

*Indian Act*

agent. I will go further and say that it is the responsibility of the department of Indian affairs to see that we have Indian agents able to give that leadership. I think we have perhaps not the only agent of that nature but certainly a young man with great vision. I refer to Mr. Hett who is stationed at Vernon. He is certainly doing a mighty fine job in building up morale among the Indians of that area and getting the co-operation of the white community in assisting him in integrating the Indian into the life of the various communities.

Of course the place to start is with the young, and the Indians are no different than the white people in that respect. Sometimes old fellows—I am not excepting some of us in the house—are not amenable to change, but if we can get this across to the young generation it will be an easy matter to instill in them a different outlook and viewpoint.

For many generations we have looked upon the Indian as a second class citizen. I attach no blame for that feeling to either the Indian or the white man, but we must get rid of that stigma, if you want to call it that, and try to make the Indian a first class citizen. In my area we have no separate Indian schools. The Indian children attend the local public schools in Vernon, Enderby, Armstrong, Salmon Arm and I believe every place I could mention. They are not even in separate classrooms. They are free to mingle in their classes, in their sports and in their studies with the white children on a common ground and on a common basis.

It may be that there are many white people, who are not prepared to accept the Indians as an equal but in most cases, especially among children, you find no difference. We also find that the Indians have their bright students and their average students and some who are not even average, but the brighter students are certainly encouraged to go on to higher education, and we have them in the vocational schools and nurses' training schools, and we even have one or two students in the university. So a start has been made in that direction toward encouraging Indians to seek higher education.

We have had no trouble in placing educated Indians in employment. I will go further and say that we have found no trouble among the Indians in regard to earning a living in the local mills and in the woods and in the various jobs open to them in the white community. There is only one complaint I have. There is one large mill in my town that will not hire Indians, for the reason that they will work only two or three days or a week and then go away. For

that reason this particular man will not accept Indians, except possibly on a casual day to day labour basis. However, in the main we have Indians working in the mills and in the bush, earning a good deal of money on a scale equal to white people and building up very good homes for themselves on the reserves.

There is one other thing I should like to mention at this time. I spoke of the Indian agent giving leadership to the community or to the Indians on the reserve. Of course he cannot handle that by himself. The only way he can do that is by enlisting the support of people in the white community who are prepared to give some of their time and devote some effort to this work. I just want to tell you a little experience I had last summer. Mr Hett, the agent from Vernon, was anxious to get something started on the reserve, and a special meeting was called in our city hall. At that meeting we had the mounted police detachment—only two of them, by the way—I was at it, and also various other people of the community interested in trying to evolve some way to benefit and give a little lift to life on the reserve.

Of course at a meeting such as that there are always various ideas put forth, and at this one there were several. As a result we had some of the women and men from the town of Enderby who were prepared to devote one night a week or one night a month, as was required, to meet with the Indians and try to educate them into better ways of living. As a result we had a home-makers' club organized on the reserve. By the way, they have a very nice community hall less than half a mile from the limits of our city, and they meet there once a month. Different women from the town of Enderby attend these meetings and give hints and lessons on various phases of home-making.

In a very short time results have been noticeable. When one drives along the roads through the reserve one sees that the washing on the line, for instance, is a little whiter than it used to be. One sees some brightly coloured curtains hanging at the windows, and one notices some painting and decorating being done on the houses. Inside the houses one will find action being taken in painting and decorating these homes. That is the result of the spirit that has been engendered in that community through the leadership of the people of Enderby.

We all know that sport is one of the greatest ways to level off the thinking of people. In that community we have Indians on the baseball clubs and on the hockey teams. Since I left there I have noted that a boxing