

BIA Transfers Ten Schools To State

The transfer of 10 Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to State operation this summer is expected to cause no major changes or problems, BIA and Alaskan officials said in public meetings in the villages affected.

They continued that the transfer was part of a pre-arranged plan between the State of Alaska and the Bureau. Under this plan, all BIA schools will be transferred to the State as soon as it is able to handle them.

Last week, Wallace Craig, Fairbanks District Superintendent for the BIA, and G. Lee Hayes, Area Superintendent for the State Department of Education, held public meetings in Minto, Tanacross, Eagle, and Northway to explain the transfer to the residents of the villages.

Similar meetings were held in the Anchorage area, where schools at Atka, Kalignek, Manokotak, New Stuyahok, and Togiak will be turned over to the State, and the school at English Bay will be turned over to the Kenai Borough.

Craig and Hayes told the

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Schools . . .

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Tundra Times that the turnout at Minto, Eagle, and Northway was extremely high, and that the residents were interested in how the transfer would effect the education, school lunch, janitorial service, and other programs.

Hayes said that the main change would be "some new faces, and correspondence with new people for funding and administration." In Minto Tanacross, and Eagle, he said that the BIA had left the schools in excellent shape, and the State could just "move in and start operating."

In these three villages, the title to the schools will be given to the State on July 1 of this year. A different situation exists in Northway, where the school facilities are severely overcrowded.

There, the school will be operated by the State, under contract with the BIA.

This arrangement, established under the Johnson-O'Malley Act, has the state operate the school and perform routine maintenance, while the BIA handles major alterations and improvements. It is used when schools are not up to standard.

In Northway, the one-classroom, 40-student BIA school near the village will be combined with the two-classroom, 50-student State school at the FAA station. Title to the BIA school will not be transferred until the BIA and the State have eliminated the overcrowding.

At present, some seventh and eighth grade Native children from Northway are being sent to school in Oklahoma because of the overcrowding.

Hayes said that he was taking information on the situation to Juneau, and he expected plans for next year to be announced as soon as possible.

Craig said that the transfer of the other BIA schools in the State would be decided on a year-to-year basis, depending on the State's ability to support them.

He added that the transfer involved only the BIA schools, and did not affect any other services.