

## 5

## Wrangell Institute



**Figure 147.**

*In 2008 the Wrangell Institute was an alder-covered rectangle with mounds of contaminated soil (some covered with white or grey tarpaulins) ready for removal. The boathouse stands at lower left.*

While Aleuts from Atka and the Pribilof Islands were taken directly to their wartime camps, the others were housed during late summer of 1942 in a tent city on the grounds of the Wrangell Institute – a large territorial boarding school on Wrangell Island near the town of Wrangell – until facilities at the Burnett Inlet cannery and Ward Lake CCC camp were readied. Like its neighbors, Wrangell Island is mountainous and cloaked in deep forest (Figure 147). At Wrangell the huge outflow of the Stikine River meets the deep channels of Frederick

Sound, Sumner Strait, Stikine Strait, Zimovia Strait, and Eastern Passage radiating out like spokes on a wheel (Figure 148), supporting a rich marine life. In the early 1800s the availability of sea otter and other furs encouraged the Hudson Bay Company and Russian American Company to develop posts for trading with the local Tlingit. The town of Wrangell survived to become one of southeast Alaska's few population centers, cyclically relying on furs, fishing, mining, logging, and tourism during the 1900s and into the subsequent millennium.

**Figure 148.**  
 The Wrangell Institute was located several miles southeast of Wrangell on a coastal road following the shore of Zimovia Strait. Note Burnett Inlet cannery at lower right.



### Early Years

By the 1930s Alaska had a history of church- and government-sponsored Native boarding schools and orphanages at Sitka, Eklutna, Seward, Holy Cross, Unalaska, Kanatak (in Bristol

Bay), and elsewhere. The Territorial Commissioner of Education had announced the intention to build an industrial school in southeast Alaska as early as 1924 (Parks 1932:95). In October of 1932 the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs began classes at the new

Wrangell Institute, a large complex overlooking Shoemaker Bay several miles south of Wrangell (Figures 148-149). The school was described as “one of the pet projects of the Roosevelt Administration” (Yzermans 1979:55). An appropriation of \$171,000 was made to clear the land and erect the first five buildings (Parks 1932:95).

Initial enrollment consisted of 71 high-school students drawn mostly from southeast Alaska. Students were expected to obtain a vocational education, and school maintenance tasks formed part of the instruction. Home building, nursing, commercial fishing, and home economics were among the list of trades taught (MacPherson 1998a). In 1937, prior to his 1941 appointment as Curator of the Alaska Territorial Library and Museum (a position he held until 1965), Edward L. Keithahn began teaching at the Wrangell Institute (Alaska State Library 1996). He authored articles

and books on Alaska topics including totem poles (Keithahn 1945), and supervised the student-carved totem poles that can be seen in early photographs of the school (Jordan 1966). Though ostensibly not affiliated with any religious organization, Wrangell’s Catholic priest took an interest in the school and incorporated it into his parish (Yzermans 1979:55-56).

The size of the Wrangell Institute’s land parcel has been reported as 171 acres or 141 acres (MacPherson 1994, 1998a), with development concentrated in a cleared rectangle measuring approximately 1000’ x 500’ (Figure 149). Centrally located was a large school building connected by enclosed walkways to large flanking two-story dormitories – boys on the left (northwest), girls on the right (southeast). With the school measuring 110’ long, the dormitories 144’ long, and the walkways spanning about 30’ between the buildings, the enclosed space was over



**Figure 149.**

*In 1938 the three central buildings – the boys dormitory at left, the school building right of center, and the girls dormitory at right – were surrounded by a wide clearing.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)

*[Wrangell Insitute] students study the natural life of the sea and shore, the village communities and their economic and health problems, business accounting, and homemaking. ...In addition, contributory skills are taught: woodworking, building construction, boat building, blacksmithing and machine shop practice, engine installation, operation and repair, navigation, and the household arts....The students also assume responsibility and cooperate with staff members in assemblies, control of health and sanitation, upkeep of the lighting and heating facilities, student accounts, and athletics.*

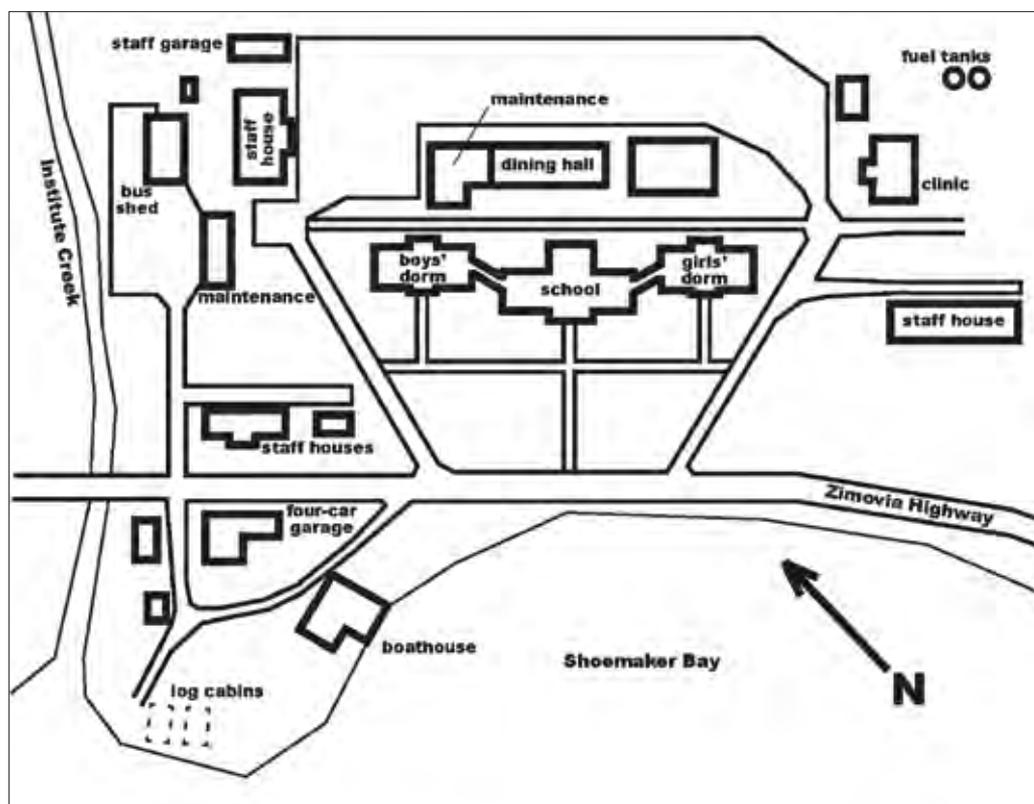
Colby 1941:140-141

450' long. Other buildings bounded large rectangular yards and parking lots; and eventually driveways, sidewalks, and terraces added more geometry and symmetry to the plan (Figure 150). Reports compiled in 1944 by the federal government describe a compact campus with about a dozen significant buildings. Most of the building materials were standardized: walls of 2"x6" studs, shiplap, with stucco on the outside surface and metal lath and plaster (or plasterboard) on the inside surface; roofs of 2"x8" rafters overlain with shiplap and asphalt shingles; and 2"x14" joists for the basement floor and 2"x10" joists for the first and second floors, overlaid by shiplap and 1"x4" hardwood flooring.

The school building was a 17,620 square-foot, two-story building with a half-basement, and a one-and-one-half story flat-roofed gymnasium on a

concrete pad centrally attached to the back of the building. The main building had a simple hipped roof with a central bell tower (Figure 149); a central cross-hipped entrance block with three arched penetrations and a central entry facing the waterfront. Three oil-fired boilers in the basement provided steam heat to radiators in the school and adjacent dormitories. The basement also contained two shops. The first floor held four classrooms, two offices, and the gymnasium, while the second floor held four more classrooms, an assembly room, and a library. When inventoried in 1944 the school building had drinking fountains in the halls but no bathrooms – likely bathrooms in the boys and girls dormitories were relied upon.

The girls and boys dormitories were built from the same plans as mirror images of each other, attached to the school by covered walkways with arches matching those of the school and dormitory entrances (Figure 149). Like the school, the dormitories had two stories, but the girls dormitory had only a partial basement and the boys had none at all. Like the school, they had a simple hipped roof with a central cross-hipped entrance block and arches facing the waterfront. The first floor of the girls dormitory contained a kitchen, a separate dining room, a



**Figure 150.**  
A 1975 Government Service Administration (GSA) auction notice for the Wrangell Institute furnishings included a plan (redrawn here) that identifies building functions.

social room, and “two rooms used for sewing and cooking classes,” according to the property inventory form. On the second floor were two large dormitory rooms, a bathroom, two private rooms, and a three-room apartment for the girls dormitory supervisor. The first floor of the boys dormitory contained a laundry, two social rooms, a bathroom, and three private rooms, while the second floor held two large dormitory rooms, storage rooms, and a three-room apartment for the boys dormitory supervisor. Unique to the boys dormitory was a “smoking room” on the second floor. Each of the dormitories contained more than 12,500 square feet of space, housing a maximum of 96 boys and 83 girls.

Some Wrangell Institute teachers and employees lived in Wrangell and commuted to work, but others lived on the grounds in a ten-unit apartment complex at the north end of the clearing (Figure 151). The staff house was a two-story building with a partial basement containing a laundry room and the oil-fired boiler for the steam heating system. Two- and three-room units were available, and the lobby was designed as a social area. The building contained over 3,000 square feet of space. The apartment’s architecture matched the school and dormitories, with a hipped roof and a central cross-hipped entrance block with three arches.

The medical clinic was completed in 1932, a year after the school, dormitories, and staff house were built. It was a one-story building with a basement and attic apartment at the south end of the clearing. The building's hipped roof and central cross-gabled entrance block with three arches matched the architectural details of its compan-

ions. The side opposing the entrance also had a cross-gabled block and a rear entrance, and the roof had a small shed-roofed dormer (Figure 152). The small basement held an oil-fired boiler for the steam heat system, while the first floor contained a clinic and five small wards, a "diet kitchen," an office, a room for the attendant, and three

**Figure 151.**

*A ten-unit apartment was built in 1931 near the north side of the campus for teacher and staff housing, on fill (note rock retaining wall), and was already slumping by the time this 1944 photograph was taken. The four-car staff garage is at right. Note totem pole at building corner.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



**Figure 152.**

*The rear of the medical clinic, shown here in 1944, had a cross-gabled central block to create a small nurse's apartment in the attic.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



bathrooms. The nurse lived in an attic apartment with a living room, kitchen, and bathroom.

In 1934 the school built a vehicle garage, and the following year they built two more. The first was a one-story L-shaped building constructed on the shore side of the highway, with four enclosed bays facing the campus (Figure 153); another two open bays were added on the shore side (facing Shoemaker Bay) in 1936 (Figure 150). Students and staff made the building with a hipped roof to match the other buildings, and poured two concrete grease pits into the floor. The original building measured 20'x43', while the addition measured 20'x23'. One of the two garages built in 1935 was also a four-car design with a hipped roof, open bays, and a shop area, with the addition of a gasoline pump and a 500-gallon fuel tank, lubrication

oil dispensers, and an air compressor (Figure 154). The building measured 20'x45', or 900 square feet. It was situated near the large staff apartment and intended to house staff vehicles. The second 1935 garage was a small 11'x18' one-story building with a hipped roof.

The ten-unit apartment building was not the only staff housing available by World War II. In the late 1930s the CCC began construction of two 22'x30' log cabins behind the six-car garage, near the shore (Figures 155-156). Left uncompleted by the CCC, one was finished by students and staff in 1941 and the other in 1942. Each cabin contained a living room, kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom, and was heated by a wood stove. The main gabled roof was complemented by shed roofs over a door at each gable end.

At the water's edge students and staff built a 20'x60' boathouse on a



**Figure 153.**

*By 1944 a garage on the shore side of the road, originally built with these four bays facing the campus, had a two-bay addition on the other side to make a six-car garage.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)

**Figure 154.**

*Bumpers of what would now be vintage cars peek out from the four-car staff garage in 1944.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



**Figure 155.**

*CCC crews began two log cabins near shore in the late 1930s, leaving them for staff and students to finish in 1941. The boys dormitory shows at right in this 1944 view to the east.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



concrete foundation, where vessels could be winched for repair and storage using a 40' marine ways (Figure 157). Archival photographs indicate construction in 1938. Shiplap siding protected the exterior walls, and asphalt shingles protected the roof. The large bay facing the water had tall plank doors to keep out the elements, but

a shed-roofed extension of posts and trusses on the north side of the building was left open (Figure 158). Rather than following the lead of the Sheldon Jackson boarding school in Sitka, which had its own fishing boat to help feed the campus, the Institute built watercraft rigged solely for transportation, according to Richard Stokes.



**Figure 156.**

A 1944 view to the west shows the second identical log cabin (right) built beside the first (left), both facing the bay.

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



**Figure 157.**

The boathouse in 1944 had a servicable marine ways to haul watercraft into the building.

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)

Simple wooden boats named *Institute 1* through *3* reached lengths of 40' (Figure 159). By 1942 the CCC had completed a dock and floats for the school (The Wrangell Sentinel 1942a).

The 1944 property inventory listed several other campus features, including a small building to house fire hose,

and the two 20,000 gallon oil tanks and pumphouse that served the individual buildings (Figure 160). Near the waterfront staff and students also built an open fish-cleaning station in the Adirondack style, with cedar shakes on spruce poles and a concrete slab foundation (Figure 161). Nearby was an elevated smokehouse of similar

**Figure 158.**

A shed roof supported by posts and trusses was attached to the north side of the boathouse, here looking southwest in 1944.

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



**Figure 159.**

The *Institute 3* was one of the boats built at the Wrangell Institute boathouse.

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



construction, with “plank catwalks for hanging fish” (Figure 162). The 1944 inventory also includes photographs of a timber dam approximately 15’ high and perhaps 40’ long – probably constructed northeast of the campus up Institute Creek and used to collect domestic water.

As the 1944 photographs illustrate, unlike the other locations where

Aleut evacuees found themselves, the Wrangell Institute was a fully-functioning federal facility at the beginning of World War II.

### **World War II and the Camp Experience**

The Aleut experience at the Wrangell Institute was of two kinds. Villagers from Unalaska, Nikolski, Makushin,

Akutan, and Kashega arrived there directly as fresh evacuees from the Aleutian Islands before being forwarded to their ultimate wartime destination (Figure 163). Then, after being settled in their camps, children from the relocated villages were sent to the Wrangell Institute for schooling.

The Alaska Steamship Company's vessel *SS Columbia* arrived at Wrangell Institute on July 13, 1942, to deliver 160 Aleuts into the custody of the Alaska Indian Service – the U.S. Department of the Interior's agency for administering Native affairs in the territory. The six-village contingent consisted of 41 people from Akutan, 18 from Biorka, 20 from Kashega, eight from Makushin, 72 from Nikolski, and one from Unalaska (Kohlhoff 1995:80–81). Military and political matters delayed evacuation of Unalaska, and reports differ on the event details. On August 1, 1942, 137 Unalaskans arrived at Wrangell Institute on board the Alaska Steamship Company's vessel *SS Alaska* according to Kohlhoff (1995:84), while Kirtland and Coffin (1981:35) state that 111 Unalaskans arrived there on July 26 – one week earlier.

The Juneau office of the Alaska Indian Service began making arrangements in mid-July to receive Aleut evacuees at the Wrangell



**Figure 160.**  
*Two 20,000 gallon steel tanks (viewed here in 1944) behind the clinic held the campus's heating oil.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



**Figure 161.**  
*A fish-cleaning station of spruce poles and cedar shakes in the Adirondack style was built near the beach.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)

Institute (Kohlhoff 1995:80). The broad terraced grounds were to become a temporary city. More than twenty large pyramidal military tents

were erected along the existing sidewalks, each on its own tent platform (Figures 163-165). The entry of each tent faced southwest, towards the sidewalk and the beach beyond. Each tent was equipped with a small camp stove – photographs show both sheet-metal and cast types – stationed in a long row outside the tents on the opposite side of the sidewalk. Obviously used for cooking rather than heating, the stoves’ locations indicate a concern for fire danger among the closely packed dwellings. Canvas patches are visible on some tents. According to one evacuee, women and children were assigned to live in tents (Figure 165), eight per tent, with one cot per tent, while men and boys slept in

**Figure 162.**  
Near the fish-cleaning station was an elevated smokehouse also in the Adirondack style.

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)



**Figure 163.**  
Workers build tent platforms in July of 1942, on the grounds of the Wrangell Institute, in preparation for the arrival of Aleut evacuees. Note boathouse at upper right.

National Archives Still Picture Branch





**Figure 164.**

*Large military tents were erected along the sidewalks in front of the Wrangell Institute to house the Aleut evacuees during the late summer of 1942.*

Alaska State Library Butler/Dale collection PCA306.2266

the vacant dormitories (Kohlhoff 1995:101). The Wrangell Institute tent camp was intended to be struck in the fall of 1942, after better accommodations were readied elsewhere (and before returning students arrived to begin the new school year). Villagers from Unalaska spent less than a month there before moving to the cannery at Burnett Inlet (Kirtland and Coffin 1981:35). Villagers from Akutan, Biorka, Kashega, Makushin, and Nikolski built a barge (probably using the Institute's boathouse) that was then filled with building supplies and towed to Ketchikan by the USS *Penguin* in late August (some remember an Institute vessel pulling the barge); 25 villagers accompanied the barge while the



**Figure 165.**

*Most Aleut Islanders except those from Atka (and Attu) spent time at the Wrangell Institute tent camp. Eva Borenin (age 15) and Evdokia (Eva) Borenin (age 55) were residents of Makushin. Both died at Ward Lake in 1943 and were buried in Ketchikan.*

National Archives Still Picture Branch

*I was born in Craig, Alaska, in the sixth month, the 25th day, year '29....I came up to Wrangell to attend high school....I didn't come up until late '42...I graduated in the last graduating class as a high school [1947].... Everybody had one week [out of four] where you didn't go to school. You had the kitchen, or you had the bakery, or you had the laundry, or you had the health center, or you could work for staff and get paid.... It was real disciplined. Everybody got up at 7:00. Everybody ate breakfast by 8:00. Everyone did their chores between 8 and 9, and then you went to school. We had our algebra, we had all math classes, science classes, geography classes, and history. English. And then of course we had a band....We could come in to Wrangell every Saturday, and maybe Sunday for a movie.*

Wilma Stokes

*Mr. Barrett, the principal of Wrangell Institute, came to Funter Bay on June 16 [sic], 1942, and asked if there were any boys and girls of high school age who would like to attend his school. As soon as I heard this I wanted to go. But I knew that a boy over sixteen can't go any farther in school, because where I come from the Government Service of Fishing and Wild Life puts them to work....When I got to the Institute I was homesick. The students were strangers to me, and the trees looked ugly, because I had never seen a tree in all the sixteen years of my life.*

Sixteen-year-old Flore, from St. Paul,  
quoted in Beech (1944:20)

remainder traveled to Ketchikan on-board an Army transport vessel (Kohlhoff 1995:103-104).

By early September the tent camp was gone and the Wrangell Institute started its regular school year, beginning the 1942 fall enrollment with an

unprecedented number of Aleut students. Lee McMullan's log at Funter Bay recorded the USFWS's *Brant* leaving October 17 for the Institute, bringing 20 Pribilof Islands schoolchildren, their two schoolteachers, and the schoolteachers' children, and the children were also enrolled the following year (Kirtland and Coffin 1981:62). Children from other evacuation camps also attended school at the Wrangell Institute (Kirtland and Coffin 1981:63), but "the record of enrollment of children from Killisnoo, Ward Cove and Burnett Inlet has not been discovered."

### Post-War Development

Unlike other evacuation camps, the Wrangell Institute was in operation immediately prior to the war, it continued its education mission during the war, and it remained a boarding vocational high school immediately after the war. But after the war the U.S. Navy no longer needed their huge seaplane base at Sitka, so in 1947 the newly created Bureau of Indian Affairs (or BIA – successor to the Indian Service) transformed the Sitka naval station into Mt. Edgecumbe High School, reducing the Wrangell Institute to an elementary and junior high



**Figure 166.**

*Students stroll the sidewalk behind the school and dorms, looking south, probably in the early 1960s. The boys dormitory is at right, the school (with bell-tower) is left of center, and the girls dormitory is at the far left.*

Wrangell Museum

school (Jordan 1966). The main school and dormitory buildings changed little (Figure 166), but more buildings were added to the campus. A bus shed and a maintenance shop were added at the north corner of the clearing, according to archival photographs. A large building was constructed northeast of the school as a maintenance facility and dining hall, and another of unknown function was built adjacent to the dining hall. Added to the existing staff house at the north corner of the complex were another large staff house at the south corner of the complex (Figures 167-168) and two smaller staff residences by the road near the west corner (Figure 150). A long wharf at the south end of the complex that was in good repair in the 1940s was quite dilapidated by 1961 (Figure 167). One of the last buildings added to the com-



**Figure 167.**

*The school's dock was in place by 1942, but it was dilapidated by the time this 1961 image was made.*

National Archives Pacific Alaska  
Region RG75 (BIA) Box 14 4/8/8(3)

plex was a garage near the boathouse sometime after 1966, according to an aerial photograph (Jordan 1966).

In the mid-1960s as many as 260 students attended classes at the Wrangell Institute, but the curriculum of four decades earlier had evolved, and home economics was the only vocational course still taught (Jordan 1966). The staff included two registered nurses,

four practical nurses, four guidance counselors, 12 teachers, 10 teacher's aides, and three nighttime dormitory keepers. Just under 90 students were enrolled in January of 1975, when the BIA announced it would close the facility that June (The Wrangell Sentinel 1975). During its last semester, in its 43rd year of operation, the school employed 45 people including seven teachers. Alaska's continued expansion of rural bush schools lessened the need for BIA boarding schools, and the closure of the Wrangell Institute was warranted on the basis of "rising costs, decreasing enrollment and

major renovations needed," according to a BIA spokesman (Hanchett 1974). The campus infrastructure development was at its zenith by 1975, though the two log cabins near the mouth of the creek (Figures 155-156) had been removed.

The Wrangell Institute was soon declared surplus federal property and assigned for sale under the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). Cook Inlet Regional Corporation or CIRI, a Native regional corporation established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, announced in early 1977 that it was claiming the property under a provision in the Act that entitled CIRI to select surplus federal property nationwide in compensation for the lack of available land near Anchorage (The Wrangell Sentinel 1977). GSA issued CIRI a temporary use permit for the property, allowing CIRI in 1977 to lease the facility to the U.S. Forest Service as a Young Adult Conservation Corps camp (The Wrangell Sentinel 1977). After opening in January, 1978, "the work camp employed about 100 16- to 23-year-olds as well as about 40 staff members who worked on public works and conservation projects" (MacPherson 1994). That use continued until 1980 (Alaska Department of

*There were two large 20,000 gallon fuel tanks which stored heating oil for the school. The fuel was transferred from tankers uphill to the tanks by a pipeline and then dispersed to the individual fuel tanks at each building by another pipeline. There were 12 small tanks on the property. In 1999, the City removed all of the tanks and excavated 750 cubic yards of contaminated soil which was stockpiled in a rockpit. In 2001, the City performed a site assessment of the property, demolished all of the buildings, [and] excavated additional contaminated soil which was stockpiled near the site....Approximately 6,000-8,000 cubic yards of petroleum-contaminated soil remained on site in the spring of 2007. The groundwater is also contaminated....The State will receive \$2.35 million as reimbursement for past and future costs....The soil will be cleaned up to DEC's most protective cleanup levels, which will allow for unrestricted future use of the property.*

Website: Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation  
Contaminated Sites Program: Wrangell Institute



Environmental Conservation 2007:3). Title to the property was officially transferred to CIRI on August 11, 1978, but the Native corporation was cautious about predicting future development (The Wrangell Sentinel 1978). Some buildings were leased as private rental units (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation 2007:1).

After 1980 the buildings remained idle for almost 15 years. Then in 1994 CIRI demolished three buildings and conducted asbestos abatement and lead-based paint removal programs, in turn causing a fuel spill, and under a special 1995 Congressional authorization CIRI relinquished the property in exchange for approximately one million dollars in other surplus federal property (MacPherson 1998b; Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation 2007:3). Since then the history of the Wrangell Institute has been one of hazardous materials removal

and demolition. Asbestos removal was almost completed in 1998, and in 1999 the City removed fuel tanks and removed and stockpiled some contaminated soils. According to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (2007:1-3), in 2001 additional contaminated soils were removed and stockpiled and all buildings were demolished (though the original boathouse was found standing in 2008).

### Current Condition

On-site investigations at the Wrangell Institute were so brief that a taxi was kept waiting. The City's permission to conduct the field investigation had not been conveyed to onsite individuals supervising remediation, and time was not available to request additional permissions. The site visit was long enough to photograph the loss of the central building complex, the soil remediation process, and the standing

**Figure 168.**

*An aerial photograph published in the June, 1966, New Alaskan shows the final layout of the Wrangell Institute.*

**Figure 169.**

*In 2008 the Wrangell Institute had been leveled of most buildings and workers were preparing contaminated soil (under cover) for removal. Compare with the similar perspective (looking southeast) in Figure 166.*



**Figure 170.**

*From the highway the Wrangell Institute's main campus consists of mounds of contaminated soil surrounded by encroaching vegetation.*



**Figure 171.**

*The Wrangell Institute's boathouse, built by 1942, is in fair repair (compare with Figure 158).*



boathouse. Campus features obscured by alders or the forest fringe were not observed during the brief field visit.

Most of the Wrangell Institute was demolished by 2008. The property northeast (upslope) of the highway contains long plastic-covered mounds of contaminated soil waiting removal (Figures 169-170). These mounds and the graveled surfaces between correspond to the area once holding the dorm and school building alignment and the maintenance and cafeteria buildings (Figures 150, 166). No building debris was observed; the contents of the covered piles were not inspected. Young alder, spruce, and hemlock are revegetating other parts of the main campus. Dilapidated chain-link fence and gates guard the upslope Wrangell Institute property on the northeast side of the highway (Figure 170).

On the southwest side of the highway next to a playground

and tennis courts is the Wrangell Institute's boathouse, which dates to 1938 (Figures 157-158, 163). In 2008 the building was in fair repair (Figure 171), but it hadn't been used as a boathouse for many years (Figure 172). Interior observations were not made.

The wood frame boathouse has a tall gable-roofed main block at the water's edge with large doors facing Zimovia Strait that allowed boats to be winched or floated in (Figure 159). Three windows equidistantly spaced on the south elevation are battened with plywood, as are two on the east (Figure 171); archival photographs (Figures 157-158) indicate they once held 4/4 double-sash windows. The building is clad in simple wood drop siding, and roofed with ribbed metal. Distinctive eave

*Those [construction] workmen were fabulous, 'cause those buildings were just as good as new.*

Richard Stokes



**Figure 172.**

*The boathouse has wide, tall doors facing Zimovia Strait. Vegetation, beach berm, and logs indicate that decades have passed since the building served that function (compare with Figure 157).*

returns on the gable ends appear as they did during the war (Figure 158). A windowless plywood sliding door is centered on the east elevation where there was once a plank door perforated by a pedestrian door in turn having a six-pane fixed window (Figure 158). A metal stovepipe that wartime photographs show penetrating the roof near the southwest corner is no longer in evidence.

In 1944 the boathouse had a low, open, shed-roofed block attached to the north elevation, supported by roof trusses and braced posts (Figure 158); by 2008 that block was completely enclosed. The north and south walls are clad in simple drop siding like the remainder of the building, while the east wall consists of plywood, T-111, two plywood doors on a track, and one hinged plywood door (Figure 171).

*Walter Rudolph was the boat instructor. He was a good man. And they built the Institute 1, and the Institute 2. There was a lot of skiffs, and stuff [built there], but I'm talking the power boats. The Institute 2 was the largest – it must have been 40' at least. [Built probably] '34, '35. Her [spouse Wilma Stokes] uncle bought it, after they used it. They used it for transporting kids back and forth, to here, and Sitka, and Petersburg. I don't know about Ketchikan. They were just transportation, but it became a fishing boat when her uncle got it. So it could have been even 45'. It was a good-sized boat.*

Richard Stokes

The roof of the shed block is identical to the main block, being ribbed metal.

North of the boathouse, past tennis courts and playground, is a small one-story gable-roofed shed with two large bay openings. It may be a building plotted but unidentified on the 1975 campus map, but that was not confirmed. In 2008 the building serves the recreational complex.

### Summary

After the Aleut relocation experience, the Wrangell Institute continued its Alaska Native boarding school programs until 1975. The property was sold to Cook Inlet Region Incorporated (CIRI) in 1978 and left idle from 1980 until 1995, when it was traded back to the federal government for one million dollars in other surplus property. Since then the City of Wrangell has acquired the campus and overseen the demolition of most of the buildings and removal of huge volumes of contaminated soil. The 2008 field reconnaissance documented a boathouse as the one Institute building definitely constructed before 1942. The brief onsite visit did not systematically scrutinize the campus, and other historic features likely remain along the margins of the parcel.