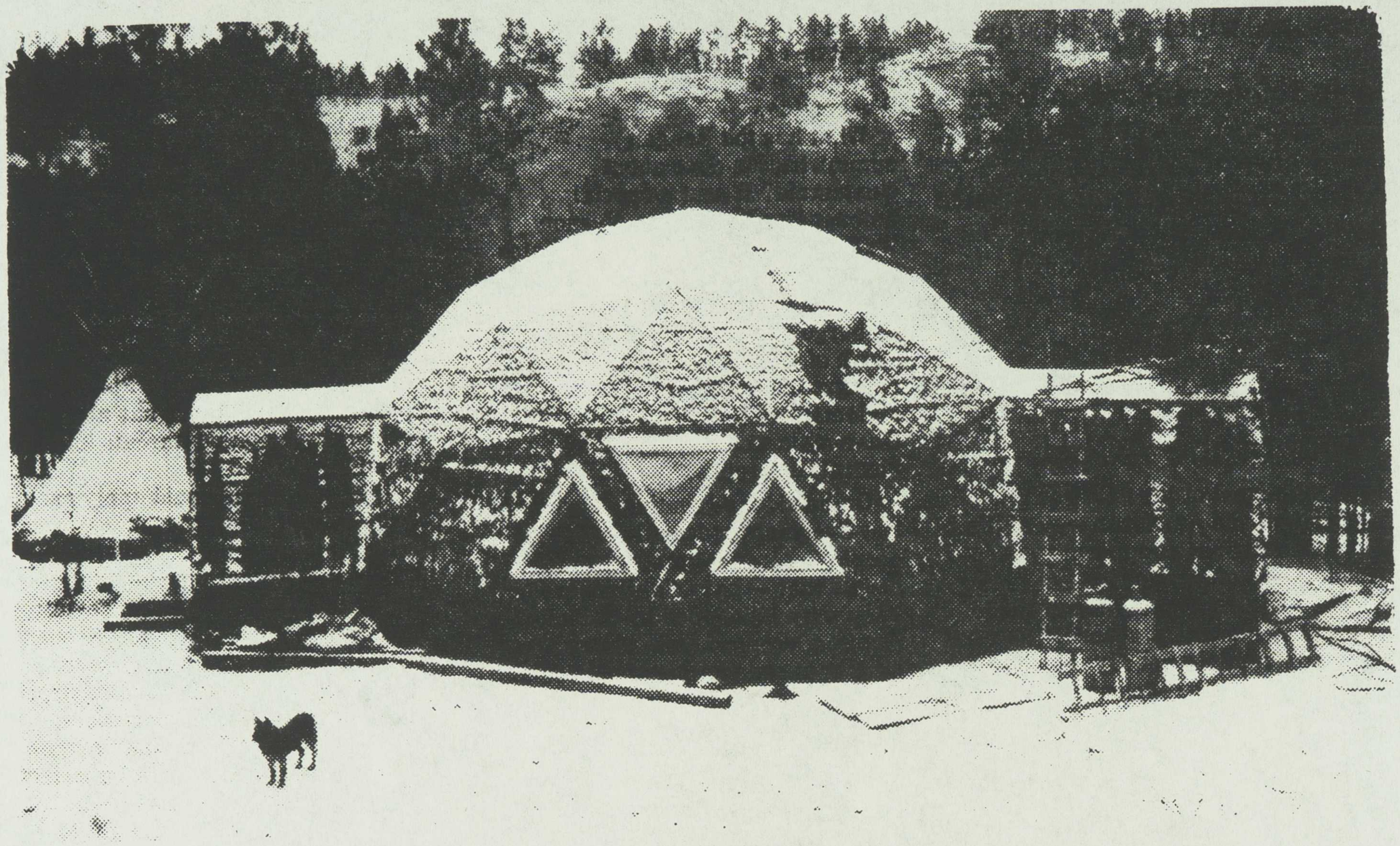

The classroom-kitchen dome at Yellow Thunder camp. (Staff photo by Ray Miller).

Dakota AIM children begin classes in geodesic dome

The Associated Press

Classes for Dakota American Indian Movement children will begin soon in a new geodesic dome built on federal land southwest of Rapid City.

The dome was built at the Yellow Thunder Camp after U.S. District Judge Donald O'Brien ruled in favor of Dakota AIM in a legal action. The federal government wanted to block construction of the dome.

Construction of the outer portion took four days and the finishing touches inside the dome took about two weeks, said camp spokesman Russell Means. The dome was finished Saturday and the Indians celebrated the New Moon Feast in the dome that night, he said.

The structure, which is 18 feet tall and 39 feet in diameter, has two wood stoves and one propane stove. All the people in the camp helped build the dome at one time or another, but four people consistently worked on it, Means said.

The dome will be used for classrooms, meetings, kitchen and dining hall.

O'Brien ruled Dec. 10 that the Indians could erect the dome on the site, which is on U.S. Forest Service land. The Indians set up camp on the land April 4, claiming 800 acres as part of their land under terms of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty with the federal government.

O'Brien ruled as part of the government's lawsuit seeking the Indians' eviction from the land. He said government attorneys did not refute the Indians' argument that the dome "is urgently needed during the winter months."

The judge also ruled the $12,000 dome was needed as a council teepee and a place to pass on Lakota beliefs.

But O'Brien told the Indians that the dome must be taken down by April 15, 1982. The Indians plan to give the dome to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation at that time.