Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Lovett 202/343-7445
For Immediate Release: September 10, 1981
Print PDF

Bureau of Indian Affairs officials from Washington, D.C., will be meeting September 14-17 with Alaska State officials and Alaska Native representatives to discuss a proposed transfer of as many as 20 BIA-operated village schools to state operation in the 1982-83 school year. The Bureau currently operates 39 elementary village schools serving approximately 2,100 students.

Coming to Alaska will be Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Roy H. Sampsel and the BIA's Director of Indian Education Programs Earl Barlow.

They will meet September 14 with representatives of Alaska Native organizations in Anchorage and go to Juneau September 15 for meetings with Governor Jay Hammond and State Education Commissioner Marshall Lind.

Barlow will then meet on the 16th with members of the Alaska State Board of Education at Ketchikan and with Rural Education Attendance Area superintendents at Anchorage on the 17th. He will also meet with BIA school officials that same day.

"It has long been the plan," Sampsel said, "to transfer the operation and control of these village schools to the State." Between 1967 and 1970, 28 BIA schools became part of the State system and in this past year two more schools were transferred to State operation.

Sampsel noted that the State, according to its own constitution, is required to "maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State." He said the State has indicated a willingness to accept the transfer of the BIA schools beginning in fiscal year 1983.

In addition to the village elementary schools, the Bureau operates one boarding high school, Mt. Edgecumbe. Present plans call for the school to be closed after the 1981-82 school year because it duplicates and competes with state education programs.