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WORK OF THE BUREAU OF EDUCATION
FOR THE NATIVES OF ALASKA

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INTRODUCTION

Through its Alaska division the Bureau of Education is required to make provision for the education of the natives of Alaska, extend to them all possible medical relief, train them to self-support, and, so far as possible, relieve worthy cases of destitution. The work is under the supervision of the chief of the Alaska division, with headquarters in Seattle, Wash., which is more readily accessible from all parts of Alaska than is any point within Alaska itself. The Seattle office functions as a purchasing and disbursing agent for all of the bureau's activities in Alaska; it selects and recommends to the Commissioner of Education for appointment all of the bureau's employees in Alaska; it expends or invests, as requested, funds sent to it by employees in Alaska, by the cooperative stores of the natives, or by individual natives of Alaska; it also sells commodities, such as furs, ivory, and reindeer meat, for the natives and remits, deposits, or expends the proceeds as directed.

The field force in Alaska during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1924, included 1 superintendent of education of natives of Alaska, with duties of a general supervisory character, 5 district superintendents, 151 teachers, 8 physicians, 21 nurses, 12 hospital attendants, and 8 herders in charge of reindeer belonging to the Government. Eighty-three schools were in operation, with an enrollment of 3,910. The teachers not only carried on the educational work in the schoolrooms, but, in many instances, were responsible for the relief of destitution, for the extending of medical aid to natives in the vicinity of the school, and for the supervising of the industries and of the reindeer herds tributary to the school.

The bureau's work was carried on in 116 buildings, including school buildings, teachers' residences, hospitals, and orphanages, valued at \$273,550.

The educational statistics for the year are as follows:

Total number of days in actual attendance.....	367,396
Total number of pupils enrolled during year.....	3,910
Average daily attendance throughout the year.....	2,652
Percentage of attendance.....	67.7
Average number in each schoolroom each day.....	26.9
Total schoolrooms open.....	101
Average number of days in the school year.....	135.12
Cost of school per day per child, based on actual attendance.....	\$0.70
Cost of school per year per child, based on actual attendance.....	\$97.65
Cost of school per year per child, based on total enrollment.....	\$66.23
Spent during the year for repairs on the school buildings and not counted as a part of the operation of the schools.....	\$7,193.23
Spent for new buildings.....	\$8,153.33

MEDICAL RELIEF

In its endeavor to afford medical relief and to safeguard the health of the native races of Alaska, the Bureau of Education maintains hospitals at Juneau, Kanakanak, Akiak, Nulato, and Noorvik, which are important centers of native population in southern, western, central, and Arctic Alaska, separated from each other by many hundreds of miles.

The hospitals, physicians, and nurses serve only the thickly populated districts. In the outlying areas the teachers must, of necessity, extend medical aid to the best of their ability. Accordingly, the teachers in settlements where the services of a physician or nurse are not available are supplied with household remedies and instructions for their use. Each hospital is a center of medical relief for a very wide territory, and each physician must make extended tours throughout his district. In the great majority of the native settlements, the teachers are the only "doctors" and "health officers." It often becomes the duty of a teacher to render first aid to the injured or to care for a patient through the course of a serious illness. The school is often the only place within a radius of several hundred miles where the natives can obtain medicines and medical treatment, and they often travel many days to secure the relief desired.

Inadequate as the medical service is to meet the needs of the entire native population, it has nevertheless accomplished gratifying results as is indicated by the following statement of services rendered during the year:

Patients or cases handled through the 5 hospitals.....	9,559
Total treatments, outside and clinical.....	24,433
Days of hospital care.....	14,156
Number of times medical assistance was rendered by teachers.....	17,709

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

In the day schools industrial education supplements to some extent the academic work, but one of the greatest needs in connection with the present educational system is that more training of a vocational character be provided. It is important that as much training as possible be given to enable the natives of Alaska more readily to earn a livelihood in the changing conditions with which the advance of civilization has confronted them.

Many natives, with very little supervision, would become excellent carpenters. In all parts of Alaska their skill in carving proves that the making of furniture could be made a very remunerative native industry. In the native houses well-constructed articles of furniture could be made to take the place of the cheap and often unsatisfactory furniture which they now buy in stores. In the shops they could be taught how to make cooking utensils, sled runners, anchors, chains, and rigging for their boats. In Alaska almost all communication is by water. The aboriginal races of Alaska have always been expert builders of canoes. In the progressive villages power boats and small schooners have replaced the primitive native canoe. Boat building would, therefore, be a very important subject of instruction. The natives could also be taught how to construct and repair engines for their power boats. Their skill in sewing and in the making of ceremonial robes shows that they would make excellent tailors. With very little training they would excel in mechanical trades, such as typesetting and printing. In the weaving of baskets they are proficient. This talent, which in some parts of Alaska appears to be disappearing among the rising generation, could be fostered.

Special industrial schools are in process of organization at Eklutna, near Anchorage, on the Alaska Railroad, at Kanakanak in southwestern Alaska, and at White Mountain on the Seward Peninsula, where buildings have been erected and to which teachers have been sent to develop courses in such activities as carpentry, boat building, carving, the tanning of reindeer hides and of the skins of fur-bearing animals, the curing of fish, tailoring, nursing, home economics, sanitation, and physical education.

REINDEER SERVICE

Originating, in 1892, in importation of reindeer from Siberia to furnish subsistence for the Eskimos in the neighborhood of Bering Strait, the reindeer industry has expanded until it has assumed chief importance in the bureau's industrial activities in behalf of the natives. Herds are now maintained near all of the principal native settlements of western Alaska from the Arctic Ocean to the Pacific

Ocean; in the interior near Mount McKinley National Park; along the Alaska Railroad; on Kodiak Island west of the Gulf of Alaska; along the Alaska Peninsula; and on the Aleutian Islands. So rapidly have the herds increased that the total number of reindeer in Alaska in June, 1924, was estimated at 350,000, of which about 235,000 were owned by the natives. One of the principal problems confronting the Bureau of Education at this time is the reorganization of the reindeer industry on a cooperative basis so as to make it possible to handle more efficiently the increasing herds and market the surplus meat. This reorganization will attempt to care not only for the distribution of the herds, as in the past; but for handling the industry on a business basis. The present commercial value of Alaskan reindeer herds is approximately \$8,750,000; \$1,550,000 more than the sum paid for the Territory by the United States in 1867. This does not take account of more than 200,000 reindeer slaughtered in the past and used as meat by the natives or sold by them, nor does it include the benefit derived by the natives through participation in this great industrial success.

TRANSPORTATION OF APPOINTEES AND SUPPLIES

One of the greatest problems in connection with the work of the bureau in Alaska has been the transportation of appointees and supplies from Seattle to the remoter settlements. In April, 1920, the U. S. S. *Boxer*, a wooden vessel which had been used as a training ship for naval cadets, was transferred from the Navy Department to the Interior Department for use by the bureau in connection with its work in Alaska. Funds to cover the expense of fitting the vessel for service in Alaskan waters were provided in the Interior Department appropriation act approved May 24, 1922. During the winter months of 1922-23 a Diesel engine was installed in the vessel and it was refitted for its work in the waters of the Pacific and Arctic Oceans as far north as Point Barrow.

Annually the *Boxer* carries from Seattle to the coast villages of Alaska and to the distributing points at the mouths of the great rivers teachers, physicians, and nurses, together with a heavy tonnage of supplies and equipment. On its southward voyages it brings out employees whose terms of service have expired, and carries reindeer meat, furs, and other valuable commodities which the Eskimos wish to be sold for them through the Seattle office of the Alaska division.

During the winter of 1923-24 in a four-months cruise in Southeastern Alaska the *Boxer* served as a floating school for 20 native young men, with the ship's officers as instructors in navigation, radio, telegraphy, the operation and care of Diesel engines, dynamos, and marine machinery, also in cooking, personal hygiene, and physical

training, as well as in general elementary subjects, with special emphasis on speaking and writing English.

During its cruise in the summer of 1924, in addition to performing its routine duties, the *Boxer* rescued the crews of the *Lady Kindersley* and the *Arctic*, schooners which had been caught in the ice near Point Barrow, the northwesternmost cape of the continent. This action saved the lives of these men. The *Boxer* also took on board at Point Barrow a party of eight men of the United States Geological Survey and conveyed them to Nome. But for this service, these men would have been compelled to wait at Point Barrow for two months until the freeze up, and then would have had to proceed to Nome by dog sled, with great loss of time, and at a cost to the Government of thousands of dollars.

