

# Are JOM and IEA Both Needed?

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During the past school year, a number of teachers, school officials and members of the public have asked, "Do we really need both Johnson-O'Malley and Indian Education Act programs?" Often these are the same questioners who doubted that the schools should have any special educational programs for Native students. Upon being convinced that special needs do exist among Native children, these doubters then ask why there are two separate programs spending Federal monies to meet these needs.

The answer to that question lies in the exact nature and scope of each program, and in the historic and legal framework within which each operates. The programs actually serve different groups with different services.

As operated during the past school year, the Indian Education Act program administered by the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District served Native American students enrolled in the School District's schools. There were counselors who offered tutoring and some cultural heritage classes to students in those schools having high percentages of Native students. A curriculum developer worked with the School District's curriculum steering committee and other concerned officials toward establishing better curriculum and materials for teaching School District students about Alaskan Native

people.

The JOM program operated by Fairbanks Native Association was multi-faceted. It offered six classes, accredited through the FNSB School District, as alternative high school electives. Demonstrations and classes centered on various aspects of Alaskan Native cultural heritage were offered several times throughout the year at many of the School District's schools, and at Headstart. A library of books and materials concerning Alaskan Natives and other Native Americans was open in the FNA building. A curriculum developer worked on development of immediately usable, hands-on types of educational materials that could be used by local children and teachers. A newspaper, River Times, was published monthly.

The basic similarity of the two programs was that both were dedicated to the goal of improving the general education of Alaskan Native students in the Fairbanks area. An additional goal is allowing parents of Native children more influence in their children's education. This was true in Fairbanks, and is generally true of all IEA and JOM programs everywhere.

Differences between the programs were primarily the target groups of eligible children, the purpose and length of the programs, and the exact form of the programs. IEA programs serve children of 1/16th or more Native American origin, and eligibility is somewhat determined by the contracting agency. If, as in Fairbanks, the con-

tracting agency is a school district, then only students enrolled in that district are served. JOM programs serve students of 1/4th or more Native American origin, and may serve any such child between 3 and 18 who is enrolled in any public or private school or program which is not sectarian. The 3- and 4 year-olds may be served even if they are not enrolled in any other school.

The primary difference in length and purpose of the two programs is that IEA was enacted for a specific period of time. Congress intended it to be a five-year program to upgrade education in a given district or area. That original intent has not yet been altered by Congress, so that even with extending amendments, the funding is expected to last no longer than five years. The JOM Act was passed in 1934, and was designed to give the Federal Government a legal way to contract for educational services performed for Native Americans. Other acts and regulations have refined that purpose to its present definition of providing "supplemental" education for Native students. Still, the length of time of funding has not been limited as yet. So long as Congress feels a need exists, JOM funding will continue.

The exact form of the programs in the Fairbanks area has obviously been different. Some teachers and school administrators have felt that the programs have overlapped somewhat. In trying to improve the general education offered to Native children in this area, and attempting to eliminate any