

# Bethel Student Activities

## Combat Behavior Problems

The Bethel Regional Dormitory and High School consists of a body of students from throughout the AVCP region. For many of these students, their year in Bethel represents their first time away from their villages. This has the capacity to become either a positive or a negative experience for the student. Unfortunately, in the past, many students were dissatisfied with their living situation and reacted against it in a number of ways.

Behavioral difficulties arose and friction developed among dorm, boarding home, and town students. A dormitory, by its own structural nature, is not an easy living atmosphere; students are lumped together and removed from family and friends, which in itself can cause a strained situation conducive to difficulties. As a result, a dormitory staff must take all necessary steps to insure that the students are as happy and adjusted as possible.

The over-all purpose of the Bethel Student Activities Program, under the direction of John Angaiak and staffed by Christy Williams, Betty Barton, and Tom and Anne Lewis is to provide all students, dormitory, boarding home, and town students, with a variety of activities during their leisure time. However, underlying goals of the program are to introduce, or further develop, Native crafts and hobbies thereby establishing a union between village and town ways of life as well as creating a comradeship among all of the students.

The program is broken down into four different areas: 1) Athletics, 2) Native Arts and Crafts, 3) Crafts and Hobbies, and 4)

Special or Unscheduled Events. Thus far, we have offered such classes as wrestling, self-defense, beading, guitar lessons, cooking, basketry, isegan (fish basket) making, needlework, fish-trap building, and ice fishing. We also have presented numerous special events, such as Halloween and Thanksgiving dances, films, Eskimo story-telling, snow machine excursions, and cross-country skiing.

Although the program did not officially go into effect until Nov. 1, after the students had begun school, the Bethel Student Activities Program has made great headway and has been very successful. Students surveyed about their reactions to the program have stated that they enjoy, and frequently rely on, the activities and that they have been provided a means of establishing a wider range of friends.

Homesickness, an omnipresent problem at any dormitory, is mentioned far less frequently now that the program is running. Although it is quite plausibly still too early to evaluate the over-all results of starting such a program, we have noticed thus far very measurable improvements in behavior and attitude.