

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF EDUCATION

BULLETIN, 1921, No. 35

THE WORK OF THE BUREAU
OF EDUCATION FOR THE
NATIVES OF ALASKA

[Advance sheets from Biennial Survey of Education
in the United States, 1918-1920]



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1921

ADDITIONAL COPIES
OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE PROCURED FROM
THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
AT
5 CENTS PER COPY

THE WORK OF THE BUREAU OF EDUCATION FOR THE NATIVES OF ALASKA.

CONTENTS.—Extent of territory—Supervision—Control of expenditures—Nature of the work—Colony building—Sale of native commodities—Recent epidemics—Transportation—Census of Alaska—Reindeer service.

The work of the Bureau of Education for the natives of Alaska includes the Alaska school service, the Alaska medical service, and the Alaska reindeer service, with a field force in Alaska, in 1920, of 6 superintendents, 133 teachers, 9 physicians, and 13 nurses.

The work is of vast extent, and it is carried on under peculiar difficulties. If Alaska were superimposed on the United States, its northernmost cape would be on the boundary between the United States and Canada, its southeasternmost extremity would touch the Atlantic coast at the State of Georgia, the Aleutian Islands would skirt the Mexican border, and the westernmost of its islands would lie in California. The 67 villages in which the bureau's work is located would fall in 21 different States.

Some of the villages on remote islands or beside the frozen ocean are brought into touch with the outside world only once or twice a year, when visited by a United States Coast Guard steamer on its annual cruise or by the supply vessel sent by the Bureau of Education. Many of the settlements have no regular mail service and can communicate with each other and with the outside world only by occasional passing boats in summer and sleds in winter. During eight months of the year all of the villages in Alaska, with the exception of those on the southern coast, are reached only by trails over the snow-covered land or frozen rivers.

SUPERVISION.

The regulations governing the work of the Bureau of Education in Alaska permit the greatest freedom of action on the part of the local employees that is consistent with the ultimate responsibility of the Commissioner of Education.

The entire work is under the direction of Mr. W. T. Lopp, superintendent of education of natives of Alaska, whose headquarters are in Seattle, which is more readily accessible to all parts of Alaska than is any point within the Territory itself. The Seattle office of

the Alaska division also functions as a purchasing and disbursing office for the service.

The Territory has been divided into six school districts, each under the immediate supervision and direction of a district superintendent. One of these supervision districts contains fully 100,000 square miles. In visiting the widely separated schools, a district superintendent must travel vast distances by sled over the frozen, trackless wilderness; frequently he must risk his life on treacherous, tempestuous waters in a native canoe or small power boat; he must endure the violence of the northern storms, the rigors of the Arctic winter, and the foulness of the native huts in which he must often find shelter.

CONTROL OF EXPENDITURES.

At the beginning of each fiscal year the Commissioner of Education distributes to the purchasing agent in Seattle and to the superintendents, from the appropriation made by Congress for the support of the work, definite sums for the purchase of supplies, furniture, equipment, and fuel; for the payment of rental; for furnishing medical relief to the natives; for the relief of destitute natives, and for the payment of traveling expenses. In like manner, from the authorizations received by them from the Commissioner of Education, the superintendents distribute to the teachers, physicians, and nurses in their districts "subauthorizations" to enable them promptly to make expenditures for local needs. Except in grave emergency, no expenditure is permissible unless it is covered by an authorization or by a subauthorization. By this method of distributing funds each superintendent and teacher is enabled to meet, within the limit of expenditure authorized, every need of the service as it arises. The effectiveness and scope of the work are limited only by the amounts of the appropriations made by Congress.

NATURE OF THE WORK.

The work is carried on for the benefit of adults as well as for children. In the Alaskan native community the school is the center of all activity—social, industrial, and civic. Each schoolhouse is a social center for the accomplishment of practical ends. Many of the buildings contain, in addition to the recitation room, an industrial room, kitchen, quarters for the teacher, and a laundry and baths for the use of the native community. The schoolroom is available for public meetings for the discussion of the affairs of the village or, occasionally, for social purposes. In the schoolroom the endeavor is made to impart to the children such instruction as will enable them to live comfortably and to deal intelligently with those with whom they come in contact; instruction in carpentry, house building, cook-

ing, and sewing is emphasized. In some sections the natives have been taught to raise vegetables, which provide a healthful addition to their usual diet of fish, meat, or canned goods.

In the villages the teachers and nurses endeavor to establish proper sanitary conditions by inspecting the houses, by insisting upon proper disposal of garbage, and by giving instruction in sanitary methods of living. Natives are encouraged to replace their primitive huts by neat, well-ventilated houses. Cooperative enterprises, financed by native capital and conducted by the natives themselves, are fostered. In many instances the school is the only elevating power in the native community.

Tuberculosis, pneumonia, rheumatism, and venereal diseases prevail to an alarming extent in many of the native villages. In its endeavor to safeguard the health of the natives of Alaska, the Bureau of Education maintains hospitals in five important centers of native population, employs physicians and nurses who devote themselves to medical and sanitary work among the natives in their respective districts, and provides medical supplies and textbooks to the teachers to enable them to treat minor ailments and intelligently to supervise hygienic measures. There are extensive regions in which the services of a physician are not obtainable. Accordingly, 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.

To be "teacher" in the narrow schoolroom sense is the least of the duties of a teacher in the Alaska school service; he is the friend, adviser, and inspirer of the natives in their struggle toward civilization.

COLONY BUILDING.

For the protection of the natives and in order more effectively and economically to reach a larger number of natives than it could in the small, scattered villages, the Bureau of Education has secured the reservation by Executive order of carefully selected tracts in various parts of Alaska to which natives can be attracted and within which they can obtain a plentiful supply of fish and game and conduct their own commercial and industrial enterprises. Residence within these reservations is not compulsory; natives settling on the reservations are in no way hampered in their coming and going, nor is their status in any way changed by residence thereon. The object is to make these reservations so attractive from an economic and social point of view that natives will voluntarily come into them. Within the reservations it is possible to maintain better equipped and more efficient schools than can be provided for smaller villages, and to supervise cooperative stores and industrial enterprises maintained by the natives themselves. The settlements at Hydaburg,

Noorvik, and Metlakatla are conspicuous successes in colony building.

Hydaburg.—The locations of many of the native villages in southern Alaska were selected in ancient times when intertribal strife made strategic sites desirable. Several of these villages are not advantageously situated with regard to hunting and fishing grounds or for trading purposes. For these reasons there existed among the members of the Hydah tribe in the villages of Klinquan and Howkan a desire to migrate. Taking cognizance of this desire, representatives of the Bureau of Education selected as a site for a new village for the Hydahs a tract on an uninhabited bay on the shore of Prince of Wales Island, with abundant timber, fresh water, and game, and accessible to centers of trade. By Executive order a tract of approximately 12 square miles was reserved for the use of this colony and such of the natives of Alaska as might settle within the limits of the reservation.

In a fleet of canoes the people of Klinquan and Howkan migrated to the new site during September, 1911, taking with them their household goods and movable property. Under the leadership of the teacher, a clearing was made in the primeval forest; the schoolhouse was the first building erected; neat log cabins followed, the Bureau of Education aiding in equipping the sawmill to provide lumber for the new village, to which the natives gave the name Hydaburg.

Under the guidance of the Bureau of Education during the following years the Hydaburg people, only a generation removed from savagery, have turned the dense forest into a thriving, well laid out, electrically lighted, self-governing town, with several miles of planked streets, a modern dock and float landing, a sawmill, a cannery building, church, cooperative store, shingle mill, and lumber yard.

The Hydaburg Trading Co. was organized in November, 1911, to transact the mercantile business of the settlement and to operate the sawmill. When the books were audited 12 months later, \$4,020 had been subscribed in stock. On June 30, 1920, the capital stock of the company was \$40,000; merchandise inventoried at \$20,000. The sales of lumber from February 1 to June 30, 1920, amounted to \$6,000. The company owns a store building worth \$10,000, a sawmill valued at \$9,500, a cannery building and dock at \$6,000, a moving-picture outfit, an automobile truck, and equipment for electric lighting.

In 1911 the par value of a share in the Hydaburg Trading Co. was \$10. In 1920 the total accumulation on each share, including the stock dividend and the purchase dividend each year, amounted to \$244.28. This success is in large measure due to the fact that, through the teacher, the Bureau of Education exercises rigid supervision over

the transactions and accounts of the company. An accountant from the Seattle office of the Alaska division of the Bureau of Education makes the annual audit.

Noorvik.—With their advancement in civilization the Eskimos living at Deering, on the bleak coast of the Arctic Ocean, craved a new home. Lack of timber compelled them to live in the semi-underground hovels of their ancestors, while the killing off of game animals made it increasingly difficult to obtain food. An uninhabited tract on the bank of the Kobuk River, 15 miles square, abounding in game, fish, and timber, was reserved by Executive order for these Eskimos, and thither they migrated in the summer of 1915. On this tract, within the Arctic Circle, the colonists, under the leadership of the teachers, have built a village, which they have called Noorvik, with well laid-out streets, neat single-family houses, gardens, a mercantile company, a sawmill, an electric-light plant, and a radio station, which keeps them in touch with the outside world.

The Metlakatla Colony.—In 1857 William Duncan, of Yorkshire, England, was sent by the Church Missionary Society, of London, as lay missionary to the Indians near Fort Simpson, British Columbia. In course of time Mr. Duncan raised this tribe from barbarism and founded for them a prosperous village, named Metlakatla, with church, store, sawmill, and cannery. Disagreements with the Church of England on religious matters and with the Canadian Government on the ownership of land caused the natives under Mr. Duncan's guidance to consider migrating to Alaska. During the winter of 1886-87 Mr. Duncan visited Washington and conferred with the President, members of the Cabinet, and other prominent men in regard to the proposed migration. Encouraged by the interest shown by the officials in Washington, almost the entire colony of about 900 migrated in August, 1887, to Annette Island, where they built a new Metlakatla. In 1891 Congress reserved Annette Island, in southern Alaska, for the Metlakatlas and such Alaskan natives as might join them.

In 1891 Mr. Duncan organized the Metlakatla Industrial Co. to carry on the industries of the colony. In 1905 Mr. Duncan repaid to the natives and to the philanthropists the money invested by them, with interest; the company was dissolved, and Mr. Duncan remained in sole control. The operations of the cannery and sawmill were curtailed, and in 1913 they were closed. Lacking employment in Metlakatla many natives left the island, and the colony deteriorated.

The cogency of petitions for the establishment of a United States public school in Metlakatla, and personal investigation of the situation by the governor of Alaska and by the Commissioner of

Education, resulted in 1913 in the establishment by the Bureau of Education of a school in Metlakatla. The resuscitation of the industries followed.

In 1917 the Secretary of the Interior, on behalf of the Metlakatlans, entered into a five-year lease with the Annette Island Packing Co., of Seattle, granting fish-trap privileges within the reserved waters adjacent to Annette Island, and permission to erect and operate a cannery within the reserve. The returns to the Metlakatlans for fish royalties, trap fees, labor, and for lumber purchased from the local sawmill, amounted in 1919 to \$90,032.88. It is expected that in 1921 the revenues from the lease will enable the Secretary of the Interior to take over for the Metlakatlans the property of the lessee within the reserve. The Metlakatla Commercial Co., organized by the Bureau of Education, conducts the mercantile business of the settlement and operates the sawmill.

Under regulations issued by the Secretary of the Interior, the local government of the colony is vested in a council of 12, elected annually. The religious affairs are under 12 elders, selected by the people.

SALE OF NATIVE COMMODITIES.

Formerly it was possible for the Eskimos on the shores of Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean and in other remote regions of Alaska to dispose of their valuable furs, ivory, and whalebone only to the local traders, with the result that the natives usually received low prices for their commodities, and were constantly in debt to the local traders. Availing themselves of the parcel-post service and of the increased opportunities to send freight, many Eskimos who have been educated in the schools now forward packages of fox, lynx, and mink skins, and ivory and whalebone to the office of the Alaska division in Seattle, which, through the Seattle Fur Sales Agency, sells the furs at public auction, in accordance with the rules governing such sales, with the result that many natives are now receiving full value for their goods. The proceeds of all sales are sent to the individual natives, applied to the settlement of their accounts with the Seattle merchants, or placed to their credit in savings banks, as requested; and detailed account is kept of all transactions. The vessel which makes the annual delivery of supplies to settlements along the Arctic coast of Alaska carries many tons of food supplies, packages of clothing, household goods, and building materials, purchased with the proceeds of the sale of furs and other commodities sent out by the natives during the previous summer. All transactions in connection with these sales, purchases, and shipments were originally carried on under the general oversight of the chief of the Alaska division of the Bureau of Education, acting as a private individual. This

philanthropic action, inaugurated as an emergency measure, has received official sanction by the Department of the Interior and has been made part of the official duties of the chief of the Alaska division, who is under bond for the faithful performance of the same.

RECENT EPIDEMICS.

In October, 1918, following the line of steamship transportation from Seattle, influenza broke out in the coast towns of Alaska and rapidly spread to the interior settlements. Furnishing medical relief to the native races of Alaska is a duty of the Bureau of Education, but in the great emergency created by the epidemic the bureau could not, by itself, effectively cope with the situation. Gov. Riggs, therefore, as executive head of the Territory, accepted the responsibility of directing the fight against the disease and took immediate, energetic, and effective action to check its ravages among the native races of Alaska, as well as among the white people.

The Surgeon General of the Public Health Service authorized Gov. Riggs to employ physicians and nurses and to purchase medicines. As a sufficient number of doctors and nurses could not be had in Alaska, 19 physicians and 3 nurses were secured in the State of Washington and sent to southern Alaska on the naval collier *Brutus*. All of the bureau's physicians, nurses, superintendents, and teachers were placed at the governor's disposal and rendered zealous service in fighting the epidemic in the native villages. White people throughout the Territory cooperated heartily. The assistance of the Red Cross was also secured.

The epidemic was especially severe in the Nome and St. Michael regions, where it resulted in the death of at least 850 natives. Among the victims of the epidemic were Mr. Walter C. Shields, who for many years had been superintendent of the work of the bureau in northwestern Alaska; Dr. Frank W. Lamb, physician in charge of the bureau's hospital at Akiak; and Mrs. Harriet T. Hansome, assistant teacher at Hydaburg.

In May, 1919, influenza made its appearance among the Eskimos in the Bristol Bay region and among the Aleuts at Unalaska. As in the previous epidemic, vigorous measures were at once taken to combat the disease, the Navy Department sending the *Unalga*, the *Rear*, the *Vicksburg*, and the *Marblehead*, with physicians and nurses, to the stricken districts. In the Bristol Bay region the epidemic caused 440 deaths and in the village of Unalaska 45 deaths. As the result of these epidemics about 250 children were left orphans. In the Nome region it was found possible to distribute the orphans among Eskimo families, but in the Bristol Bay and Cook Inlet districts it was necessary for the bureau to assume their entire care in orphanages which were erected at Kanakanak and Tyonek.

TRANSPORTATION.

The 67 villages in Alaska in which the work of the Bureau of Education is carried on are scattered along thousands of miles of coast line and on the great rivers. Very many villages are not on the routes of commercial vessels. Some of the settlements can be brought into touch with the outside world only during the short season of open navigation in midsummer. The securing of transportation from Seattle to their remote destinations of teachers, physicians, and nurses, and of the supplies and building materials required in the Alaska school service, the Alaska medical service, and the Alaska reindeer service is an undertaking of great difficulty. The problem was acute during the summer of 1919, transportation to and in Alaska being in a chaotic condition as the result of war conditions and because vessels carrying freight for western and northern Alaska had left Seattle before the passage of the appropriation for the support of the work of the Bureau of Education in Alaska. Even on the established routes rates were excessive and steamers were unable to maintain their time schedules: there were long delays of passengers and freight at transfer points: in several instances expensive emergency transportation of employees and supplies had to be secured. For a long series of years the Coast Guard Service, through its vessels cruising in Alaskan waters, has willingly cooperated with the Bureau of Education, but its vessels are not adapted to the carrying of passengers and freight and they have numerous other duties to perform.

Experience has shown that the work of the Bureau of Education in Alaska can never be administered effectively and economically until the bureau owns and controls its own vessel. Request was therefore made to the Navy Department for a vessel suitable for use by the Bureau of Education in connection with its work in Alaska. Complying with the request, the Navy Department transferred to the Department of the Interior the U. S. S. *Boxer*, a staunch, wooden vessel, with a carrying capacity of about 450 tons, and admirably adapted for the purpose contemplated. The endeavor to secure a congressional appropriation to meet the expenses of refitting the *Boxer* for service in Alaskan waters did not meet with success. The vessel is held at the Naval Training Station, Newport, R. I., pending the securing of an appropriation.

CENSUS OF ALASKA:

The vast extent of the Territory, the remoteness of many of the settlements, and lack of transportation facilities make the taking of the census of Alaska a matter of great difficulty. At the request of the Bureau of the Census, Mr. W. T. Lopp, superintendent of

education of natives of Alaska, was placed in charge of the entire work of the Alaska census of 1920, with the bureau's superintendents, physicians, and teachers in all parts of the Territory as special agents and enumerators. This cooperative arrangement, while greatly increasing the duties of the bureau's employees during the year, proved to be mutually economical and advantageous.

REINDEER SERVICE.

The greatest work for the natives inhabiting the northern and western parts of Alaska has been the introduction and development of the reindeer industry.

Until 1892 there were no reindeer in Alaska. The industry began in that year with the importation by the Bureau of Education and the Revenue-Cutter Service of 171 reindeer from Siberia, which were bought with funds secured by Dr. Sheldon Jackson from benevolent individuals. The importation continued until 1902; during that period 1,280 reindeer were brought over. There are now approximately 180,000 reindeer in Alaska, distributed throughout the coastal regions from Point Barrow to the Alaska Peninsula. Two-thirds of these reindeer, representing a value of \$3,000,000, are the property of the natives.

The raising of reindeer is the form of industrial education best adapted to the Eskimos inhabiting the limitless grazing lands of arctic and subarctic Alaska, and in the early stages of the enterprise the reindeer service became an integral part of the educational system of the Bureau of Education for those regions. The district superintendents of schools are also superintendents of the reindeer service; the teachers in charge of the United States public schools in the regions affected by the reindeer industry are ex officio local superintendents of the reindeer herds in the vicinity of their schools. The reindeer are distributed by a system of apprenticeship, promising and ambitious young natives being selected by each local superintendent as apprentices for a term of four years, receiving at the end of each year the number of reindeer prescribed by the regulations governing the service. Upon the satisfactory termination of his apprenticeship the apprentice becomes a herder and assumes entire charge of his herd, subject to the supervision of the district and local school authorities. In accordance with the regulations, the herder must in turn employ apprentices and distribute reindeer to them, thus becoming an additional factor in the extension of the enterprise. In order to safeguard the reindeer industry for the natives, the regulations forbid the disposal of female reindeer to others than natives of Alaska.

The object of the importation was originally to furnish a source of supply for food and clothing to the Alaskan Eskimos in the vicinity

of Bering Strait, nomadic hunters and fishermen, eking out a precarious existence upon the rapidly disappearing game animals and fish. Within less than a generation the reindeer industry has advanced through one entire stage of civilization, the Eskimos inhabiting the vast grazing lands from Point Barrow to the Aleutian Islands; it has raised them from the primitive to the pastoral stage: from nomadic hunters to civilized men, having in their herds of reindeer assured support for themselves and opportunity to accumulate wealth.

The magnitude and value of the reindeer industry have resulted in the making by Congress of an appropriation to enable the Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Bureau of Education, to make investigations, experiments, and demonstrations for the improvement of the reindeer industry in Alaska. The distribution of reindeer among the natives and the use of the enterprise as the form of industrial education best adapted to the races inhabiting the untimbered regions of Alaska will remain under the supervision of the Bureau of Education.

In making its public schools centers of social, industrial, and civic life in the native villages of Alaska, the Bureau of Education took pioneer action in making an educational agency reach an entire community.

The establishment of the Alaska reindeer service was the earliest governmental action providing, by the introduction of a new industry, practical vocational training, adapted to community needs, guaranteeing assured support, and resulting in training a primitive race into independence and responsible citizenship.