

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jacqueline Martain for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in History, History, and Anthropology presented on December 23, 2009.

Title: ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION: SHELDON JACKSON TO PAUL JENSEN, 1884-1984.

Abstract approved:

William G. Robbins

This thesis will look at Paul Jensen while he was an education professor at Western Oregon State College in Monmouth, Oregon, and his role in Alaska Native education while working with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Dr. Jensen's work coincided with the last twenty-five years of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) involvement in Native education in Alaska. The final era of BIA education spanned the time following Alaska statehood in 1959 to the placement of the last BIA school into the Alaska State Operated School System in 1987.

Some of the programs on which Jensen worked originated with him and some were mandated through the BIA. The Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program is an example of one of Jensen's own programs while the Bilingual Education program is an example of the latter. This thesis will examine these programs, the nature and depth of Jensen's involvement in Alaska Native education and fit him into a reference point with respect to BIA policy and philosophy.

Jensen's main work was with the Yupiks of west-central Alaska; he wanted to accomplish two things: (1), educate Native Alaskans and (2), preserve Yupik culture and language. The BIA's history of acculturation in dealing with American Indians/Alaska Natives appears to be in direct opposition to Jensen's stated desire to preserve Native culture. I will focus on the question of whether Paul Jensen was an assimilationist or a preservationist. At times he appears to be a religious missionary structuring his work on his religious upbringing and beliefs; he also appears to be a BIA assimilationist following

strict guidelines to moving the Yupiks into modern American society. Whichever role he follows, he insists that he is a preservationist of culture.

To get a full picture of what Paul Jensen was attempting to accomplish I will be looking at the history of major contact between the Yupiks and those outside their culture, namely the Russians and Americans. Included will be an ethnographic study of Yupik life ways with particular reference to their traditional education and how it differed from that brought by American religious missionaries, the Bureau of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Finally I will look at Jensen's work with Alaska Natives, his methods of teaching, and his beliefs about Yupik culture.

I will be using historical texts for an analysis of the missionary and BIA education programs as well as ethnographic studies made by some of the early explorers, scientists, and missionaries that provide background material pertinent to Yupik lifestyle. Included in this study will be interviews both with administrators and teachers who worked with Jensen, and non-professionals who took part in his programs. Much of the information for this thesis comes from Jensen's own files contained in the archives of the Paul Jensen Arctic Museum in Monmouth; some of the information is from the many recent texts relating to Alaskan history as well as articles about Native education found in professional journals. There have also been many recent publications from Alaska Natives that deal with the effects of first contact with outsiders and the changes in Native society. An analysis of these materials with particular regard to Jensen will present a picture of his motives, his goals, his achievements, his understanding of the Yupiks and whether he truly worked for preservation of their culture.

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ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION:
SHELDON JACKSON TO PAUL JENSEN
1884-1984

by

Jacqueline Martain

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

Presented December 23, 2009

Commencement June 2010

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies thesis of Jacqueline Martain
presented on December 23, 2009.

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the
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Jacqueline Martain, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses sincere thanks to my
thesis committee, past and present
and to Paul Farber and Jonathan Katz.

Richard Ross, Jennifer Cornell, Stephen Hackel and Kurt Peters
graciously gave of their time in the past.

David Brauner and Benjamin Mutschler helped me
work in the present.

I am particularly grateful to Janet Nishihara
who jumped in at a crucial time;

to William Robbins
who never lost faith in me

I am especially thankful.

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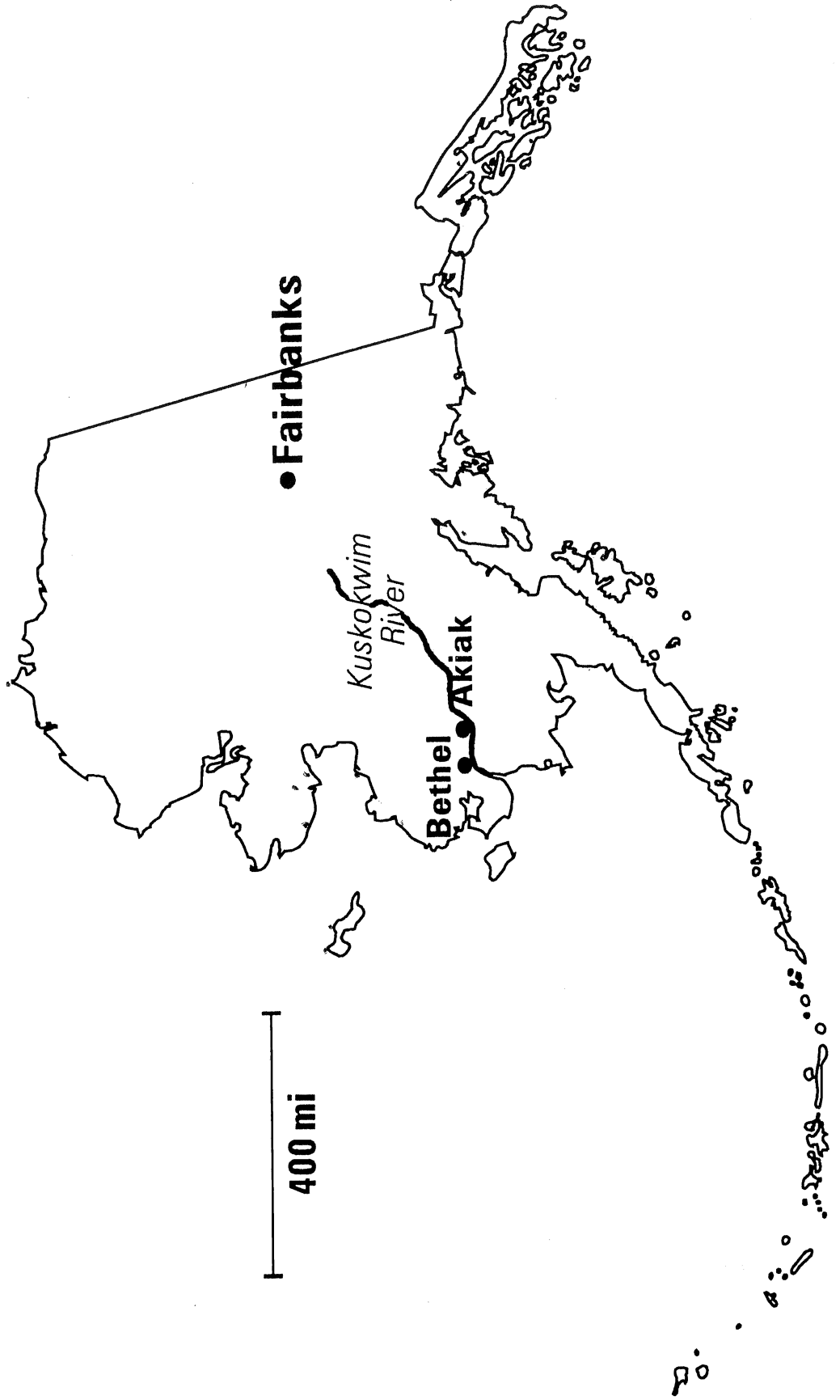
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ALASKA NATIVE: SHELDON JACKSON TO
PAUL JENSEN, 1884-1984

1. INTRODUCTION

Yuuyaraq...Prior to the arrival of Western people, the Yup'ik were alone in their riverine and Bering Sea homeland--they and the spirit beings that made things the way they were. Within this homeland they were free and secure. They were ruled by the customs, traditions, and spiritual beliefs of their people, and shaped by these and their environment: the tundra, the river and the Bering Sea. Their world was complete; it was a very old world. They called it Yuuyaraq, the "way of being a human being."...It defined the correct behavior for all members of the community...Yuuyaraq defined the correct way of thinking and speaking about all living things...prescribed the correct method of hunting and fishing...to honor and appease their spirits and maintain a harmonious relationship with them. Yuuyaraq encompassed the spirit world in which the Yup'ik lived. It outlined the way of living in harmony within this spirit world...the Yup'ik...born not only to the physical world...but into a spirit world as well. Their arts, tools, weapons, kayaks and umiaks, songs and dances, customs and traditions, thoughts and actions--all bore the imprint of the spirit world and the spirit beings...They lived in deference to this spiritual universe, of which they were, perhaps, the weakest members. Yuuyaraq was the law by which they lived.¹

Globally, most indigenous cultures seek balance between the human, the natural and the spiritual worlds. This is also true of Alaska's Yupiks. They "lived a life that required a balance between quality of life and an environmentally determined set of needs." All aspects of life centered on maintaining this balance and traditional education systems sought to preserve balance by bringing into play mythology, history, and observation of the natural world to understand the use of the materials it provided.² Traditional education for Alaska Natives was taught and learned in a natural, unthreatening manner in the home environment. Western education for Alaska Native students has been traumatic, experimental, and controversial. The Russians had the first major contact with Native Alaskans but their influence was of short duration (the 1740s to the 1800s) and limited in scope geographically and culturally. They occupied



only a few places on the outer boundaries of Alaska, did little to initiate Christianity, and less to introduce education to the Natives. They established schools in Kodiak, New Archangel (now Sitka) and a few other places. Most of the students were of mixed heritage and at New Archangel, the capital of Russian Alaska, of the twenty-seven boys who attended school, only one was full blood; the rest of the students were sons of higher skilled white employees of the company and Natives were not encouraged to attend.³

The United States purchased Alaska in 1869, but most representatives of the government were convinced that it was 586,000 square miles of useless, frozen wasteland, and hence the government was slow in handling territorial issues. Alaska's great geographic distance from the contiguous United States, the incomprehensible size of this mostly unmapped area, and the sluggish post Civil War economy were factors contributing to the disinterest in the country's newest acquisition.⁴ As a result, the spiritual and educational welfare of Native Alaskans was taken on by missionaries who began arriving in the 1870s. Presbyterian Sheldon Jackson was one of the first on the scene.

Sheldon Jackson had grown up in a strict religious household, attended Union College in New York and Princeton Theological Seminary where he decided to go into missionary work. After he graduated in 1858, he received permission from the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions to teach at an Indian school in Oklahoma. He left within the first year, deciding that his forte was planning and administration rather than instruction.⁵ Jackson next went to Minnesota for ten years to supervise the institution of churches in small towns, later becoming a pastor himself. Never one to think small, however, he was already developing other plans. Convinced that the opening of the transcontinental railroads would spur population movement westward, he developed a strategy to open churches in the new towns he envisioned, to be followed by missions in Indian Country.⁶ Within a year, Jackson had established

missions from the Missouri River to the Sierra Nevada Mountains and raised enough money to support himself and ten missionaries. The Presbyterian Board of Home Missions became convinced that Jackson could handle Indian missions, and in 1870 granted approval for him to proceed to Indian country.⁷

After his successful campaign in the West, he turned his efforts to Alaska and spent thirty years working for Alaska Native education.⁸ He determined there was a need for education in the territory and poured his efforts into lobbying for an educational system for Alaska Natives. His efforts led to a succession of missionaries to Alaska. Moravians John and Edith Kilbuck were among the earliest group of missionaries in Alaska and went to the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta where they established a mission that they named Bethel. It is interesting to note that Kilbuck was a Delaware Indian, in fact the first Delaware to become an ordained minister in the Moravian Church. In his initial impressions in the delta region, he noted that he thought that he would be able to easily learn the Yupik language because their way of speaking was like that of other American Indians he had met and in vocalization similar to the Delaware. However, he was not sure that it would be easy to grasp “their way of thinking and the mode of expressing their thoughts.”⁹ Other missionaries followed to their assigned areas of Alaska where they built churches and schools to help with the salvation of the Natives.

The changes brought about by contact with the United States were far-reaching and since the purchase of Alaska, many players have had a hand in the education of Alaska Native students. The territorial government, religious missionaries, the Bureau of Education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and finally the Alaska State Department of Education were all involved in Alaska Native education. The early players determined that the Natives needed a Western system of education to bring them into modern life. From the first missionaries to the BIA, administrators encountered what they perceived as alien lifestyles, poverty, and backward ways. They believed that Alaska Natives

needed to be assimilated, and that the natives needed to attain material success and technology equal to Western society. Although the parties responsible for educating Native Alaskans have changed over the years, the educational philosophy and curriculum changed little until the 1950s. At this time Alaska Natives became increasingly vocal about the educational needs of their children, and administrators finally realized that Alaska Natives needed to take a more assertive role in determining the course of education for their children.

Dr. Paul Jensen, a professor of education at Oregon College of Education (OCE) in Monmouth (now Western Oregon University), also played a role in Alaska Native education. Jensen was born in Denmark, attended schools there, in Norway, and later the United States. He emigrated to the United States and became a naturalized citizen in 1935. His education degree took him to work in Washington State, Nevada, Mexico, and Texas before he moved with his family to Oregon in 1959 and began his teaching career at OCE.¹⁰

Jensen began working with Alaska Native education programs in 1962 and continued until the 1980s. After Alaska statehood (1959), the BIA began the process of turning over all its native schools to the Alaska State Operated School System. The State of Alaska was working to create a single Department of Education for all Alaskan children instead of the multi-agency system that had been in place since territorial days. Although the BIA hoped to have its changeover complete by the mid 1960s, many problems, some of them unique to Alaska, delayed implementation until 1985. The last twenty-five years of the BIA's Native education mission coincided with Jensen's work there.

It was while Professor Jensen was at Monmouth that he began the Alaska Program, a series of classes and projects that regularly took him to Alaska. His myriad programs included students from first grade through college, ranging from five years to adult. He was the coordinator of the Bilingual Education Center in Bethel, taught periodically at Alaska Methodist University in Anchorage, and

supervised student teachers at BIA schools throughout the state. Early in his Alaska career he developed exchange programs between schools in Oregon and Sitka, Alaska, initiating exchanges between high schools in the two states. He brought groups of Native students from Alaska's remote southwestern elementary schools to Oregon for academic and cultural enrichment programs and directed summer camps for Native Alaskan students seeking extra academic instruction. He developed summer educational programs in Alaska for BIA school administrators, Native parents, and Native aides working in Alaskan schools. The extent of his work in Alaska was diverse, touched on many areas of uncertainty and experimentation in the field of Alaska Native education, and mirrored his personal educational philosophy.

Most of Paul Jensen's work was carried out on the west-central coast of Alaska. He was happy to work there because he had known Greenland Eskimos from his early school years in Denmark and appreciated what he knew of Eskimo culture. Although there are many diverse cultural groups in Alaska, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Aleut, Eyak and Athabaskan, it was the Yupiks, native to western Alaska, who provided Jensen with the opportunity to further his association with a northern culture. His daughter, living in Fairbanks, initiated correspondence between Jensen and a native of St. Lawrence Island, situated in the Bering Sea. He came to know the island Yupiks through this correspondence and in 1962, John Aponglook, his first correspondent, invited him to visit. Jensen's connection with the St. Lawrence Islanders was both personal and professional and continued through his many years in Alaska.¹¹

Because Jensen worked mainly with Yupiks, this study will focus on the Natives in the southern Bering Sea region of Alaska's west-central coast. This area encompasses St. Lawrence Island and the land from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to Norton Sound. There are some cultural and linguistic differences between the Yupiks of these areas, but the proximity of the groups makes the

differences transitional in nature rather than those of discrete cultural systems and the similarities allow for some generalizations in culture, lifestyle, and belief. Jensen worked in other areas of Alaska, but the main focus of his effort, and of this study, will be this area of the Bering Sea coast.

This study will trace the historical development of Native education in Alaska, particularly that of the religious missions and of the BIA. It is fortunate that some of the journals and letters of the first missionaries and teachers have been preserved. John and Edith Kilbuck, the first Moravian missionaries in the Yukon-Kuskokwim district in the 1880s, kept detailed journals and correspondence with friends and family in the lower forty-eight, as did other missionaries and teachers in Bethel. The Kilbuck's papers provide a look at Yupik society at its first encounter with Christianity while the other journals provide a glimpse of the changes that occurred between 1884 and 1916, after the Christian encounter. The changes in Alaska have taken place so recently compared to the lower United States that some of the families of Native participants were able to record their elders' first hand observations and experiences and these will be included wherever possible.

Much of the information in this thesis comes from Paul Jensen's files at the Jensen Arctic Museum archives in Monmouth. Other materials have been gleaned from studies of Indian policy and the BIA; interviews with some program participants and Jensen's co-workers are included. Professor Jensen will be the centerpiece of this investigation, particularly his work with the BIA and the Alaska Program. By examining first the mission influence and then looking at the BIA's overall educational program in Alaska, we can get a picture of that agency's goals of assimilation. This thesis will place Jensen in the framework of federal Indian education policy and will examine the basic thrust of his ideas, his background, the catalog of programs on which he worked, whether his reasoning fell into line with the Bureau's philosophy and goals, and his role in assimilation.

Jensen stated that he wished to see Yupik culture preserved. If this was one of his motives for working with Alaska native students, it will be interesting to examine how he reconciled the assimilation policies of the BIA with his stated preference for preserving Yupik culture.

¹ . Harold Napoleon, Yuuyaraq: The Way of the Human Being, 4, 5.

² . Oscar Kawagley, A Yupiaq Worldview: Pathway to Ecology and Spirit, 2, 152.

³ . Donald Craig Mitchell, Sold American: The Story of Alaska Natives And Their Land, 1867-1959, 67.

⁴ . Stephen W. Haycox and Mary Childers Mangusso, An Alaska Anthology: Interpreting the Past, xxi.

⁵ . D. Mitchell, 59-60; Smith Glenn, "Education For the Natives Of Alaska: The Work Of The United States Bureau of Education, 1884-1931," 441; Journal Of The West, 6 (1967), 440-450.

⁶ . D. Mitchell, 60, 61.

⁷ . Ibid. 62, 62.

⁸ . J. Arthur Lazell. Alaska Apostle: The Life Story of Sheldon Jackson, 53-55; D. Mitchell, 72-75. Jackson stated in his memoirs that while he was busy with the Rocky Mountain Territory he had thought of Alaska and that he had hoped he might be able to go there. Reverend Lindsley, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon claims that he himself lobbied the army and the church to send a missionary as early as 1869. He felt that Jackson was a self-promoter who ended up in Alaska at the right time to gain recognition for the work being done there.

⁹ . Ann Fienup-Riordan. The Real People and the Children of Thunder: The Yup'ik Eskimo Encounter with Moravian Missionaries John and Edith Kilbuck, 25, 31.

¹⁰ . Oral interview with Paul Jensen conducted by Jennifer Lee 41, 48, 69, series 4, file drawer 2 in the Paul Jensen Archives Museum. Interviews completed November, 1989 and transcribed by Mariana Mace, past curator of the Paul Jensen Arctic Museum.

¹¹ . Ibid. 40, 82.

2. PRE-EUROPEAN CONTACT LIFESTYLE AMONG THE BERING SEA YUPIK

The natives of western Alaska are part of the geographically widespread and culturally diverse family of Eskimo-speaking people. Eskimo speakers range from Alaska's Pacific coast to the Bering Strait, north and east along the Arctic coast of Canada, to Labrador, and finally to Greenland. The people under discussion in this paper are the Yupik speakers of west-central Alaska whose name for themselves means real, or genuine people. The Yupiks speak one of the five Yupik languages, Central Alaskan Yupik, which is divided into four dialects¹

Modern anthropologists note that the Yupik's sub-Arctic environment has always supplied a variety of rich resources, putting to flight the myth of poverty. The Yupik way of life with its gift-giving ceremonies and sophisticated arts belie the stereotype of cultural or natural deprivation. Anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan compared the resources and cultural environment of the Yupik's Yukon-Kuskokwim delta to that of the Tigris-Euphrates River valley and remarked that some anthropologists call this section of the Bering Sea coast the "cradle of Eskimo Civilization."² There were times of hardship due to early spring shortages and cyclic scarcity, but not an overall pattern of daily hand-to-mouth existence. Oscar Kawagley relates stories told by his grandmother of starvation because of extreme cold or snow and intermittent changes in animal or fish migration routes because of heavy rain and silt. He also notes that she related that survival of the people was due to communal sharing.³

Until the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, the Yupiks living along the Bering Sea had changed little through non-native contact. Lt. Lavrentii Zagoskin, a Russian military officer, traveled in the Lower Yukon and Norton Sound regions from 1842 to 1844, making observations about the people and the area. After the United States purchased Alaska from Russia, Edward William Nelson, working conjointly with the United States Army Signal Corps and the

Smithsonian Institute, made detailed observations of the area between 1877 and 1881. In the intervening years, some changes had occurred, but Nelson's reports indicate that lifestyle and traditions were much the same as Zagoskin had found them.⁴

Native Yupiks residing on the Bering coast claimed their livelihood from the water--the sea and inland rivers. Their villages were built within easy reach of navigable waters, close to the ocean or riverbanks that facilitated sea hunting and fishing.⁵ Terrain consisted of rolling hills, low mountains, miles of tundra, and shallow fresh-water lakes and streams. The average mean temperature was 25.5 degrees Fahrenheit and ranged from 76 degrees to minus 55 degrees; violent winter storms with high winds were common.

Villages were small and scattered at the time of first Russian contact. Availability of building materials and proximity to food and fuel influenced size and location. There was plenty to go around, but none to waste. Extended families and groups of families occupied single dwellings with anywhere from five to twenty people per household. Population figures for the villages ranged from five to 130 people with an average of sixty to sixty-five people per village.⁶

Houses were rectangular or circular, built into the ground and had a wooden or whale-bone framework. The dwellings were about nine feet high at the center, five feet high at the sides, and twelve to twenty feet in diameter. The framework was covered with logs or slabs, after which sod squares were laid over the top to a thickness of three or four feet. A smoke hole in the center of the roof provided natural light that was supplemented by one or two oil lamps. The lamps were open stone or clay bowls containing seal oil and a wick; the lamps also provided extra heat for the naturally insulated homes. Sleeping platforms were built into the sides of the structure and each family had its own area which doubled as workspace for women during the day. The Yupiks left their sod homes with the arrival of the spring thaw which made them wet and uncomfortable. They then

moved to their summer homes, usually inland fish camps on a river bank. This seasonal movement had a two-fold purpose: sanitation and food preservation for the coming year. The summer rains and flooding scoured the area clean of the previous winter's waste, and summer at the camps was spent hunting, fishing, foraging, preparing food for winter storage, and readying skins for sewing in the winter months ahead.⁷

Village Organization and Leadership

Early observers report that the Yupiks had no system of government. It is true that the formal institutions known as government in the Western world did not exist, but they had an orderly society dictated by established custom. Yupik life required communal cooperation as exemplified by the groups of men who hunted together on a yearly basis. In these groups, the members were trusted in their roles, the hunters for their abilities to find and spear animals, and the captains for their expertise at sailing and weather-watching.⁸ In matters of village organization, there were no recognized leaders among the Yupiks. There were village spokesmen who dealt with traders and whalers. They had gained experience with strangers, knew some trade language and outside customs, and were trusted to act as intermediaries in business affairs concerning the village. Outsiders may have assumed these people were chiefs, but the villagers had no vision of them as such. Older men in the village were asked for their advice; they knew the stories, rites, ceremonies, traditions, and hunting lore of the people. They had more experience in life so were sought out for their knowledge and heard with respect, but they were not leaders in the sense of traditional Western government.⁹

Although there were no agencies to deal with civil matters, social customs were carried out and strictly maintained. When the male head of the household died, for example, household articles were given away according to tradition. Murder was settled by the victim's family, taking the form of reciprocal death, in

the extreme, or a fine of goods, which put an end to the matter. Stealing was a social taboo, and a thief caught in the act suffered public shame. A suspected thief was summoned to the kashgee, or community house, and publicly accused. The accused usually admitted his guilt and made restitution. If the person continued to steal, denial of trading privileges, or worse, ostracism from social interaction was the outcome. Instances of crime were rare, taboos and social customs formed and enforced the law, and hence there was no need for a formal criminal justice system in the small societies.¹⁰

Communal Lifestyle

Families shared common dwellings but divided the household according to social roles. Each family occupied a set space in the dwelling. A central cooking fire was shared, but each family prepared its own meals. Within the family, the matriarch had control of the oil lamp, a position of importance and respect. Food was shared with visitors, regardless of the length of stay. Catches of fish or animals were shared with participants of the hunt and villagers who were unable to participate. A portion of the first seal caught by a young hunter was distributed to every household in the village, and the first whale of the season was shared by the village in a community festival. The men shared tools and boats for sea-hunting, and possessions were freely given to others during ceremonial feasts. Wealth was shared not hoarded, and stingy individuals could lose their possessions, or their lives, for refusing to be communal. A possible reason for communal giving is that it was a reminder of the necessity of sharing one's success and wealth so that all could thrive. Kawagley states that sharing was part of their spirituality and that it acknowledged the interconnectedness of the universe. Everyone flourished alike when resources were abundant; everyone suffered alike when they were not. No one ate while others went hungry.¹¹

Life for the Yupiks was community-oriented. Survival in extreme climactic conditions called for the cooperation of everyone in the village. Although

families conducted their own hunts and had traditional familial fishing and trapping grounds, all major hunts, festivals, and feasts were community events. Community feasts and gift-giving ceremonies translated into concern for the welfare of the whole village but with a fundamentally deeper philosophy. The sharing and giving mirrored the gifts of the hunt, be it whale, salmon or caribou, the spirits of which gave themselves willingly for the good of the village; as a reprimand for stinginess, the spirits might withhold themselves in the following year's hunt. Taking care of each other was repeated in all areas of village life. Widows and widowers quickly re-married, and orphans readily adopted into other families as natural members, partly to take care of villagers who would otherwise be left alone and partly to ensure the continuation of the family and the village. Childless couples adopted children so that someone would be left behind when they died in order to honor the shades (spirits) of their family during the Feast of the Dead and insure that their ancestors would not live in poverty in the afterlife.¹²

The yearly cycle of the Yupiks was seasonally determined. The winter months, October to June, were spent at home in the permanent villages. November and December constituted festival time with social activities in the kashgee. Individual families might hunt reindeer and stay in improvised camps, but most of the time was spent in the village. During this time, shaping and repairing tools, sleds, and kayaks occupied the men while the women engaged in sewing and care of the homes. As the weather warmed, villagers collected greens and eggs on the tundra while early openings in the ice afforded individual sealing, fishing, and trading. June through October were spent in summer camps. As the fish moved up the rivers with the warmer weather so too did the villagers; food was harvested and prepared for winter use and skins were cleaned and softened to ready them for making blankets and clothing during winter in the barabarrahs, their sod homes. The break-up of sea ice allowed communal trade with other

villages, and group hunts for reindeer, seals and whales. October brought freeze-up and a return to the permanent winter villages¹³

Yupik religious beliefs did not center on a single God but a number of spirits, or shades, that influenced the villagers for good or evil. All entities in Yupik life possessed shades that were independent of one another and watched over a person or village, or caused ill-health and misfortune. Care was taken to honor the shades and show proper respect to keep them from becoming insulted or angry and causing strife in the village. Special rites were observed during the season of particular shades, such as the whale or the salmon, so that they would continue to give themselves to the hunters. Religious practice was not confined to a certain place or day of the week but was an all-encompassing belief system that governed every aspect of life. Customs and taboos were part of this system and ruled every aspect of life from hunting and puberty rites, to proper food sharing. All of these actions were made to please the spirits so they would be willing to help the village.¹⁴

Traditional Education for Yupik Children

Traditional education can be defined as the usual and accepted means of imparting the knowledge of a culture to succeeding generations. This knowledge encompasses the spiritual life and history of the people. It also teaches the way to live with the physical world in order to achieve success as defined within that society. This takes different forms in different societies. Traditional Native education on the Bering Sea coast was far removed from any concept of education brought by the Russians in 1741, or the Western education offered by the United States after purchase in 1867. To understand the problems posed by formal education that faced the Yupiks, especially after the purchase, it may be best to know how they related to teaching and instruction before they were forced through all the different phases of education initiated by external governmental agencies.

Yupik children lived what outsiders might consider a carefree existence.¹⁵ They engaged in games and played with toys made by their parents. Many of their toys were scaled-down models of tools they would use in adulthood. They played with bows, arrows, dolls, sleds, and boats. Many of their games were physical in nature and encouraged dexterity, strength, and endurance. Children learned early in life to manipulate the tools and utensils they would be using in later years; running and wrestling games prepared their bodies for the hours they would later spend running alongside a dogsled or pulling a seal across the ice pack.¹⁶ Children were neither verbally reprimanded nor physically punished for offensive behavior, and they were not made to do things against their will. It was believed that the spirits of loved ones who had passed on came back to inhabit the bodies of children. A newborn was often given the name of the person of the same sex who had last died. The shade would then enter the body of the child to be taken care of again. For this reason, punishment would have been offensive to that spirit and to the person giving the punishment. It was not until children reached the age of nine or ten years that discipline and specific instruction in the arts of hunting, sewing, storytelling, and other traditional knowledge began.¹⁷

The kashgee was the center of ceremonial life for the Yupiks. Honoring the spirits took place everywhere, but the rituals and their importance were learned here. The kashgee, like other Yupik dwellings, was a sod house built partly underground. Unlike other buildings, it was larger and plainly visible in the center of the village and built to accommodate all the villagers for social gatherings. Its nature and frequency of use made it a comfortable atmosphere for both children and adults, and as such it was a non-threatening place to learn and take part in social activities. When babies were taken into the kashgee for the first time, the family gave gifts to all present in the name of the child. This was done to insure the future friendship and good will of fellow villagers. The gift-giving ritual was also observed by visitors from outside the village for the same reason.

The kashgee in this sense nurtured the social give and take of the village and surrounding society.¹⁸

The kashgee could also be referred to as a traditional Yupik school building. It was essential to everyone in the village for passing on social, religious, and cultural traits. However, boys and girls learned their duties in their separate places. For men and boys, this was the kashgee; for girls and women, it was the barabarrah, the sod homes of the villagers. When they were not hunting, men worked, ate, discussed matters of village importance, and socialized in the kashgee. The males who were of age to hunt took part in discussions, but it was the older men who made judgments concerning the hunt and village disputes. The village men usually stayed in the kashgee at night as did male visitors to the village. The women and children visited, provided food for the men, and were present on nights when ceremonies or other functions took place, but otherwise lived in the barabarrah.¹⁹

The males lived in the kashgee much of the time and it was here that young boys learned tool making, mask making, and the building and repair of sleds and umiaks, the traditional walrus skin boats. They heard hunting stories and learned of natural phenomena; they heard village news and learned tribal lore. Here, young boys were exposed to the wisdom of older men. They were able to hear how decisions were made and witness the process of problem-solving. They listened to tribal stories and learned proper respect for the shades of the fish and the animals they hunted. They learned their roles in providing food and assuming the responsibilities for the material needs of the family. Young boys also learned the taboos and rites that kept their society in harmony. The Yupik world was a spiritual lifestyle in a subsistence economy. Kashgee life was an essential part of Yupik education, from spiritual values to their day-to-day learning.²⁰

The kashgee was also the festival house and the place for visiting and entertaining visitors to the village. During these times, men and women were

present. Songs and dances were practiced by boys, girls, and adults. New songs and dances were composed by villagers and children learned the correct way to borrow from, or add to, the collection of music in the village. Some of the songs were contests in which the singers ridiculed each other. Many were sung to remember past events or the dead, and most were “owned” by a family. Children learned the legends and tales of society in the kashgee. The stories were the embodiment of their religion, genealogy, taboos, and history which included important events, family histories, and stories explaining the importance and origins of their tools and arts.²¹

Women and young children spent their winter days in the barabarrah. The older women were in charge of the household and under their tutelage, the girls learned their roles. The young girls learned the care of the household and children. They learned to make household necessities, practiced skinning and curing fur and hides and made clothing. They also practiced cooking and food preservation in the barabarrah. Girls learned the domestic arrangements of living with more than one family and how to live in harmony with those around them. Women gained their part of traditional knowledge by way of learning puberty, marriage, and childbirth rites and taboos and extended their knowledge of harmony from the physical to the spiritual world.²²

Outside the kashgee and barabarrah other skills were learned. Hunting was a male activity. Whales, seals, walrus, and ugruk, (bearded seal) were hunted on the ocean; women sometimes participated by handling the umiaks. Building umiaks was taught to both men and women. Men constructed the framework, and women cut and sewed the skins and fitted them to the boat after the framework was finished. The women learned to forage and though it was traditionally their activity, the men sometimes participated. All these skills had to be taught to the children either in the kashgee the barabarrah, or in the process of the activity

itself. In this way children learned to listen to their elders, to observe, and to be patient.²³

Within these parameters, all relatives played a role in the teaching process. Animals, surrounding society, spiritual leaders, and the environment all had an integral part in teaching native children. According to Native elders, education was knowing how to live with the land. Life came from the land and knowing how to survive was as important as caring for the resources that kept the people alive.²⁴

It was not just the practicalities of the process that were taught, but the relationships. The relationships were part of the holistic way of viewing each activity. The relationships between people, gender, the environment, and the spiritual world were all included. Villagers had to learn to live together and share resources, work, success, and possessions. Large projects such as building an umiak were necessarily cooperative activities, and the activity reinforced the importance of each individual's work in relation to its contribution for the good of the whole. Cooperation assured that the boats would be available and in good repair when the hunters needed them to make their contribution. Men and women were taught their roles in the world and respect for each other's work. Villagers learned the proper rites for honoring the shades, human or animal, to insure continued success in the hunt and good fortune for the village. The weather and clouds demanded a keen eye not only for good hunting, but assurance that the traveler or hunter would return safely. All of these relationships were bridges between the corporal and spiritual worlds, and all involved their own rites and taboos. To have been neglected or refused proper respect by one person could have meant dire circumstances for the entire village. The actions of one person affected the well being of all. These relationships helped maintain balance in the Yupik world.

To the Yupiks, education, like identity, arose from their natural environment and was the “process of living from the land.” The land, their natural schoolhouse, taught them how to live in an unpredictable environment and become a participating member of the community.²⁵ Yupik education and the socialization process were based on their way of life and was part of life’s daily routine; it was not a separate part of life pursued in a building apart from one’s own surroundings. It gave the Yupiks the tools to survive. Education gave children the means to identify with their way of life and with their people. It helped them identify with their traditional values and with their own places and roles in the world. Their education taught them who they were.

¹. Ann Fienup-Riordan, Eskimo Essays: Yupik Lives And How We See Them, 5.

². Ibid. 8, 9.

³. Kawagley, 13.

⁴. Edward William Nelson, The Eskimo About Bering Strait. Notes of William Fitzhugh in the introduction to the 1893 edition, 8.

⁵. H. Dewey Anderson, and Walter Crosby Eells, Alaska Natives: A Survey of the Sociological and Educational Status, 24, 31.

⁶. Anderson and Eells, 32; Nelson, 241.

⁷. Anderson and Eells, 36; Nelson, 248, 249.

⁸. Anderson and Eells, 49.

⁹. Anderson and Eells, 48, 49; Fienup-Riordan, The Real People and The Children of Thunder: The Yup’ik Eskimo With Moravian Missionaries John and Edith Kilbuck, 56.

¹⁰. Anderson and Eells, 49, 50; Nelson, 307; Kawagley, 19.

¹¹. Fienup-Riordan, Eskimo Essays, 46, 47; Nelson, 329.

¹². Nelson, 329.

¹³. Anderson and Eells, 51, 56-58.

¹⁴. Ibid. 66, 67.

¹⁵. Margaret Blackman, Sadie Brower Neakok: An Inupiaq Woman, 59. Sadie Brower was born (1916) and raised in Barrow, Alaska. She was the daughter of Asianguataq, a native woman, and Charles Brower, a white whaler and fur-trader and owner of the Barrow trading store. Many observations have been made about children and the freedom in which they lived. Neakok’s father insisted on rules based on life in the lower states, however, most children had no curfews and went where they wanted within the village. Both observers and Natives themselves

noted the ease of children's lives in earlier times. Otto George, Eskimo Medicine Man, 55. An observer from outside the culture, Dr. George was a physician whose work took him from the Kuskokwim River to Barrow. He spent 4 years in Alaska and got to know the natives as best he could while there. At one point he noted that children "were pampered and spoiled." This was true because of the belief that the shades of the dead returned to live in newborn's bodies. These may have been past family members and no one would want to spank or admonish someone who might have been a relative, particularly if that person had been a parent or grandparent.

¹⁶ . Anderson and Eells, 69, 89.

¹⁷ . John Collier, Jr., Alaska Eskimo Education: A Film Analysis of Cultural Confrontation in the Schools, 37-39; Anderson and Eells, 67, 89-91.

¹⁸ . Anderson and Eells, 32, 35, 36, 89; Collier, 13; Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 53; Nelson, 186.

¹⁹ . Collier, 23, 27, 28.

²⁰ . Anderson and Eells, 67-69; Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 56.

²¹ . Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 75, 76.

²² . Anderson and Eells, 91; Collier, 37; Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 58.

²³ . Joseph E. Senungetuk, Give or Take a Century; An Eskimo Chronicle, 51, 52.

²⁴ . Paul Marashio, "enlighten my mind* Examining the Learning Process Through Native Americans' Ways," 1, 2.

²⁵ . Anderson and Eells, 66; Marashio, 2, 38; Blackman, 205; Uncited article in the Paul Jensen Archives, "Education and the Subsistence Way of Life," 68, 71, written by a Native Alaskan.

3. THE RUSSIANS IN ALASKA: SETTING THE STAGE FOR AMERICAN MISSIONARY SCHOOLS

Yupik experience with people outside their immediate area was limited to tribes of coastal Siberia and Alaska. Contact with people of distinctly different cultures did not begin until the Russians came. In 1742 Lieutenant Lavrentii Zagoskin, a Russian military officer traveled in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region, made contact with the Yupiks and recorded their lifestyle.¹ The Russians occupied only some coastal areas of Alaska until United States purchase in 1867, a period of 126 years. During that time, Russian influence was limited in area and minimal in scope. They did not try to interfere in village life; their main influences were the search for furs, European trade goods, fire arms, alcohol, and a few churches. None of these were immediately revolutionary to Yupik culture, although collectively they would prove to be powerfully influential and devastating in time.²

Contact of any significance did not occur north of Bristol Bay until gold strikes began in the early 1880s; between 1832 and 1836, only a few Russian posts had been established from Kuskokwim Bay to Norton Sound. The small number of posts and the Yupiks' scattered villages kept direct contact to a minimum. The Yupiks received European trade goods but these were bartered with other Native villages rather than from the Russians directly.³ North of Norton Sound, from the Diomed Islands to Point Barrow, the history is different. Bowhead whales were plentiful and attracted whaling crews; in addition, trading ships had easy access to the shorelines and Native villages. The shallow waters of Norton Sound and Kuskokwim Bay farther south made it difficult for ships to enter, and the lack of large numbers of bowhead whales and fur-bearing sea mammals made it economically uninviting to whalers and commercial traders. Thus for the Yupiks in the southern Bering Sea region, subsistence economy, traditional customs, and material culture showed little sign of change.⁴ Edward

Nelson noted that during his stay in west-central Alaska in the early 1880s, he had not met more than six Natives who followed the “white man’s religion,” and that they still believed in shamans and followed the old beliefs. However, Nelson noted, as did Lt. Zagoskin 140 years earlier, that traditional ways would soon be lost because of increasing contact with Christianity and the outside world.⁵ This proved to be true, although for different reasons and later than either had anticipated.

After the United States purchased Alaska, there was little evidence of Russian occupation in the Bering Sea region; the most notable were a few Russian Orthodox churches. Although Russian influence was and still is evident in Alaska, this was a result of lingering influences and continuing immigration rather than any impact during Russian occupancy. The Russians stayed to the coastal areas, mainly in the southeastern panhandle, Cook Inlet, Kodiak Island, and the Aleutian Islands. Between 1818 and 1840, only six permanent fur-trading posts had been established in western and southwestern Alaska; five were on the coast, two on Nushagak Bay, one each on the Kuskokwim Delta, St. Michael and Unalakleet, and one about seventy-five miles inland at Nulato on the Yukon river. These were company posts, not colonies, and consisted of living quarters for men and storage for company supplies. Few colonization efforts were made outside the southeastern area and the posts were built by private companies with little or no government support. The purpose of the trading posts was to secure profits in furs, not to extend Russian civilization.⁶

There was never more than a total of 700 Russians in all the Alaskan outposts at any time during its occupation and none were known to have been in the interior. Employees of the Russian-American Company and independent fur traders constituted the bulk of the population from the outside and they were unconcerned with developing Alaska. As is true in many frontier areas, the Russian settlements were lawless, the employees lived in primitive conditions,

supplies were costly, and delivery unreliable. The Russian-American Company was the sole source of supplies and law for Russians in Alaska, and lack of supervision left the employees on their own. The Russians exploited Native labor, territory, and resources. As is often the case, they took out their frustration on the Natives, male and female alike, causing anger and resentment. As a result, the Russians lived in constant fear of Native uprisings. The Russian fur company forbade the sale of firearms to them because they had no desire to deal with a rebellious and well-armed Native group. The Americans and the British, however, had no such restrictions and did not hesitate to sell arms.⁷

The Russian government chartered the Russian-American company in 1799. The areas under Russian control consisted of the Pribilof and Aleutian chains, Kodiak Island, and the palisades inside their posts. The Pribilofs had previously been unpopulated but the number of fur seals motivated the Russians to colonize them with Aleuts and Koniags to utilize the talents of these experienced seal hunters. The Aleutian Islanders were brought under control by fire power and subsequently conscripted to work for the Russians. The Koniags of Kodiak Island were brought under control by the Aleuts and were also forced to labor for the Russians. Russians in the employ of the Russian-American Company were not safe outside their palisades. Only firepower and their greater numbers kept the Natives from destroying the forts and killing the men. The post at Nulato was burned four times and all the others repeatedly attacked. The Russians managed to put down these attacks, but as historian Donald Mitchell points out, “controlling an acre or two of ground inside a log fence is hardly tantamount to possessing northwestern Alaska.”⁸

Russian Education: Missionaries and the Russian Orthodox Church

Russian influence in education and Christianity was limited. Gregory Shelhikov, a Siberian fur trader and co-owner of the Russian-American Company, arranged to have eight Russian Orthodox priests sent to Kodiak Island in 1794,

the first missionaries in Alaska. Although the priests baptized a number of Native Alaskans, apparently this was achieved with gifts rather than divine enlightenment of the Natives' part.⁹ The first Orthodox priests performed church rites in Russian rather than adhering to the Orthodox practice of using the native language. Few of the Natives understood Russian and fewer had any understanding of the teachings. The Aleuts were rewarded with blankets, clothing, or tobacco after the ritual baptismal dunking. Some observers believed that the gifts added to the number of Aleut converts. There were also Yupik converts, but Edward Nelson theorized that Native acceptance of the Russian Orthodox church may have been the perceived similarities between the Russian Orthodox and Yupik spiritual rites.¹⁰

The Yupiks likened the Orthodox services with their attendant chanting, mystery, and rich robes to their own rites and festivals. Native ceremonies were led by shamans dressed in masks and regalia who worked in an air of mystery and were accompanied by drumming and chanting. The shaman was a bridge between the sacred and the secular and took on roles of priest, magician, counselor, seer, and healer. Although the spiritual and corporal worlds were not separated in traditional Yupik thought, the shaman was a powerful person, able to connect more intimately with the powers or spirits that intervened with villagers. As intercessors whose powers could influence fortune or misfortune, life or death, and who were able to perform miracles, they were not only respected but feared. Although the spiritual authority of the shamans could have signaled opposition to them, the Russian priests left the shamans alone. One reason may have been that there were too few Orthodox priests to make a difference. The itinerant nature of their visits, for some villages once a year, probably would not have effected much change at any rate. Lack of funding did not permit building schools or maintenance of priests in the western outposts. The Yukon-Kuskokwim region had two missions in an area roughly the size of present day Montana, one fifth the

size of Alaska, and the priests were unable to form close or lasting ties with the villagers. Apparently most of the priests were content to perform the rites and left changes to native religion out of the picture.¹¹

According to Aleutian anthropologist, Richard Dauenhauer, the Orthodox tradition did not try to erase the language and culture of the people among whom it worked. Donald Mitchell agrees that it was not the policy of the Russian Orthodox Church to be acculturationist. Rather, the Church taught in the local vernacular. As the Orthodox Church spread through eastern Europe, the official liturgical language in each country became that of the natives. The same principle held true in Alaska after a time. This may have been truly a matter of respect, or simply recognition that learning was possible only when the student could hear concepts in his or her own language. Whatever the case, priests were not teaching the Russian language but celebrating a Mass by performing a ceremony with which some of the natives, Aleut or Yupik, were able to identify.¹²

John Veniaminov, a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church, arrived in Sitka the winter of 1823 and was bound for Unalaska the following year. During his first year, Veniaminov began his work with the Alaska Natives, working with bilingual helpers to help him learn the Aleut language. Veniaminov introduced Western education to the Natives, and when he opened his first school, both the Aleut and Russian languages were taught and used for instruction. Veniaminov continued to learn the Aleut language and when he was transferred back to Sitka, began the same work there, devising an alphabet, writing system, and translations in the Tlingit language.¹³

The Russian Orthodox Church relied heavily on native born clergy. This had been the case wherever they went. Instruction was begun in order to train interested lay people. Serving first as translators, the laity helped create a written language, write the liturgy, and as readers, conducted services in their own language. Dauenhauer states: “the Church sought to instill a sense of pride in the

native language and foster popular literacy in it.”¹⁴ Whether or not pride was truly the desired outcome, the Russian Orthodox system produced literacy in two languages. (Dauenhauer’s research shows that there were more than a dozen Aleut authors in the nineteenth century and one-sixth of the Aleuts were literate.) Father Veniaminov is credited with establishing multi-ethnic, multi-lingual church services and instruction following the educational policy of the Orthodox Church in Russian America.¹⁵

This was not the philosophy of all Russians in Alaska. Father Juvenal is a case in point. He traveled to Alaska with the first group of Russian priests and in 1796 was killed by Natives at Lake Iliamna, north of the Aleutian chain. Veniaminov believed that this was in retaliation for Juvenal’s educational philosophy. In opposition to the non-acculturationist means of education among the Russian orthodoxy, Juvenal felt that the best way to educate Native children was to remove them to Kodiak Island, away from their families to be raised and taught outside the daily influence of their parents’ beliefs.¹⁶ He was killed before this could happen and probably would not have accomplished this in any case, because such practices were outside Orthodox educational policy. However, his mistake was communicating this feeling to the parents who knew nothing of the church’s philosophy and did not want to have their children taken away for any reason.

Pavel Golovin was another who differed from orthodox policy. A captain in the Russian navy, he noted the sham baptisms and the accompanying liturgical ignorance on the part of the Natives. He stated that the Russian Orthodox Church had claimed Native souls through ceremony but had failed in its mission to bring them true understanding of God. He cited the problem as a lack of desire on the part of the missionaries to learn the Aleut language. The missionaries and Natives could not converse, and since they could not share ideas, the priests could not “spread Christian teachings among the savages.” Golovin believed Christianity

would save the Eskimos but that they needed education before conversion if they were to understand Christian concepts. He shared the view of Juvenal that the children were the key to the future of Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska. He also felt that they had to perceive a need to accept Christianity and that they would never perceive that need if they were not educated. Zagoskin, too, espoused this need on the part of the Yupiks. He praised certain aspects of their culture but felt that they lived in ignorance and need. The cure for this was “white man’s education.”¹⁷ In this, all three Russians fit into the philosophy of later western educators.

Fertile Grounds for American Missionaries

When American missionaries came to the Yukon-Kuskokwim territory, native villagers had had contact with Russian Orthodox priests for fifty years. For their part, the Russian Orthodox priests did not demand cultural change.¹⁸ The changes that had occurred in western Alaska were demographic rather than technological or philosophical in nature and were the result of disease. The trade networks spread smallpox and influenza epidemics in 1838 and 1852, wiping out hundreds of native villages. Social structure and daily life patterns remained unchanged, even as people moved to other villages or filled in gaps in extended family groups.¹⁹ The Russian Orthodox Church, however, brought more change than they realized. By the time American missionaries arrived on the scene, the changes, though invisible to newcomers, were none-the-less significant.

One of the changes was the cessation of inter-tribal warfare. Population decline and demographic shift caused by disease brought a halt to inter-tribal feuding and regional rivalries; old feuds became dimmed by familial re-grouping and the need to face immediate problems. Second, the Orthodox Church opened native eyes to a different spiritual frame of reference. Although the Yupiks may have possessed only a hazy understanding of Russian Orthodox rites, they had been exposed to new ideas. The third change was an imperceptible crack in the

power of traditional religious leaders, or shamans. The shamans proved powerless to affect cures or relief for Natives who were stricken with influenza or smallpox. All these changes helped the cause of Christian missionaries in western Alaska.²⁰

By the time American missionaries arrived in Alaska, religious denominations had a lengthy history of missionary experience to guide them. They also received more support than their earlier evangelical counterparts. Although the work was the same, spreading Christianity and civilization to natives, the political make-up of this new world was very different. Missionaries were not coming from foreign countries to satisfy national needs while conducting their missionary work. Most of the mission societies in the United States were Protestant and had been invited by Sheldon Jackson to divide the work between them. Although there may have been rivalry between them, there were no state religions vying to hold territory for the motherland.²¹ The United States had purchased Alaska so ownership of land and resources was not in dispute. Unlike the French and British who fueled their rivalry by obtaining native allegiance during the American colonial period, there was no need to maintain the allegiance of a native labor force in Alaska.²²

Supported by the federal government through the Bureau of Education, their own churches and mission societies, the missionaries had help in their endeavor. Invited into the field during the 1880s as an overall effort to help the Natives in Alaska, the missions had tacit authority to achieve their purpose. They were similar to each other and similar to past mission attempts in the Americas in their overall goals. Other than propagating the gospel, their most important goals were the creation of a desire for modern goods and knowledge of the English language. The attainment of these goals meant that the Natives would be taking on a new life; it meant a rise out of darkness to what the missionaries perceived as a higher, more enlightened form of society.

Although the Natives' lives at the time of American missionary contact were little changed from the past, the intrusions already confronted were leading to major changes. Disease brought about a cessation of warfare and made the villagers more receptive to new messengers. In times past, Natives might have rejected a missionary simply to adhere to divisions between themselves and certain families or villages. The need for re-grouping and extending communal ties was encouraging them to look outward. That the Russian Orthodox priests introduced another faith was revolutionary in itself. Although many of the Natives were not Orthodox and those that had converted were often not strict adherents of Orthodox beliefs, the existence of another set of beliefs helped set the stage for other changes. Native people may not have taken on the Russian Orthodox faith as their own, but they did become aware that there was another way of thinking. This awareness helped to acknowledge the existence of spiritual practices other than their own.

The last cultural disturbance was perhaps the most telling: the loss of the shamans' power. In many traditional societies, spiritual leaders form the glue of the community; they explained beliefs and events, led ceremonies, reminded people of their obligations to the shades and effected cures for the sick. The epidemic diseases introduced by the Russians proved too strong for the shamans' powers. The Natives may have disregarded, at least at first, the lack of success on the part of the shamans and blamed themselves for creation of the disharmony believed to bring about sickness. Unnoticeable cracks may have appeared regarding the shamans, but the introduction of western medicine brought by the missionaries gave notice of their power over sickness and of the shamans' loss of favor with the spirits.

These ripples in the pool of Native thought helped make the job easier for the Christian missionaries entering Alaska. They were more demanding than the Russian Orthodox as far as cultural change, but the Russian missionaries had

opened the door to changes in Native thought. The changes the American missionaries demanded were great and no less disruptive than the changes brought to tribes in the lower United States. The new missions represented a significant cultural attack on the Yupik lifestyle and belief system in what had been a relatively undisturbed section of Alaska.²³ Alaska Natives, however, eventually came to adopt, or at least show outward acceptance of some of the changes.

Like assimilationists in the lower United States, the Russians Golovin and Zagoskin sensed that if the Natives were introduced to luxury items they would learn to desire them. This desire would lead them to find a way to acquire goods vis-à-vis working for the white man, and in the process learn obedience and a new way of life. Golovin thought the Natives could be employed in order to free company workers who had previously performed menial labor at great expense to their employers. The idea of a useful and submissive Native was antithetical to the stated philosophy of the Russian Orthodox Church, but hit directly on Western thought concerning the reasons and objectives for educating Indians and Alaska Natives. These few Russians presented a foreshadowing of what was ahead for Native Alaskans.

¹ . Carey, Richard Adams, An Alaskan Culture At Twilight: Raven's Children, 51.

² . Nelson, introduction, 8; Anderson and Eells, 23-24.

³ . Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 47.

⁴ . Nelson, 21-24, 26.

⁵ . Nelson, 421; Richard Adams Carey, Raven's Children: An Alaskan Culture At Twilight, 103. Zagoskin wrote of the need to hurry if memory of the Yupiks' primitive life was to be preserved. He noted that the spread of Christianity and contact with Russians would cause them to lose their lifestyle and become ashamed of their traditions. Writing at a later time, Edward Nelson said almost the same thing, noting also that he was sorry he hadn't been able to capture the full significance and beliefs behind the ceremonies. He felt that the natives would

become so sophisticated that the ceremonies would in time be forgotten, even to themselves.

⁶ . Claus-M. Naske and Herman E. Slotnick, Alaska: A History of the 49th State, 46; Collier; 17; Anderson and Eells, 85-86.

⁷ . Naske, 55, 56.

⁸ . Donald Craig Mitchell, Sold American: the Story of Alaska Natives And Their Land: 1867-1959, 40-45.

⁹ . Ibid. 64, 65. Mitchell explains that the priests' success was measured by the number of baptisms they performed. 2,442 baptisms had been performed in one year by a single priest at Unalaska. The same priest performed 536 marriages there in the same year.

¹⁰ . Carey, 93, 146, 148. Carey points out that Nelson heard Yupiks comparing similarities between Orthodox rites and their own and believed that they were witnessing a white man's version of their own. They saw similarities in the mask festivals, the Russian Orthodox Christmas, the sharing of gifts, and the sharing of souls between two worlds.

¹¹ . Ibid. 137, 144, 148.

¹² . Richard L. Dauenhauer, "Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education," 8, series 6, file drawer 2 in the Paul Jensen Museum Archives; Mitchell, 65.

¹³ . Dauenhauer, 3,4.

¹⁴ . Ibid. 6.

¹⁵ . Ibid. 6, 9, 24.

¹⁶ . Mitchell, 65. The reason for the death of Juvenal is not known with certainty. However, Veniaminov's theory makes sense in light of Juvenal's philosophy and the unwillingness of the Aleuts to part with their children.

¹⁷ . Carey, 151; Mitchell, 66, 67.

¹⁸ . Carey, 135, 136.

¹⁹ . Ibid. 47.

²⁰ . Ibid. 46, 47.

²¹ . Ken Coats, "Controlling the Periphery: The Territorial Administration of the Yukon-Alaska, 1867-1959," 194.

²² . James Axtell, The Invasion Within: The Contest Of Cultures In Colonial North America, 135.

²³ . Mitchell, 8, 137, 174.

4. SHELDON JACKSON'S PUSH FOR MISSION EDUCATION IN ALASKA

One of the first American missionaries to travel to Alaska, Sheldon Jackson, was the most visible, energetic, and successful missionary to work for Alaska Native education. Forty-three years of age when he first visited Alaska in 1877, Jackson began unceasing work for Alaskan causes, particularly those of Native education. His success led Commissioner of Education, John Eaton, to appoint him General Agent of Education for Alaska in 1885, the position he held until his resignation at age seventy-four in 1908.¹

It is not so much what Jackson did when he first went to Alaska but what he accomplished later stumping for his cause in Washington, DC that brought him success. He introduced the public to Alaska's need for missions through a letter that had been passed on to him. A soldier at Fort Wrangell in Alaska had written a letter to the officer in charge of Alaskan affairs requesting a missionary for the benefit of the Wrangell Natives who were developing social problems as a result of the influx of settlers. Jackson sent one copy to the Chicago Daily Tribune and one to the Presbyterian Board of Missions in 1877 along with a request to send a missionary. The Board granted approval and made the necessary arrangements.² A short time later, Jackson was in Portland, Oregon as Presbyterian missionary Amanda McFarland was preparing to leave for Alaska; Jackson, who had not yet been to Alaska, decided to accompany her. He stayed in Alaska only a short time before leaving for New York and the East Coast with plans to raise funds for the Alaska mission. Jackson did not return to Alaska for two years but during that time raised \$12,000 and arranged to have two more missionaries sent.³

When Jackson returned to Alaska in December 1879, he did some exploring in the territory and developed a plan to bring education to Alaska. He learned that the territory was too large and had too many Native children for either he or the Presbyterian Church to handle alone. The church had neither the resources nor

the missionaries, and successful though he was at fund-raising, Jackson knew he could not generate enough private funding for such a vast undertaking. The next step, as he saw it, was to arrange for large-scale financing from the federal government. His earlier (1877) request for Alaskan education funds from the Department of the Interior had been turned down so Jackson now went directly to Congress to achieve his ends.⁴

Jackson worked hard to change indifferent Congressional attitudes about Alaska. He provided representatives with favorable reports about the economic resources of the territory. The education of Natives, he told them, would help develop those resources. He pointed out that income from sealing was over one quarter of a million dollars yearly and requested the use of part of those funds for education. He argued that educating and civilizing the Natives now would be less expensive than later skirmishes with an angry Native population as had happened with the Indians of the lower United States and reminded lawmakers that the federal government had made a promise to extend education to Alaska Natives. He pleaded for education, government, and industry to replace the old practices and beliefs that would only serve to make Alaska Natives a drain on the United States government.⁵

Not willing to wait for congressional funding and approval, Jackson took matters into his own hands. In 1880 he arranged a conference for representatives of various Protestant denominations where he suggested that each denomination be assigned a different area in Alaska in which to open missions. With no input from the Natives who had no idea that the vanguards of Christianity were about to descend upon them, Alaska was about to be carved into sectarian wedges.⁶

The concept of ecclesiastical pie was not new. At the time of the Alaska purchase, President Grant's Peace Policy was being formulated in the lower states as a non-military solution to costly Indian wars. The proposed policy came about as a result of a survey undertaken to assess ways to end the wars and acculturate

Indians. The 1867 report stressed education as the pivotal means to achieve assimilation. The policy was established and a Board of Indian Commissioners created to oversee and govern the programs. The Board consisted of Protestant men who made recommendations to the government, including moving Indians onto reservations where they would be kept away from frontier settlements and taught trades and farming from Christian instructors. In return, they were to receive food, clothing, and goods at reasonable prices; those refusing to move onto reservations would be severely punished. The reservations were to be put under the care of Indian agents to be appointed by the Board who would also be responsible for hiring personnel to oversee the improvement of the Indians' way of life and bring them into line with white society. The schools and missions were divided among the Protestant sects who, it was believed, would bring a humanitarian outlook to the process of civilizing the Indians, more so than the military at any rate. Jackson took that idea to Alaska.⁷

Missionary societies were generally reliant on private funds. The fund raising, however, could not supply all the money necessary for the number of missionaries needed in Alaska. In the contiguous United States, the federal government either directly supported churches to help with their civilizing endeavors or built schools and turned them over to sectarian interests.⁸ The precedent was set in 1819 when Congress began appropriating funds to the War Department to use as a civilization fund, or education money, for Indians. Jackson's program was similar. He suggested that the religious denominations provide buildings and teachers whose salaries would then be paid by the Bureau of Education (which also furnished supplies). The arrangement was accepted and Jackson hired missionaries and regular teachers through the Bureau. In this way, many religious missions gained a foothold on Alaskan soil supported by government funds.⁹

Whatever sect was involved, the goal of the missions was to remove children from Native culture. To serve this purpose, boarding schools were opened. Native parents were required to sign over their children, girls until age eighteen, and boys twenty-one. A Catholic missionary explained that the boarding schools kept the children away from contact with their elders and enhanced the ability to enlighten them and teach them to be useful.¹⁰

By 1889, mission schools were present in all areas of Alaska. There were sixteen schools in southeast Alaska, including an industrial training school and a Russian church school. The Pribilofs and Kodiak Island had schools; the Nushagak, Kuskokwim, and Yukon regions all had schools as did Nome, Barrow, and Little Diomed Island. Along with the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic schools, the Protestant denominations were well represented by the Anglicans, Swedish Lutherans, Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and others.¹¹

Jackson and the Federal Government: The Goals of Education in Alaska

In order to understand the Christian values so firmly embedded within white culture, schooling had to become part of the process of conversion. The idea was to elevate the Native population socially, economically, and spiritually, that is, to elevate the Natives to western society and its values. Proper living conditions, nuclear families, limited sexual relationships, a Protestant work ethic, and literacy in English were all part of these values.¹²

The missions were not alone in this goal. Both the United States Congress and the Department of the Interior had a native policy whose goal was to “use the schoolhouse to transform native children into citizens who possessed white values, attitudes and work habits.” The goals of the federal agencies and the missions were one and the same as evidenced by the work of Sheldon Jackson. When he stepped into the arena of Alaska missions, he echoed objectives similar

to the United States government and possessed the determination and energy to pursue his agenda. In time, he came to carry a lot of influence in the sphere and took over the field of Alaska Native education.¹³

The mission schools offered more than formal education. Accompanying the instruction was religious teaching to help uplift the Natives. The mission schools also brought Western culture to them to help them achieve a white way of thinking. Missionary teachers believed they were bringing the good life to the Natives that could be achieved only “through conversion to white values, which basically are supported by Christian convictions.” Missionaries and bureaucrats alike believed that the best way to help the Natives achieve uplift and the good life was to make them economically useful to Western society and train them for work in industry.¹⁴

The Moravians in Yupik Country

The Moravians took their place among the many missions in Alaska in 1885. Moravian missionaries William Weinland and John and Edith Kilbuck opened a mission on the Kuskokwim River they named Bethel. Their initial views of the Alaskans were similar to their earlier predecessors in the lower United States. The Natives were recognized as human beings, but only marginally so. Weinland described them as “sluggish and dull and filthy, stupid and listless” and like previous missionaries, he considered native beliefs to be inferior to his own and their culture little more than rudimentary.¹⁵ Jackson, like John and Edith Kilbuck, described the Natives’ homes as filthy and bursting with too many people and dogs.¹⁶

Besides what they saw as physical squalor, missionaries wrote that the villagers practiced such aberrations as “cohabitation, adultery, polygamy, spouse exchange and infanticide.”¹⁷ The cultural practices that the missionaries found so abhorrent, however, were environmentally and culturally necessary in Yupik life. The missionaries, in fact, were puzzled by the happiness of the Yupiks,

wondering if it was due to their ignorance of other ways. Although they knew that the Yupiks had experienced outside contact for fifty years, the missionaries could detect no changes. Rather, the Natives accepted as natural the negative aspects that came with the consequences of the climate, possible starvation following community feasting, and the proscribed death of some newborns and elderly in extenuating circumstances. That the Yupiks seemed happy and not inclined to suicidal tendencies as a result of their hardships and abhorrent practices was perplexing to the missionaries who tried to find out why. They were told simply that their customs had never kept them from happiness. The missionaries wanted to combat the practices and set about changing the life habits of the Natives.¹⁸

Work, Physical Lifestyle and Christianity

Labor for profit, or one's own personal gain, went hand-in-hand with a godly Christian life. Early missionaries in the lower states believed that self-discipline in the form of labor was a necessary step in the civilization process. The Moravians on the Kuskokwim years later were no different. John Kilbuck expressed the belief that the Natives knew nothing of "work year in and year out, from morning to night. The work necessary for their way of living is very little and is of a spasmodic character." The Moravian missionaries thought the Yupiks lethargic and without motivation.¹⁹ Labor brought schedules and new demands to Indian lives. They were expected to be on time for mandatory attendance at prayer, work, and school. The Moravians sought a structured life for Natives on the Kuskokwim. Days and seasons were divided into times of work and prayer. Calendars and clocks were introduced along with the concept of time as an object to be saved and used rather than squandered. The new concept put individual activity into blocks of labor meant to fill in the blocks of time between blocks of prayer, or blocks of school. To John Kilbuck, work was a means, not the end.²⁰

It was with thoughts of changing the Yupiks' lifestyle that the Kilbucks taught the Natives in Bethel to garden. The gardens were labor-intensive, requiring the soil to be moved to a root cellar for thawing and then back to the garden for planting. The land along the river proved to be productive and the Yupiks had some success in raising potatoes, turnips, cabbages, and beets which they sold to white traders. At least while the Kilbucks were on the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta, the Yupiks continued to garden and profit from their work. John Kilbuck recorded returns starting at fifty dollars the first year and reaching \$750 the third. There were fourteen growers who averaged fifty-three dollars apiece. Kilbuck wanted to turn the Yupiks into productive Christians and believed that they needed to be producers instead of consumers; he saw this in light of the fact that the world had intruded upon them and that they needed to learn to adjust and fend for themselves in the Western economy. Kilbuck believed that the Natives needed to take care of themselves and not rely on outside resources and he favored herding and farming as the means to reach this goal and as symbols of a Christian lifestyle.²¹

As with missionaries elsewhere, Weinland and the Kilbucks set about changing the life habits of the Natives. Community mores were among the first area of attack. Christian marriage was introduced, adultery and divorce were condemned, infanticide was outlawed, and nakedness in private homes and the kashgees was stopped. John Kilbuck readily set about teaching western values of private ownership and frugality; he worked to improve hygiene and housing, and was anxious to effect social change. Although he wanted to see the birth of a Western Christian lifestyle and its accompanying values intermarried with certain Yupik traits, creativity and resilience for example, the changes he sought could not help but destroy Yupik life patterns.²²

Spiritual Upheaval

In 1890 Kilbuck erected a sawmill to initiate mission involvement in local trade and industry like fish packing and mining. He saw this as a way to help support the mission and begin business opportunities for his charges. Kilbuck was not seeking to infuse money into a depressed economy but was seeking to change what he considered an inferior subsistence barter economy into a western-style moneyed economy and change what he perceived as idleness and poverty into godly industry and the desire for luxury items. The missionary understood that social change was necessary if the Yupiks were to accept Moravian Christianity. The Moravian faith differed from the Russian Orthodox in that it was not solely one of liturgy and ceremony but was tied to Western culture and the virtues of discipline, thrift, and economic diversity. Kilbuck knew that complete social change, including economic transformation, would be necessary for Native acceptance of the Moravian religion. Hoping to engender these values in the Yupiks, the Moravians opened an industrial school to teach trades and enable Natives to work in the canneries being established.²³

Social change on the Kuskokwim was not just a matter of moving Western Christian values into Native communities. To be effective, it was necessary to eliminate Yupik values. Weinland and the Kilbucks, like missionaries elsewhere, quickly realized the power of the shaman's in maintaining social practices. Kilbuck, in fact, became fluent in the Yupik language and began to understand that "Yupik spiritual thought underscored nearly every custom and habit, nearly every gesture of everyday life" and that the shamans were central to this philosophy.²⁴ The truth dawned that dances and gift exchanges were more than just secular social activities and that the kashgees were more than community halls.

When Kilbuck realized the extent to which the Natives were held by the power of the shamans who, he believed, bred darkness and superstition, he began

a campaign to destroy the kashgees and the shamans. He decreed that people make a choice between traditional Yupik and Moravian practices. This brought about a battle between the shamans and the Moravians. The Yupik villagers were shocked by the intrusions into their private affairs and spiritual ceremonies but the shamans were not. The shamans recognized that the change that was being asked was nothing less than total transformation. They recognized as well the challenge to their authority and warned the villagers “against the Moravians, in particular, and against kass’aq (white) ways in general, calling white people “children of thunder” whose every action and possession was accompanied by noise.” The shamans joined unflinchingly in the battle of faiths.²⁵

Sickness and Shamans

The one field in which the Moravians had the upper hand against the shamans was that of medicine and disease. As had happened in other places where white contact was newly introduced, epidemic disease took its toll. Tuberculosis, syphilis, and smallpox came to Alaska with the Russians. The shamans were skilled healers using herbs and acupuncture. They practiced some surgery and amputation and knew how to use the mind to help heal the body. However, while the shamans recognized that these diseases accompanied the newcomers, they were powerless against them. Like population reversals for the rest of the Americas following European contact, Russian traders in 1839 estimated that 60 percent of the population on the Kuskokwim alone had died. Epidemic followed epidemic as more outsiders came to Alaska. Measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, and influenza were introduced to the Natives.²⁶

The shamans did all they could, but it was the Moravians’ showing of medicinal power that finally won converts. Unlike the shamans’ medicine that could not stop epidemic diseases or cure those already sick, the missionaries’ medicines were able to alleviate some of the suffering. Although unable to stop smallpox, the missionaries did all they could to help; they tended the sick, took in

orphaned children, and provided food to the survivors. The missionaries themselves did not contract the diseases. To the Yupiks this was a sign of their spiritual powers. Pleurisy and pneumonia, common to the Yupiks, afflicted the missionaries as well, but their medicines brought about cures for both; the Natives perceived this as a sign of spiritual power.²⁷

Natives heard about the missionary cures on the Kuskokwim and came to them for medicine, sometimes from as far away as 500 miles. The ministers and lay helpers both carried medicines with them, and it was their successful use that swayed many of the natives. “When these first teachers first came, they did not command our attention by what they preached, but when they gave us medicine, and said this and that ailment would be cured, we looked on to see if what they said was true.”²⁸ Because they could see the truth of the missionaries’ claims, Natives began to believe them and put some credence into their religion. The power of the shamans was discredited over time as missionary successes continued. The final blow for the shamans came with the Great Sickness of 1900, a concurrent epidemic of measles and influenza that originated with the gold rushers in Nome.²⁹ Many of the older shamans had died, and the Great Sickness took most of the rest. By the time of the diphtheria epidemic of 1906, the transmission of traditional knowledge such as ceremonies and healing that had already been interrupted came to a standstill.

Aftermath in the Missions

As had happened in the aftermath of diseases worldwide, starvation ensued as the food-gathering generation became too weak or had died. Missionaries took over the care of the orphans and the survivors, traditions fell into disuse, and festivals that had previously gone on all night were stopped. Not only were such ceremonies offensive to the missionaries, but they kept the children up late and made them too tired to attend school. The kashgee and barabarrahs were torn down because they were thought to be responsible for the spread of disease. In

their place, churches and western style houses were built. Because of the spread of disease, single nuclear families rather than the traditional extended families were encouraged to live in the new frame houses. The church took the place of the kashgee and offered services and prayer meetings instead of séances and chanting. Lifestyles were disrupted as villages and villagers became permanent and seasonal cycles were abandoned. This in turn gave way to church and school-scheduled activities.³⁰

In the end, missionaries and the Protestant religions seemed to win out over the shamans and traditional Yupik beliefs. To say, however, that the work of the missionaries was accomplished solely through the work of God and divine intervention would be erroneous. Some believed, as did Lt. Zagoskin, that the great tragic epidemics were sent by God to wipe out the old faith and establish Christianity in Alaska.³¹ Certainly the clerical practitioners of Christianity offered some solace to the survivors, but it was not Christianity itself that won the battle. Time and circumstance contributed much to the work of conversion. Traders and whalers, who may or may not have been Christian, and the missionaries themselves helped the process of change and conversion. They did not succeed through biblical teachings but unwittingly by their very presence. The diseases brought by the newcomers caused disruption, dismemberment, fear, and bewilderment to native societies. The chaos and loss spurred a need to cling to the aid and hope offered by missionaries.³² The changes brought about were not born of a willing desire to add white ways to their own native ways. Rather they came about from fear of the evil that had overtaken them in the form of sickness. The Yupik people were in shock, their world turned upside down. Their beliefs were in question and they followed the missionaries out of need. They were educated into a new religion and a new lifestyle.³³

The education offered before the Great Sickness was not academic, and what came to be offered afterward was only a little more so. The little that was offered

was more likely than not baffling and irrelevant. The education offered by the missionaries consisted of social change rather than social learning. Social change offered from outside the culture is conscious and aims at destroying life ways and mores in order to substitute ones perceived to be superior. There is no opportunity for change to take place on its own or for the choice of making selective adaptations to old or new cultural ways. Social learning that comes from within the culture is both conscious and unconscious and strives to help the individual succeed among his or her own people. This encompasses the life ways and allows for natural, spontaneous evolution to occur when proper or necessary. The early education efforts offered by the United States were not designed to educate Alaska Natives to live in a modern way in their own world. They were not designed to educate them to live in a modern way in the lower forty-eight. The education offered was solely a matter of changing them to behave like white Christians in a sub-Arctic environment.

Jackson's Aims and Accomplishments

Sheldon Jackson wanted to provide the Natives with a proper Christian outlook and work ethic and succeeded in bringing missionaries to Alaska for that purpose. In his efforts, Jackson's primary motivation was salvation of the Natives. He wanted to protect them from the incoming influences of white miners and traders and expressed concern about the "poverty and squalor" of Yupik life. He decried the dismal life of the natives' culture and could not accept their lifestyle. Believing that he was witnessing a society in transition, Jackson concluded that what he saw was the effect of "unwholesome white influence [that] had already destroyed the traditional Yupik culture and broken down their economy." What he called moral degeneration, he blamed on those same influences. With this in mind, Jackson worked to prepare Natives for western society through education and laws to protect them from harmful influences.³⁴

Although education and the conversion of the Natives to Christianity was Jackson's main drive, he also hoped to keep the Alaska Natives from the pitfalls of the reservation system in the lower states. Jackson pressed for education funds rather than social programs, hoping to avoid the effects of agency corruption and its attendant problems. He wanted the federal government to ban the sale of liquor in the territory and to protect Natives from exploitation by settlers in Alaska. In his work to gain funds for native education, he stressed that Natives wanted to be American rather than separate tribes with special government-to-government agreements.³⁵

This was not the way it worked in practice, however. Schools were segregated because protests from white citizens led to separate schools for Native and white children. From their earliest forays into the Western culture, therefore, Native children were excluded from the American system because of their ethnicity and lifestyle. But Jackson's efforts to prevent exploitation were no more successful in Alaska than they had been elsewhere. Traders and business owners took advantage of inexperienced Natives by way of low returns for furs and high costs for goods. Natives were employed at low wages in the canneries, mines, and at tendering supplies. They were admitted into the least remunerative and participatory side of American life as low-wage, unskilled labor.³⁶ Although blame cannot be laid on Jackson alone, he blithely accepted the system of inequality coming into existence in Alaska.

There were no laws enacted then, and still are none now, to guarantee that a white, western education guaranteed entrance into a moneyed, western lifestyle as full participating members. The Natives then were no better off than they had been before. In fact if anything, they had taken a step downward; as more Native Alaskans engaged in wage labor, their own skills were lost along with their independence. They gained the merest access to a new material culture which did not supply them with equal means to attain its full benefits. The education

offered was not equal to that of western society and was irrelevant to their own lifestyles. The employment available to Natives was demeaning and an economic dead-end. They were told to join mainstream society but were not given the tools or means to attain it. The Natives coming into the modern world were offered a dual system of education and a dual system of labor with its tacit approval of status inequality. Jackson brought the Alaskan Natives the rudiments of Western society, complete with racist segregation and second-class citizenship built in. For most natives of Alaska, this was the only means provided for entrance into the American society that they were being forced into.

¹ . Dauenhauer, 10.

² . D. Mitchell, 73, 74. Mitchell states that the Reverend Lindsley had previously sent a missionary, John Mallory, who had to leave because of ill health.

³ . Haycox, Stephen, Alaska: An American Colony, 184; Lazell, 55; D. Mitchell, 75. Lazell notes in his book that the Alaska mission was originally Jackson's idea and that he encouraged Amanda McFarland to go. Mitchell states that Lindsley had already made arrangements for McFarland to leave when Jackson arrived in Portland.

⁴ . D. Mitchell, 77, 78.

⁵ . Lazell, 63, 64.

⁶ . Lazell, 65; Mitchell, 92.

⁷ . Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 135; Frederic Mitchell, "Church-State Conflict: A Little Known Part of the Continuing Church-State Conflict Found in Early Indian Education," 6; Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: United States Government and the American Indians, 153.

⁸ . F. Mitchell, 7, 8; D. Mitchell, 68, 69.

⁹ . D. Mitchell, 89, 93; Smith, 442.

¹⁰ . D. Mitchell, 94. The comments were made by Jesuit missionary Paschal Tosi who supervised a mission school at Holy Cross on the Lower Yukon River.

¹¹ . Ibid. 61.

¹² . Ted C. Hinckley, The Americanization of Alaska, 1867-1897, 115.

¹³ . D. Mitchell, 91.

¹⁴ . Collier, 26; Smith, 442.

¹⁵ . Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 75, 263.

¹⁶ . Carey, 152,153.

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- ¹⁷ . Ibid. 153.
- ¹⁸ . Ibid. 153, 154.
- ¹⁹ . Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 77; Fienup-Riordan, Eskimo Essays, 83.
- ²⁰ . Michael J. Gonzales, "The child of the Wilderness weeps for the father of our Country: The Indian and the Politics of Church and State In Provincial California," 157; James A Sandos, "Between Crucifix and Lance: Indian-white Relationships in California, 1769-1849," 206; Axtell, 122, Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 77.
- ²¹ . Carey, 180; Fienup-Riordan, The Real People, 12, 194-195.
- ²² . Carey, 156, 172, 84.
- ²³ . Ibid. 150, 156, 162.
- ²⁴ . Ibid. 156.
- ²⁵ . Ibid. 151.
- ²⁶ . Ibid. 168-169.
- ²⁷ . Ibid. 158.
- ²⁸ . Ibid. 174. The missionaries on the Kuskokwim, like Father Veniaminov earlier, relied on native helpers to extend their work to outlying villages and for translation. The quote is from a native helper at a church conference in Bethel in 1895.
- ²⁹ . Haycox, Alaska, 209-210.
- ³⁰ . Carey, 178, 179.
- ³¹ . Ibid. 170, 172.
- ³² . Napoleon, 11-13.
- ³³ . Ibid. 11.
- ³⁴ . Hinckley, 129, 153; Collier, 86.
- ³⁵ . D. Mitchell, 89.
- ³⁶ . Ibid. 97.

5. POST-MISSION SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS IN ALASKA

The Territorial Organic Act of 1884 ushered in a school system for Alaska. Funding limitations combined with the need to bring Alaskan Natives into the dominant culture convinced the Bureau of Education to place its emphasis on schools for Natives. (The Bureau of Education was housed within the Department of Interior as was the Bureau of Indian Affairs.) White settlers protested that the majority of funds were being used for Natives and left very little for their own children. The complaint was sound in that \$25,000 was the entire amount appropriated to cover education for the territory; however, the Native population far outnumbered the white population, resulting in the unequal portions.¹

White settlers expressed concern that the Bureau of Education's integrated program would provide inadequate instruction for their own children. They saw no need for natives to have equal education and their main objective was not education or financial equity but the mixing of Native and white children. To keep the peace, Sheldon Jackson (appointed General Education Agent in 1885), bowed to public sentiment to segregate the school system and had the Native and white children attend classes at separate times during the day.² Settlers still protested this solution because they resented white children having to share classrooms with Natives. As a result, Congress approved the Nelson Act in 1905 which gave Alaskan settlers the right to petition for school districts. Schools organized under this act were limited to whites and children of mixed blood "leading a civilized life." The Nelson Act schools and white students were under the jurisdiction of the territory, while responsibility for Native education rested with the federal government.³

Relieved of its duties to white children, the Bureau of Education reorganized in 1906. The agency developed an Alaska branch to deal with Native educational

and social needs. Acculturation, self-reliance, and future citizenship were still the policy of education pursued by the Bureau. According to a 1907 report by the United States commissioner of Education, Harlan Updegraff, an official policy of paternalism was also put into place. Following Jackson's lead in trying to protect the Natives from the demoralizing effects of white influence, the Commissioner wanted to ban the sale of liquor to Natives and the exploitation of Native women by white men. To these issues he added health and disease, disregard of Native rights, and the destruction of fish and game. Medical care, relief programs, economic assistance, and training for Native enterprises were offered in the villages, usually under the direction of the teacher.⁴

Alaska gained territorial status in 1912, and a Territorial Department of Education was established five years later. At that time, the Territorial Department took over Nelson Act schools and those not under federal Bureau of Education supervision. The federal government had already taken on responsibility for Native schools and continued to solidify its role in native education. However, there were also schools in rural areas that were funded and controlled by the territory and most Native children lived in rural areas so attended territorial schools and were funded by the territory.⁵ The territorial government took the view that the education and welfare of the Natives rested with the federal government and wanted it to take over all Native education. They reasoned that the federal government should establish schools specifically for Native students or pay tuition to help support the territorial schools the Native children attended. Legally, the federal government could not pay tuition for a tax-paying segment of the population (Natives were not exempt from paying taxes, but most had no need to), so the Bureau of Indian Affairs took over the operation of predominantly native schools.⁶

The Federal Bureau of Education (BOE) had taken over many mission schools by 1894. Even with the changes in agency control, the policy and

curriculum of Native schools remained as it had been. The school became the community center with the purpose of promoting the physical, moral, and industrial welfare of Native adults as well as children.⁷ The educational program promoted the policy of the Bureau of Education in that it emphasized social progress and acculturation. The “intellectually gifted” were sent outside (to the lower states) for vocational education and then returned to their villages to teach and “render service” to their fellow villagers. Health problems and social maladjustment of the students sent outside led the BOE to open its own Alaskan boarding schools in 1911 and send fewer Native students outside.⁸ Other than this, little if any notice was given to special educational needs for Native children. The curriculum was geared to a white population and offered little room for flexibility. Not until the early 1930s was mention made of the fact that the education offered in Native territorial schools was inappropriate for the population it served. The curriculum and policy of both the territorial and the federal schools were ill-suited for Native students. The federal schools continued to follow the guidelines of the mission schools and stressed domestic and vocational education. The programs were much the same as those of the mission schools. Sanitation, morality, and the English language were still major goals of the Bureau’s policy of assimilation. Education in the territorial schools was more academic and assumed knowledge of concepts on the part of Native students that they did not have. In neither case were the schools prepared to educate Alaskan Natives.⁹

Education Survey of Indians and Alaska Natives

The Meriam Survey was conducted in 1928 to assess conditions of Native Americans, outline their needs, and improve federal programs. The Survey assessed the problems of Indian education and concentrated on education reform.¹⁰ The 1930s brought philosophical changes in American education and recommendations from the Meriam Survey. However, little in the way of

innovation or solution sifted down to the classroom level and American education, Native or white, remained static.

In 1929, Interior Secretary Ray Lyman Wilbur declared that education was to be the jump-off point into a new era for the Indians. Henceforth he noted, Indians “would be regarded as potential citizens” and the education program “would be practical, vocational, and designed to absorb the Indians into the economy of the United States.”¹¹ The suggestions for economic security display a sad but ironic note about the state of Native survival. New elements of agriculture, fur farming, and animal husbandry were added as were sales, research, and business management. The striking point is that use of natural resources, such as fish, was to be part of the curriculum. Components included catching, curing, storage, consumption, and sale. Selling fish was introduced to take the place of traditional barter. Aside from learning new economic principles, Natives were to re-learn what they had been told to unlearn. Cooperative enterprises were to be taught for the purpose of economic stability; the old methods of village cooperation that had been disrupted and discarded were now to be restructured and re-instituted.¹²

The traditional economic patterns were discarded because they were seen as old, broken down, and rustic. Once the natives had gone through tremendous social change, the population loss due to disease, and their past lifestyles left behind, the old ways were now being reintroduced. Granted these were couched in concepts of science and Western economy, but their own preservation methods had worked in the past and their barter economy fulfilled their needs. It is important to note that the Native lifestyles that had been attacked and left behind as primitive by the harbingers of new technology and civilization were now being re-taught as American.¹³

The 1930s saw a Bureau of Indian Affairs push for Native self-determination. The Bureau understood the need for self-determination but not the

reality that Native Americans were unprepared to deal with bureaucratic twentieth century America. There was talk of the need for preservation of Native culture, and its incorporation into modern education and life, but no understanding of the reasons for the problems. Native cultures were in chaos as a result of heavy loss from disease; the survivors may have been able to lead the villages to a healthy, progressive evolution of their lifestyles had they been left alone. The introduction of missionaries and programs from the lower United States however, hampered their natural ability to repair the breaks. After disease, they lost too much to intrusion. John Collier, appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933, called it the subtraction process noting that Alaskan Natives had given too much, too quickly, and too abruptly to be able to easily incorporate new ways with their own.¹⁴ The Native cultures of Alaska were caught between two worlds.

In 1930, the Bureau of Education contracted for an educational survey of Alaska to evaluate the educational system, the social development of the natives, and make suggestions about the direction of Native education for the future. H. Dewey Anderson and Walter Crosby Eells of Stanford University were chosen for the field work and evaluations.¹⁵ The United States Education Commissioner, William Cooper, noted that Alaska and other tracts of land within the contiguous states that had been acquired by the United States included many Native populations markedly different from those of the dominant white population. He pointed out that the educational process had used the same system for Natives and non-natives alike. Cooper hoped that the study would outline an educational system adapted to Native people and their environments. He further observed that the education system should be used to maximize native resources and not as a civilization program: “Any school system which tends to create wants that cannot be satisfied is of course inferior.”¹⁶

At last it seemed that Native Alaskan education might take a positive step forward. During the time of the study, Native education changed hands once again. In 1931, responsibility for Alaska Native education was transferred from the Bureau of Education to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Anderson and Eells noted that at the time of the study, the BIA was using a program initiated by the Bureau of Education in 1926. Although the Commissioner of Education at the time of publication suggested it be revised, nothing had been done. Anderson and Eells then studied the suggested program, the one currently in use, and its effectiveness.¹⁷

The completed Alaska Native Survey was sent to the BIA in 1934. Anderson and Eells found curriculum and classroom rules vague, confusing, ignorant of conditions in Alaska, and failing to meet the needs of pupils or teachers. They found a patchwork of courses and methods, most suited only to students and conditions in the lower states. Their evaluation covered every aspect of the schools: curriculum, policy, teachers, physical sites, health, supervision, testing, and research. In almost every instance, they recommended that the existing program be scrapped for one with more realistic goals and that better teacher training be offered to take into consideration Alaska's unique circumstances and students.¹⁸

Their report made numerous recommendations for the improvement of Alaska Native education. On the curriculum list pertaining to acculturation, they believed the process of civilization was taking place too fast and that natives needed to understand the old ways to help them adjust to elements of the new culture. Their recommendations for acculturation instead focused on the need for teachers and administrators to learn the cultures and activities of the natives in order to help preserve their culture and contribute to future survival. "Cultural adaptation" rather than abrupt substitution would better suit the needs of Alaskan students. Their report recommended a gradual introduction to Western culture

while studying their own cultural practices. Anderson and Eells believed that the Natives needed to understand their own culture in order to compare and relate it to the new one entering their lives.¹⁹ Native games, dances, feasts, contests, music, and festivals were suggested for use in the curriculum and as community recreational activities. They noted that teaching and construction of Native arts as community projects would be more relevant and useful to the Natives than the American based projects. Non-sectarian religious education explaining the historical, mythological, and practical aspects of native religion and Christianity was also included in the suggestions for curriculum change.

The curriculum currently in use was too abstract and subject-oriented, Anderson and Eells wrote. It needed to be discarded along with textbooks that concentrated on subjects and situations completely foreign to Native Alaskan students. The researchers also made note of the linguistic handicaps the Alaskan Native children were under in trying to master an American-based curriculum. Anderson and Eells suggested a more practical curriculum to meet their present level and needs.²⁰ Given the need for a different curriculum, they also suggested that students who scored higher on tests be provided training in industrial schools as potential community leaders rather than continue with an American-based curriculum. The justification for using a different curriculum was that it would be socially more beneficial.

The course of study suggested by the two men included prescriptive courses for health, economic security, stable social development, schooling and education, and civic responsibility. Many of the suggestions they called for were practical and necessary. Keeping health statistics and maintaining regular medical services, for instance, were invaluable for determining native health needs and taking care of present health problems. The new way of life and the introduction of diseases previously unknown to the Natives engendered the need for teaching Western practices of hygiene and sanitation. The researchers were convinced that

a different curriculum was needed to assure the Natives stable social development. Once they were assured that, they could begin studying social organization.²¹ Educational opportunities, the fundamentals of social intercourse, and training in the practical and decorative arts were all part of the report. Among other recommendations was the primary objective of teaching English.

The 1928 Meriam Report and the 1933 appointment of John Collier to Commissioner of Indian Affairs spurred reform within the BIA. The appointment of Collier was a bold move for the BIA. He had been a social worker in New York City, served as executive secretary of the American Indian Defense Association, and lived for two years in New Mexico. While in New Mexico, he spent time with local Indians and was convinced of the viability of their culture. He was an outspoken critic of the policy of assimilation favored by the BIA. He called for agency reform and a push for preservation of Native cultures.²²

The new BIA policy and the Alaska Survey by Anderson and Eells coincided on many points. Reforms were necessary and began with the teachers hired by the Bureau. Qualifications governing the selection of teachers were to be more demanding. There was a notable lack of qualified personnel making up the teaching staff in schools; for example, only 57 percent had a high school education.²³ Teachers in the Alaska service were required to do more than teach. The construction and maintenance of facilities was one of their duties. Most villages had only one or two teachers who also took care of community welfare, dental examinations, adult education, and community law enforcement. The teachers supervised the distribution of relief goods and were in charge of native economic enterprise.²⁴

The Alaska Survey noted that Native educational needs were not being fulfilled. There was no program to train teachers for the unique Alaska service. There was no technical or theoretical training. Field training to teach the care of basic health problems and maintenance of social programs were not discussed.

The study also noted that there was no mention of the dynamics of village communities or the psychological aspects of isolation in the bush. Curriculum planning, classroom procedures, educational psychology, sociology, and study of the Native culture were suggested to help teachers live and teach in Alaska. One of the most important aspects was giving new teachers a perspective of their role in the Alaskan bush. Teachers were to understand they were not simply teachers in a classroom but social engineers charged with bringing cultural assimilation to Alaskans.²⁵

Education and Administrative Reform

As has been noted, no guidelines had been provided for teaching in Alaska; moreover, the disadvantages of climate, distance, and transportation discouraged regular supervision, discussion of goals, care of Native social needs, or uniformity of Native educational programs. Education reform within the BIA included yearly conferences to assess improvements and unity in teaching programs. The Alaska survey suggested summer school for the teaching staff to help train new teachers by preparing them for the bush, offering curriculum planning guidelines, special seminars, and discussions of needs and possible solutions to problems in Alaskan Native schools.²⁶ The Bureau stressed the need for greater communication and cooperation between the states and territories with Native American schools and Bureau teachers. Agency teachers were encouraged to use the state curriculum guides as a base and broaden them with relevant material for native classes and needs. The Alaska survey concurred. It recommended that “An indigenous curriculum should be worked out based upon native needs and directed toward the cultural assimilation and economic independence of native people.”²⁷

The reforms suggested by the Alaska survey and the BIA were positive and a step in the right direction. Education and knowledge of the English language are necessary to any group of people surrounded by dominant Western society, and

understanding the workings of the Western economy and law are important to survival within that system. There is no denying the assimilationist tendencies in both the survey and the BIA, however. The Interior Secretary's declaration that Indians should be absorbed into mainstream American life and the survey's note that teachers were social engineers leaves no doubt about the continued push for assimilation of Indians and Alaska Natives. The Alaska survey called it a more complete plan than classroom instruction. Economic independence of the Natives was important, but the Alaska Survey curriculum was one of cultural assimilation into the mainstream economy rather than one of strengthening the traditional economy.²⁸

The assimilationist proponents of the Native surveys hoped that students would come to accept the superiority of white culture and Christianity. Compare this with Collier's statement: "No interference with Indian religious life or expression will hereafter be tolerated. The cultural history of Indians is in all respects to be considered equal to that of any non-Indian group. And it is desirable that Indians be bilingual, the Indian Arts are to be prized, nourished, and honored."²⁹ Collier's stance was to preserve Native culture so that Indians could find strength and support within their traditional means.

Anderson and Eells noted the positive aspects of studying native culture, but their survey was designed to make the Natives see the superior attributes of Western society. They believed that a comparative study would sway the Natives to choose the path of Western technology. While Anderson and Eells touted positive traits within Native culture, cheerfulness, honesty, and thrift for example, these traits were to be transferred to a new way of life. It was not life ways and beliefs themselves that were to be preserved. Anderson and Eells were objective in recognizing that an established culture was being confronted with new ways. Even so, they were not immune to a certain degree of ethnocentrism and blindness to the disruption of native life patterns that had led to the erosion of traditional

activities. The suggestion that three-fourths of the school day be devoted to practical activities came with the explanation that these activities would enrich their “comparatively drab lives.”³⁰ Collier noted that the government had an obligation to make modern knowledge accessible to Indians but asserted that education should rekindle Indian pride and hope for an Indian future.³¹ While the goals of the Secretary of the Interior stressed education and assimilation into American culture, Collier pushed for education and preservation of Indian culture.

Charles Ray’s Office of Education Study

A study by Charles K. Ray for the United States Office of Education in 1959 indicates that little change took place in Alaska Native education during the 1930s and 1940s. The objectives of Alaskan education remained the same while the BIA re-evaluated its policy of acculturation. Realizing that it was not healthy for Indians and Alaska Natives to lose their unique identities, suggestions were made to incorporate local resources and Native stories into the curriculum. These suggestions were not implemented.³² In the 1950s emerging policy was designed to bring about rehabilitation and complete assimilation of Alaska Natives into Alaska’s new mainstream society. The new program was to be modified to prepare Alaska Natives to live anywhere within the territory, and the government began to push for regional high schools. Bureau policy also changed from the old idea of educating individuals who would return to villages as leaders to a plan of personal achievement.³³

The BIA took over the supervision of nineteen predominantly Native schools from the territory of Alaska in 1939. Although territorial schools were mostly rural and comprised of Native students, their curriculum was designed for the white population. The curriculum did not take into consideration the unique outlook and needs of native groups but followed a traditional Western pattern unrelated to the Alaskan environment. Two separate studies completed by the Alaska Commissioner of Education, one in 1932 and the other in 1941 stated the

problems clearly. The first noted that rural schools were neither doing the work of teaching nor adapting themselves to the specific needs of the people they were meant to serve. The second also concluded that the curriculum was “ill-suited to the needs of the native children.”³⁴

During the 1950s, territorial schools also reflected efforts to integrate Native and white children in a modern Alaska. The definition of students allowed into territorial schools now deleted words pertaining to race. From “children of mixed blood leading a civilized life” to “children of mixed blood,” to “schools within incorporated cities, and rural schools outside incorporated cities,” schools were designating themselves as institutions for education rather than as schools for a select portion of the population.³⁵ The integrated designation, however, provided a handy escape to the problem of developing a curriculum suitable for native students in territorial schools. Already entrenched in a program designed for mainstream students in the lower states, the territorial school system declared that no further changes were needed, adding that provision for local needs was reduced, and that curricular changes too often reflected parental or village pressure, or a teacher’s personal educational philosophy.³⁶

From Segregation to Unification

The 1905 Nelson Act decision to split Alaska’s school system was race-based. Although the premise was “that different types of education were needed for the white and native population,” it was not based on sensitivity to native needs but biased regarding the supposed limitations of Native children. During the 1930s the idea of unification of Alaska’s schools began to take hold. In a major shift from the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ emphasis on education in the 1930s, it began a gradual move away from education in Alaska during World War II. The agency’s rationale was its desire to integrate Natives more fully into the dominant society. If the territories or states took over supervision of certain

native needs, it was believed that the Natives could better adjust to dominant society by learning to deal directly with the community around them.³⁷

Beginning in 1945, the Territory of Alaska and the BIA initiated negotiations for the transfer of federal schools to territorial control. Five schools were to be transferred in 1951 and the process was to continue until 1960 when the transfer of all schools would be complete. Between 1951 and 1954, twenty-two schools were transferred before the process was terminated. The transfer agreement failed to take into consideration problems inherited by the territory, including the poor physical condition of many of the buildings, differences in academic standards, and health and communication problems in the more isolated villages. At the time of statehood in 1959, progress was at a standstill over the transfer process.³⁸

As the territory took over schools, it stressed equality of education “regardless of race or background.” Equality of education, however, was not the same as curricular uniformity that leaves no room for flexibility. The curriculum guides offered little time for activities other than academics. It was up to the teacher to provide resources and materials for use as alternatives and supplements in native schools. Because the territory’s guidelines did not recognize that cultural differences led to learning problems, no training in cultural understanding or use of cultural materials existed for teachers in Alaskan territorial schools. In the 1950s, the BIA stressed the need for flexibility due to special circumstances. The chief of the education branch for the BIA in 1953 pushed for regional decision-making, stating that outside of minimum requirements, the curriculum for native schools should be filled out with local school committee recommendations.³⁹

The recommended classes and meetings suggested by the BIA and the Alaska Survey in the 1930s were put into place. Ray noted that workshops and in-services were utilized by the BIA to deal with educational questions and the

development of instructional materials for Alaska Native children. The question at the time of Alaska statehood was how to deal with the curriculum needs of both Native and non-native students without creating a greater separation between the two groups. The BIA's goal was to eliminate special education and eventually bring together the curricula of the two groups. The BIA and the Territory of Alaska recognized that Natives needed to be ready for Western society whether they left the villages or stayed. The goals of the BIA and the territory were the same. In a sense, the difference between them was the single question asked by earlier missionaries: civilization or Christianization first? The difference in the current question was civilization or assimilation first?

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- ¹ . Charles K. Ray, A Program Of Education For Alaskan Natives, 30, 32; Smith, 445; D. Mitchell, 87.
 - ² . Ray, 30, 90.
 - ³ . Ibid. 30, 31, 32.
 - ⁴ . Ibid. 33.
 - ⁵ . Ibid. 32, 42.
 - ⁶ . Ibid. 43.
 - ⁷ . Blackman, 20; Ray, 23.
 - ⁸ . Ray, 34, 35, 36.
 - ⁹ . Ibid. 44.
 - ¹⁰ . Randolph C. Downes, "A Crusade For Indian Reform, 1922-1934," 342, 345.
 - ¹¹ . Ibid. 345.
 - ¹² . Anderson and Eells, 385.
 - ¹³ . Collier, 17.
 - ¹⁴ . Collier, 39-41.
 - ¹⁵ . Anderson and Eells, viii, Introductory note by Ellwood P. Cubberley, Dean of the School of Education, Stanford University, 1933.
 - ¹⁶ . Ibid. vii, Foreword, William Cooper, 1934, 6.
 - ¹⁷ . Ibid. 370.
 - ¹⁸ . Ibid. 371.
 - ¹⁹ . Ibid. 384, 436.
 - ²⁰ . Ibid. 384-388, 436.
 - ²¹ . Ibid. 385-388.
 - ²² . Kenneth R. Philp, "John Collier And The American Indian, 1920-1945," 66-68.

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- 23 . Anderson and Eells, 262, 265, 266; Philip 346.
24 . Anderson and Eells, 239, 275, 279.
25 . Ibid. 282-284.
26 . Downes, 342, 345, 346; Anderson and Eells, 282-284, 399.
27 . Downes, 347; Anderson and Eells, 436-439.
28 . Downes, 347.
29 . Ray, 60-63.
30 . Anderson and Eells, 385, 390.
31 . Philp, 70.
32 . Ray, 37, 38.
33 . Ibid. 39, 40.
34 . Ibid. 44, 45.
35 . Ibid. 46.
36 . Ibid. 47.
37 . Ibid. 49, 50.
38 . Ibid. 54, 55, 57.
39 . Ibid. 60-63.

6. PAUL JENSEN—A SKETCH OF THE MAN AND HIS WORK

The issue of civilization versus assimilation is embodied in the philosophy and practices of Paul Jensen who worked with Alaska natives beginning in the 1960s. He was born in 1907 in Denmark to Anna and Hans Jensen. In a series of interviews with Jennifer Lee, Jensen noted that his mother was a great influence on his life. He was the youngest child for a period of years before his two younger siblings were born so he spent a lot of time with her. His mother taught him that hard work and a good job would bring him success.¹ Anna Jensen was a religious woman and reared the family in a strict Christian household. The family was Danish Lutheran, went to church regularly, and reserved Sundays for church related activities. Jensen's mother influenced his religious convictions and his interest in education and other cultures. She supported the mission work of the church and while she had little interest in travel or the cultures of other people, she made up stories for her children about the lifestyles of the people in the church's missions.²

Anna Jensen taught Paul the values of honesty and hard work, the importance of being a good Christian, and the need for strong family ties. Jensen believed he was privileged to have been brought up in a Christian home and the influence stayed with him all his life. Although Jensen was also close to his father, his mother's influence was stronger. He was interested in her philosophy and faith and retained a close lifelong attachment to the Lutheran church.³ Jensen's first Alaskan friend, John Aponglook, was a Presbyterian lay minister and many of the other people he knew in Alaska were closely associated with Christianity. Jensen sometimes spoke at services when he was in Alaska and made sure that Alaska native exchange students had the opportunity to attend church while they were visiting in the lower forty-eight. Boyd Applegarth, former Superintendent of the Beaverton, Oregon School District, knew Paul

Jensen well. When asked if he would describe Jensen as a religious man, he noted that while Jensen attended church, he would call him more spiritual than religious. Applegarth believed that Jensen was straight forward and had “no guile” in his personality.⁴

Jensen’s mother impressed the importance of education on her son. While his siblings were successful in their individual pursuits, of the seven children, Paul was the only one to pursue higher education. He remembers that as a child he was fascinated by learning but was not a particularly good student; his favorite studies centered on Arctic Eskimos and American Indians. Familial support and security were also important to Jensen. He felt that whatever he chose to do he would have support and that his background gave him the tools to achieve his goals. He told interviewer Jennifer Lee, “I came from a good home and I knew how to survive as a worker.”⁵

Jensen’s Introduction to Arctic Culture

Paul Jensen’s interest in Arctic culture began in the primary grades where he met Greenland natives who had come to Denmark to attend school. He was impressed by their thoughtful and deliberate approach to life and their manners and gentleness. Because of this, he read anything he could find about Eskimos and attended lectures by Knute Rasmussen and Peter Freuchen, both noted Arctic explorers. The interest and admiration for their unique culture stayed with him all his life. His wife, Arlene Jensen, called it adventure and his childhood baby-sitter noted that he had “an adventurous spirit.” Jensen referred to his interest in other cultures as enrichment, and said about himself, “I’ve been very selfish about that--enriching my own life with the cultures of other people. I feel other people have so much to contribute.”⁶

At age seventeen (1924) Jensen went to Norway to study and the following year he immigrated to Canada to work. He wanted to attend school in the United States and in 1928 went to Spokane, Washington to attend high school to improve

his English. After graduating from high school, he attended Midland College in Nebraska and received his BA in 1935, the same year he attained his United States citizenship.⁷ He then went to the University of North Dakota and completed a Ph.D. in Education in 1938 and followed up with a degree in counseling from the University of Washington in 1941. He worked as a part time instructor at the Seattle institution and in 1946 began teaching at the University of Nevada. From 1951 to 1955, he worked in International Education for the United States, teaching English in Latin America for the State Department and after returning to the United States in 1956, taught history at San Antonio State College in Texas.⁸ Jensen traveled to Oregon with his family in 1958 where he accepted a position at Highland Junior High School in Corvallis. He stayed for six years and in 1964 began his career at Oregon College of Education (OCE [now WOU]) in Monmouth. Jensen worked as a research professor for four years and in 1968 began teaching as a Professor of Education at OCE.⁹

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Jensen took part in research surveys for youth and developed a program of teacher self-evaluation for elementary and secondary school teachers. In addition to professional visits to Alaska, he traveled to Denmark, Norway, Washington DC, Australia, and Hawaii for diverse research projects that included bilingual education. His many trips to Alaska were spent developing classes for teachers, supervising student teachers for the BIA, and heading a team to write curriculum guides for BIA schools in western Alaska. Jensen's many summer programs in Alaska and Oregon were diverse and at one time or another included parents, teachers, administrators, and students of all grade levels.

Jensen's most ambitious projects in Alaska were those that brought Native students to the lower forty-eight. Through the BIA he arranged for wrestling and cheerleading teams from Alaska to visit Washington, Oregon, and California. The teams competed, stayed with host families, and visited the Cascade

Mountains, the Oregon Coast, and Disneyland. The academic enrichment programs that he initiated through the BIA involved the greatest number of people. He traveled to Alaska to accompany student visitors and adult supervisors back to Oregon for the Academic Enrichment program. The visitors stayed with host families in the towns they visited, attended area schools, and got a taste of the world outside of Alaska.¹⁰ Although Jensen retired in 1978, he continued to teach classes at Western Oregon State College (WOSC, now WOU, formerly OCE), and established the Arctic Museum on the WOSC campus. He continued with his work in Alaska until 1984. Although his pace slowed, Jensen never stopped working until his death in 1992 at the age of eighty-four.¹¹

Jensen's Work in Alaska

The list of programs undertaken by Paul Jensen is extensive, and the Alaska files in the Museum archives present many titles but few descriptions. Jensen brought many grants to WOSC that included agencies as diverse as the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Ford Foundation, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He received his first BIA grant in 1962 for his work on St. Lawrence Island. There are no extant records for either this project or for many of the others. Evaluations of projects, usually required by the granting agency, are also non-existent.¹²

Paul Jensen worked with parents as well as students. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) worked with the Alaska State Department of Education in 1968 to assess educational needs for Native students. Following NWREL's report, Jensen worked with the BIA to develop a program for parental assistance designed to draw parents into the educational process. The program was established in 1968 to involve the community, foster parental participation, and provide positive reinforcement for children.¹³

The NWREL survey found that Alaska Native parents were concerned with their children's education but not with their success in Western-style schools.

Because the home environment was crucial to attitudes about education, the survey found that parental indifference was reflected in the high drop out rate. Villagers may not have been as indifferent as it appears, however. In many Alaskan Native villages there was little economic opportunity to use anything beyond basic academic skills, and parents saw little need to have their children sitting in a classroom learning skills that had little relation to their subsistence lifestyle.¹⁴ Parents did not see a relationship between their traditions and modern life, or the importance of Western education for their children in a modern world that existed elsewhere.

Jensen and WOSC developed another program designed to teach parents to assist with the education of their handicapped children. The program gave parents positive, practical ways to help their children at home; it taught them to understand their child's disability and how to assist with their education. It also familiarized parents with laws pertaining to special education. The Parental Assessment and Handicapped Program was offered in 1975, 1976, and 1982. Parents also traveled to Oregon and worked with special education staff members at WOSC. Reports indicated that children were more successful when parents worked with them and that the self-esteem and abilities of both child and parent increased.¹⁵

Programs for Administrators

Jensen presented a 1975 preparation workshop for curriculum development and administrative duties in the Bethel Agency Schools. The curriculum program, established by a grant, was a five-year series of workshops addressing needs assessment, lesson objectives, teacher participation, community involvement, and evaluation. A school curriculum committee, initiated by the first workshop, used the input of local advisory school boards, WOSC, and the BIA, all of whom posed questions and suggestions to the committee to facilitate curriculum design. In addition, the school committee studied leadership, village

organization, cultural needs, and values. The committee discussed the priorities of schools and communities, if there was a need for materials concerning the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), and evaluation of the curriculum.¹⁶ To insure that a proper curriculum was put into place, the committee was asked to keep in mind “the goals for Alaska’s BIA schools.”

The curriculum guides, housed in the archives at the Jensen Museum, look like a curriculum for any school in the lower forty-eight. There was little evidence that the needs, environment, or background of Alaska Native students were taken into consideration. Of thirty-six binders arranged according to subject matter, only five specifically mentioned Alaska. There was a section about the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, but no grade level was listed; the arts guide included sections on Native arts only for the upper grade levels (6-8); the language arts guide included a section about the Netsilik Eskimos (Canada) and tool-making; a few stories about Alaska and Alaskan culture were included in the reading series. The binders holding the social studies plans for grades one through nine gave the most thought to Native Alaska. The guide for grade five had sections about Alaska and Northwest Indians; the grade seven guide had sections about Alaska Native culture and the Native Claims Act; the remaining guides gave only a passing nod to Alaska and Alaska Native culture.¹⁷

Teacher and Instructional Programs

Other than language programs and those where Jensen actually worked with students, the teacher programs were most important in terms of their impact on Native students. Most instructional programs were created for new teachers, but there were also those for experienced teachers and administrators working in Alaska. There were programs for Native and non-native teachers that included a Leaders’ Orientation Course in Instructional Innovation, student teaching in Alaska, new-teacher orientation, teacher internship programs, the Yupik language

teacher training program, the Primary Eskimo Program (PEP), English-as-a-second-language training, and media workshops for teacher aides.

The Teaching Research Division at WOSC put together the 1968 Leaders' Orientation Course in Instructional Innovation for its Alaska Bureau of Indian Affairs Institute. The course was described as advanced training for teachers, school superintendents, supervisors, and principals. Seminar sessions included behavioral objectives in the classroom, innovations in teaching, test development, and the creation of "learning packages" to stimulate students and fit them "into the total Alaskan BIA framework."¹⁸

The University of Alaska at Fairbanks developed a teacher training institute for Alaska's rural schools to help prepare teachers for the cold, dark winters in Alaska and the loneliness of the bush. The institute was straight forward about the disadvantages of teaching in Alaska. WOSC became involved in the Fairbanks program, with Jensen developing courses related to teaching in Alaska. With the help of a BIA grant, WOSC initiated a student teacher program of its own. Finding people to teach in the bush was difficult, keeping them even more so. Jensen's courses offered an introduction to the unique problems of Alaska and the Native cultures; the Fairbanks institute hoped such courses would help make the transition easier for "gussak" (Caucasian newcomer) teachers in the bush.¹⁹ Jensen's courses included Alaska school law, an ANSCA curriculum development class for adult education, curriculum development in Alaska, physical education, and a health curriculum geared to Alaska Natives. He covered topics relating to Indian education and the difficulties of teaching in Alaska.²⁰

WOSC's Alaska program included pre-travel courses in the anthropology of northern cultures, materials preparation for working with culturally diverse children, and identifying teaching problems in rural schools. Once in Alaska, student teachers were required to turn in weekly lesson plans, objectives, and

taped material documenting classroom performance. In addition, Jensen traveled to Alaska and spent one full day of observation and evaluation at the locale of each student teacher.²¹ Students taking part in the Alaska program were given a list of “Objectives of Education for Bilingual Groups” that included helping Native students understand and appreciate the contributions and strengths of their culture, and involving them in active participation in school projects and local government. Student teachers were instructed to work with Native students to analyze their local economic and natural resources and to teach practical skills. Prospective teachers were also asked to “understand the experience and background” of the students with whom they were working so they could adjust their teaching concepts; they were expected to pace their teaching to match the bilingual handicap.”²²

Most course work and subject seminars in the Alaska teacher training institute differed little from those for teaching staff in mainstream schools. The major difference was the session titled “Defining Problems as they Relate to the Alaska Native.” Jensen included alcoholism, common health problems, income, values, lack of vocational training, and lack of Native enterprise as some of the problems. Jensen listed cultural differences as a factor contributing to the difficulty of teaching Alaska Native students. Alaska Native students, he believed, lacked leadership and goals. Having goals in life, Jensen insisted, came through a strong nuclear family structure and leadership involved mental competition which Natives shied away from. Jensen noted that a Yupik told him that he thought the white man’s world was full of tricks so he understood that Alaska Natives were uneasy about living in that world. He stated that it was “not fair to have a native leave a simple cultural environment” and enter “complex Western society and compete according to its rules.”²³

As one of the major problems inhibiting learning, Jensen cited English language difficulty in the early grades. He believed that if Yupik students could

pick up language skills and cultural understanding in the lower grades, they would come to match the grade level of their peers in the lower forty-eight. The ages of Yupik students entering high school ranged from fifteen to twenty-one years. English was the language of instruction but Yupik was the first language, the language of home and Native students lost contact with English during the summer, impairing academic progress. To counter this, Jensen suggested two programs: (1) employ teacher's aides for summer programs to meet with students for half-day discussions in English; and (2) a concentrated pre-school English program to prepare children to enter first grade.²⁴ He also felt that there was a cultural lag that kept them from comprehending mainstream American culture. Some of the student teachers' questions pushed this further in revealing their belief that Alaskan Natives lived in "cultural poverty" and knew nothing of simple economics. Jensen emphasized their independence and further stated that they did not see themselves as poor; he explained that their poverty existed only in comparison with the lower forty-eight.²⁵

It is not possible to tell from Jensen's papers how long the Alaska program was in place. The last document is dated 1978 when the program was changed to "BIA New Teacher Orientation." At that time, the Bureau called for changes because Alaska Natives were becoming more involved in the educational system. The previous objectives of the Alaskan BIA Education Program had simply offered equal educational opportunity to prepare natives for success in either the native or non-native world. The new goals now took into account diverse backgrounds, improvement of programs and facilities, the development of local managerial capabilities in the schools, and finally the involvement of Native parents in determining the educational needs of their children.²⁶

These additions to the BIA's educational objectives gave them a progressive outlook that may be exaggerated. The passage of the Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971 and the Self-Determination Act in 1975 left the agency no choice.

Both acts empowered Natives in their own villages and the Self-Determination Act required parental involvement in schools.²⁷ In light of these measures and the changes brought about by construction of the Alaska pipeline, the Bureau called for Native youth to develop an understanding of the coming changes and how they might affect their communities. An understanding of money, land, and “inter-related corporate structures” were given top priority after passage of the Native Claims Act and the corporate restructuring of Alaska’s Native lands. The BIA had maintained a paternalistic stance in its history with the natives; now the agency was in the position of having to push the young from the nest. As the BIA was preparing for changes, Jensen and WOSC again received a BIA grant in 1970 for “New Teacher Orientation” to meet the new standards. Materials and methods remained as they had been.²⁸

Native Teacher Aides

Jensen was also involved with Native teacher aide programs that included a variety of classes and experiences. Under Jensen’s direction, WOSC conducted a media workshop for Yupik aides in the summer of 1971 to introduce them to the use of media equipment and techniques. Another teacher aide workshop was held at WOSC in 1974 to help the aides define and preserve examples of their culture for subsequent display or presentation of their samples. They took field trips in Oregon to acquaint them with the culture of the lower forty-eight, visited Portland’s Museum of Science and Industry, the Portland Zoo, the St. Paul, Oregon rodeo, and Bonneville Dam. During the field trips the aides had an opportunity to practice their skills in photography, plant collection, and English.²⁹

The five year period from 1976 to 1981 saw the number of Yupik teacher aides in Alaska increase from thirty-three to more than one hundred. Besides working full days in the classroom, the Yupik aides took evening classes for college degrees or career development at Kuskokwim Community College during the school year and continued to receive extra training at WOSC during the

summer months. Mornings at WOSC were spent in seminars with college staff and afternoon activities were geared to acquaint aides with day-to-day activities depicted in textbooks from the lower forty-eight. The focus of the workshops was cultural differences between Alaska and the lower forty-eight.

Bethel Area Bilingual Education Center

Arlene Jensen, Paul Jensen's wife described the Bethel Area Bilingual Education Center (BABEC) as "one of the more unique enterprises undertaken by Paul Jensen." A joint effort between Jensen and the education specialist at the BIA's Bethel Agency, BABEC began in 1976 as a print shop for Yupik language children's books.³⁰ Most of the books for the first and second grades were entirely in Yupik, but by the third and fourth grades the children were more fluent in English and the books included both languages. As parents became familiar with the books, many asked why they lacked pretty books for their language like the English language books in the lower forth-eight. To remedy the problem, some books were sent outside for publishing and the center was able to offer hard-bound books with color illustrations.³¹ When the BIA gave over its responsibility for Native education to the State of Alaska in 1984, the center was run by the Bethel-Kuskokwim Delta School District for a few years and then closed in 1987 for lack of funding.³²

The Primary Eskimo Program was included under the aegis of BABEC. It was a Yupik language maintenance program and teacher-training course for Yupik instructors. The BABEC grants stipulated continuing program development, teacher training, research, and the dissemination of pertinent materials to all schools taking part in the program. To keep instruction flowing smoothly and to insure that program objectives were being met, coordination between first language and second language teachers and their programs was a requirement. The BIA also required attendance at annual bilingual conferences to keep center staff in touch with developments in bilingual education.³³

The bilingual program began as a result of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, or Title VII. The purpose was to provide funding for local educational agencies to establish programs in bilingual education. The first languages of the students were to be used for instruction in the schools and not merely taught in the language arts curriculum. The Primary Eskimo Program was initiated to satisfy the new bilingual requirements and proved to be a successful pilot program. The first year, 1970, three schools were involved in PEP, seven in the second year, and in 1978 a total of twenty-one school were participating.³⁴

Bethel area schools were chosen because the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta comprised the largest number of Yupik-as-first-language students. The total Native population of southwest Alaska in 1975 was 15,000, most were Yupik, most were Yupik speakers, and half lived in the delta. Instruction centering in English was found to be a contributing factor to the low grade level of Native students in comparison with their counterparts in the lower forty-eight. The program provided for 85 percent of instruction to be given in Yupik at the early grade levels. By fourth grade, instruction was primarily in English with only some courses presented in Yupik.³⁵

Children's Programs

Paul Jensen developed and worked in many Alaska programs. Most were in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta although he occasionally taught in Anchorage, supervised student teachers at various places around the state, and started his Alaska career on St. Lawrence Island. The most gratifying to him, however, were the ones in which he worked personally with children. These programs included summer camps for academic tutoring, high school programs, and academic enrichment programs.³⁶

The academic or cultural enrichment programs involved a great deal of planning and work. Jensen arranged for the entire elementary school population of the participating villages to be flown to Oregon accompanied by teachers and

adult chaperones. The trips included spending six weeks in Oregon. The students stayed with host families, attended area schools, and took numerous field trips. There were a total of nine trips undertaken between 1969 and 1975 involving about 430 children and forty adults. The students were in grades kindergarten to eight and ranged from five to sixteen years of age.

Jensen knew that isolated native children could not comprehend much of what they read in American books.³⁷ He realized that Native students had no understanding of stories based on a culture far removed from their own. The BIA was looking for a way to help natives become part of mainstream American life and Jensen seemed to supply an answer with his program.³⁸ He stressed the message that the culture in the lower forty-eight was not better but different than native culture. He believed that education gave Natives a theoretical choice, but in reality they had none if they could not see and understand the outside world.³⁹ Students from various Native schools in western Alaska participated in the academic enrichment program at different times. They stayed in Monmouth, Corvallis, Dallas and Beaverton, and visited sites in Oregon to acquaint them with another way of life. With the exception of Barrow, a city of 3,000 people, the average population of the participating villages was one-hundred fifty.⁴⁰

Jensen's View of Alaska Native Needs

Jensen understood that the element of survival was crucial to the lives of Alaska Natives. He also knew that Western education was not effective at that time because education for survival in the technological, American, twentieth century Western world did not meet Alaskan Native needs.⁴¹ Western education was not relevant to the economic situation in the villages because the economy was still subsistence based. He recognized the discrepancy between the two and during an interview was asked if he felt it was his mission to bring Native Alaskans into the twentieth century. He replied in the affirmative. The interviewer remarked to Jensen that it appeared that he preferred to give the

children a gradual introduction to the new culture while preserving the old. Again Jensen agreed.⁴² Jensen understood the work and money exchange system of the Western world and the value of money, but he also knew that money played little role in Yupik life. Jensen admitted that he wanted to instill the values of the lower forty-eight in the people of the Bering Sea villages. He wanted to educate them to compete in the work place because there were few local jobs.⁴³

Paul Jensen also recognized that there were changes taking place. He noted that new wants did not fit the old needs. Dog sleds had given way to snow machines, old style clothing was being abandoned in favor of jeans and rip-stop nylon, and seal hunting was losing ground to Caucasian-owned village stores. New wants created new needs. He recognized the danger of losing the old culture to new ways. The village elders knew that Jensen appreciated the old culture and gave him mukluks, harpoons, arrowheads, handmade articles, and traditional artifacts. He reciprocated in the old way by trading what he had. The people of St. Lawrence Island invited him to accompany them on archaeological digs. They knew that Jensen wanted to put the Native language into print and to preserve their culture.⁴⁴ With these goals in mind, he also wanted them to find a “viable substitute.” He suggested to Alaska Natives to modernize and “Get with what there is today, and get the education, and you’ll make it to the Governor’s or the Senator’s.” If they failed, Jensen believed that Alaska Natives would be caught in the same situation as Natives from the lower forty-eight whom, he believed, spent their time and energy trying to set themselves apart and ended up with nothing.⁴⁵

Jensen was verbally supportive of Alaska Natives, their culture, and wanted to preserve the old ways. His affection for Alaska was genuine, and much of it probably related to the people and the culture he encountered. Some of his feelings may have been due to his love of adventure and travel. Jensen’s desire to bring education to Alaska Natives was sincere and is confirmed by many people who knew and worked with him during his Alaska years.

¹ . Jennifer Lee, 41, 48, 69; Carolyn Homan, “They call him “Angyalik:” which means Captain or leader of the ship, 46, 47.

² . Lee, 5, 7, 14, 15, 20-21.

³ . Ibid. 29, 49, 69, 190.

⁴ . Lee, 186, 190; Boyd Applegarth, telephone interview, 19 February 1997. Applegarth was Superintendent of the Beaverton School District during one of Jensen’s Academic Enrichment Programs. When Jensen approached him with the idea of bringing Stebbins, Alaska students to the school district for six weeks, Applegarth insisted that he know as much as possible about the program and Jensen’s goals. He worked with Jensen closely and accompanied him to Stebbins to meet the villagers and school personnel before making a final decision about involving the entire school district. Applegarth approved the project whole heartedly. When I spoke with him he had no hesitations about underscoring Jensen’s positive attributes and sincere attitude.

⁵ . Lee, 111.

⁶ . Ibid. 40, 82, 179-180.

⁷ . Ibid. 512.

⁸ . Paul Jensen’s professional resume, updated, 1984.

⁹ . Ibid.

¹⁰ . Arlene Jensen, a short sketch of Paul Jensen’s career in Alaska, 10, 11.

¹¹ . Mariana Mace, personal correspondence, September 1997.

¹² . Bruce Parham, Assistant Director, National Archives and Records Administration, Alaska Region, Anchorage, conversations at the archives, November 1996; Parham said that the records may not yet have been archived. Presbyterian Historical Society, telephone call, December 1996; the librarian reiterated Parham’s statement but added that the school records may have been too old and could have been destroyed. Ron Hogan, Principal, Kotzebue High School, Kotzebue, Alaska, telephone call, November 1996; Hogan thought that the records may have been scattered as the supervisory agencies for the schools differed at the time of Jensen’s programs. Shiron Jones, United States Department of Education, Washington DC, telephone call, January, 1997; Jones agreed that the records may have been scattered but noted that there may not have been any as the BIA did not require evaluations at the time. Margaret Szasz, history professor, University of New Mexico, telephone call, January, 1997; Szasz stated that evaluations and records-keeping were weaknesses of the BIA until the 1980s.

¹³ . Ashley Foster, “Predispositions to Success By Alaska Native Students: An Interim Study,” series 13, bound volumes. Parental Assistance of Nome-Beltz High School, 1968-1969; Frank Darnell, “Educational Process and Social Change

in the Northern Environment,” series 13, bound volumes, Parental Assistance of Nome-Beltz High School, 1968-1969.

¹⁴ . Ibid.

¹⁵ . Carolyn Ross, “Funding Application For P.A.T. (Parental Assistance Program).” Series 13, bound volumes, Parental Assistance of Nome-Beltz High School, 1968-1969.

¹⁶ . “Workshop for School Principals, BIA Project 1975,” series 13, bound volumes; correspondence, Paul Jensen to Mr. S. Wm. Benton, Education Program Administration, Bethel Agency BIA, 29 August 1975.

¹⁷ . Curriculum Guides, series 12, three ring binders.

¹⁸ . Paul Jensen’s Session Notes for Curriculum Workshop, series 13, bound volumes, Curriculum Workshop, Summer 1976; BIA Directives for Curriculum Workshop, Summer 1976, series 13, bound volumes, Curriculum Workshop.

¹⁹ . Institute For Training of Teachers for Alaska’s rural Schools,” University of Alaska Fairbanks brochure, series 8, file drawer 3; Student Teaching/Rural Schools. “Final “Report on Student Teaching in Alaska’s Rural BIA Schools,” Paul Jensen for BIA Alaska Region, 1969, series 13 bound volumes, Student Teaching in Alaska: “Difficulties Relating to Teaching in Alaska,” series 8, file drawer 3.

²⁰ . “Student Teaching in Alaska’s rural Schools, OCE Screening Committee Requirements,” series 13, bound volumes, Student Teaching in Alaska.

²¹ . Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Report on the Needs of Alaska Native Students, series 8, file drawer 3; Teacher Internship Program, Paul Jensen’s Session Notes, series 8, file drawer 3, Teacher Internship Program.

²² . “Difficulties Relating to Teaching in Alaska,” series 8, file drawer 3, Difficulties Relating to Teaching in Alaska.

²³ . Ibid.

²⁴ . Ibid.

²⁵ . Ibid.

²⁶ . “Statement of Philosophy--New Teacher Orientation,” series 13, bound volumes, Student Teaching in Alaska and New Teacher Orientation.

²⁷ . Prucha, 176. The Self-Determination and Education Assistance act of 1975 required Indian parent advisory committees in districts with a minority of Indians on the school board.

²⁸ . “Statement of Philosophy--New Teacher Orientation,” series 13, bound volumes, BIA New Teacher Orientation; “Justification for non-Competitive Procurement for OCE,” series 13, bound volumes, BIA New Teacher Orientation.

²⁹ . “Aides to Alaska Teachers Attend Workshop at OCE,” article, Oregon Statesman, 19 June 1971, series 13, bound volumes, Alaska Teacher Aide Workshop.

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- ³⁰ . Arlene Jensen, 16.
- ³¹ . Ibid. 15.
- ³² . Ibid. 17.
- ³³ . Contract No. EEOC1420 Part-100, series 10, file drawer 4, BIA Programs/BABEC.
- ³⁴ . “The Primary Eskimo Program: A Newsletter in Bilingual Education,” Vol.1, No. 1:2, November, 1975, series 13, bound volumes, PEP and ESL Summer Training; “The Primary Eskimo Program: A Newsletter in Bilingual Education,” Vol. 3, No. 3:7, July 1975, series 13, bound volumes. PEP and ESL Summer Training.
- ³⁵ . I bid 5, 6, 7.
- ³⁶ . Correspondence, Paul Jensen to Warren Tiffany, Assistant Area Director, BIA, 7 May 1969, series 8, file drawer 3. Correspondence about Alaska Projects.
- ³⁷ . Homan, 45, 46; John Marshall, “Golovin’s Eskimos Jump South,” article, The Corvallis Gazette Times, 5 March 1974, series 13, bound volumes.
- ³⁸ . Homan, 45, 46.
- ³⁹ . Ibid. 49.
- ⁴⁰ . “Evaluations for Northeast Cape Children’s Project,” series 13, bound volumes, Northeast Cape.
- ⁴¹ . Lee, 14, 154.
- ⁴² . Lee, 154; Homan, 49.
- ⁴³ . Lee, 155, 193.
- ⁴⁴ . Ibid. 100, 111, 115, 132-133. Note: Jensen established the Arctic Museum in Monmouth in 1985 at WOSC. Articles included gifts and other objects that he traded for or purchased while in Alaska, however, it is my understanding that some of the articles are in question as to true ownership.
- ⁴⁵ . Ibid. 138, 139, 191.

7. CONCLUSION: PAUL JENSEN: ASSIMILATIONIST OR PRESERVATIONIST?

Although Alaska Native education went through changes in its first one-hundred years after United States purchase, most of them were in name only. Sheldon Jackson, a Presbyterian missionary from the lower forty-eight states, succeeded in bringing Western education to Alaska on a large scale. The numerous missionary denominations, the United States Bureau of Education, the federal surveys, and the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs all claimed that they wanted to provide a good education for Alaska Native children. Jackson's goals of bringing education and civilization to Alaska were no different from the agencies following him. The greatest innovation for Alaska Natives was the shift from their own traditional ways to traditional Western education.

Yupik children in far-western Alaska originally learned from their cultural and physical surroundings. Their education was holistic in that lessons were integrated with life; they learned as they lived. Ecology, for example, was not a unit in a social studies book; it was a daily activity. The types of clouds, the kind of snow or color of ice showed the Yupiks what kind of weather to expect. From it they learned when to travel, when to stay off the ice, or the best direction to take for a hunt. Religion was a part of daily existence and they honored their guides and spirits in a prescribed manner during the course of the day. Yupik children learned through observation and experience, and through stories and actions how to live their lives. The primary lesson for the Yupiks was survival and how to achieve it on a communal basis. They belonged to the "whole" which was their surrounding environment of weather, land, people, animals, and spirits. These were their teachers.¹

The Russians who came to Alaska gave little thought to the education of the Natives. Their primary objective was profit from furs. When Russian Orthodox missionaries came at the request of Gregory Shelikov, they did little to tip the

educational scales. There were too few missionaries to serve the Native population and the majority was in southeast Alaska where the Russian population was greatest; only a few went into the bush. The Russian Orthodox Church was not assimilationist and most of the missionaries spent the greater part of their time with the Natives performing mass and administering the sacraments rather than teaching or trying to change lifestyles. There were exceptions, however, such as Father Juvenal who wanted to separate Native children from their parents to keep them from the influence of the old ways. The influence of the Russian missionaries in parts of southeast Alaska was barely visible in the Bering Sea region of the Yupiks. The Russian Orthodox Church did not impact Yupik lifestyles and the Russian missionaries did little to present formal education in west-central Alaska.

Christian Missionaries

Due to Sheldon Jackson, the greatest changes in Yupik life took place after 1867. American missionaries and teachers began to move north in the 1880s. Sheldon Jackson's presentations in the lower United States introduced a picture of Alaska that highlighted what he described as the cultural and moral poverty of the state of the Natives. Jackson persevered in his work and succeeded in his efforts to convince others of the necessity of Alaska Native Education. He raised money, brought missionaries to Alaska, and was rewarded for his efforts by being appointed General Education Agent for Alaska in 1885. Aside from civilization and education, his motive was to protect the Natives from the negative influence of settlers. When Jackson visited the Yupiks, one of the tribes least impacted by outside influence, he believed that their culture had fallen into disrepair after contact with Russians and Americans.² He saw little value in salvaging Yupik culture and wanted to establish schools and missions to convert them to Christianity. Jackson and successive missionaries wanted to destroy the remnants

of Native culture, alter their lifestyles, and indoctrinate them into Western culture.³

What the missionaries did not understand is that Yupik culture was in a state of transition because of its brief encounters with the Russians, the missionaries, trade goods, and exogenous disease. Although Yupik life seemed to be in disarray, the survivors had stayed together and worked to continue their lives. Missionaries, however, viewed their culture as depraved and determined that Native people needed education and Christianity to push them toward the more meaningful life of Western culture.⁴ The education offered by Christian missionaries, including classroom study and lifestyle changes, was completely alien to the Yupiks. Whereas the Yupiks had formerly learned on the basis of everyday experience, they were now forced into a school building to study subjects that had no meaning to them. Where they had previously lived in warm underground homes, they were now forced to live in above-ground frame houses and their extended family groupings gave way to nuclear families.⁵ The missionaries discredited Yupik beliefs and practices; their lifestyle was dismantled and in its place, a Western style of living was substituted.

The missionaries, however, had difficulty educating natives primarily because of the language barrier, so the early days of mission education concentrated on the study of the English language and Western civilization. In addition, the longer missionaries remained with the Yupiks, the more they realized that they held true to the old religion and the shamans. To counteract the Natives' adherence to their old ways, the missionaries decided to delay formal education in favor of Western manner, mores, style of dress, and labor in hopes that they would see that their ways were inferior to Western lifestyle and convince them to seek Christianity.⁶ The new Yupik education came to be learning English and play-acting a Western lifestyle.

Sheldon Jackson believed in his cause; he was saving Natives from self destruction, loss of a spiritual afterlife, ignorance, and poverty. Jackson and other missionaries believed the Natives needed the good life of Western technological society, a sophisticated economy, and spiritual salvation.⁷ Jackson probably had no understanding of the attributes that constitute culture. As much as he decried their bad habits and traditional cultures, Jackson also wanted to preserve a memory of them and established a museum in Sitka.⁸

The Moravian missionaries on the Kuskokwim Delta also worked hard to change Yupik culture. They believed that hard work and daily schedules would bring salvation to the Natives who, they felt, had too much idle time. Like other missionaries, the Moravians did not understand that the Yupiks had a dynamic, working culture. They did not understand the old ways that had kept the Yupiks in harmony with their world and considered their beliefs superstitious; the missionaries set about to disrupt Yupik traditions and bring Christianity and civilization to them.⁹ Academic education was set aside to teach hygiene, gardening, and English, the doorway to Western culture.

The Agencies

The Department of the Interior housed both the Bureau of Education (BOE) and the BIA. As a result of Sheldon Jackson's push and persistent lobbying, both agencies eventually became involved in Alaska Native education. The Bureau of Education was the first agency that Jackson was able to persuade to introduce education to Alaska. Jackson and the BOE pursued the same educational policy. English and Western civilization were to be the end points of study and the focus was on assimilation; hygiene, sanitation, morals, and proper living conditions. Academic study was pushed aside for the moment.¹⁰ Indeed, teachers spent most of their time tending to activities geared to civilize Yupiks, and little on academic subjects. There was no mention of trying to understand Yupik culture or what the Natives needed or wanted.

During the 1930s, a series of federal initiatives promised to reform Native education. The 1928 Meriam Report, Anderson and Eell's 1930 study, and the 1933 appointment of John Collier as Commissioner of Indian Affairs offered promise for the future. The Meriam Report and Anderson and Eell's Alaska Survey had been undertaken to determine the conditions and needs on Indian reservations in the lower forty-eight states and Native communities in Alaska. Both studies focused on Native education to see how the students compared with their counterparts in mainstream education, suggested courses of action, and made recommendations to help the educational process of Native Americans. The studies had the potential to revitalize Native education and help American Natives develop independent futures. The Meriam Report clearly stated Native needs, but its recommendations were never put into place by lawmakers. Although the Anderson and Eells' Survey held elements of ethnocentrism and a certain lack of cultural understanding, many of its suggestions were sound, although few were adopted.¹¹

John Collier, Commissioner of the BIA from 1933-1945, believed that Indian cultures were viable and contained the elements of community cohesion. He saw hope for the future of Indians in the spiritual values he witnessed while living in New Mexico.¹² Collier's basis for Indian education reform was to allow the strengths of their cultures to work for them. The spiritual world that Collier witnessed validated, for him, Indian culture. Like no other BIA chief before, or many since, Collier proposed courses of study to teach Native language and culture.¹³ Some of his programs were accepted and funded but most were too radical for Congress to adopt. Unfortunately, the onslaught of WWII brought a decrease in federal funding for his programs and most were eventually swept under the rug. Collier's era with the BIA showed the greatest promise for Native American education; he supported fostering strength in traditional cultures to help Natives find a secure footing for the future.

Paul Jensen--Christian Missionary or Missionary of Modernization?

Missionary concerns about Natives centered on depravity of culture and lack of Christian values. From these central points followed lack of nuclear families, work ethics, goals, and the necessity of fitting into the mainstream. To the missionaries, the way to fulfill these goals was through Christianization and education. The missionaries posed a question, asking if it was necessary to educate the Natives first so that they could appreciate Christianity.

Paul Jensen adhered to Christian ethics all his life. He attended services wherever he went, spoke at services in Alaska, and made sure the Alaskan students on exchange trips had the opportunity to attend church; he also had a respect for some of the old beliefs.¹⁴ It can be said that while Jensen may have liked to see all Natives convert to Christianity, this was not one of his Alaska goals. Jensen was not a missionary for Christianity but rather a missionary for the modern American lifestyle.

The agencies that worked for Alaska Native education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Education, and the Alaska State Operated School System, all had the same concerns for Native Alaskan education. English language education was a top priority. Following that came mainstreaming into Western society, adopting Western, Christian mores, and leaving the old culture behind. John Collier was the first to try to implement Indian education by preserving their cultures while introducing them to the new Western world. Paul Jensen echoed this desire. He worked on behalf of Native Alaska education for twenty-five years, developing education programs for Western Oregon State College and other agencies, usually the BIA. He was involved in some innovative projects and accomplished a great deal to introduce Yupiks to modern society while working with a traditional culture.

To Jensen's own query about the "problems and needs in the education of Indian and Alaskan Native children," he cited cultural differences and those relating to a sophisticated society. He pointed to cultural deprivation and cultural isolation as the basis of need.¹⁵ He put lack of leadership and goals and language problems at the top of his list. He went on to say that Natives suffered from a "failure to understand white man's stories and books," that their "attitudes and values are different from ours," that they "do not live by the clock," and that their "life has not changed for 4,000 years and there are few external influences to force change."¹⁶ He also noted they are "extremely poor" and "suffer from a lack of income."

On the other side of the coin, Jensen also stated that "the Natives have not yet learned to be selfish or competitive;" "they are quite independent;" "they do not see themselves as poor;" and that it was only in comparison with "the culture of the South 48 [that] they are poor." To take his own question about education further, he asked if it was possible "to give these natives a Caucasian education...My question is, Is it necessary to raise the social and economic level before the Native can appreciate the value of an education?"¹⁷ In light of these questions and thoughts, it is fair to say that Paul Jensen, while not a Christian missionary looking to win souls for the church, was a missionary of modernization attempting to bring Yupiks into the twentieth century. His question has a familiar echo, however. He did not ask if the Yupiks needed Christianization or education first, but rather education or Western Civilization first?

Jensen's Successes

It can be said that Paul Jensen succeeded in his education programs. The difficulties of implementing a Native language program in its infancy must have seemed insurmountable to some BIA educators. Jensen's wise use of Native teacher aides gave the program a boost. It almost certainly would have failed had

it not been for the readily available Native speakers. Instruction would have come to a standstill, especially in the early grades because there were so few trained Yupik speaking instructors. The bilingual program increased participation and the comfort level in the learning process. The gradual switch to instruction in English gave students an edge in succeeding grade levels; students who were already familiar with concepts in Yupik could make an easier transition to expanding the basics in a new language. The Bethel Area Bilingual Education Center also proved successful. Not only did it supply Yupik and bilingual texts, it was a source of pride, particularly when it was able to furnish “pretty books” with color illustrations as well as text.¹⁸

The Native teacher aide classes were also a success. Summer workshops took place at WOSC. Jensen recognized that Alaska Natives were functional in their own culture, but as a minority were at a disadvantage and “entitled to know something about the mainstream of American life...[in order] to help make wise decisions for his own life. Who can better interpret the mainstream of American life than teachers and education aides of his group?”¹⁹ The focus of many of Jensen’s workshops was “the culturally different child in Alaska’s isolated rural schools.” The workshops were designed not only to acquaint the aides with American culture so that they could define it for the students, but also to “help teacher aides in Alaska to become aware of their culture, how to preserve it, how to identify it, and how to exhibit it.”²⁰

The academic or cultural enrichment programs were designed to help the students’ first hand knowledge of life in the lower forty-eight states. The inspiration for these programs came from a visit to a school on St. Lawrence Island, northwest of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Jensen related that he spoke to a fourth grade girl who had just finished reading a book about a family outing somewhere in the lower forty-eight and asked her what she had read. Her reply was, “Words.” After puzzled consideration, Jensen realized that the culture she

had read about in the story had no basis in reality with her own. He thought that with first-hand experience the students could begin to understand some of American life.²¹ The program probably did not provide great lifestyle change, but it did give some Yupiks the opportunity to see and experience a different mode of life.

These examples provide a positive look at Jensen's programs and what he was trying to accomplish. Classroom work kept the Yupik language alive while students studied English and other subjects. The Bethel Area Bilingual Education Center print shop provided physical examples of the language. The teacher aide and academic enrichment programs gave students and aides the opportunity to experience mainstream American culture as well as engender a greater appreciation for their own. Jensen's programs were innovative and he worked hard to bring them to fruition.

Paul Jensen and the Bureau of Indian Affairs

The preservation of Yupik culture and language were two of Jensen's goals. Providing a twentieth century American education and teaching English were also two of his goals. Were they mutually exclusive and did they fit into the BIA framework which awarded most of his grants? Although program evaluations for all of the grants he received might not have been required, he still had to pull his programs into line with BIA goals to receive them. It is also possible that the BIA would have granted proposals to anyone willing to work in southwest Alaska, but we may never know.

Jensen worked with the BIA to develop curriculum workshops for its school administrators and teachers. The BIA workshops were built around two questions: (1) what should the goals of Alaska's BIA schools be? and (2) how to fit Native students into a framework to achieve those goals.²² The guidelines for curriculum development asked participants to determine how the students saw themselves in their own setting, in a developing Alaska, and finally, as citizens of

the United States with “countless career opportunities.”²³ The guidelines were meant to develop a viable curriculum to set Alaska Native students on a path to the future but at the same time, the agency set limits when it questioned whether Natives should serve on subject matter committees and if there should be materials on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). In light of ANCSA and the fact that Native lives were heading for immense change, any input from the Natives would have been crucial and all information about ANCSA should have been mandatory. If the BIA’s goal was mainstreaming Alaska Native students, these should have been answers, not questions. Perhaps the BIA could not get beyond the fact that since 1930s it had been “the” agency that “provided” education and set the guidelines, to the reality that the Natives would soon be required to take over decisions about their own educational needs, had the desire and ability to do so, and would no longer be under their control.

The teacher training courses for Alaska developed by Jensen focused on the unique problems and cultures of Alaska Natives and the anthropology of northern cultures.²⁴ In addition, teachers were asked to “understand and appreciate the contributions and strengths of the Native cultures... help them analyze area resources... teach practical skills to improve their standard of living...to achieve some mastery over their environment,” “hold a job away from their native villages,” and help them “become citizens of their own communities.”²⁵ This material was closer to home and included the use of native resources and skills to aid in the process of becoming economically independent. This idea was sound, but it ignored the cultural aspect. Carving, for example, is just carving unless there is some understanding of the cultural framework that surrounds it.

The BIA’s guidelines fit well with Paul Jensen’s assessment of Yupik educational needs. He fell into line with the BIA in terms of educating and introducing the mainstream culture of the lower forty-eight and he proved successful as an educator who was able to implement innovations within the

school district. He developed Yupik language programs for education to help Yupik students learn to read and write their own language, and provided activities and English language instruction to help students understand mainstream culture. Jensen cited the need for vocational training and native enterprise as well as community workshops where the Natives could come together to “keep alive their talents in carving, sewing, weaving and artwork.” Although this is an admirable goal, it lacked a cultural aspect. At the same time that construction of the oil pipeline in Prudhoe Bay and ANCSA were ushering in change for Alaska’s Native communities, an understanding of money, land and “interrelated corporate structures” moved to the top of the educational priority list for the BIA and Jensen.²⁶ Suddenly the question became more than just fitting Natives into the BIA framework, but how to help them remain viable in the future with or without their culture. With the coming changes, the BIA was less concerned with Native culture than with readying their charges for the impact on their lives it would surely bring. Jensen wanted to retain the old culture within the framework of the new system of values, but it is not clear that he knew how to achieve that goal. It is likely that his understanding of the solution was to pay homage to the old while ushering in the new.

The Contradictions

Paul Jensen wanted to preserve Yupik culture and provide a modern lifestyle. Like Sheldon Jackson before him, he established a museum to preserve Yupik material culture; he also developed a bilingual education program to teach classes in Yupik to preserve the language and provide a language base for knowledge that could then be transferred into the English language. His programs provided instruction in English language, Western education, and mainstream American life. He wanted instruction in the values of traditional culture, but his notions about what these were and how to preserve and present them were vague. Jensen was not an anthropologist and it is possible that he saw culture as a

collection of artifacts from the past to be stored in a museum, rather than as an interconnected system of beliefs, manners, language, and tradition. As carving is just carving unless it is imbued with cultural significance, language is just “words” without an understanding of the cultural values reflected in them whether it is Yupik or English.

Jensen’s admonition to “get with what there is today” and find a substitute for a living culture is at odds with his stated preference for the preservation of Yupik culture. How can a culture be preserved and substituted for at the same time? Although Jensen recognized the cultural differences that attracted him to Yupik people, his policies would have them give up the idea that they were unique. The preservationist turns assimilationist in his statement that he was “constantly trying to fit the Eskimo into today’s dominant culture.”²⁷ Jensen remarked that the Indians who tried to set themselves apart ended up with nothing.²⁸ Unfortunately, the assimilationist methods of bringing Indians into dominant society had not worked in the past, and Indians who gave up their culture by force and those who assimilated willingly are people who ended up with nothing. They were neither accepted into dominant society nor were they comfortable on their own reservations. Indians who refused to give up their culture may have been barred from participation, but they still held to their cultural values.

As is true with most ideas and actions, there are many conflicting perceptions to Jensen’s policies. Paul Jensen held contradictory views about Yupik lifestyle and the conflicting interests of traditional values and twentieth century commerce and technology. At times he lacked clear thinking about the best way to bring the two worlds together. Jensen wanted to preserve Yupik culture and was supportive of the Natives; at the same time he was almost too willing to push them into the mainstream values of an alien Western culture. Did he want them to understand mainstream culture or was he more concerned with

saving them in the missionary sense; that is, was he trying to bring about assimilation into a more advanced, Western society? He was also oblivious to his own lack of understanding of the difference between preserving a culture physically and preserving its viability so that it could retain its ability to take its own evolutionary course. He wanted to give Alaska Natives a choice in life, but was he sharing a different lifestyle or actually pushing them toward assimilation with the dominant culture?

Paul Jensen appreciated Yupik culture. It is fair to say that he was part educator, part missionary, and that he sometimes had trouble keeping the two separated. He wanted what was best for Alaska Natives but was uncertain what that was. It is also possible that Jensen was overwhelmed by the problems he encountered in Alaska. The educator side of Jensen wanted to see children instructed so they could find jobs and a way out of poverty. His missionary side wanted to promote nuclear families and Western goals and values.

Paul Jensen wanted the Yupiks to fit into the dominant culture. Like Sheldon Jackson before him, Jensen was raised in a religious household and maintained lifelong ties to his church. He had been influenced by the missionary work of his childhood church and truly wanted to protect the Yupiks from the social problems making their way into Native society. His problem lay in not knowing how to keep them from falling prey to modern problems. Jensen cannot be faulted for failing to know the methods of a social worker. His main failing may lie in his belief that he thought he understood how to solve Yupik problems. While he appreciated many Yupik cultural traits, he did not truly understand their culture. He said he wanted to show the Yupiks a culture different from their own, one that was not better but simply different. But because of his bias toward his own culture and lifestyle, he wanted to instill in them Western cultural values. Jensen was an educator but he was also a missionary of modernization in that he was anxious to inculcate the Yupiks with his culture.

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- ¹ . Anderson and Eells, 70; Marashio, 3-5.
 - ² . Hinkley, 53.
 - ³ . Lazell, 65; Hinkley, 114-116.
 - ⁴ . Carey, 154,155.
 - ⁵ . Carey, 178-180.
 - ⁶ . Carey, 162.
 - ⁷ . D. Mitchell, 91.
 - ⁸ . Ted C. Hinckley, "Sheldon Jackson as Preserver of Alaska's Native Culture," "Pacific Historical Review," Vol. 33, No. 4, Jan 1, 1964, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
 - ⁹ . Napoleon, 13.
 - ¹⁰ . Ray, 23.
 - ¹¹ . Downes, 343-346.
 - ¹² . Philp, 68.
 - ¹³ . Ray 63, Philp, 70.
 - ¹⁴ . Lee, 68, 191; Boyd Applegarth, telephone interview, 19 February 1997.
 - ¹⁵ . "Difficulties Relating to Teaching in Alaska," series 8, file drawer 3; "Student Teaching in Alaska's Rural Schools," series 13, bound volumes, Student Teaching in Alaska.
 - ¹⁶ . "Final Report on Student Teaching in Alaska's Rural BIA Schools." Paul Jensen for BIA Alaska Region, 1969, series 13, bound volumes, Student Teaching in Alaska.
 - ¹⁷ . "Difficulties Relating to Teaching in Alaska," series 8, file drawer 3.
 - ¹⁸ . Arlene Jensen, 16.
 - ¹⁹ . Homan, 45, 46.
 - ²⁰ . Teacher Aide Workshop, Summer 1971, series 13, bound volumes.
 - ²¹ . Milligan, Donald and Nona; telephone interviews, Elim project, 12 February 1997; Judy Kozisek, telephone interview, Elim project, 2 February 1997; Shirley Schmid, telephone interview, Elim project, 3 February 1997; Fwingen Amy and Carol, telephone interviews, Stebbins project, 5 February 1997.
 - ²² . BIA Directives for Curriculum Workshop, Summer 1976, series 13, bound volumes, Curriculum Workshop; "Leaders Orientation Course in Instructional Innovation, Alaska BIA Institute, Schedule of Classes and Activities," series 8, file drawer 3, Teaching in Alaska.
 - ²³ . Paul Jensen's Session Notes for Curriculum Workshop, series 13, bound volumes, Curriculum workshop, summer 1976.
 - ²⁴ . "Student Teaching in Alaska's Rural Schools, OCE Screening Committee Requirements," series 13, bound volumes, Student Teaching in Alaska.

²⁵ . Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Report on the Needs of Alaska Native Students, series 8, file drawer 3, Teacher Internship Program.

²⁶ . “Statement of Philosophy--New Teacher Orientation,” series 13, bound volumes, BIA New Teacher Orientation.

²⁷ . Lee, 193.

²⁸ . Lee, 138, 139, 191.

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