



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Office of Indian
Education Programs

Honorable Dewey F. Bartlett
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

FEB 5 1974

Dear Senator Bartlett:

The enclosed report provides information on developments
pertaining to the future use of Intermountain School. We
appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs

Enclosure

INTERMOUNTAIN SCHOOL
Status Report from the Commissioner
February 1, 1974

There have been reports that Intermountain School might be closed at the end of the current school year, in June, 1974.

This will not happen. I have instructed the Navajo Area Director to plan to continue the operation of the school at least through the 1974-75 school year for returning junior and senior students.

A number of persons representing tribal or inter-tribal organizations have urged that Intermountain be utilized as an inter-tribal or all-tribal school of some sort. I intend to give these and other recommendations about the possible use of this facility full and serious consideration.

The question, however, cannot be simply "Would it be desirable to have Intermountain provide an alternative school program to those already available for Indian people?"

Since the Bureau's education budget is not unlimited, cost factors obviously have to be considered. Determination of the number of students who would need and actually use the school would be a critical point because of the large size of the Intermountain facility. The impact on other existing school programs also has to be studied. Would keeping Intermountain open mean that other schools would have to be closed? There are clearly many questions that need to be asked and

answered to clarify the priorities of Indian communities and to judge the feasibility of any new program at Intermountain.

This past December, I announced my intention to form a task force, composed of Bureau and non-Bureau personnel, to thoroughly explore all possible uses of the Intermountain facility.

Before this task force could be fully formed and activated, it was recommended to me that this study be made by an all-Indian group composed of representatives of national and regional Indian organizations. There is no question in my mind that there needs to be non-Bureau Indian representation on this task force -- and extensive consultation with Indian people and organizations. I also see advantages, however, in having some of my own staff people involved in this work and, because of the Utah community's interest in Intermountain, a representative from that State. I expect to have the opportunity very shortly to discuss with some of the Indian leaders who recommended an all-Indian group the make-up and work of this task force.

I want to move ahead with this study because planning time will be required to implement any decision that is made.

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February 8, 1974

The Honorable Dewey F. Bartlett
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Sir:

I was informed by Senator Ted Moss' office this morning of BIA Commissioner Morris Thompson's letter regarding Intermountain School. Commissioner Thompson stated that Intermountain School will remain open until June 1975. Enrollment could fall to 350 next year.

On January 16th and 17th a group of very concerned Indian tribal leaders gathered together on the campus of Intermountain School. From the Northwest, the Southwest, the Northeast and the Southeast Indian representation came. For three days, 10 to 17 hours per day, this group reviewed and evaluated the facilities, equipment, staff and programs of this large Indian school. A shocked group pondered the alleged BIA decision to close the school. Navajo Tribal Council representatives retold this incredible story to all of us.

We have been told that the decision to close the school was made by the Navajo Tribe. Mr. Billie of the Navajo Education Committee informed us while facing t.v. cameras that this was not a tribal decision. He said that the Navajo School Board and the Navajo Tribal Education Committee are all on record opposing the closing of this school. It would appear that this is strictly a BIA plan with no Indian input.

A young Navajo girl--the student body president, presented a moving report in tears to our group. Her name is Mary Keyonnie. Many times she has been told by BIA that her tribe was closing her school. She said, "...this is not true!" Then Mary presented a letter from Mr. Peter MacDonald, Chairman of the Navajo Nation. In his letter he stated, "Be assured that the Vice Chairman and I are continuing our efforts on a federal level to avoid the closing of your school." This certainly is contrary to the report BIA (Dr. William Benham's letter) supplied your office and my office only recently this month.

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The BIA education office has said that there are no other tribes who can send children to Intermountain School. I heard 26 different tribal representatives listen to this report in shock and amazement. The Utah, Idaho, Montana, California and Wyoming tribes said they have requested use of the school for several years; always the answer is no.

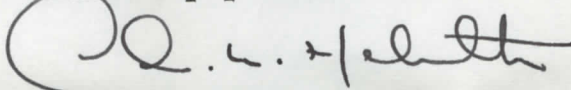
The BIA has had a study run on Intermountain School. Indian people want a study to take place also; but we want qualified Indian educators to run this study. The National Tribal Chairmen's Association and the National Congress of American Indians have all endorsed this move.

I am enclosing copies of the position paper developed by the Indian leaders which they all signed. I am also enclosing the names and addresses of all of the people attending the meeting. With this I am sending several copies of news accounts and a copy of Mr. MacDonald's letter. This was a very open meeting of very concerned people.

We urge your assistance in this matter, and I hope you share our concerns regarding the school and Indian education. The Utah congressional delegation has much of the history and information concerning this vital issue.

Thank you for your cooperation in this important matter.

Sincerely yours,



Charles W. Helseth
Director, Administration

CWH/gr
Encls.