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WORK OF THE BUREAU OF EDUCATION
FOR THE NATIVES OF ALASKA

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WORK OF THE BUREAU OF EDUCATION FOR THE NATIVES OF ALASKA

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In addition to maintaining schools for the native children, the United States Bureau of Education aids entire communities by extending medical aid, by relieving destitution, by fostering commercial enterprises, by supervising the reindeer industry, and by promoting generally the interests of the natives.

The organization of the Alaska division of the bureau consists of the office in Washington with 3 employees; the office in Seattle, Wash., which is the headquarters of the chief of the Alaska Division and functions as the purchasing and disbursing office for the bureau's Alaskan work, with 7 employees; and the field force in Alaska, which, during the fiscal year 1927-28, included 6 superintendents, 177 teachers, 9 physicians, 28 nurses, 3 employees in connection with the reindeer service, 17 employees on the U. S. S. *Boxer* and on the Yukon River medical boat; also 19 cooks, janitors, and orderlies, a total of 269 employees. Ninety-five schools were maintained with an enrollment of 3,742 pupils.

The bureau's vessel, the *Boxer*, continues to render valuable service in transporting appointees, equipment, and supplies from Seattle to their remote destinations on the coast, on the outlying islands, or on the rivers of Alaska. Leaving Seattle in the spring the vessel makes its first voyage of the season through the waters of southeastern Alaska and along the southern coast as far as Kodiak Island; on its second voyage it visits the settlements on the shores of the Alaska Peninsula and of Bering Sea; its third voyage is the long cruise to the Eskimo villages beside the waters of the Arctic Ocean as far north as Point Barrow. The annual visit of the *Boxer* furnishes to many settlements their only means of communication with the rest of the world. Its passengers are the teachers, doctors, and nurses

going to or returning from their voluntary exile. Its cargo includes the lumber and hardware for use in constructing school buildings at various places in Alaska, the coal and food supplies required for a year, and a year's supply of the books, furniture, and equipment needed by the schools. On its last voyage for the season it brings to Seattle reindeer meat, furs, and ivory carvings which are sold for the Eskimos through the Seattle office of the Alaska Division.

Through employing Alaskan natives as sailors, the *Boxer* also functions as a training ship in the educational program of the bureau.

In each of the day schools, in addition to instruction in the usual academic subjects, attention is given to such industrial work as conditions permit. Sewing, cooking, and carpentry are emphasized. Important as the industrial work of the day schools is, it must be supplemented by specialized training in such activities as will enable the natives successfully to meet the new conditions resulting from the advance of civilization. With this in view, three industrial boarding schools are maintained, located at White Mountain on Seward Peninsula; at Kanakanak on Bristol Bay; and at Eklutna on the Alaska Railroad north of Anchorage. The curriculum of these schools includes such industries as carpentry, furniture making, boat building, the making of clothes, shoemaking, sled construction, operation and repair of gas engines, ivory carving, taxidermy, and basket weaving. The innate dexterity of the natives insures their success in these industries.

Having in view the necessity for the training of natives for service in connection with their cooperative stores, instruction is given in typewriting, stenography, clerical work, and business methods. Problems in connection with the reindeer industry are considered. Reindeer skins are tanned and made into garments. Instruction in health and sanitation is given by resident nurses. Directed play includes basketball, baseball, and tennis, as well as the primitive games of the natives themselves. Utilization of Alaska's food supply is stressed. Fish and berries, obtained plentifully during the season, are canned for winter use. The gardens at Eklutna furnish many of the vegetables required and hunting expeditions by the older boys supply the school with the meat of the caribou and the mountain sheep. From these industrial schools students will go directly into the industrial and business life of their communities, applying at once the knowledge and skill gained in the schools.

Experience has shown that teachers appointed from the States to schools in Alaska frequently have difficulty in adjusting themselves to local conditions and to the work for the natives. As the result

of conferences between the United States Commissioner of Education and the president of the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines, at Fairbanks, decision has been made to include in the work of that institution courses in the training of teachers for the schools of the natives of Alaska. Graduates from these courses will be considered for appointment by the Bureau of Education. The familiarity of these persons with the climate and general conditions in the Territory is expected to be advantageous.

On January 18, 1928, the school building at Barrow was destroyed by fire with all school supplies and personal effects of the teachers. The teachers and natives borrowed from the school at Wainwright, more than 100 miles distant, and transported by dog sleds, supplies, books, and equipment, and reopened school in a storeroom. Congress promptly made an emergency appropriation of \$16,000 for the erection of a new building and the purchase of supplies and equipment.

During the night of April 1, 1928, fire destroyed the 2-room log school building at White Mountain. Books, equipment, most of the records, the laundry of the boarding pupils, and a quantity of food stored in the building were burned. The building was erected a number of years ago as a day school, long before the industrial school was established. Congress made an appropriation of \$60,000 for a commodious building with its equipment, for a storehouse at Golovin, on the seacoast, and for a power boat to transport building materials and supplies from Golovin to White Mountain.

On June 8, 1928, the school building at Killisnoo, a village in southeastern Alaska, was destroyed by a fire that burned practically the entire village. Most of the natives have moved from Killisnoo to the neighboring village of Angoon.

In the autumn of 1927 the Combined Packers' Association deposited at Kanakanak, in southwestern Alaska, lumber, with plans and specifications, for a boys' dormitory at Kanakanak Industrial School. By special legislation the Secretary of the Interior was empowered to accept, officially this gift. At the opening of the 1928 cannery season in May carpenters were sent by the association to complete the erection of this building during the summer months.

Hospitals have been maintained at Juneau, Tanana, Akiak, Kanakanak, and Noorvik. Contracts were entered into with hospitals at Nome, Anchorage, and Cordova in Alaska, as well as with hospitals in the States of Washington and Oregon, for the treatment of Alaskan natives. Several native boys and girls were brought to Seattle for special treatment. The professional service rendered in Alaska during the fiscal year 1928 is shown in the following table:

Medical service by doctors and nurses

Service	By nurses	By doctors	Total
Number of visits to homes	8,725	201	8,926
Number of patients treated	11,304	5,150	16,454
Number of treatments given	31,286	20,659	51,945
Number of births reported	124	39	163
Number of deaths reported	128	30	158
Total days of hospital care	655	14,601	15,256
Out and clinic patients	637	3,988	4,625
Out and clinic calls	10,052	6,399	16,451

In the majority of the native settlements the teachers must of necessity extend medical aid to the best of their ability. In many regions the school is the only place within a radius of several hundred miles where the natives can obtain medical relief, and they make long journeys to secure it. The extent of this service is set forth below.

Community service rendered by teachers

District	Visits made to homes	Medical assistance rendered	Births reported	Deaths reported	Native population served	Number of teachers reporting
Central	2,901	4,701	60	43	1,898	32
Northwestern	2,889	3,394	61	34	2,260	22
Seward Peninsula	4,636	4,633	59	15	2,142	29
Southeastern	3,343	5,192	104	168	4,784	39
Southwestern	1,963	3,544	34	40	1,417	28
Western	3,666	6,306	45	41	2,020	27
Total	19,398	27,770	363	341	14,521	177

In order to extend medical relief to natives scattered throughout the Yukon Valley, the Yukon medical boat was again operated during the season of open navigation. In 1927 it was in charge of Dr. John Huston, detailed from the Juneau hospital, who was assisted by two trained nurses. The boat went into operation at Nenana on June 1, 1927, and its work was very successful during the early summer. Unfortunately, Doctor Huston fell overboard on July 16 and was drowned. After his death the two nurses continued to treat all cases along the river that required medical attention. During the cruise of the boat 1,473 patients were treated and much dental work accomplished, including 884 extractions. The opportunity for securing medical aid is greatly appreciated by the natives and whites in the isolated settlements along the river.

On June 8, 1928, the Yukon medical boat again went into commission with a physician, a dentist, and two nurses as its professional staff.

In view of the fact that a large number of reindeer are killed for food locally and for exportation it is difficult to state the precise number in Alaska at any given date. It is estimated that there are between 400,000 and 500,000 reindeer in the Territory.

The great increase in the number of herds of reindeer in northern and western Alaska rendered it urgent that provision be made for the allotment of grazing lands. By the act of March 4, 1927, authority was granted for the establishment by the Secretary of the Interior of grazing districts in Alaska and for the granting of leases for definitely described areas therein. The provisions of this act are being carried into effect as rapidly as possible. This action will regulate the occupancy of grazing lands by the reindeer herds and prevent friction among the owners of reindeer in regions where the herds are most numerous.

In order to interest the natives in reindeer raising and to encourage them, the reindeer were distributed among them through a system of apprenticeship; the result is a large number of individual owners. In 15 localities native owners of reindeer have combined their herds and formed cooperative associations, thus insuring better safeguarding of their interests, more efficient methods for the sale of meat and hides, economy in the herding, and simplification of the marking of the reindeer, one mark for the entire association being substituted for the large number of marks of the individual owners. These cooperative associations own approximately 160,000 reindeer.

It has been found that the ability of the natives to manage their herds is a condition to their success in the reindeer industry. The Commissioner of Education and the president of the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines have entered into an agreement by which a limited number of Eskimo young men will be received by that institution in order to furnish them an opportunity to acquire training to fit them for the independent management of their herds. At the experiment station of the Bureau of Biological Survey, maintained in connection with the college, these natives will be instructed in reindeer husbandry, including selective breeding, the prevention and cure of diseases, the marketing of the meat and hides, and the nutritive value of the various forage plants eaten by the reindeer. They will also be given special courses in the college in cooking, sanitation, hygiene, and such elementary school subjects as are found suitable to their requirements. Six young men, whose expenses are paid by the Federal Government, have entered upon this course. A succession of natives thus trained would provide competent administrators of the reindeer industry and insure its permanent success.

As part of their duty, the teachers in the Bureau of Education's schools in those regions affected by the reindeer industry have hitherto been required to exercise supervision over the herds in the vicinity of their schools. The growth and importance of the industry have necessitated the appointment of a general supervisor whose duties cover all matters connected with the reindeer service, including

the inspection of the herds, the establishment of new herds, the making of recommendations for the issuing of leases for grazing areas, cooperation in the prevention of disease, promoting the marketing of the meat and hides, and furthering all other measures for the advancement of the industry.

One of the problems in connection with the reindeer industry is the providing of a market for the meat, which is greatly in excess of local demands. Progress is, however, being made in this direction. When returning from northernmost Alaska, the *Borer* calls at Eskimo villages along the Arctic coast north of Nome and takes on board about 500 carcasses, which, at Nome, are transferred to steamers bound to Seattle. The *Borer* then proceeds to St. Lawrence Island, in northern Bering Sea, and again fills her cold-storage space to capacity with carcasses for sale to dealers in the towns along the southern coast of Alaska and in Seattle.

An incorporated company, with a capital of \$3,000,000, exports large quantities of reindeer meat each season and maintains six plants on the Seward Peninsula, to which reindeer are driven when in prime condition, slaughtered, and placed in cold storage. For the transportation of its reindeer meat from Alaska to Seattle and of supplies needed in Alaska, this company operates the *Sierra*, a freighter with a capacity of 2,000 tons, which makes three round trips during the season of navigation, transporting approximately 12,000 carcasses during the season. The steamers *Victoria* and *Alameda*, of the Alaska Steamship Co., have also been equipped with refrigeration facilities and transport reindeer meat from Nome to Seattle. A cold-storage plant has been constructed on the shore of Bristol Bay for the storage and sale of reindeer meat to the 28 canneries operated in that region during the summer months; surplus meat at the end of the season is shipped to the Pacific coast on the cannery tenders. Flat-bottomed barges, decked over and provided with cold-storage compartments, are towed from deep water into shallow bays and rivers to furnish storage for reindeer slaughtered at Kotzebue, within the Arctic Circle, St. Michael, near the mouth of the Yukon River, and at Kokrines, on the lower Yukon River.

The increase in the exportation of reindeer meat rendered desirable an inquiry into its nutritive value. Chemical and biological analyses of reindeer meat made by the Department of Agriculture, at the request of the Bureau of Education, show that it has high protein, low fat, and comparatively low moisture. This means that reindeer meat possesses high nutritive value in proportion to its weight, which is an important fact in a commodity which is shipped long distances from its source of supply.