

## **RECORDS OF THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS**

### **RECORD GROUP 75**

In 1824, Congress established an Office of Indian Affairs within the War Department, the agency which had exercised jurisdiction over Indian relations since the formation of the Federal government. The Office operated informally within the War Department until Congress authorized the appointment of a Commissioner of Indian affairs in 1832. The Office was transferred to the new Department of the Interior in 1849. Although commonly called the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), it was not officially so designated until 1947.

As presently constituted, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is responsible for most of the Federal government's relations with the tribes of Indians that it recognizes. Some groups of Indians, particularly in the eastern states, have never received official recognition, while others ceased to function as cohesive tribes before the establishment of the Federal government in 1789. The Bureau has only exercised responsibility for Indians living on a recognized reservation or who maintained an affiliation with a recognized tribe. Many people of Indian descent are not mentioned in any of the Bureau's records because they, or their predecessors, had severed all connection with any tribe.

The programs of the BIA have had an impact on virtually every phase of tribal development and individual Indian life including education, land ownership, financial affairs, employment, and legal rights. The Bureau had also long been responsible for health issues but in 1955, most to these activities, including the operation of Indian hospitals, were transferred to the Public Health Service.

When it was created in 1824, the Bureau inherited a well-established system of agencies, each of which was responsible for all relations with one or more tribes. Many of these agencies were subordinate to a superintendency that had general responsibility for Indian affairs in a territory or other geographical area. Although there were numerous changes in agency designations and jurisdictions, this basic organizational structure remained unchanged until superintendencies were abolished in the 1870's and all agents began reporting directly to the Bureau headquarters in Washington, DC. In 1947, the BIA established "area offices" to exercise supervisory control over agencies and other administrative units (such as schools or irrigation districts) within a specific geographic region.

In addition to the agents who were responsible for the day-to-day implementation of Indian policy, the Bureau often sent officials into the field for special purposes. These included treaty commissioners, inspectors, purchasing and disbursing agents, enrolling and allotting agents, and education specialists. Many of the schools that operated on Indian reservations were under the control of a superintendent who was often independent of the agent and sometimes exercised the functions of an agent. There were also a number of non-reservation schools, such as the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, which accepted students from all over the country and were not under the control of any local agency.

The BIA's administration in Alaska was late in developing and unique in that with one specialized exception (see below), the Natives of Alaska did not include the reservation system and education for Natives was the initial impetus. Although schools for Native children existed in the Russian period, the first such of the American era did not open until 1883, at Juneau and nearby Sitka. Eventually, day schools were established in many Native villages. The head teacher served not only as an instructor but also performed the duties of a social director and medical worker for the entire community. In many villages, particularly the more isolated ones, the teacher was the only U.S. Government official and represented a number of Federal agencies. Beginning in the 1930s, under the Office of Indian Affairs, these teachers were also responsible for social welfare work, occupational training, recreational activities, and supervised Native cooperative organizations and reindeer herding.

The Alaska Division of the Office of Education was established in 1885 pursuant to an act of May 17, 1884 (23 Stat. 24), which directed the Secretary of the Interior to provide education for children in Alaska. On April 11, 1885, the Commissioner of Education appointed Sheldon Jackson of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions as general agent for education in Alaska. The Division consisted of a section in the central office in Washington, D.C., and a field office in Seattle, Washington. Jackson divided his time between the two. The Washington, D.C., office was headed

by an Alaskan Assistant, who administered the policies formulated by the Commissioner of Education and approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

The Alaska Division's Seattle office was headed by a "Superintendent of Education of Natives of Alaska," who supervised field activities through an educational unit comprised of nine school districts, each in the charge of a District Superintendent. These Districts were the: Northern (1908-1911), Northwestern (1912-1934), Seward Peninsula (1919-1934), Western (1912-1934), Upper Yukon (1912-1922), Central (1922-1934), Southern (1908), Southeastern (1909-1934), and Southwestern (1909-1934).

Medical relief work among Alaskan Natives began about 1915, and by the early 1920s, there were five hospitals. This medical relief was carried out with the advice and assistance of the Public Health Service. At first, the Alaska Medical Service was operated by the Seattle field office, but on July 1, 1930, the educational and medical relief functions were transferred from Seattle to Juneau and placed under a director of education and a director of the Service. Thereafter, the Seattle office performed largely routine administrative functions.

On March 14, 1931, the Secretary of the Interior's Order 494 transferred the Alaska Division from the Office of Education to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. By then, the Division's activities had expanded beyond education and medical care into economic assistance, necessitated by the depletion of the seal herds and whale fisheries.

In 1933, the new Alaska Indian Service, headquartered in Juneau, replaced the Alaska Division. The new office coordinated the programs of its divisions, which included the Alaska Native School Service, the Alaska Medical Service, and the Credit, Welfare, and Construction Divisions. The Alaska Native School Service operated a system of day, special, and vocational boarding schools. The Alaska Medical Service grew to encompass a system of clinics and hospitals scattered throughout the territory. By the 1930s, there were nine general hospitals located at Barrow, Bethel, Juneau, Kanakanak, Kotzebue, Mountain Village, Tanana, Unalaska, and Mount Edgecumbe Medical Center at Sitka. Tubercular patients were hospitalized in the specialized tuberculosis wards of many of these hospitals, the Tuberculosis Sanitarium at Sitka (formerly in Skagway), Seward Sanitarium, and at Tacoma Indian Hospital.

Other economic and social assistance followed. A short-lived Alaska Trust Fund was established for the convenience of Alaska Natives and Federal employees for whom it provided banking services, including the extension of credit. This fund was administered by a Treasurer and Trustee in the Seattle office but was discontinued on February 1, 1935. A related Annette Island fund was also set up by an amendment to Secretary's Order 434. Under the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934 (48 Stat. 984), the Trust and Annette Island Funds made loans to Natives to pay for education in the trades and vocations. In 1939, a revolving credit fund program began to economically support the fishing industry in southeastern Alaska and Native cooperative stores in the other parts of the Territory. These stores operated in villages as the main source of food, clothing, and other supplies and also were used as clearing houses for furs, ivory,

and Native crafts. In 1948, the Credit Division began providing financing for the Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association (ANICA), a central buying organization for the Native stores. In addition, it operated a network of radio stations at most schools and hospitals in the more isolated areas. The Welfare Division provided financial assistance to Native families and their dependants, orphaned children, those with physical handicaps, and other qualified persons. The Construction Division supervised a regular maintenance and repair program and handled major construction projects.

In 1945, the name of the Alaska Indian Service was changed to the Alaska Native Service.

The Alaska Resupply Program began in 1922 when the Bureau of Education acquired the U.S.S. *Boxer* from the Navy to deliver personnel and supplies to Bureau stations, schools, and hospitals. In 1932, the program was transferred from the Bureau of Education to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and expanded to provide transportation services to Alaska Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos along the coastal areas of Alaska which were without service by commercial ocean carriers. The primary objective of the program was that, through regular delivery of cargo and fuel, the Natives would be able to improve their standard of living. A resupply network, including the Seattle Liaison Office (later, the Seattle Support Center), a large terminal facility in Seattle, and one to two vessels, was put into place. In 1932, the first *North Star* replaced the ancient *Boxer* and, in its turn, was replaced by the larger U.S.M.S. *North Star II*. The resupply program continued to expand and, in 1961, the full-rigged freighter *North Star III* came into service and sailed until 1984. Thereafter, the maritime resupply program continued under commercial contract and on military sealift.

In the reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1956, regional offices were set up to coordinate activities of Indian agencies and service districts. The Juneau Area Office was established to coordinate services to all Alaska Natives. This office also supervised the operation of the Bureau's system of day and boarding schools scattered throughout Alaska. In 1984, the Bureau turned over most of its responsibilities for educating Alaska Natives to the State of Alaska.

## RECORDS DESCRIPTION

Dates: 1886-1889, 1912-1983 (bulk dates: 1933-1983). Volume: 927 cu.. ft.

Records of the following divisions, offices, agencies, and schools:

ALASKA DIVISION OF THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION, 1886-1889. This division was established in 1885 with a section in the central office in Washington, D.C. and a field office in Seattle, Washington. The records consist of a file created by Sheldon Jackson on Alaskan School Matters, 1886-1889, in his capacity as General Agent for Education in Alaska.

ALASKA INDIAN SERVICE, Juneau, 1933-1945/ALASKA NATIVE SERVICE, Juneau, 1945-1956. The records concern administrative matters, the phasing out of some day schools, school

management and personnel, welfare and employment assistance, and the operation of Native stores. Among the records included are correspondence (i.e., general subject correspondence, mission correspondence, education correspondence, social services decimal files, etc.), narrative inspection reports, and school activity and attendance reports.

JUNEAU AREA OFFICE, 1956-present. Established in 1956, it supervises the following offices, agencies, and schools: Anchorage Agency, Bethel Agency (closed, 1995), Fairbanks Agency, Ketchikan Office, Kotzebue Office, Nome Agency (closed, 1995), Southeast Agency, Seattle (Washington) Support Center; Wrangell Institute (closed, 1975); and Mount Edgecumbe Boarding School (transferred to State of Alaska, 1983). The type and contents of records vary, and there are often gaps in chronological coverage. In many cases, the record series of the Area Office and now held by this regional archives are similar in scope and content to those of its two predecessor agencies, the Alaska Native Service and the Alaska Native Service.

Records of the Juneau Area Office document tribal economic, political, and social life; the daily relations between the BIA and Alaska Natives, a superintendent and his superiors, and officials of other Federal and local government agencies; and the perceptions of field employees about Alaska Natives and his duties. Included are annual narrative and statistical reports and correspondence.

The records concern Natives' financial affairs such as annuity payments and disbursements of other funds to tribal members as a result of treaties or congressional legislation. They contain the Natives' name and the amount of money or type of goods received. The records include cash reports, ledgers of receipts and disbursements, property returns; and vouchers.

Tribal or village censuses and other enrollment records pertain to genealogy and tribal demographics. In particular, the Alaskan Village Census Rolls, 1912-1972 (bulk dates: 1933-1972), provide information on individual residents (e.g., surnames, dates of birth or age, sex, occupation, degree of Native blood, etc.) in 328 camps, villages, and towns scattered across Alaska. The records of the Juneau Area Office also contain Tlingit-Haida tribal enrollments, 1890s-1976, for individual members of this group. The Bethel Agency records include village or tribal censuses, ca. 1940-1974.

The records also concern financial affairs of "restricted Indians," considered incompetent because of their age or other factors. They reflect the collection and disbursement of funds; requests by Natives for money to buy automobiles, clothing, farming equipment, furniture, groceries, livestock, pianos, and many other items; and the determination of heirs and the distribution of the estates.

The records document the operation of non-reservation schools that Alaska Natives attended; school enrollments; and planning and implementation of educational programs. Included are correspondence, narrative and statistical reports, school newspapers, and individual student files that contain applications for admission, correspondence, and grades. The records also reflect the impact

of changing social and economic conditions caused by health care programs; construction of homes and roads; housing; income; liquor control; living conditions; and recreation. They concern tribal governments and provide insight into tribal policies and Native reaction to various Federal programs and policies. Included are agendas, minutes, and resolutions of tribal business committees or other elected groups.

Nontextual records include building plans, maps, and photographs.

The type and content of records of the agencies and boarding schools vary and there are often gaps in chronological coverage. For instance, with the exception of the Anchorage, Bethel, and Fairbanks Agencies, most of the agency records are limited to employment assistance case files, which concern relocation and financial and employment assistance.

ALASKA REINDEER SERVICE, 1901-1974. In 1891 Sheldon Jackson led an expedition to Siberia to import the first reindeer into Alaska to provide food, clothing, and a source of income from the sale of hides and meat. This was followed by other such expeditions, each financed by small congressional appropriations. In 1929, the Secretary of the Interior signed an order transferring responsibility for reindeer matters from the Bureau of Education to the Office of the Alaskan Territorial Governor in his capacity as *ex officio* Commissioner of the Department of the Interior for Alaska. By 1933, there were five such units in Alaska. Administrative responsibility for the reindeer herds shifted several times but 1937 it was returned to the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, wherein an Alaska Reindeer Service was established. The Service was headed by a general reindeer supervisor, located in Nome, and included teachers from the Bureau of Indian Affairs who also served as local reindeer superintendents and unit managers. The records include annual reports of reindeer herds; decimal correspondence; circulars; apprentice contracts; sales correspondence; general case files; monthly herd reports; agricultural, hunting, and fishing statistics (alphabetically arranged by village name); fur farm statistics; herd permits; and other related records. The papers of Lawrence J. Palmer, who served as an official of the Bureau of Biological Survey, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Reindeer Service in Alaska from 1922 to 1945 are also among these records..

EKLUTNA INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, 1924-1945. Opened as a non-reservation industrial boarding school in 1924, it was located twenty-five miles northeast of Anchorage. Eklutna provided high school and vocational training to Natives from the Yukon River, Kuskokwim, and central Alaska. After the Tanana Orphanage and School for the Blind closed in 1933, some students were transferred to Eklutna. The Industrial School closed in 1945 and the faculty and students were temporarily housed in surplus barracks at Fort Ray near Seward. In 1947, they moved to Mount Edgecumbe School. The school's student records (including files prior to 1941) are merged into the Mount Edgecumbe School individual student case files, 1941-1983.

MOUNT EDGECUMBE SCHOOL, 1941-1983. Opened as a non-reservation boarding school for Alaska Natives in 1947, it was located on the former U.S. Naval Operating Base on Japonski Island across the harbor from Sitka. In 1947, students from the closed Eklutna Industrial School, Wrangell

Institute, and possibly from White Mountain Industrial School transferred to this site. The curriculum stressed vocational training for students in trades associated with the maritime economy of southeastern Alaska and other industries of Alaska. Courses included mechanics, arts and crafts, and domestic science, in addition to standard academic studies. Because it was able to provide advanced vocational course work for students from communities without a high school, Mount Edgecumbe had large enrollments from throughout Alaska. In 1950, the Bureau opened a two-hundred bed sanatorium and orthopedic hospital at the school. In 1984, Mount Edgecumbe School became (and remains) a state-operated boarding facility. Records include the individual student files, 1941-1983.

SEATTLE SUPPORT CENTER, 1920-1984. The Alaska Resupply Program records include program correspondence files, history files, and logbooks of the U.S.S. Boxer and the U.S.M.S. North Star I, II, and III. Also included are correspondence, financial records, and reports of the Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association (ANICA).

WHITE MOUNTAIN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, ca. 1924-1947. It was a combination boarding and day school. Junior high boys and girls were enrolled in the boarding school while the day school offered educational opportunities for elementary school children living in White Mountain village. White Mountain served primarily Inuit and Inupiat students from the Seward Peninsula and northwest Alaska. While the Regional Archives holds no distinct records of White Mountain, the correspondence files of the Alaska Indian Service and its successor agency refer to it and it is likely that, as with other schools, students transferred to Mount Edgecumbe when White Mountain closed in 1947.

WRANGELL INSTITUTE, 1932-1975. This non-reservation Alaska Native boarding institute opened in 1932 near Wrangell. Originally, it was a boarding institute for orphaned Native children of elementary school age, grew to include a vocational boarding school for older children, and then reverted in 1947 to a boarding school to provide a home and school facilities for abandoned, neglected, and dependent children of elementary school age. The vocational students transferred to Mount Edgecumbe Boarding School. The Institute closed in 1975.

**RELATED RECORDS:** Several other record groups held by the Alaska Region of the National Archives include material of interest to researchers in Alaska Native history. Records of District Courts of the United States (RG 21), 1884-1991. The case files in the records of the district courts of the United States (RG 21) often contain information regarding Native use of land and resources, locations of seasonal settlements, fishing rights and methods, social and religious customs and practices, and many other topics. The regional archives holds records of the U.S. district court in Alaska.

Records of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (RG 22), 1872-1969. The records of the Pribilof Islands Program, 1872-1994, document the Federal government's role in seal harvesting and with the Aleut islanders. These records document the voyages of the *Penguin* and other ships

in a maritime supply program similar to that of the BIA's *Boxer* and *North Stars*. In 1969, the responsibilities for the Pribilof Islands fur sealing program were transferred to the National Marine Fisheries Service, now a part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Additional program records are also described in the guide entry for the records of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (RG 370).

Records of the Bureau of Land Management (RG 49) include land survey records, field notes, plat maps, tract and deed books, and townsite trustee records showing the locations of Native-owned land; correspondence; and other records. The regional archives holds records of BLM offices in Alaska.

As part of Record Group 200, the National Archives Gift Collection, the regional archives holds the Sir Henry S. Wellcome Collection, an extensive block of government documents, private manuscripts, correspondence, and a large number of photographs concerning the Tsimshian Indians of Metlakatla, Alaska.

**RELATED MICROFICHE/FILM:** The records of the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs are held by the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The Alaska Region has microfilm copies of three separate record series, (1) unnumbered, selected General Correspondence, 1908-1935 (54 rolls, 35mm); (2) unnumbered, Indexes to General Correspondence, 1910-1930 (in process, forthcoming 1996); and (3) M1333, Records of the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Concerning Metlakatla, 1897-1931 (14 rolls, 35mm).

In 1908 the Alaska Division started a general correspondence file used until 1935. It is arranged for the most part by fiscal year and thereunder by main and subsidiary headings, which varied somewhat from year to year. Typical headings are legislation, department relations (with folders for individual departments and bureaus), Executive orders, natives, land, reindeer, outside relations, monthly office reports, Alaska Trust Fund, contracts, leases, estimates, circular letters, new schools and hospitals, inspection, officers and employees, appointments, supplies, financial matters, buildings, U.S.S. *Boxer*, Seattle office, names of individual districts, and in the earlier years individual schools in alphabetical order. The school files (rolls 1-27) include correspondence for sixty-four Bureau of Education schools in sixty-two Alaskan communities for the years 1908-1920. The New Schools File (roll 28) and the District Files, 1908-1934, (rolls 29-48), were also microfilmed by special arrangement. The Reindeer Files, 1908-1935 (rolls 49-54), document the integral role the Alaska Reindeer Service played in the education of Alaska Natives in northern Alaska. In 1982, part of this record series was microfilmed by the National Archives (NARS) for the Alaska State Library in Juneau. For further information, see entry 806 in Edward E. Hill, comp., Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, PI-163. The Indexes to General Correspondence, 1910-1930, consists of a card index on microfilm for the years 1910 to 1930. These cards index the correspondence described immediately above. For further information, see entry 805 in PI-163.

There is a separate series of correspondence, reports, and other records, 1897-1931, on microfilm concerning the Metlakahtla controversy, which involved William Duncan and the colony he dominated on Annette Island. There are also some copies of telegrams and letters sent by the Chief of the Alaska Section of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1935-37. For further information, see entry 807 in PI-163. There is also some material concerning Metlakatla in the general correspondence (entry 806). See also Preliminary Inventory 150, "The Sir Henry S. Wellcome Papers in the Federal Records Center, Seattle, Washington" (1963). In 1991, the Wellcome Collection was transferred from the National Archives-Pacific Northwest Region to the National Archives-Alaska Region.

## RELATED MICROFICHE/FILM

- A-3303 Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Pribilof Islands Logbooks, 1872-1961 (RG 22)
- I-15 William Duncan Papers, 1851-1945 (selected rolls)
- I-18 Reindeer Program Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Land Operations Branch, Juneau, Alaska, 1909-1968
- I-24 North of Fifty-three: Army, Treasury Department, and Navy Administration of Alaska, 1867-1884 (Ph.D. dissertation, 1974)
- I-28 The Alaskan Labors of Sheldon Jackson, 1877-1890 (Ph.D. dissertation, 1961)
- M-6 Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800-1889
- M-11 Records of the Russian-American Company, 1802-1867
- M-18 Register of Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1880
- M-21 Letters Sent by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881
- M-22 Registers of Letters Received by the Office of the Secretary of War, Main Series, 1800-1870
- M-234 Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881
- M-348 Report Books of the Office of Indian Affairs, 1838-1885
- M-430 Interior Department Territorial Papers: Alaska, 1869-1911
- M-574 Special Files of the Office of Indian Affairs, 1807-1904
- M-641 Alaska File of the Revenue Cutter Service, 1867-1914
- M-668 Ratified Indian Treaties, 1722-1869
- M-720 "Alaska File" of the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, 1868-1903
- M-802 Alaska File of the Special Agents Division of the Department of the Treasury, 1867-1903
- M-939 General Correspondence of the Alaskan Territorial Governor, 1909-1958
- M-1011 Superintendent's Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports From Field Jurisdictions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1907-1938
- M-1012 Records of the Alaskan Territorial Legislature, 1913-1953
- M-1070 (selected rolls) Reports of Inspections of the Field Jurisdictions of the Office of Indian Affairs, 1873-1900
- M-1293 Public Hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of

- Civilians
- M-1333 Records of the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Concerning Matlakatla, 1887-1933
  - M-1486 (selected rolls)
  - P-2008 Chemawa Register of Pupils Admitted, 1880-1927
  - P-2010 Historical Album of Bureau of Education-Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools in Alaska, ca. 1925-1935.
  - P-2263 Chemawa Indian School: Index to Descriptive Statements of Students, 1890-1914.
  - P-2286, Alaskan Village Census Rolls, 1912-1972 [bulk dates: 1934-1972]
  - T-1200 Chronological Files of the Alaskan Governor, 1884-1913
  - T-1201 Correspondence of the Secretary of Alaska, 19900-1913

## FINDING AIDS

Series title list.

For many Alaska series; folder and box content lists.

BIA file classification manuals (1951 and 1962) provide numerical and alphabetical listings for coded decimal file series.

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Entries 798-823 Records of the Alaska Division) [PI-163].

Cartographic Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Special List 13 (Entries 5, 414, 538, 757-761, 855, 866, and 969).

**RESTRICTIONS:** Access to some files or portions of documents may be restricted due to privacy concerns. These files include student case files, employment assistance case files, and welfare case files, as they contain personal information on individual Alaska Natives..