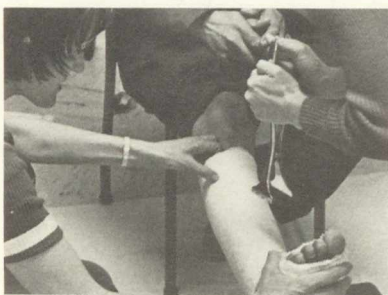


# SIX



## DIRECT CANADA EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION COMMISSION TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE SPECIALIZED PARAPROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR NATIVE PERSONS.

Under the present scheme of delivering Federally-sponsored health services to Native communities, there is a serious lack of trained personnel who can concentrate their efforts on the early detection and prevention of disabilities. This usually means that a disability can reach a serious stage before the disabled person is likely to receive medical treatment.



**Poor Situation:** In Northern Canada, for example, *otitis media* is a widespread and persistent problem for Native people. This middle-ear infection, which sometimes afflicts 80% of the individuals in a community at some time during their lives, often results in damage to the eardrum and consequent hearing impairment. At present, there are not enough trained medical person-

nel to concentrate on a systematic screening process to detect *otitis media* in an individual at an early stage. As a consequence, detection and treatment are hit and miss.

**Excellent, But:** There is a high turnover of public health nurses who are trained to deal with *otitis media*. Even in the best of situations, their ranks are understaffed, given the need that exists for their services in all areas of medical care. These nurses are dedicated and do excellent work. They make considerable efforts, often beyond the call of duty, to deal with the problems of disabled Native persons. But they are not members of Native communities, so their commitment to any location tends to be short term. The problems of disabilities, however, such as those caused by *otitis media*, and the programs for prevention, require a long-range continuity of attention and service.

**Further Problems:** A disability such as that caused by *otitis media* has more than medical implications. The Special Committee received the following testimony from representatives of the Government of the Yukon:

"It is generally accepted that there is a higher incidence of middle ear infections in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Permanent or intermittently mild to moderate hearing loss means that the young child is at a severe disadvantage in acquiring speech and language skills. The problem is compounded still further when the child does not speak English as a first language or is not exposed at home to the standard English patterns that he needs in order to benefit fully from formal education."

Imagine the educational opportunities which are lost because this preventable disability often goes untreated or undetected until it reaches advanced stages.

**Paraprofessional Training:** The Special Committee feels that this example clearly illustrates that the only long-term solution to problems such as *otitis media* lies in the active involvement of trained Native technicians who will deliver medical and health-related services to their own communities. In short, there is an urgent need for specialized paraprofessional training for Native per-