



PHOTO BY ROB STAPLETON

Chuna McIntyre talks with Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy at a recent reception for Alaskan artists held at the Senate Office Building in Washington D.C. More than 100 Alaskan artists exhibited their works. McIntyre, a well-known Yup'ik dancer and paint artist was one of three Alaska Natives.

Senate approves Edgumbe repair money

By Ceceile Kay Richter
Tundra Times

True to his word, Alaska U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens plugged \$31.35 million into a current year federal supplemental appropriations bill for the upgrade and repair of Mount Edgumbe Boarding School and 20 day schools still operated in Alaska by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The bill, which has already passed the House of Representatives without the BIA funds was reported from the Senate appropriations committee last Thursday. It will be considered by the full Senate sometime after June 6 when the Senate returns from a 10-day recess.

In the Senate version of the bill, the language is flexible enough so that BIA could conceivably run Mount Edgumbe for the 1983-84 school year out of the \$22 million for its rehabilitation, Stevens' press secretary Pam Rubinstein said from Washington D.C.

However, she said that the bill could pass the House with the added funds but the House might not approve it.

The final resolution probably won't be known until late in June.

The present appropriations law bars BIA from spending any money to continue academic and residential programs at the high school after June 30 of this year.

Glenn Robertson, BIA public information officer in Juneau, said that "While the supplemental has passed the Senate Appropriations Committee, until it becomes effective law there isn't much we can do except to keep marching on the orders we already have to close the school."

Gov. Bill Sheffield said "This initial step in the Senate takes us measurably closer to resolution of the question of continuation of Mount Edgumbe. Coupled with a complete review of our educational options at the high school, and a more thorough review of the balance of our rural educational effort, I am confident that we can develop sound in-

novative uses for Mount Edgumbe."

Sheffield said State Commissioner of Education Harold Reynolds Jr., has plans to begin working with architectural firms and program specialists to evaluate state options in the immediate future but that state use is not foreseen before 1984 or later.

BIA Juneau Area Director Jake Lestenkof said on Friday that he felt it would be almost impossible for the BIA to run an educational program at the site next year while the state is conducting the renovation of the facilities.

Lestenkof said "It would be more prudent to close it for
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a year and get it fixed up right so that an educational program could be provided in the renovated facilities the year after that."

Lestenkof told the Mount Edgecumbe graduating class at commencement ceremonies last Friday that for more than 50 years the BIA had been in the education business in Alaska, running at one time 139

day schools and several boarding schools. Now there is only Mt. Edgecumbe and 20 elementary day schools.

"Shortly we will fade out of this operation because we now have a party known as the State of Alaska which is indeed able and willing to take over this rule."

Himself a Mt. Edgecumbe graduate, Lestenkof said "I feel that Mt. Edgecumbe as an

institution is important now and in the future and I hope that this state will make it a part of its education system, especially a part of rural education."

In announcing the appropriations committee response to his request for Alaska, Stevens said "These funds would pave the way for a final agreement for the state of Alaska to assume control of Mt. Edge-

cumbe in 1984 and operate it as a secondary school for all Alaska students.

The committee's action will help facilitate the continuing negotiations between the state, the BIA, and the congressional delegation.

In addition to the \$22 million for Mt. Edgecumbe, Senator Stevens added \$9.35 million to bring the remaining BIA day schools up to state health and safety standards. If this money is approved by Congress, the funds for the day schools would be combined with \$9.35 million already in BIA's current appropriation to assist the state of Alaska in the basic operation and maintenance of the remaining day schools when they are transferred to the state.

When announced May 18, Steven's plan called for a complete state takeover of the day school program by the end of the 1984-85 school year. According to sources in the governor's office, it was envisioned that the state assume control of 10 day schools by the end of the 1983-84 school year and the remaining 10 by the end of the 1984-85 school year.

It has since been announced by the Department of Education that Tuntutuliak Day School will be transferred to the state at the end of this school year at the request of

the village.

If the Senate language giving the BIA flexibility to operate Mt. Edgecumbe does pass the House, it could be too late, Robertson said. "The people to run the school such as the superintendent, and many of the teachers, and dormitory counselors, have already accepted other positions. Some of the faculty have been in government housing this year and even if the school continues, their housing will not be available again.

"People have already made their ferry reservations down South," he said.

He also said that many actions needed to run the school next year — ordering supplies, booking plane reservations, and other things — have not been taken, thus making it almost impossible practically to open the school next year.

Steve Thomas, BIA's Juneau property control officer, said that the Mt. Edgecumbe equipment is going through the federal screening cycle. About half the equipment at Edgecumbe already has been selected by BIA and other federal agencies for use and, as of June 6, those agencies can remove the property.

After June 13, any equipment not claimed by federal agencies will be available for state donation.