

Temporary Schoolrooms Likely for Kaltag

School children at Kaltag may be back in class this fall despite a July 7 fire that gutted the community's two-classroom BIA school.

Wallace Craig, BIA Area Director in Fairbanks, yesterday told the Tundra Times that temporary buildings may be put up in Kaltag, on the lower Yukon River, to house school classes until a new, bigger school can be built there.

Despite the crash program to build, he said, it may be a month after the ordinary opening of classes in the fall until Kaltag youngsters can resume their education.

The community's small school burned last July 7 when a fire of undetermined cause swept through the building in the middle of the night.

BIA teacher Richard Burcell and his wife, Roberta, were able to get out of the

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burning building but lost all their belongings.

Burcell himself escaped with only a pair of trousers and the keys to his new airplane.

Goodwin Semekin, Kaltag resident who works as a maintenance man at the school, discovered the fire around 11 p.m. and woke Burcell and his wife by pounding on doors and windows.

The teacherage was a part of the two classroom complex. Everything in the building was destroyed, according to reports.

Kaltag's school was perhaps due for replacement or enlargement anyway, Craig said yesterday. Last year

85 youngsters were crowded into the two small classrooms, attending school in two half-day shifts.

The BIA hopes to build a new three-classroom school there, with a kitchen for hot lunches and a multi-purpose room if funds are available in the federal budget. Teacher's quarters at the new building would be separate with room for another man and wife teacher team at the village.

Last year the Bureau's construction budget was severely cut by Congress in a cost-trimming measure to ease burdens of increased U.S. military costs in Viet Nam.

Until the new school at Kaltag can be built, Craig said, school youngsters will probably be attending class-

Ralph Mize, head of the BIA's Planning, Design and Construction division in New Mexico is in San Francisco now buying pre-fabricated materials for the temporary buildings, and yesterday Craig and Carl Scott, Planning Officer with the Bureau's PD&C flew to Kaltag to look the situation over.

Final approval for installing the temporary buildings will still have to come from Washington, D.C., Craig said. It may cost two to three hundred thousand dollars to put up the pre-fabricated structure.

The old school was built 25 years ago at a cost of \$140,000.