

NORTHWEST HIGHWAY TRANSFER

A public ceremony at Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, on April 1 marked the hand-over of the Northwest Highway System from the Department of National Defence to the Department of Public Works.

Representing National Defence was Lieutenant-General Geoffrey Walsh, Chief of the General Staff. The Public Works representative was Mr. G. Lucien Lalonde, Deputy Minister.

The Northwest Highway System had been maintained by the Canadian Army since April 1, 1946, when it was taken over from the United States Army.

A cairn and suitable plaque commemorating the handover were unveiled as part of the ceremony. Senior officials from the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta, the Yukon Territory and the State of Alaska were present.

NORTHERN EDUCATION THRIVES

Recently, on the isolated Belcher Islands in Hudson's Bay, a young teacher from Manitoba marked a reading test that would compare the progress of his 15 Eskimo pupils, on an equal basis, with pupils in southern Canada. He knew that the youngsters in his one-room school with its snow-swept windows were interested and quick. But it takes time to learn a new language, and time to learn about an unfamiliar outside world; the school had been in existence only three and a half years.

The youngsters completed the test in the regulation 20 minutes. Paulossie Kavik, who leaves his rifle outside the school in case he sees a ptarmigan on the way home, got a perfect score. The other children rated well above average for their school years.

"The Belcher Island School is not unusual in its achievement; other schools in the Northwest Territories and Arctic Quebec scored equally well on similar tests," said Northern Affairs Minister Arthur Laing recently. "In fact, the progress and rapid expansion of education is one of the biggest stories in the North today. Enrolment figures have passed the 6000 mark; about 300 trainees outside the schools are taking courses in trades that range from the operation of heavy-duty equipment to coffee-shop management and fish filleting."

SPECTACULAR ENROLMENT INCREASE

In the past six years, the increase in school enrolment has been most spectacular in the sparsely-populated settlements of Baffin Island, the Keewatin District and Arctic Quebec. In Arctic Quebec, where 96 per cent of the pupils are Eskimo children, attendance figures have risen from about 50 in 1958 to over 650. Since 1955, the Frobisher Bay school on Baffin Island has added 13 classrooms; the present 15-room school and smaller schools in scattered settlements accommodate a total of 628 children. In the Keewatin District nearly 500 children have the usual school day with active play at noon and a hot lunch served by the teacher.

"About 400 Eskimo children are still not in schools in the Eastern Arctic," says W.G. Devitt, Northern Affairs Superintendent of Schools for the Arctic District. "These children are mainly in the Baffin Island hunting camps, where families live by hunting and trapping. The parents have to choose between parting with school-aged children for the term or giving up their means of livelihood and moving into a populated settlement where hunting may be poor. It is a difficult choice for a close-knit Eskimo family to make."

To ease the change from home life to "boarding school", small family-type hostels with bunks for eight children are being built near the Arctic District schools. An Eskimo mother and father supervise the children. The girls help with the sewing, meals and sweeping; on week-ends the boys hunt and trap with their foster father. When the school term is over, the youngsters come back to their family circle.

"In a small settlement, the teacher and the missionary or the trader are likely to be the only non-Eskimos in the community," says Mr. Devitt. "This means that the teacher may dispense drugs, give emergency first aid, buy and pack carvings, and distribute family allowance cheques as well as teach school. When an epidemic of measles hits the settlement, a teacher has to pack up his books until it's over."

ASPIRATION TO UNIVERSITY

In the Mackenzie District, the first federal school was built at Tuktoyaktuk, east of the mouth of the Mackenzie River, in 1947. In the next ten years other schools were opened, which are now beginning to graduate their first Eskimo and Indian students. The first Indian girl to become a teacher in the Northwest Territories is a graduate of the Sir John Franklin School at Yellowknife. Last summer, a young Eskimo boy graduated from the Inuvik federal school with an above 80 average; he is now studying science in the University of Manitoba. Through a plan of grants and loans established by the Northwest Territories Council, financial support is available to permit all N.W.T. students who qualify for university entrance to continue their studies at universities in the south.

The Eskimos themselves are beginning to look ahead to the future that a sound academic education will provide for their children. "My girl is three, and she should be a nurse or a teacher," says a young Eskimo Assistant Northern Service Officer at Igloolik. "My boy is five and he should go to university. Things like this must be planned, and I am saving my money now."

ENGINEERING DROP-OUTS

The average drop-out rate for engineering classes that graduated from 1954 to 1963 from Canadian universities was 44 per cent. This was revealed in Bulletin No. 3 in the series *Professional Manpower Bulletins* issued by the Economics and Research Branch, Department of Labour.

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