

Districts must comply —

Bilingual ed is now required by law

By BARTZ ENGLISHOE

Editor's Note — The writer, an Athabascan Indian, is a freelance photographer and a regular contributor to the Tundra Times.

Recently, I had the privilege of photographing the Management Institute for Bilingual Education Programs for Native A-

mericans held in Bozeman, Montana.

The main premise was that Native Americans have the legitimate right to desire a stronger influence in matters pertaining to the education of their children.

Further, that Native people are the most interested in and best able to decide upon the curriculum content and instructional methods used by their children.

Furthermore, it was recognized that the only real hope for improving Native American education lay with Native community control of the educational system. This would set the stage for local Native people to become the directors of their children's education.

To ensure that students receive a proper bicultural-bilingual education system that will last, Native people should seek teachers and administrators that are knowledgeable in Native customs, language and who are sensitive to teaching practices suited to children with non-Anglo backgrounds.

Professional educators do not always know best. Many have the premise that parents do not

have the intellect to know what is best for their children.

Native Americans' greatest hope in the field of education is to get local Native people into the positions of teachers, administrators and para-professionals.

Steps must be taken to secure and educate local Native people for school personnel. Native teachers and officials can foster a strong and positive self-image in the students. This is hard to accomplish with non-Native persons.

The Bilingual Act of 1978 established funding and programs to provide special education services to linguistically different students. Funding is not only for teaching English to limited English proficiency students, but is to include language revival and language maintenance for the students' mother language.

In order to ensure long-lasting programs and local control of them, a major part of the Bilingual Act is to secure local Native

people to work in the school district. The B.E.A. is supported by 15 previously enacted laws and court decisions.

Congress appropriated \$250 million to finance the programs for fiscal year 1980. Alaska's share for this year is \$1,710,296.

All school districts, whether they receive federal funds or not, must provide services to meet the special needs of linguistically and ethnically different students.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act requires equal treatment of students in education. The Office of Civil Rights has been charged with the responsibility of identifying school districts which are not in compliance and with enforcing their compliance.

It only takes one person to request the Office of Civil Rights to investigate whether linguistically and ethnically different students are receiving special services in the school district.

The Office of Civil Rights must reply in 45 days to such a request from an individual.

Any person interested in bicultural-bilingual education matters should contact individuals from their area who are to attend the Sixth Annual Alaska Bilingual-Multilingual Conference on Feb. 13 - 15. Those persons attending the conference should be able to gather material and have questions answered as requested by members of their communities.

People who are unable to get answers to their questions may also write either of the two following persons:

Iris Santos-Rivera; Coalition of Indian-Controlled School Boards; 511 16th Street, Fifth Floor; Denver, Colorado 80202, phone (303) 573-5715.

Or, Ms. Evelyn Dwimoh, Office of Bilingual Education, 400 Madison Avenue S.W., 421 Reporters Building, Washington, D.C. 20202.