught all the five things above. The results were based on the pre-school questionnaire the ad hoc advisory group composed on their last meeting in October. These questionnaires were sent to the families in the villages.

The villages express their opinion and suggestions "how the children should be taught."

The villages agreed also that they all have facilities, in-kind service and a teacher to have a program in their villages, but they need additional training for the teacher.

The villages all meet the five "needs," Eskimo Culture, Elementary Skills, Safety Rules, Hygiene, and Swimming.

Each village have someone to teach the five skills.

These recommendations are going to be reviewed by the State-Operated Schools, Board of Directors in January and Office of Child Development.

Bering Straits Native Corporation is one of the six or seven Native Corporations who got a contract from Alaska State-Operated Schools to do Early Child Development Planning in our area.

The people in rural Alaska showed their interest tremendously with an attitude of "we can do it," "we did it," and "we want to be heard" with our "needs."