INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND EDUCATION IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR NORTH

(One among a series of papers on educational programs and policies regarding indigenous populations in Canada, Greenland, the Saami area, the Soviet Union, and Alaska)

Presented at the

University of Alaska-Juneau

May 19-24, 1985



Edited by

William G. Demmert, Jr.

Summer 1986

LIBRARY
UAS - JUNEAU

NATIVE EDUCATION: THE ALASKAN PERSPECTIVE

William G. Demmert, Jr.

Introduction

With an aboriginal population of some 72,000 members scattered over one half million square miles,[1] Alaska has served as a crossroads for many events since the beginning of time. The aboriginal populations of North and South America are reputed to have used the Bering Land Bridge between 25,000 and 40,000 years ago as they moved across and down the continents.[2] Animals migrating to and from Asia also used the land bridge from time to time.[3] In more contemporary times, Anchorage serves as an important stopover point for flights to and from Europe and Asia.

Pre-historic Alaska required the development of different cultures with different skills because of its diverse climate and terrain. The migration patterns and different waves of people also dictated variations within its indigenous populations.[4] Alaska is known for having three distinct Native groups, the Aleut, the Eskimo, and the Indian populations. The Eskimo population is divided into two distinct language groups, the Inupiat and Yupik speakers. The Indians included three separate groups. The Athabaskan comprised many groups of people speaking one or another of several Athabaskan dialects and occupied a common territory in Central Alaska. They were not organized into formal tribes. The three Southeastern Indian tribes were the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian, with the Tlingit occupying most of the territory from Controller Bay to Dixon Entrance. The Haida settled on the southwest coast of Prince of Wales Island, and the Tsimshian settled on Annette Island, south of Ketchikan. The culture and language of the various groups in Alaska were similar within geographic areas but in some cases significantly different between groups. For example, the Eskimo of the far north is different in appearance, temperament, culture, and language than the Tlingit of Southeast.[5]

The original educational system for each aboriginal community in Alaska may also have differed, but certain basic principles were common to the several groups. Various members of a local community were responsible for the education of the youth. In some cases, this meant the responsibility was met by members of the immediate family. In other cases, a member of the extended family or other members of the community were responsible. In all situations, the process was internal; that is, the authority and responsibility for educating the young belonged to members of the village in which the person lived. The customs, the language, and the skills were directed by local priorities and the environment in which the people existed. This practice changed dramatically with the coming of Russian and later American schools.

A Historical Perspective

I pointed out earlier that parents, members of the extended family, or the community have generally had the primary responsibility for transmitting to their children the knowledge and skills necessary to keep them caring, to create for them a sense of belonging, and to provide them with the means to feed themselves. "This process probably began with simple food gathering and hunting skills, a need for companionship, and an instinct to survive."[6] In the Tlingit's early history, the young man child was taught what he needed to know by a maternal uncle. His education began at an early age, from the day he learned to walk, with a daily bath in the ocean. He was eventually taught the skills necessary to survive in his environment. There was no failure, for he was taught well and could compete with any person or group. This was a source of great pride to the uncle, to the young man, and to the family as well as to the community.

After the arrival of the Russian, this process deteriorated. Gradually, Native children were shifted from learning in their own environment and from their people to learning in a classroom and from people from another culture. In all cases, the process

became external; that is, the responsibility for educating Native youth became the responsibility of someone or some group outside the community. The education system in Alaska as a formal process in the classroom started with the Russian schools. Mission, Bureau of Indian Affairs, territorial, state-operated, and public schools as we know them today gradually succeeded one another.[7]

Russian schools were of three types: public schools under the control of the Russian-American Company, religious schools under the Russian-Greek Orthodox Church, and government schools. Company schools were designed for training future personnel. Government schools were available for the sons of company officials, and religious schools were designed to Christianize the Natives by teaching them to read the scriptures.[8]

With the transfer of property belonging to the Russian American Company to the United States under the Treaty of Cession on March 30, 1867 (and the unauthorized transfer of title to some 580,107 square miles of land, finally resolved by the Alaska Land Claims Settlement Act of 1971),[9] the missionary era of education began for the Alaskan Native. American churches began to fill the void created by Russian withdrawal after 1867. The missions started schools in various parts of Alaska. "The Russian-Greek Orthodox Missions were operating schools in Nushagak and St. Michael by this time. The Swedish Evangelical and Moravian churches led in the establishment of schools among the Eskimos. Schools at Golovin, Kangekosook (Kangusuk), Koyuk, Kotzebue, and Unalakleet were opened by the Swedish Evangelical or Covenant Church. The Moravians moved into Akiak, Bethel, Kalskag, Quiegaluk, and Tuluksak. Other schools were established by the Presbyterians at Gambell and Barrow, by the Episcopalians at Point Hope, by the Congregational Church at Cape Prince of Wales, and by the Roman Catholic Church at St. Joseph's on the Yukon Delta."[10]

Sheldon Jackson, General Agent of Education in Alaska, submitted the first report on Education in Alaska to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior in 1886. He described the

state of educational opportunity in various communities and among some of the aboriginal groups. He notes that the Innuit, with the exception of those in Southern Alaska, have had no educational or religious opportunities outside of their traditional systems. He also notes that they had not yet been influenced by the customs or innovations introduced by the Russian or Euro/American immigrants. The school listed for the Innuit to the south is located on Spruce Island near Kodiak. It was closed at the time of the report because no teacher was available.

Sheldon Jackson described the Aleuts and Creoles (children of Russian fathers and Native women) as well educated and very religious. Some of the best physicians, traders, and accountants were Aleuts, especially during the Russian period. Veniaminoff, an early Russian missionary priest and bishop who eventually became Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in Moscow, had provided an Aleutian alphabet and grammar for use in the Russian American Company's and Church's education system. Jackson mentioned only three schools for the Aleuts, one in St. George, one in St. Paul, and one in Belkoffski at the end of the Alaska Peninsula.

In Jackson's report the Southeastern Tlingits are referred to by village. Schools had been established for the Chilkat in 1880, the Hoonah in 1881, the Auke in 1882, the Taku in 1882, the Stikine in 1878, the Tongass in 1884, and the Sitkas as early as 1805, with a permanent school finally established in 1880 with the help of the Navy commanders in Sitka. The Hydah (Haida) inhabitants of the west coast of Prince of Wales Island are described as warlike, great artisans, and having had a school established on the 22nd of August 1881.[11] In March 1885 the Secretary of Interior (H.M. Teller) requested the U.S. Commissioner of Education to develop and implement a plan of education for the Territory. Commissioner of Education John Eaton requested the appointment of Sheldon Jackson as a general agent of education.[12] This was accomplished on April 11, 1885, and the establishment of public schools in Alaska was complete.

Jackson's efforts to establish schools and provide them with supplies met with some resistance. This opposition peaked when on August 19, 1885, Sheldon Jackson was arrested by the Deputy Marshal and escorted off the steamer as it was preparing to depart Sitka for communities in which schools were located. Jackson was delayed by the Marshal until the vessel departed. The next steamer brought official news of the removal of the officials responsible for the harassment of Sheldon Jackson.[13]

It is interesting to note that during this early period of schooling for Natives there were several teachers representing aboriginal populations from Alaska and the lower forty-eight states.[14] Sheldon Jackson points out that the teachers brought in from outside Alaska were not adequately trained to deal with the people, the climate, and the rural isolation. Jackson notes that they became depressed in their work and believed institutes would help them become better prepared to teach in Alaska.[15]

These early public schools were mission schools subsidized by the federal government. In 1899 local communities were authorized to set up school boards, select teachers, and establish schools. Racial problems were first reported in 1902 where the school board in Nome neglected to make provision for Eskimo children to attend school. In 1905, with the passage of the Nelson Act, schools for white children outside of incorporated towns fell under the authority and responsibility of the Governor of Alaska as an ex-officio Superintendent of Public Instruction. The education of Native Alaskans remained the responsibility of the U.S. Secretary of Interior. This was the beginning of Alaska's two separate school systems.[16]

The U.S. Congress, with passage of the Act of March 3, 1917, authorized Alaska's territorial legislature to establish schools in Alaska under the authority of local governments. White children, as well as Native children and children of mixed blood whose parents had adopted customs of the white population, were eligible to attend. Generally, children from the Native communities

continued to attend federal schools. The territorial government carried out its responsibility by enacting a uniform school act and taking control of the scattered school districts in the territory. The federal schools started under the Nelson Act remained intact.[17]

From the American point of view, the underlying philosophy of this early period was one of civilizing Native Alaskans and moving them as far away as possible from their basic culture. In 1926 even Native games and dances were banned in Native educational settings.[18] The Meriam Report of 1928, however, clearly pointed out that major changes in the educational programs for Indian students needed to be implemented if schools were to be more successful in educating them. The recommendations for these changes included a greater focus on the home environment where young children spent most of their time, an opportunity for the school curriculum to include more Indian cultural activities, and a training program for teachers that allowed better preparation for working with indigenous populations, recommendations which generally shifted authority and responsibility back to Natives for managing their own affairs. The report also stressed the importance of early childhood education.[19]

In Alaska the major issue in the 1930s was whether the federal government or the state government was responsible for providing education for the Native. The U.S. Congress provided authority to encourage school boards to educate untaxable Natives of mixed blood. The federal government was able to transfer the operation of forty-six schools to the territory between 1942 and 1954. In 1959 when Alaska became a state, the new constitution required the state to assume responsibility for educating all of its citizens (including Natives). Initially, the state could not afford to add the cost of operating Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to its budget.[20] Since the Alaskan oil rush and the resulting wealth through the late 1970s, Alaska has made several direct attempts to work out an agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to take over responsibility for all federal

schools in Alaska. A primary example of this transfer was the 1983 federal closure of the BIA-run Mt. Edgecumbe Boarding School. The state has worked out an agreement with the federal government that will allow that school to open again for the 1985-86 school year as a state-operated institution.[21]

Major Events Affecting Educational Opportunities for Native Alaskans

In 1832 the U.S. Congress created a Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He was to be in charge of all matters arising out of Indian relations, which included direction and management of all Indian affairs. Two years later the legal description of Indian country was established along with provisions for the organization of the Department of Indian Affairs. The Act of March 3, 1849, created the Department of the Interior and transferred the Bureau of Indian Affairs from the War Department to this new agency.[22]

When the United States signed the Treaty of Cession in 1867 with Russia, transferring European title of Alaska to the United States, provisions were included in Article 3 to address questions of aboriginal title and governance. The Organic Act of 1884 and the more recent Alaska Statehood Act both postponed the issue of defining Native land rights, which were finally clarified in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.[23] Sections 12 and 13 of the Organic Act addressed questions of educational need and responsibility. The Act of January 27, 1905, provided for the construction and maintenance of roads and the establishment of schools in Alaska. It was under this statute that the Governor of Alaska also became the ex-officio chief state school officer. This statute, under Section 7, segregated Indian and Eskimo children from the schools attended by white children and children of mixed blood that had adopted the ways of the new settlers.[24]

The question of Indian and Alaskan Native U.S. citizenship was unsettled until the Citizenship Act of 1924 made all non-citizen Indians born within the United States and its territories American citizens.[25] Citizenship did not alter the Indians' rights to tribal or other Indian property rights, thus preserving tribal rights derived from treaties.[26] For Alaskan Natives, the question of federal-Indian relationships was theoretically settled under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). In fact, there are still questions, and the U.S. government continues to provide special programs, special tax exempt status extended to lands conveyed under the Act, and Alaskans have been included expressly as beneficiaries in all major Indian legislation since passage of ANCSA. In addition, a continuing fiduciary relationship has been acknowledged judicially between Alaskan Natives and the federal government.[27]

The Snyder Act of November 2, 1921, authorized the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to direct expenditures of Congress for the benefit, care, and general assistance of Indians in the United States. This law, expanded by subsequent legislation, provides congressional authority for expenditures for most of the BIA's activities, including health, education, employment, administration of Indian property, and irrigation.

In 1934 the Johnson-O'Malley Act was passed authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to provide for Indian education, medical attention, agricultural assistance, and other services via contract with a state or territory. The program has become a major source of money for Indian tribes and Alaskan Native groups for educational programs. In Alaska the focus has been early childhood education and academic support for students in the schools.[28]

Several major events in the past few years have significantly influenced educational opportunities for Native students or the school systems they attend in Alaska. In 1965 the federal government passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It

has provided billions of dollars for American education over the years, and two parts of that legislation provide direct support to Native Alaskans. Title I provides monies for the educationally and economically disadvantaged, and Title VII provides monies for bilingual programs designed to teach English to non-English speakers. Under Title I, virtually all rural Native students were given opportunity to concentrate on building academic skills in basic areas like reading, mathematics, and language arts. Under Title VII, programs were established in many schools to begin concentrating on developing English language skills among children whose home language was other than English. This program eventually helped emphasize the importance of establishing a sound first language base before attempting to transfer the focus to a second language, or at least provide opportunities for bilingualism (that is, provide opportunities to develop both the first and second language skills concomitantly).

In 1971 the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, under the leadership of Dr. Frank Darnell, established the Center for Northern Educational Research. This Center, now called the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, was originally created to begin looking at problems and solutions to Native education issues in the state. It led the way to scholarly studies of issues surrounding Native education in rural communities. Most of the research of rural or Native education has been done by faculty of the Center. One of the most important pieces of work done by this group was the decentralization of Alaska's state-operated school system. Members served as a conduit for discussion and research of the project. The state was operating all rural schools outside of the organized boroughs and city school districts. They found that the system covered too many schools, too much territory, and could not be effectively managed. They also found that local communities were looking for more authority and responsibility for their own schools--there was a need for a sense of local ownership. In 1975 the state system was decentralized into twenty-one regional educational attendance areas, each with its own elected school board. The impetus for this event came from

rural communities interested in local control, but the movement was strongly supported by professional educators, legislators, and university people. It did not do all it was designed to do, but the system that has emerged is viewed as a positive step in giving local communities a greater sense of ownership over the schools their children attend.[29]

On December 18, 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was signed into law by the President of the United States. In general terms, the Act allowed the Natives to keep 40 million acres of land, paid Natives $962.5 million, and established first twelve and then thirteen regional business corporations. All eligible Native villages were required to form corporations as either profit or nonprofit organizations. All Alaskan Natives of one-fourth blood or more were eligible stockholders in a regional and village corporation.[30] This piece of legislation caused significant changes in the Alaskan political, social, and economic arenas. The demand and the impacts of those changes are far reaching and will be evaluated by historians of the future.

In the areas of education and training, the demands were nothing short of traumatic. The need for Natives as trained managers, educators, lawyers, and other professionals could not be met then, and they are not being met now. The state, the Native community, and the U.S. government are still recovering from the effects of that legislation. They are just beginning to understand some of the ramifications and are searching for solutions to questions that have been raised. The importance of education, training, professionalism, and an informed populace has been realized by the Native communities in Alaska, and they are placing a higher and higher priority on educational activity.

Title IV, Public Law 92-318, commonly referred to as the Indian Education Act of 1972, created several programs that have served the Native communities in Alaska well. The law authorized monies for special programs for Indians/Natives attending public schools, offered an opportunity for parent committees to help

design the programs their children attended, offered Indian tribes and organizations an opportunity to start and operate their own schools, provided monies for experimental programs, and provided monies for college scholarships and programs that led to jobs. Implementation of the law probably provided more jobs for professional Indian educators than any other effort in the history of Indian education.[31] During the 1982-83 school year, Alaska received $8,551,377 out of a total Title IV budget of $77,852,000.[32] The monies were used for early childhood education programs; tutoring students in academic areas important to school success; culturally related activities focusing on the arts, oral history, customs, and traditions; curriculum development; and other educational programs Native Alaskan students and their parents were interested in.

In 1975 the U.S. government passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. The law clarifies and consolidates the federal government's responsibility (specifically the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, the current Secretaries of Health and Human Services, and the Secretary of Education) to contract with and make grants to Indian tribes and organizations to operate federal service programs, including education. Natives in the state of Alaska have only taken advantage of the law in service areas outside of education, with only five Native communities organizing contract schools in the state (a contract school is one that is funded by the federal government and allows a Native group or organization to run that school). The policy established or reinforced by the "Indian Self-Determination Act" was one of allowing programs run for Indians by the government to one of allowing programs funded by the federal government to be run by Indians for themselves.[33]

The most recent action affecting the State of Alaska and its responsibility to rural communities (which are predominantly Native) was the Molly Hootch case. The State of Alaska was sued on behalf of Alaska Native secondary students, charging that the State Constitution required an educational opportunity for all of

its secondary students in their communities of residence. The case was settled by a court-supervised consent decree, with the State agreeing to provide schooling for all of its elementary and secondary students. The Regulations provide that a child may not be required to live away from the local community in which he or she resides to obtain an education (Alaska Dept. of Administration, 1977, Code 05.030). Either the governing body of the school district shall provide a secondary school, or, if so requested by the local school committee, a partial secondary school program in each community in the district in which there are one or more children available to attend a secondary school; and there is an elementary school in the community operated by either the district or the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Alaska Dept. of Administration, 1977, Code 05.040).[34]

Current Programs and Activities for Native Alaskan Students

In the spring of 1970 the Alaska State Department of Education was asked to participate in a national convention organized to look into the problems American Indians and Alaskan Natives were having as students participating in the nation's state and federally supported school systems. The response from the Alaska State Department of Education was that there were no problems and that Alaskan Native students were treated the same as all other students.[35] There have been a large number of changes since then. Nationally, the National Indian Education Association was formed, the Indian Education Act of 1972 was passed, the Indian Self-Determination Act was created, and a large number of Indian tribes and organizations contracted with the federal government to plan for and operate their own schools.

Within the state of Alaska, the first contemporary program bringing culturally related activities into the public school system was implemented in Klawock in 1967-68.[36] Since that time, many changes have taken place, both in the attitude of professionals towards the education of Native students and in the educational opportunities offered. School districts have developed

programs under Title I for the educationally disadvantaged and under Title VII for bilingual education, both originally part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Title IV, the Indian Education Act of 1972, and the Johnson-O'Malley Act, from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, have both allowed the implementation of programs designed especially for Indian and Alaskan Native students. Most recent is the effective schooling movement, which has focused on the identification of programs that are associated with academic achievement of low income students in elementary schools, with several rural schools receiving recognition for the success they have achieved in promoting the academic performance of their students. Of importance to teacher training institutions is the state-funded rural teacher training program. The program allows for a $7,000 annual loan for rural residents selected for teacher training programs. If a participant graduates with a teaching degree and teaches for five years, he/she will not have to pay the loan back--it is forgiven.

The University system has followed suit by developing programs specifically designed to benefit the rural/Native student. The University of Alaska-Fairbanks has consolidated a variety of programs for Native students under one administration. The Juneau campus has just revised its secondary education program to provide rural teachers a broad general background as well as focused majors in particular content areas. The University of Alaska-Rural Education, based in Anchorage, serves all parts of the state outside of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast Alaska. The program reached some 250 Native students directly during 1983-84.[37]

The following is a summary of some of the activities that have taken place over the past few years or a description of some of the programs that are now in operation.

Centralized Correspondence Study

The Department of Education offers correspondence courses available to all students in all communities located in the state. The program currently serves approximately 1,200 elementary and secondary students annually in a wide variety of communities and locations. It has an annual budget of $2,579,300 for fiscal year 1985. There have been 202 high school graduates since the 1970-1971 school year.[38] The State began funding correspondence study in 1939 for students living in remote areas of the state. It has been redesigned to serve any student (in grades kindergarten through twelve) living anywhere in the state. There is no charge to students. All textbooks, supplies, and postage are provided by the program.[39]

Educational Technology

In 1980-81 the State of Alaska passed legislation creating an instructional telecommunication network known as "Learn Alaska." The University of Alaska (UA) and the Alaska Department of Education (DOE) jointly manage the network. The two parts of the network include audioconferencing and instructional television. The audioconferencing network handled more than 3,300 conferences during the 1982-83 academic year, handling more conferences per month than any other facility in the world. The system is capable of linking up with any telephone, can link up to 80 sites in a single audioconference, and several sites together in simultaneous conferences. The instructional television network is the first and largest low-power TV network in the country. The network broadcasts 365 days per year, 24 hours per day, and can reach more than 240 communities. Programming on the network includes education programs for preschool, kindergarten through grade twelve, postsecondary/higher education, continuing education, general education, and special interest programming. Onsite volunteers serve as coordinators and place trouble calls when necessary, distribute catalogs and schedules, and help keep users informed of network changes in schedules.[40]

Alaskan public schools lead the nation in the number of computers per student. With one computer for every 21.8 students, Alaskan schools have a great opportunity for teachers and students to use this tool as effectively as the business world. Students/teachers currently use computers in activities like drill and practice, tutorial instruction, simulations, and problem solving as a supplement and extension of existing curriculum. Use of the computer as a word processor is the second most widespread use in educational settings. The State has developed nine Individual Study by Technology (IST) courses for high school students with 2,929 students in 124 schools taking advantage of the medium. The Department's Office of Instructional Services has an agreement with the Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium which allows the distribution of its software at a reduced price. This material is being used in 364 Alaskan schools.[41]

Effective Schooling Project

The Governor of Alaska in 1980 (Jay S. Hammond) asked the State Board of Education for a status report on the schools of Alaska. In response to the Governor's request, a special task force on effective schools was created. In 1981 the task force presented its report, clarifying responsibilities of a school, identifying practices with evidence of effectiveness that were supported by research and practical experience, and including recommendations to put those practices into operation in all Alaskan schools.[42] That report, based on a nationwide project supported by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., proposed a list of goals for education and recommended a standardized minimum curriculum for elementary, middle, and senior high schools. The task force also provided a list of effective schooling conditions.[43]

One of the best summaries on effective schooling practices is provided by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Its report is divided into classroom, school, and district characteristics and practices. Under Classroom Characteristics

and Practices, the list reveals the following: instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum; there are high expectations for student learning; students are carefully oriented to lessons; instruction is clear and focused; learning progress is monitored closely; students are retaught when they don't understand; class time is used for learning; there are smooth, efficient classroom routines; instructional groups formed in the classroom fit instructional needs; standards for classroom behavior are explicit; personal interactions between teachers and students are positive; and incentives and rewards for students are used to promote excellence.

School Characteristics and Practices show that everyone emphasizes the importance of learning; strong leadership guides the instructional program; the curriculum is based on clear goals and objectives; students are grouped to promote effective instruction; school time is used for learning; learning progress is monitored closely; discipline is firm and consistent; there are high expectations for quality instruction; incentives and rewards are used to build strong motivation; parents are invited to be involved; teachers and administrators continually strive to improve instructional effectiveness; and conditions for learning are pleasant.

District Characteristics and Practices indicate that high expectations pervade the organization; policies and procedures support excellence in student performance; student learning is checked regularly; improvement efforts are monitored and supported; excellence is recognized and rewarded; and curriculum planning ensures continuity. "The effective schooling research base identifies schooling practices and characteristics associated with measurable improvements in student achievement and excellence in student behavior. These 'effective schooling practices' include elements of schooling associated with a clearly defined curriculum; focused classroom instruction and management; firm, consistent discipline; close monitoring of student performance; and strong instructional leadership."44

Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools

In 1905 schools in Alaska were segregated into two systems, those run by the Department of the Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs) and those run by the Territory of Alaska.[45] Negotiations have been going on for several years between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the State Department of Education to transfer those schools to the State. Transfers have been taking place since 1938, with the transfer of the Douglas school. All schools will finally be transferred during the summer of 1985.[46] There are also five contract schools, commonly referred to as "638 schools," that have been operating as independent school districts. They are requesting legislation that would allow them to retain independent status after the transfer.[47] The five BIA elementary schools that remain under the Bureau system are kindergarten to grades six or eight, with one to grade twelve. The schools average sixty students each and generally use the standardized curriculum implemented by the Juneau BIA Area Office several years ago. This curriculum allowed for a bilingual program and allowed for the coverage of certain materials by certain grades.

In 1979 the federal government began implementing P.L. 95-561, which significantly changed the organizational structure of BIA schools. This law provided for school boards with authority similar to public school boards, provided direct funding of schools under a formula specifically designed for a school's size and location, and allowed superintendents to hire teachers from local areas. Although there was some apprehension about how the new law would work, it appears that the changes have been positive in nature. School boards have taken their new responsibilities seriously. Hiring teachers locally has reduced the time required to actually get someone on location and has reduced the cost, and boards have begun changing school curricula to meet their local priorities. The school faculty has become more stable over the past few years, with administrators and teachers averaging five years of local service. There appears to be little

or no dropout problem with the students that leave the elementary schools and that attend local public high schools under the REAAs. Students stay in school through the eighth grade and move on to high school. It will be interesting to note whether the stability of teachers and the apparent student satisfaction with the schools remain under the state system once it is implemented.[48]

University Programs

The Alaska Native Language Center (now called the Alaska Native Languages Program) was established at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks by the State Legislature in 1972. It serves as a linguistic research center and is considered the major center in the United States for the study of Eskimo and Northern Athabaskan languages.[49] In 1981 the Alaska Native Programs was created from a group of six Native education programs. These six programs are the Alaska Native Art Center, the Alaska Native Language Program, Alaska Native Studies, Cross-Cultural Communications, Special Services, and Student Development. The primary mission of this group is to promote Alaska Native student college completion and understanding of the Native community through research, curriculum development, and instruction. Degrees are offered in Alaska Native Studies, Applied Linguistics for Alaska Native Languages, Yup'ik, and Inupiaq Languages.[50]

In 1975 the University of Alaska established the Rural Education Program based on a recommendation by Alaskan Native organizations and groups. The program now operates under a Dean of Rural Education with local advisory councils and a statewide policy advisory council. The local councils assist in local or regional planning and send representatives to the statewide council for statewide policy issues. Rural Education offers an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Applied Science degree through the University of Alaska Community College System. The Associate of Arts degree encompasses five disciplines: Communications, Social Science, Humanities, Natural Science/Mathematics,

and Applied Sciences. The Associate of Applied Science degree program is awarded by the Kuskokwim and Northwest Community Colleges. Rural Education delivers services through thirteen centers to ninety villages covering 224,000 square miles. Programs are offered in Vocational-Technical Education, Alaska Native Health Careers, Community Health Aide Certificates, Community Health Practitioner, and a wide variety of other upper division classes through the Anchorage and Fairbanks campuses. Outreach classes and programs in Southeast Alaska are offered through the University of Alaska-Juneau campus.[51]

The University of Alaska-Juneau has recently developed a teacher training program designed to prepare rural teachers to better meet the demands of small schools. In the past, teacher training programs allowed students to develop majors in narrow fields, like history. The new program at Juneau requires a broad major in the social sciences, fine arts, or language arts and a minor in a narrow area in another field. This program allows a teacher to develop competence in a variety of subject areas under a broad discipline and indepth knowledge in a specific area. The teacher is better prepared to teach a greater variety of subjects rather than a narrowly defined subject.

The Juneau campus, like the Fairbanks campus, is making a special effort to begin serving regional Native populations. The training of teachers; recruitment of students; research of faculty (Wauters, et al., Hagstrom, et al., Greenberg, et al., Demmert, et al.); and proposed curriculum design changes all provide a new focus on rural/Native students.[52] A pilot three-week precollege academic program was held during the summer of 1984 to introduce rural/Native students to college life and the pressures they would find when they attended college in the fall. The objective of the program was to teach thinking, reasoning, and study skills. The students attended class six hours a day. Three hours were spent in physical science. In addition, activities like kayaking, swimming, basketball, going to movies, shopping, and listening to guest speakers were provided. The

program has led to a major proposal for changes in the way the University organizes class size, housing opportunities, and student advising for entering freshmen.

Public School Activity

In February 1985 the eleventh Alaska Bilingual-Multicultural Conference was held in Anchorage. It is a major activity of the Alaska Department of Education and is jointly planned by the Alaska State Advisory Council for Bilingual-Bicultural Education, the Alaska Association for Bilingual Education, and the Department of Education. Thirty-one of the fifty-three Alaska school districts provide bilingual-bicultural education programs. There are over 9,500 students with more than one hundred different language backgrounds served by the State's bilingual-bicultural program. These programs provide for full or partial maintenance of a student's first language or provide for the teaching of English skills and concepts.[53]

Many schools in Alaska are trying exciting and innovative approaches to education. At Kotzebue Elementary School, Northwest Arctic School District, fifty pre-schoolers from age four to five attend a two and one-half hour day in class. The youngsters are engaged in activities that teach language, auditory, visual, gross, and fine motor skills. Art is a daily activity. Developing skills, especially where English is a second language at home, is a high priority.[54]

At Kenai Junior High School, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, administration and staff set out to eliminate student failures. Academic intervention teams were created to bring together faculty, students, and parents to brainstorm ways to help students in serious academic difficulty and to support those students in overcoming their difficulties. Recommendations have included counseling, changing a student to a different class, placing students in gifted and talented programs, and/or establishing reward systems at school as well as in the home. Peer

tutoring (with student tutors actually attending classes, helping to take notes, study for tests, and meeting with tutees before or during school to review for tests or check completed assignments) has worked well as part of the effort to improve student success. The record shows that all tutees who were failing a class before receiving the help had achieved passing grades by the end of the quarter. Success did not just happen. The tutors were carefully selected and trained. They studied behavior management, task analysis, and other recognized techniques of good teaching and communication. The tutors selected for the program were matched with up to four students that had requested peer tutors. Each tutor received one elective credit for a year of tutoring.[55]

The Juneau School District's Indian Studies Program is designed to bring Southeast Alaska Native experts into regular classrooms to supplement the standard curriculum. School Board policy requires that instruction on Tlingit culture be included in the various grade levels as an integral part of the kindergarten to grade twelve social studies curriculum (adopted September 9, 1971). A scope and sequence of class activities and requirements was presented and adopted on May 18, 1982, and serves as a guide for the various presentations made by members of the Indian Studies Program. The program offerings are currently undergoing a review and analysis process for improving quality of material and information. The University of Alaska-Juneau education staff is involved in that review.[56]

Southeast Alaska Tribal Activity

The Sealaska Heritage Foundation, created by the Sealaska Regional Native Corporation, is a Native organization responsible for harnessing all available resources to preserve, promote, and maintain the cultures and heritage of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people for the benefit of present and future generations and the public. The Foundation is responsible for several programs. Their scholarship program provides scholarships to Alaska Native students seeking higher education opportunities.

The heritage study program provides Alaskan Natives grants to learn traditional skills from highly skilled instructors. The language and cultural studies program assists local communities in creating cultural and resource materials as well as producing their own language and cultural materials. Their tribal archives acquire, preserve, and manage records and materials of the member tribes that are donated by institutions, organizations, and individuals. Their traditional celebrations create, share, and record traditional dances, music, and song. The traditional music program records and transcribes traditional songs, their history, and their origin. The oral history program records, transcribes, and translates information from elders about their lives, culture, and history. Their collections and other holdings are very important parts of the efforts to record, preserve, and demonstrate the heritage of the Southeastern Alaska Native.[57]

Concluding Statement

There are many exciting educational programs in Alaska for rural and Native students through federal grants (Johnson O'Malley, Title IV, Bilingual programs); through regular school budgets in communities that are willing to try new and innovative activities; and through projects such as Learn Alaska, the University's Rural Education programs, and the focus on effective schooling research. Supporting the continuation of these activities is information that tells us Native students are doing better in school (especially contract schools), test scores on nationally validated tests have gone up, attendance is better (students are staying in school longer), and larger and larger numbers of Native students are attending institutions of higher education where higher and higher percentages are succeeding.[58]

All of these efforts are fine and worth continuing, but in Alaska there are two persistent problems: generally, in larger city schools, fairly large numbers of Native students are still dropping out of school or barely surviving, and generally, there are fairly large numbers of rural Native students that complete

their schooling but do not reach national academic standards for high school graduates. The numbers in both categories are getting smaller but are still large enough to to considered problems that must be dealt with.[59]

I have some very strong opinions about what we, as parents, educators, and communities, must do to succeed with children that we are still failing to motivate academically. First of all, the value we place on an education must be of the highest priority and include academic goals, physical goals, as well as social-cultural goals. The atmosphere in the home, in the community, and in the school must be one that promotes the success of all children in meeting academic, physical, and social/cultural standards in school and in life. Second, we as parents must create a home environment for young children (including aspects of prenatal care) that sets a proper base for learning those skills necessary to succeed academically once our children start school. These include nurturing cultural/social development, working on kinesthetic skills, language development (and other academically based components), and stimulating intellectual curiosity. Third, leaders in the community and community members at large must provide the attention required to stimulate and hold general support and high expectations for the educational institutions in that community. Fourth, the schools must attract and hold the best people they can find for instructional/administrative faculty and develop a program that reflects the desires and expectations of the parents and community, while stimulating them to exciting and higher goals. The schools must reflect the cultures of the community in a way that creates the interest and support they need from the community in order to succeed with the students from that community. Fifth, the goals and expectations that we, as parents, communities, and schools develop must be consistent, providing opportunities for our young adults in the society in which they choose to live. Students should expect and be given an opportunity to contribute to society--to their homes, communities, and outside that circle when the desire and skills are there to do so. When these priorities receive widespread adoption, and

only then, the good work and progress we have begun will begin to render the full fruits of our endeavors and our goals.