

Expanded Counseling Services for Native Students at AMU

An expanded program of counseling services is under way on the Anchorage campus of the University of Alaska, aimed at helping more Alaska Native students to make the transition from village life to college.

"Until recently, the dropout rate for native students in colleges was astronomical — something like 90 per cent," observed

Charlene Taniguchi, recently appointed director for a program known as "Special Services."

Charlene is a native-born Eskimo from White Mountain, a small village on the Seward Peninsula near Nome. She attended a one-teacher school in her village, and Covenant High School near Unalakleet.

She worked for several years

as a secretary in Fairbanks, Seattle and California before returning to Alaska to obtain a degree in psychology and office administration at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

As a native-born Eskimo, with a background in psychology, she is well prepared to assist native students in coping their new experiences on the

campus and in the community.

Some of their problems are the kinds of things which affect all students — where to find a place to live, where to find a part-time job, and how to get to and from the campus.

During the past year, an Alaska Native Students Organization was organized and provides the organizational structure

to work for programs to assist the 250 native students now enrolled at Anchorage Community College and the Senior College.

"We are proud of our heritage and we want to see more courses that are relevant to the Alaska Native student", Charlene said.

The university, she feels, has been slow to recognize the needs of native students but now "seems to be headed in the right direction."

Among the courses being planned for the future, she said, are such classes as Alaska Native Dancing, Alaska Native Heritage and more classes in Alaska Native crafts.

The Special Services office, located in the log cabin built last year as a project by the students at Anchorage Community College, encourages students to have confidence in themselves and to develop their own special talents.

"More and more we are being asked to assume positions of leadership, and we are counting on Anchorage Community College and the University of Alaska, Anchorage to help prepare us for the future."

Assisting Mrs. Taniguchi in the Special Services office is Rae Ann Hickling, a graduate student in counseling, and Richard Gelardin, a member of the ACC counseling staff.