

# KALSKAG PLEADS FOR SCHOOL

## Village Denounces 40-Year-Old School As Potential Death Trap

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Staff Writer

It appears that a 40-year-old two-room schoolhouse at Kalskag will not be replaced in the near future despite inadequate conditions at the school.

Fearful that their children could not escape if the building were to catch fire, the Kalskag Advisory School Board

expressed their concern in a letter to the Tundra Times.

"We need your help in getting the State or Congress to build us a new school now. Four or five years may be too late for some of our children," the board wrote.

The school was first built by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the early 1930's. About 30 years later the one-room schoolhouse became a two-teacher school when the shop room was made into a classroom.

According to Richard P. Birchell, superintendent of the Bethel Agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs recognizes that the school needs to be replaced and has had its replacement as a "high priority project for several years."

Kalskag, on the Kuskokwim River, is in the Bethel BIA area.

However, money for Bureau school construction for specific locations, is dependent upon direct appropriation by Congress, he explained.

"With the rising costs of school operations, growth of village school enrollment, and the paucity of federal funds for Bureau construction, regrettably the Kalskag school has not been designated as a site for replacement of facilities," Birchell wrote.

He added that Kalskag con-

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tinues to be a top priority item and said, "we continue to give our strongest support to this request."

The Kalskag School Board cited insufficient space, inadequate lighting, heating and fire hazards as its primary concerns.

The two classrooms, they said, are about 18 by 30 feet and during the last three years have held as many as 65 students.

Though the school has fluorescent lights, the board continued, the lights are too dim and "are below minimum as checked by the Public Health Service Engineer."

The school is heated by a space heater without a circulating fan so some students close to the stove are too hot, while those close to the windows are too cold.

"We are glad to have a school, but it is time to have a good school for our children."

"The school building is so old we are afraid for our children," the board wrote. "We think our children would be hurt if school ever caught fire, especially if wind was blowing. There is only one door for our kids to get out of building if it ever caught fire."

Noting that these conditions are basically correct, Birchell added that the safety of the students is a primary concern of Bureau personnel and that every precaution is taken to maintain

a safe school building at Kalskag.

He commended the school board for its concern about the well-being and education of the children.

Kalskag Advisory School Board members signing the letter were: Chairman, Olinga Gregory, Joe Gregory, George Guy, Olga Nesbit and Mary Ann Vaska.