

Cry wolf

Only one week remains before the final, end, no-more-general assistance cutoff to financial aid to many Alaska Natives who have great need for such aid.

One more week and no solid plan has been put in place to compensate for that lack of assistance.

The BIA and state Department of Health and Social Services have worked out an analysis which recommends, among other things, that an adequate "lead time" be worked out so that federal general assistance clients will have a chance to become educated about the results of that cutoff.

That proposal was worked out on March 8. Even if it were immediately approved by both agencies, on March 8, that leaves only 23 days to inform about 3200 rural residents that they wouldn't be getting general assistance and what to do about it.

Twenty-three days isn't a lot of time when you are talking about a family's food source.

Perhaps the state government simply didn't believe that the federal cutoff would occur.

Perhaps it was a case of the federal government "crying wolf" one too many times when it came to a cutoff of federal monies to Alaska Natives. After all, the feds have been saying that the end to such services would come for a couple of years.

And while we do not for a minute believe that the federal government is living up to its full trust responsibility in this general assistance cutoff and the turnover of BIA schools to the state, we also do not for a minute believe that the state lived up to its responsibility in this case.

Only at the urging of a state legislator did the Department of Social Services start to work on a plan to accept these programs.

And in that, the department was woefully negligent.