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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 22, 2009

### **Phyllis Carlson named Director of Rural Education**

JUNEAU – Alaska Education Commissioner Larry LeDoux has named Phyllis Carlson of Juneau as the state's first Director of Rural Education. Governor Sean Parnell announced the appointment today at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention in Anchorage.

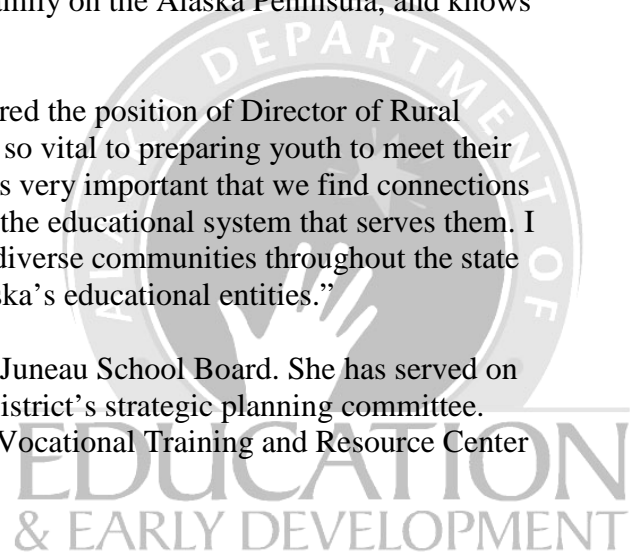
The Director of Rural Education will be instrumental in bringing about education reform through a variety of approaches, including bridging the cultural differences between rural communities and the public education system.

The director will build the capacity of the department, school districts and rural communities to meet the academic needs of rural students. The fundamental task is to increase student achievement by engaging communities in their schools and assisting educators in working with their communities.

"Although we received many strong applications, Ms. Carlson stands out for her commitment to formal education and the people and cultures of rural Alaska," Commissioner LeDoux said. "Ms. Carlson's experience in public service, early education, K-12 schools, at-risk students, adult vocational education and other types of higher education brings a valuable perspective. She is a lifelong Alaskan, born in Kodiak and raised in Chignik in a commercial fishing family on the Alaska Peninsula, and knows Alaska's diverse Native cultures."

"I feel very privileged and challenged to be offered the position of Director of Rural education," Carlson said. "Because education is so vital to preparing youth to meet their future goals and become productive citizens, it is very important that we find connections between what they know, their world view, and the educational system that serves them. I am looking forward to learning more about the diverse communities throughout the state and developing partnerships with them and Alaska's educational entities."

Carlson is a longtime member and leader of the Juneau School Board. She has served on school site councils and on the Juneau School District's strategic planning committee. Carlson most recently served as Director of the Vocational Training and Resource Center



of the Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, after a long term as manager of its Johnson O'Malley Native Education Program and a stint with Head Start. She has worked with the Rural Systemic Initiative of the Alaska Federation of Natives, University of Alaska Fairbanks and the National Science Foundation.

Carlson is a member of the Juneau Alliance for Mental Health, the Juneau Communities in Schools, the Consortium for Alaska Native Higher Education, and Kids Voting. She serves on the Chancellor's Campus Council at the University of Alaska Southeast and the advisory board of the Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaskan Schools program at UAS, and she is the Alaska representative to the National Johnson O'Malley Association.

Carlson is a graduate of Kodiak High School and holds a bachelor's degree from Alaska Methodist University, now known as Alaska Pacific University.

Carlson will be an integral part of the department's team that implements comprehensive improvement efforts in academically low-performing districts and schools. She will be a leader in implementing the Alaska Education Plan to ensure academic success for rural Alaskans. As well, Carlson will supervise the implementation of the state's cultural standards for schools as endorsed by the State Board.

The position will be based in Juneau and involve extensive travel. Carlson will report to the commissioner and work closely with the deputy commissioner. In addition, she will work with the Governor's Rural Adviser as needed. Carlson will take up her duties in late November.

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