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For Immediate Release: January 19, 1969
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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today plans for establishment of an Educational Cultural Center for Alaskan Native students between the ages of 17 and 20 in cooperation with the University of Alaska.

Udall said the signing of an agreement with the University of Alaska by the Bureau of Indian Affairs brought to successful culmination negotiations which began on June 4, 1968.

The Secretary had directed that steps be taken looking to establishment of such a center following a report to him on April 1, 1968 by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, based on personal observations of four members during a trip to Alaska, which included this statement:

"The Board found that education which gives the Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut knowledge of--and therefore pride in--their historic and cultural heritage is almost non-existent, either in BIA or in State public schools in Alaska."

The agreement between BIA and the University of Alaska calls for preparation by the University by July 1 of a preliminary proposal for developing a model for an educational cultural center for Alaskan Native students.

It is hoped that at least a pilot program of instruction may get underway by next September. A budget of $50,000 for the 1969 calendar year is to be funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The University will appoint a full-time project director to develop the curriculum and methods of teaching, staff requirements, facility needs, counseling services, student eligibility standards and selection procedures, and so forth. The director also will develop a proposed operating budget for at least three years.

The proposal states that the aim will be to develop an exciting and totally new concept for the education of the native people of Alaska, using as a basis an arts centered curriculum.

"The Center would be an innovative institution where selected high school native students will have an opportunity to complete their high school education and learn to become contributing members of society, drawing from their own heritage for strength, and utilizing it in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to participate fully in today’s society," the agreement adds.

It is pointed out that the proposed center would be another benchmark in efforts to implement programs called for by President Johnson in his unprecedented message to the Congress last year on the plight of the American Indians and Alaska Natives.

In discussing the objectives, the agreement says:

"The development by the University of Alaska of a model for an

Educational Cultural Center for the Alaska Natives would unite the forces of the Federal government, the University of Alaska, the State Department of Education, and the greater Indian community in one

concentrated inter-institutional offensive against existing educational, economic, cultural, and social problems confronting Alaskan students today. The approach will be to help the Natives identify themselves through the cultural arts so that they can successfully complete their education and take their full place in the world.

"The program to be developed will be based on a curriculum designed to meet the unique needs of the Native students of Alaska. The program will give the Native students' knowledge of their historic and cultural heritage and will attempt to develop in the students pride in their cultural heritage in order to help them develop a positive self-image. It is felt that a well-defined interpretation of their heritage will assist the Alaska Native youths to attain the security necessary to become contributing members of today's society.

"Specialized techniques for assisting the Native students of Alaska to enter contemporary society with dignity and confidence will be developed. It is believed that by linking the best in native culture to contemporary life, the Alaskan Natives will find adjusting to today's society much easier."
