Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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A group of young American Indian and Eskimo trainees in electronics who have prepared themselves for defense and communications jobs in their home State of Alaska under the adult vocational training program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs will visit President Kennedy at the White House at 9:45 a.m. August 2 during the course of a two-day visit to the Nation's Capital, the Department of the Interior announced today.

They will be accompanied by members of the Alaska delegation in Congress, Officials of the Interior Department, and representatives of the Radio Corporation of America, which provided the training under an agreement reached about 18 months ago.

The trainees making the visit represent the first contingent to complete the training under this agreement. Included in the group are five Indians and three Eskimos who finish their 18-month course at the RCA Institute in New York on August 10 and two other Eskimos who still have several months to go. All eight of the graduates will take jobs with RCA's "White Alice" communications system in Alaska. Their beginning salaries will range from $9,357 to $10,209 a year.

"Use of technically trained Indians and Eskimos to staff the installations in Alaska," Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash pointed out, "is beneficial in two ways. It provides excellent employment opportunities for young Alaska natives immediately and over the longer pull it will undoubtedly produce a more stable work force, with a far lower rate of turn-over, than will the employment of technicians brought in from other States.

"We in the Bureau of Indian Affairs are particularly proud that the first contingent of Alaska natives to enter training have all successfully completed the course which is exceptionally difficult."

Under the contract with RCA the Bureau of Indian Affairs paid the costs of tuition and provided living expenses for the trainees as part of its adult vocational training program.

The program arranged for the trainees on August 2 includes the meeting with President Kennedy a conference with Commissioner Nash and other Bureau officials at 2:00 p.m. in the Interior Building, a reception later in the afternoon and a moonlight cruise on the Potomac in the evening.

The August 3 program will include a luncheon at the Capitol as the guests of the Alaska Congressional Delegations and a sightseeing tour.

The eight graduating trainees are:

Russell W. Attwood, 21, Tlingit Indian from Ketchikan;

Morgan Aukongak, 19, Eskimo from Nome;

Percy Ipalook, 22, Eskimo from Kotzebue;

Harry Kito, 21, Tlingit Indian from Petersburg;

Sam Kito, Jr., 24, Tlingit Indian from Petersburg;

Herman Kitka, Jr., 20, Tlingit Indian from Sitka;

Arthur H. Peterson, 22, Athapascan Indian from Fort Yukon;

Joseph Pungowiyi, 22, Eskimo from Savoonga.

The other two trainees, who will complete their courses late in 1962 or early next year, are:

Peter J. Tocktoo, 21, Eskimo from Shishmaref;

Gordon Upicksoun, 21, Eskimo from Point Lay.

The trainees will be accompanied on their Washington trip by G. F. Maedel, president of RCA Institutes, Inc.; Harold Metz, vice president of RCA educational services, and Harold Fezer, director of the RCA Institute in New York City.