

# YAKUTAT CONDUCTING UNIQUE WAR ON POVERTY

## Mayor of Town, BIA Improve Work Situation

The City of Yakutat is now in its tenth month of a most unique and interesting concept in handling the war on poverty.

The BIA General Assistance program, which provides financial aid to persons who do not otherwise qualify for normal welfare assistance has been developed in Yakutat into an effective program of community action and development.

Under the leadership of Jerry Nelson, Mayor of Yakutat, and Southeast Area Social Services Director William Diebels, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was able to contract the General Assistance Program to the City of Yakutat for the fiscal year 1970.

The expenditure of funds for this program for the 1969-70 fiscal year was in the neighborhood of \$18,000.

Mrs. Lloyd C. Howard was hired by the City as General Assistance program clerk, and the men qualifying for the assistance program have been engaged in various jobs in the community.

They painted the interior of the ANB Hall, tiled the bathrooms, tiled the Health Center Kitchen, assisted in renovating the City School and completed the tiling of the school gymna-

sium baths.

The entire project has resulted in a healthy work situation. Problems of timekeeping, supervision, work assignments and job performance were handled by both the City Council and those qualifying for the program.

Good work habits have resulted and the recipients readily admit that they are happy to be earning money by working. Mayor Nelson has stated that although mis-use of alcohol is still one of the major problems in Yakutat, he feels there has been a reduction because of the work aspect of the program.

There is a double benefit: people who would normally be unemployed in the winter because of the absence of jobs maintain their dignity by working; and City betterment projects, which used to go unattended due to lack of local funds are now being taken care of.

Another very important part of this program is that the Social Worker who would normally handle the applications for assistance as part of a monthly visit to the area, is now free to devote that time helping people solve their own problems.