

1964

A Study of the Federal School System of Alaska Concerning Its role and Administrative Problems

John E. Coffee
Central Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), and the [Educational Methods Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Coffee, John E., "A Study of the Federal School System of Alaska Concerning Its role and Administrative Problems" (1964). *All Master's Theses*. 373.
<https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd/373>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@cwu.edu.

A STUDY OF THE FEDERAL SCHOOL SYSTEM OF ALASKA
CONCERNING ITS ROLE AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree
Master of Education

by
John E. Coffee
August 1964

LD
5771.3

C674s

1940
1941

1942

1943

1944

1945

1946

1947

1948

1949

1950

1951

1952

1953

1954

122522

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

Donald G. Goetschius, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

John Schwenker

W. M. Brown

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	1
Statement of the problem	1
Importance of the study	1
Limitations of the study	1
Definitions of Terms Used	2
The dual school system	2
Native	2
Village	2
The Bureau and B. I. A.	2
Methods of Research and Sources of Data	3
Methods of research	3
Sources of the data	3
Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis	4
II. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM	5
Early mission schools	5
The Federal government assumes responsibility	6
Alaskans discontented with schools	7
The dual school system begins	9
Federal native education since 1905	9
Problems of unification	11
Changes in the philosophy of Federal schools	12
III. ALASKA'S FEDERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM TODAY	14

	111
CHAPTER	PAGE
Alaskan natives served and location of schools	14
Village and school description	15
Characteristics of the native child	18
Objectives	19
Curriculum	21
Teacher responsibility	22
Rationale supporting the federal system	24
Value to the native community	25
Why the State of Alaska cannot do this work	25
IV. ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS	27
Teacher supply and hiring	27
Supervision of personnel	29
Supplying village schools	30
Orientation and in-service training of teachers	32
Teacher turnover	34
Facilities	35
Other problems	35
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	37
Summary	37
Conclusions	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY	40

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Locations of Bureau of Indian Affairs Education Offices in Alaska	16
2. Locations of Bureau of Indian Affairs Day Schools, Boarding Schools, and Administrative Offices in Alaska	17

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purposes of this study were (1) to discover the reasons for the development of the dual system of education in Alaska; (2) to study how this system grew and still persists; (3) to show the importance of the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools in Alaska; and (4) to discover administrative problems facing the Bureau of Indian Affairs school administrator.

Importance of the study. Educators often stress the importance of providing for individual differences in planning the school program. In Alaska, through a dual school system, an attempt to meet the varying needs of people with vastly different cultural backgrounds is being made. The potential school administrator in Alaska can learn much from a study of the federal school system in that State. Many administrative problems are more severe in this land of the last frontier than they are in the continental United States. First hand knowledge of these problems and methods used in solving them should prove most valuable.

Limitations of the study. This study was restricted

to cover only the United States Federal Government's separate program of education for Alaskan natives. Individual schools were not examined. Rather, an overview of the entire system was made with emphasis placed upon administrative problems.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The dual school system. Throughout this paper, the term "dual school system" shall refer to Alaska's unique provisions for public education in which the State is responsible for educating most citizens and the Federal government has taken over the responsibility of educating Alaskan natives in isolated villages.

Native. The term "native" shall refer to three groups of Alaskans. These groups are Eskimos, Aleuts, and Indians of southeastern Alaska. An individual, to be considered native, must be one-quarter blood Alaskan Eskimo, Aleut, or Indian.

Village. Throughout this paper the term "village" shall be interpreted to mean any small community, usually of less than five-hundred population, which is made up almost entirely of Alaskan natives.

The Bureau and B. I. A. The terms "Bureau" and

"B.I.A." shall refer to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an agency of the United States Department of the Interior, which is responsible for educating many Alaskan natives.

III. METHODS OF RESEARCH AND SOURCES OF DATA

Methods of research. To attempt to meet the objectives of this study the following procedures have been used; (1) library research in the Central Washington State College library and in the public library and museum in Juneau, Alaska; (2) interviews with Bureau of Indian Affairs officials; and (3) use of this agency's reports and records. Most of the research work was carried out in Juneau since this city is the headquarters of the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools in Alaska. Interviews with Bureau officials occurred during the months of March, April, and May in 1964. The individuals interviewed were L. Madison Coombs, Assistant Area Director of Community Affairs; Edgar L. Wight, Area Director of Schools; and Kenneth K. Crites, Assistant Area Director of Schools. Interviews were used in an attempt to understand administrative problems and the methods used in overcoming them.

Sources of the data. Bureau publications, statistics, and records have been used as well as a wide variety of

books concerning native education in Alaska. Interviews with B.I.A. administrators were an important source of material.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

This study includes a history of the dual system of education in Alaska, a brief overview of the entire Federal system as it exists today, an examination of administrative problems involved in this operation, and a summary of findings.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

This chapter is devoted to a brief history of the provisions for public education in Alaska. It will show how the dual system of education began and why it still persists. The responsibilities of various agencies for education in Alaska will be explained.

Early mission schools. All Alaskans, both whites and natives, were educationally neglected during the first two decades of United States ownership of Alaska (12:4). Russian mission schools, which were begun during the time of Russian ownership, remained the main form of education even after the purchase by the United States (11:239). These schools were located in the Aleutian Island Chain and scattered along the whole western coast of Alaska.

In the late 1870s American churches began to take interest in Alaska as a mission field. Dr. Sheldon Jackson, a Presbyterian minister, visited southeastern Alaska in 1877. Upon his return to the United States he was able to arouse interest and some support for Alaskan missions. Jackson published a book on the Territory in 1880 and quickly became recognized as an authority on Alaska (11:234-235).

In the early 1880s many mission schools, primarily for native children, were started throughout Alaska (20:12). Prominent in this mission field were the Presbyterians, Catholics, Episcopalians, and Quakers (11:237). Russian and American mission schools, though inadequate in most ways, bridged the gap from 1867 until 1884 (18:20).

The Federal government assumes responsibility. For seventeen years after the purchase of the Territory of Alaska, the United States Government refused to provide any funds for education in the Territory (3:153).

In 1884, the Harrison Bill was passed which made a civil and judicial district of Alaska and education was placed under the control of the Secretary of the Interior (9:28). Two provisions of the act were (1) an examination of the educational state of the Alaskan Indians; and (2) to find out what could be done for them. Under the provisions of this law, Dr. Sheldon Jackson was appointed first General Agent of Education for the Territory of Alaska (19:224).

Jackson faced a truly impossible task. He was to distribute a congressional appropriation of twenty-five thousand dollars over an area of half a million square miles, to take care of the educational needs of six thousand school age children (10:60).

The United States Congress was completely unrealistic about early education in Alaska. For example, in 1886 the General Agent was expected to visit all schools in Alaska. Jackson called this a physical impossibility. He then graphically described the problems one would encounter in travelling from southeastern Alaska to visit schools located on the Yukon River. This trip alone would have involved months of travel (13:28).

The pattern that was to be followed until the beginning of the twentieth century had been established. Each year meager appropriations, always less than fifty thousand dollars, were granted by the United States Congress. The General Agent of Education for Alaska then distributed these funds as he saw fit. Many problems resulted. Since most schools were denominational mission schools, there was continual conflict about where the money should be spent. The white population of the Territory became increasingly embittered since the native mission schools always received the bulk of the appropriations (11:289). This may well be where the idea of a dual system of education was formulated, for within a few years the responsibility for educating the white and native children was to become partly separated.

Alaskans discontented with schools. Alaskans and

others began to evaluate the Territory's schools critically in the 1890s. For example, a treasury agent told of the deplorable conditions of a school on one of the Pribilof Islands. He claimed that after seven years of school, native children could neither speak nor write any English (10:91). This agent recommended that the government take over responsibility for schools of this type. This recommendation was not followed, but it was a forecast of what was to transpire within a decade.

The Harrison Bill of 1884 had provided for no race distinction in educational opportunity. However, the white population of the Territory of Alaska believed that congressional appropriations were used continually to civilize Alaskan natives while their own children received an inferior type of education (18:30).

Education was a burning issue in Alaska at the turn of the century. The deplorable school facilities in Alaskan cities was a topic of discussion at a Juneau town meeting in 1899. In 1900 the United States Congress passed an act which established independent schools for white children within incorporated towns (20:31).

By 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt had sent George T. Emmons to investigate Alaska's schools. Emmons reported neglect on the part of the Federal government and

went on to say that it had a responsibility to extend educational facilities in Alaska (18:225). During this same year Dr. Sheldon Jackson was recalled from his position as Education Agent, thus ending his control (11:242).

The dual school system begins. The Nelson Act of 1905 provided for the establishment of schools in areas outside incorporated towns for white children and for native children leading "civilized" lives. These schools were placed under the jurisdiction of the Territory of Alaska (18:31). This left a large portion of native education as the responsibility of the United States Government. The Federal government became responsible for education in the most remote sections of a vast and undeveloped Territory. This dual system of education, begun with the Nelson Act, still exists and is flourishing in Alaska today.

Federal native education since 1905. After 1905 the full efforts of the Federal government were directed toward native problems. Dr. Charles Ray states, "During the next four decades the Federal government undertook a vast paternalistic social program to improve the condition of the native people in Alaska" (18:33).

During this time village schools became the focal

point of the entire program. Besides supplying schooling for natives the Federal government also maintained social welfare programs, hospitals, and often times encouraged native industries and cooperative stores (18:33).

In the early 1900s the civilizing of the native was the basic educational objective of the United States Government program in Alaska. English was stressed and the curriculum included such things as sanitation, personal hygiene, manual arts, and homemaking. A plan aimed at civilizing these Alaskans was the establishment of boarding schools for native youth. This was done so that natural leaders could leave their respective villages, go to the boarding school, and then return to influence the lives of their neighbors. This boarding school idea of developing leadership has remained government policy until recent years (18:30).

By 1915 there were three classes of schools within the Territory. The Alaskan native schools were under the jurisdiction of the United States Bureau of Education, the schools for white children and "civilized natives" outside of incorporated towns were accepted as a Territorial obligation, and the schools in incorporated towns were financed by local taxes and Federal license sales (10:173). This remains basically unchanged today except

that the State has replaced the Territory and the Bureau of Indian Affairs has replaced the United States Bureau of Education. Local, State, and Federal governments have retained their areas of responsibility in Alaskan education.

By the 1930s the Territorial officials concerned with education began to recognize the need for unification of education in Alaska into a single system. Up to this time the main objection to a unified school system had been the financial burden that would be placed upon the Territory. Both Territorial and Federal administrators of schools in Alaska were gradually concluding that education was properly a State function.

Problems of unification. Since the 1940s the Territorial government and later the State government, has acknowledged that the education of Alaskan natives should not be a Federal obligation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the State of Alaska both accept the eventual transfer of responsibility to the State. Both are working toward this goal (25:2).

Unfortunately, unification to a single school system is not easily accomplished. From 1920 until the present time the Federal government has educated from three thousand to five thousand native children annually (11:319). Chaos would undoubtedly be the result if the

changeover of responsibility was complete and sudden. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is doing a job in remote villages which the State could not possibly duplicate without entering the field gradually with much assistance. Another obstacle to unification in recent years has been the poor physical condition of many of the Federal schools which the State has been asked to take over. The State has often refused to accept these school facilities until they are put in better repair (9:29).

A Department of the Interior pamphlet had this to say about unification in 1958: "Education of the native children is being transferred from Federal to Territorial jurisdiction as rapidly as conditions justify" (24:13).

As long as conditions in most villages do not justify the transfer of responsibility the Bureau of Indian Affairs intends to continue to meet the educational needs of the Alaskan native (14:27). At the present time this agency is operating eighty remote village day schools and two large boarding schools in the State of Alaska.

Changes in the philosophy of Federal schools.

Changes have gradually taken place in the educational objectives of the Federal system. Warren I. Tiffany states that the government's tasks are now twofold:

To prepare the native for a new way of life in case he chooses it and, at the same time, to help him see the worth and charm of his own culture, the rewards and opportunities of a life among his own people (22:8).

The major objective is no longer as simple as "civilize the native." The policy now is to prepare the Alaskan native to live anywhere in the State rather than to prepare him for life in a single village (18:39).

CHAPTER III

ALASKA'S FEDERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM TODAY

The first section of this chapter is an overview of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools in Alaska. Topics included are; (1) Alaskan natives served, (2) location of schools, (3) village description, (4) school objectives and curriculum, and (5) teacher responsibility.

The final section is an attempt to show the importance of the B. I. A. schools. Their presence in Alaska will be defended and reasons will be given showing why the State cannot, at this time, assume the responsibility of education in isolated native communities.

Alaskan natives served and location of schools.

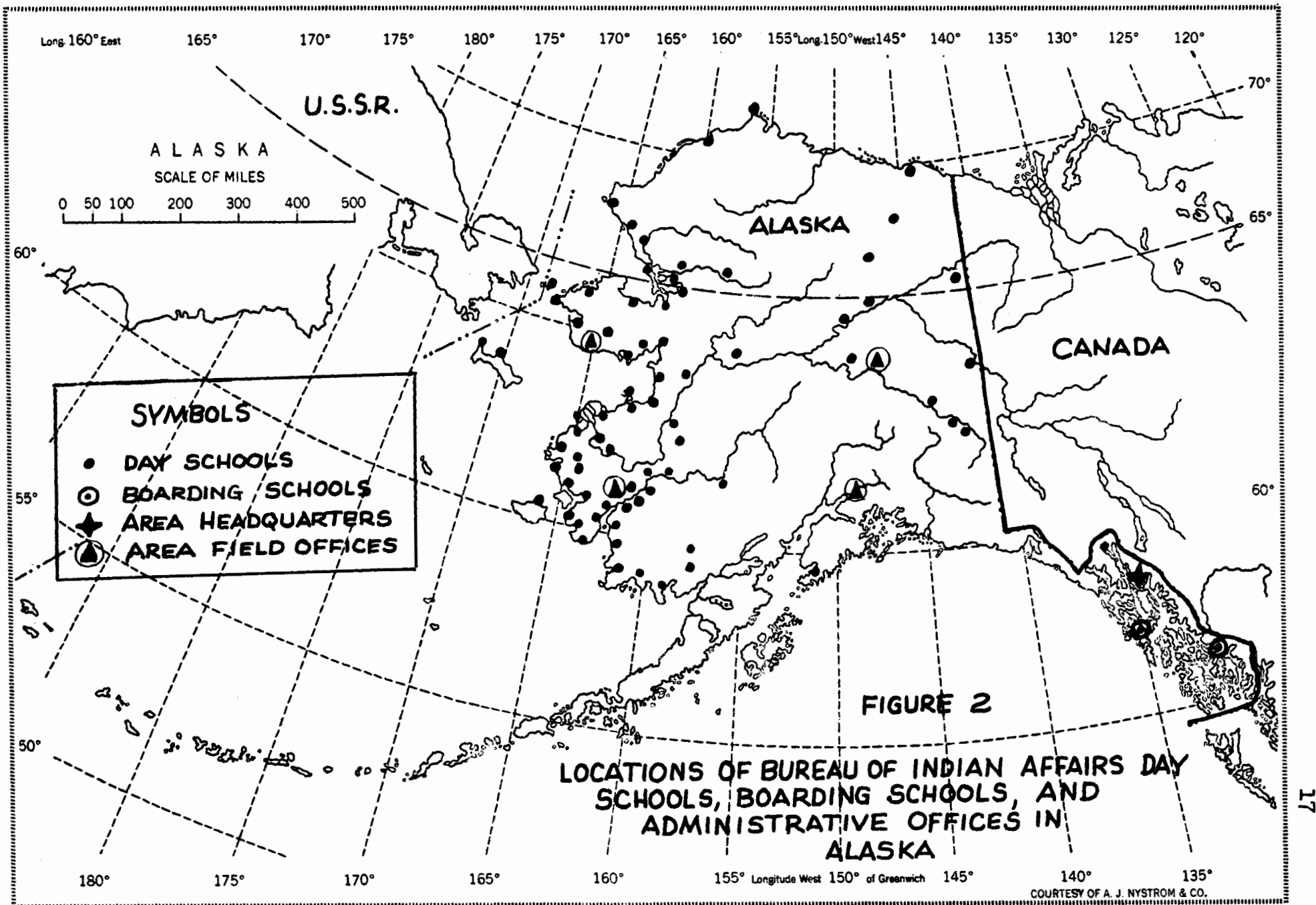
The Bureau of Indian Affairs operates schools only in areas where the State, because of financial or other problems, has not yet been able to extend its schools (25:1). Included in the Bureau's program are three distinct groups of people referred to collectively as Alaskan natives. These people include the Indian tribes of southeast Alaska, the Aleuts of the Aleutian Island Chain, and the Eskimos of the far northern sector of the State (14:7). Over half of Alaska's native children of elementary school age are enrolled in State schools or in

schools maintained by independent school districts (4).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs schools in Alaska are located, almost without exception, in isolated native villages in the northern and western parts of the State. Two boarding schools are exceptions to this statement (25:1). Mount Edgecumbe, a co-educational high school is located in Sitka, Alaska and Wrangell Institute, an elementary school for native children is in Wrangell, Alaska. Approximately eighty day schools comprise the main body of the Bureau's school system. These schools serve about five thousand native children from grade one through eight. Day schools are primarily located along the Yukon River, on the shores of the Bering Sea, and near the Arctic Ocean (22:9). Figure II gives a graphic view of the system.

Village and school description. Alaskan native villages are tiny pockets of civilization which are often hundreds of miles from the nearest small town (16:106). Many villages have populations of less than one hundred. Most of the members of the village are extremely poor and modern conveniences are very limited. These villages are so remote that teachers are usually flown to their assignments by bush pilots, and supplies and equipment are delivered by freighter (4).





The B. I. A. teacher must enter a strange, under-privileged environment in which the native population has come to rely heavily upon the Bureau of Indian Affairs for both financial help and advice. This is true because of the seasonal nature of the main occupation which is fishing, and because of the isolated state of the typical village (4). Because of this unique setting of the native village, teaching for the B. I. A. does not closely resemble teaching in the average American school system.

It is extremely difficult to describe the typical village school. They range from very modern school facilities to very old and run down buildings (14:89). This is due to the fact that the Bureau's building program has reached some communities, while it has not yet come to others (1:5). Probably the most common native school is the one in which all eight grades are contained in a single classroom and the students are grouped according to maturation level (17:14). The rural American one-room school comes close to describing the physical plant generally used in the Alaskan native school.

Characteristics of the native child. The Alaskan native's sense of values and thinking patterns are foreign to the average American teacher. The native child's behavior pattern is rooted in centuries of his culture (17:2).

For example, time has little meaning for the native since he eats when food is available and hunts only when game is available. He shuns competition in favor of group enterprise, and he seldom contributes anything to class discussion. In short, the teacher must expect him to often behave in what seems like an undependable way. The instructor of these people must attempt to understand their culture and then let this understanding effect his teaching (17:2).

The native child comes from a home where often only the native tongue is spoken (17:7). The only English he will come in contact with will be at the school. This creates great problems for the teacher. Besides facing the problems of helping children adjust to the understandings and concepts of a new culture, the teacher must also face the problems involved in bilingualism (17:44).

Objectives. The ultimate goal of the B. I. A. program is to bring the native population to an educational level sufficiently high so that they can share equally and compete successfully with other American citizens (14:7). Major objectives of the schools are to teach; (1) constructive citizenship, (2) wise use of resources, (3) health and sanitation, (4) and an understanding of acceptable social behavior. Other goals are to; (1) offer

training for college, (2) serve as a community center to meet community needs, and (3) offer vocational training (14:72-3).

These objectives represent a major change in the thinking of administrators of these Federal schools. Through most of the history of the Federal schools in Alaska the basic goal has been simply to prepare the native for life in his own village (18:39). Because of the increase in mobility of the Alaskan native, this goal is no longer adequate. He will be forced to compete in a modern world so his education has been updated. A group doing research in native education recently stated:

Education can serve as one vital influencing force designed to decrease the differences in attainment and opportunity which exists at the present time between native and nonnative groups. Therefore the long range objectives of the schools must be pointed toward an eventual common education for all, regardless of race (8:29).

The present aim of the B. I. A. is to work closely with the State school system. However, the Federal administrators realize that their program should not be an exact duplicate of these others at this time. Warren Tiffany, the principal of the Federal school at Nome, believes that the native culture should not be abandoned by the schools. This view, which is widely accepted, seems to be that the student should be prepared to live

both among his own people and among others of different cultural backgrounds (22:8).

Curriculum. The curriculum of the B. I. A. schools is similar to that of most rural schools in America, with some significant differences (2:56). The Bureau program has been developed to help the native make a rapid cultural adjustment. Cultural traits and village environment are considered carefully in curriculum planning (17:8).

In order to deal with the unique problems of native youth the educational program throughout the United States Indian Service has been developed to meet goals in the following fields; (1) English communication and understanding, (2) social conformity, (3) personal and community health, (4) science, and (5) mathematics (21:27). Minimum goals to be reached by all children are included, but the B. I. A. teacher is encouraged to do a great deal of adapting to the local situation. Academic goals are not ignored, but before they can be reached many social goals must be reached (18:64). Academic learnings are worthless if the individual is not helped to adjust to the new culture by which his culture is being assimilated (17:5).

An ever present danger is that unrealistic goals may be forced upon the Alaskan native. Each village teacher is instructed to move slowly in introducing the

dominant culture. This can be accomplished only by setting goals which have meaning to the learner and are attainable. For example, an attainable goal might be to write a simple letter about a seal hunt, while an unattainable one might be to write a formal business letter. Often times in the past an inadequate job of adapting teaching methods to native needs has been done (8:30).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has been forced to use traditional textbooks in its village schools with a few exceptions. A notable exception is a reader which was developed especially for Eskimo children (23:26-60). Many teacher-made materials are reproduced and used throughout the system (26). Other special materials are needed but obstacles stand in the way of the development of these instructional materials. Publication costs for the small quantities needed are prohibitive (18:66). Teachers are encouraged to construct many of their own teaching aids which have special significance to native youth. Some of this construction is done in in-service workshops (5).

Teacher responsibility. The village teacher is advised to assume his responsibilities slowly (14:41). The Bureau maintains that the following should be strictly

adhered to in order to retain the goodwill of the village people; (1) show no favoritism, (2) be honest in all dealings, (3) have a sense of humor, (4) respect villagers ideas and beliefs, and (5) don't preempt duties of other village workers even if they make mistakes (14:37-44).

Johnson and Logan state:

It is important to remember that you and your family are a minority group in an environment new to you. Alaska is Alaska. It is unique and its people are likewise new to your experience. They are not "like" any other people you have ever met before. They are the result of their heritage and their environment (14:37).

The village teacher must accept responsibility in many areas. He is the Federal government's representative in all fields of endeavor. Some duties handled by many B. I. A. teachers and their spouses are: (1) handiman, (2) janitor, (3) general store helper, (4) community worker, (5) communications equipment operator, (6) cook, and (7) doctor. Kursh states that it is often the teachers' responsibility to "contact physicians, describe symptoms, and carry out the prescribed treatments" (16:106). The following statement quoted from a guide for teachers, We Teach in Alaska, describes a few of the duties the teacher is expected to handle:

Before school starts, check all stoves and chimneys. Replace stove pipes when necessary. Be sure the range and all heating stoves are clean: pipes should be replaced at least once a year and the interior of the

range should be cleaned out about every three months, the heating stoves every six, or as often as needed (14:32).

Administrators hire, with few exceptions, only married couples. This is done because of the many duties involved and to help combat loneliness. If both the husband and wife teach they are assigned to two teacher or multiple teacher schools. If only one person teaches, the other individual is hired as a general assistant (11:359).

It seems logical to conclude that it takes a rare type of individual to teach in these village schools of Alaska. To be a success in this system the teacher must be able to adjust to the isolated environment and he must also be a dedicated humanitarian.

Rationale supporting the federal system. The Federal schools in Alaska exist because they are necessary. Most Alaskans agree that education should be primarily a local and state function. However, adhering to this principle in our largest State has been impossible. Finances have been the big problem. Most native land is held in trust so it is not subject to taxation (4). Local schools are deprived of tax money because of this land situation and the State cannot afford to take over the financial burden, so the Federal government has accepted the obligation of educating people in the remote villages (4).

Aside from financial matters, there is another important reason for continuing the B. I. A. schools. The organization for running this far-flung school system is set up and operating (5). The following statement by Dr. Ray of the University of Alaska supports the Federal system.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, because of its experience in establishing and operating schools exclusively for native groups, has taken greater account of the special problems and handicaps faced by native students than has the Territorial Department of Education (18:64-5).

Value to the native community. Alaskan natives are in a cultural transition. Federal native schools are improving community life by helping over five thousand children become better prepared for a new way of life in a changing State (22:10). In reality, the Federal government school is the only link between the outside culture and the native village culture (16:106). Only when it is understood that the B. I. A. school is the center of community life and the main impetus for personal and village improvement can their importance be accurately evaluated (22:10). Teachers have often been responsible for improving village sanitation, water supply, diets, and housing (22:10). Their influence has extended much farther than the classroom.

Why the State of Alaska cannot do this work. If

the State of Alaska attempted to take over the Federal schools rapidly it would face great problems. "The educational philosophy in the Federal schools," says Tiffany, "has always been directed at a community program" (21:14). The B. I. A. aim is to help natives in all phases of living, not only in meeting their needs for formal education. Without entering the field gradually, with great assistance from the Federal government, the State could not hope to do the work as well as it is now being done.

Administrative problems as basic as supply delivery would be almost insurmountable. The Department of the Interior owns its own vessel which the B. I. A. uses to deliver village supplies. Because of high commercial shipping costs, the State would be forced to purchase its own vessel if the Federal system of schools was taken over (5). This is just one example of problems which would be encountered.

The financial condition of the State, especially since the recent earthquake, makes it impossible for Alaska to assume its obligation of educating all citizens at this time.

CHAPTER IV

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

Chapter four will discuss the major problems facing the Bureau of Indian Affairs school administrator in Alaska. Measures being used to overcome some of these problems will be included. Administrative problems examined are; (1) teacher supply and hiring, (2) supervision of personnel, (3) supplying village schools, (4) orientation and in-service training of teachers, (5) teacher turnover, (6) facilities, and (7) other problems.

Most of the material used for this chapter was gained from personal interviews with Bureau of Indian Affairs school administrators in Juneau, Alaska.

Teacher supply and hiring. The supply of teachers wishing to work in the B. I. A. schools of Alaska is adequate in number, but the applicants are not always of the caliber desired (4). Dr. Ray maintains that there are too many drawbacks to village life to expect superior teachers to contend with primitive conditions and a work week of well over forty hours (18:251). He hastens to add that there are many dedicated people who are exceptions to his statement (18:251).

Hiring of new teachers poses special problems. A

personal interview is extremely rare in Alaska (4). Cost of travel prohibits this practice. Since teaching in these schools is a Federal job, all teachers are hired from the civil service registers sight unseen. This makes it mandatory that administrators make careful teacher selections.

After securing good teachers the Bureau's problems do not end. The "tourist teacher" is a familiar problem to all school systems in Alaska (18:248). In describing this problem a former Commissioner of Education said, "Teaching in Alaska is not a profession it's a procession" (11:358). Many educators, as well as workers in most other fields, come to Alaska with the idea of seeing the country and then returning to live in the continental United States. While this may be a logical plan, it creates problems for administrators faced with the task of hiring and training teaching personnel.

Even with these problems, the caliber of teacher employed has improved greatly in the last quarter century (18:243). Eighty-four per cent of B. I. A. teachers now have college degrees (18:244). These improvements are due to better recruiting and increased teacher benefits. For example, salaries are generally comparable to that of populated areas of the State while the cost of living is

much lower in the native village (18:244).

The Bureau has two main plans for simplifying the task of securing good teachers. One plan is to begin recruiting on a nation-wide basis by using many education magazines. It is felt that this will result in both a larger quantity and, more important, a better quality of applicants (4). The second plan is to reduce the teacher work load by training natives to operate village communications equipment and maintain some school equipment (26). Both of these plans are being tried at this time.

Supervision of personnel. With day schools scattered almost the entire length of our largest State, the B. I. A. administrators have a hard task overseeing the operation of all of these schools. Recent changes in location of administrative personnel has improved supervision. In 1952 all schools, except boarding schools, were supervised directly from the Juneau office (6). Since this time field offices with field representatives and education specialists have been set up in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Bethel, and Nome (6). This has been done to bring education experts closer to the native school.

Even with this new set-up the supervisory problems are apparent. The area field representative attempts to visit each teaching station in his district at least two

times a year. This goal is seldom reached because of arctic weather, vast distances, and poor communications (4). Even when the field representative completes his visits it is extremely difficult to evaluate teaching and give assistance in the short time he is present in the native community.

Out of necessity, the B. I. A. teacher often doubles as school administrator. The two large boarding schools have full time administrative staffs and four of the day schools have non-teaching principals, but if the school is a single teacher school the teacher is considered to be the principal (6). Since supervision of the principal-teacher is usually from afar, professional books and B. I. A. educational bulletins must substitute for in-person supervision (14:115).

An ironic part of the supervision problem is that the larger schools are so situated that they are easier to visit than the tiny, remote schools. These latter schools, which most need educational supervision, often are the ones which must go unvisited (6).

Since 1952 great strides have been made in supervision, but this area of the Federal school program in Alaska leaves much to be desired.

Supplying village schools. Distributing supplies

to schools from Wrangell in the south to Point Barrow, on the Arctic Sea, is a huge undertaking. The distance in air miles between these points is approximately one thousand two hundred fifty miles.

Ordering supplies for these diversified schools is also a great task. Teachers are required to order materials two years in advance (26). They must anticipate every possible need before it actually arises.

The only feasible way to supply the B. I. A. schools is by ship. The North Star, a ten thousand ton vessel, is owned by the Department of the Interior and operates out of Seattle. Two voyages are made each year, one in April and one in July. The great per cent of villages are located either on coastal waters or on the Yukon or Kuskokwim Rivers. Therefore, the villages can be reached either directly by The North Star or by river barge (4). This operation is costly but other possible methods would be more expensive.

A unique tool has been developed to meet the supply ordering problem. This is known as the Annual Survey and Requisition Report (26). This is an order catalog which lists all items that village teachers are likely to request. It is continually updated by including a section for the listing of new needs. When many teachers request

a particular new item it is added to the list of regular items the following year (6). By using this standardized ordering form the Bureau saves up to fifty per cent on some items. This is accomplished by asking bids on large quantities of certain items. This ordering tool could be a helpful guide to many other school systems with supply problems.

Orientation and in-service training of teachers.

One of the conclusions of the recent Task Force Report on native education in Alaska was: "Many teachers each year take up assignments in isolated villages without being properly prepared" (15:18).

The Bureau provides an orientation program for its new teachers. This is held in Juneau before the start of the school year. This program includes; (1) an introduction to government procedures, (2) a short course on operation of the teaching station, and (3) indoctrination of Bureau educational philosophy and teaching methods (4). This is followed by further orientation at the district office in either Fairbanks, Nome, Bethel, or Anchorage (4).

B. I. A. officials admit that this program is not as valuable as it could be (7). Teachers need a great deal of special training for this type of teaching. What they receive is a few hurried days of instruction which

must concentrate as much on taking care of the physical plant as it does on the children they are to teach.

The Task Force Report proposes moving the orientation program to Fairbanks as a means of overcoming some of its shortcomings (15:18). Juneau cannot adequately handle all new B. I. A. teachers for any length of time without housing costs becoming prohibitive. Fairbanks is recommended because housing is more readily available there.

Periodic in-service training has been a part of the B. I. A. plan for years (18:247). During June of 1964 a two week workshop was held in Sitka, Alaska for all Bureau elementary teachers. This workshop is held in alternate years (14:115). In the past, conferences and workshops have been held in various teaching districts of Alaska (4). Administrators attend an annual conference in Alaska as well as a Bureau-wide administrators conference in Brigham City, Utah. These conferences are considered to be very important because the desirability of continued training is recognized (14:115).

Administrative problems involved in holding conferences for teachers are stated by Eunice Logan in a handbook for teachers entitled, We Teach in Alaska.

Distances, unavailability of housing and budgetary limitations make workshop sessions for classroom teachers particularly difficult in Alaska. Therefore, they cannot be held as frequently as would be desirable (14:115).

She goes on to state that professional books, bulletins, and visitations must often substitute for vicarious training (14:115).

Finally, administrators openly question the value of spending large sums of money for orientation and in-service training even though they recognize the importance of continued training. The reason for this attitude is that much of the training will be valueless to the system because of high teacher turnover (18:248).

Teacher turnover. Teacher turnover is bound to be high in a system which consists mainly of isolated schools. The annual rate of turnover in recent years has usually been close to twenty percent (18:248). This rate would be much higher except for the fact that B. I. A. teachers are hired for two year periods (7). Thus, many teachers who would most likely terminate their employment after one year are obligated to stay for another.

Considering all of the adverse factors involved in village teaching, administrators do not believe that teacher turnover is excessive (4). While they are not alarmed, they are continually working to lower the turnover rate. This is done by making good initial selections, improving teaching conditions, improving supervision, and improving orientation and in-service training (4).

Facilities. Construction of new schools and renovation of old schools costs the Bureau around five million dollars annually in Alaska (26). However, even with these expenditures, school administrators are fighting a battle to provide adequate facilities. L. Madison Coombs, past Area Director of Schools, has stated the following:

Each year we are completing construction of several new modern elementary school plants to try to take care of the expanding population and to replace outmoded and obsolete buildings. The State is making a similar effort. But so far it has been nip and tuck to hold even with the growing school population (1:5).

A major problem is that a few large projects take most of the available funds leaving many schools in need of renovation. At this time much of the money is being used to plan and build regional high schools so that more native youth will have an opportunity for a high school education. There are to be new high schools at Point Barrow and Kotzebue in the near future (5).

Because need surpasses available funds, administrators must consider where the most pressing needs lie and then allocate money on this basis.

Other problems. Two other problems which shall briefly be discussed are communications and climatic conditions.

The only means of communication between village

school and regional office is by teletype (22:10). Though this is a fast method of communicating it certainly leaves much to be desired as far as clarity is concerned. For this reason, much communication is done in written form. This can never be as effective as face to face communication.

Arctic climatic conditions must be overcome in the villages of the far northwestern coast. Teachers have to be trained in solving sewage disposal and water supply dilemmas. Ice must often be melted to obtain a water supply (4). Teachers also must be trained in the operation of arctic heating plants. This knowledge can often mean the difference between life and death.

Other administrative problems exist, but Bureau officials who were interviewed agree that the foregoing ones are their most demanding problems.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary. Alaska's dual system of education came into being because the Territory of Alaska could not educate all of its citizens. The group excluded from local and Territorial programs was the Alaskan natives in remote villages. For over half a century the United States Federal Government has assumed this responsibility.

As was stated, this school system consists of approximately five thousand school children who are educated in eighty day schools and two boarding schools. Problems of two cultures coming together typify life and teaching in the isolated village. A teacher must be self reliant and well prepared to succeed at his task which is to give the native child the best possible education for a changing world.

The role played by the Bureau of Indian Affairs is extremely important. Every American, regardless of race, is entitled to a formal education, but if it were not for these Federal schools of Alaska it is doubtful if Alaskan natives in remote villages would receive that formal education. The importance of B. I. A. schools goes beyond the education of young Alaskan citizens. The schools are centers, in backward communities, for village improvement.

The Bureau teacher often influences adult behavior as well as student behavior. All phases of community betterment are undertaken.

Administrative problems stem from the vast area covered by schools and the isolated locations of the teaching stations. The major problems naturally involve teachers since administrative objectives and ideas can only be carried out by these individuals. This is especially true in isolated native schools. Problems involving teachers are: (1) supply and hiring, (2) supervision, (3) orientation and in-service training, and (4) turnover. Other administrative problems are; (1) supplying schools, (2) facilities, and (3) communications.

Conclusions. (1) The dual system of education in Alaska developed because of the inability of the Territory to provide education for all. (2) This system still exists because the State of Alaska cannot, because of financial problems, assume the rightful obligation of educating all of its citizens. (3) Alaskan natives are in desperate need of education to improve their lives. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools of Alaska play a vital role in meeting this need. (4) B. I. A. administrative problems in Alaska differ greatly from the problems faced by most other school districts because of the vast

size of the operation and the remoteness of schools. (5) Tremendous administrative problems exist, but school officials are attempting to meet all of them. (6) There has been great progress in solving most administrative problems.

122522

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bennett, Robert L. B. I. A. Bulletin, Bureau of Indian Affairs, United States Department of the Interior. Juneau: Juneau Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, January, 1964. 14 pp.
2. Butler, Evelyn I. and George A. Dale. Alaska: The Land and the People. New York: The Viking Press, 1959. 159 pp.
3. Clark, Henry W. Alaska: The Last Frontier. New York: Grosset and Dunlap Publishers, 1939. 246 pp.
4. Coombs, L. Madison, Assistant Area Director of Community Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Juneau, Alaska, in a personal interview March 17, 1964, Juneau, Alaska.
5. Coombs, April 22.
6. Crites, Kenneth K. Assistant Area Director of Schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Juneau, Alaska, in a personal interview May 14, 1964, Juneau, Alaska.
7. Crites, May 25.
8. "Education of Alaskan Natives," School Life, Vol. 42-43:28-30, October, 1959.
9. Gruening, Ernest. "Alaska: The Forty-ninth State," The Alaska Book: Story of Our Northern Treasureland. Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1960. pp. 9-42.
10. Gruening, Ernest. The State of Alaska. New York: Random House, 1954. 495 pp.
11. Hulley, Clarence C. Alaska 1741-1953. Portland, Oregon: Binford and Mort Publishers, 1953. 386 pp.
12. Jackson, Sheldon. Report on Conditions of Education in Alaska. Washington: Government Printing Office, Dec. 20, 1881. 27 pp.
13. Jackson, Sheldon. Report on Education in Alaska. A report prepared by the General Agent of Education in Alaska. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886. 95 pp.

14. Johnson, Dorothy, and Eunice Logan. We Teach in Alaska. 2nd ed. United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Education. Juneau: Juneau Area Office, June, 1959. 132 pp.
15. Keeler, W. W. Report to the Secretary of the Interior by the Task Force on Alaskan Native Affairs. Washington: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Dec. 28, 1962. 40 pp.
16. Kursh, Harry. This is Alaska. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1961. 274 pp.
17. Logan, Eunice, ed. Curriculum Planning for Cultural Adjustment. United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Education. Juneau: Juneau Area Office, Rev. ed., 1961. 64 pp.
18. Ray, Charles K. A Program of Education for Alaskan Natives. College, Alaska: University of Alaska, 1959. 275 pp.
19. Rogers, George W. Alaska in Transition. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1960. 369 pp.
20. Territorial Department of Education. Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Years 1918-1920. Territory of Alaska. Juneau: Department of Education, 1920. 95 pp.
21. Tiffany, Warren I. Education in Northwest Alaska. United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Education. Juneau: Juneau Area Office, December, 1958. 29 pp.
22. Tiffany, Warren I. "Federal Schools for Native Children in Alaska," School Life, Vol. 40:8-10, May, 1958.
23. United States Bureau of Indian Affairs. Primers for Grades One through Five. Brigham City, Utah: Materials Preparation Department, Intermountain School, 1963. pp. 26-60.
24. United States Department of the Interior. Alaska. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1958. 39 pp.

25. United States Department of the Interior. Education in Alaska. Report prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Education. Juneau: Juneau Area Office, July, 1963. 2 pp.
26. Wight, Edgar L. Area Director of Schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Juneau, Alaska, in a personal interview May 12, 1964, Juneau, Alaska.