

Education is the key to a promising future for the Indians. Our great hope lies in the young people now at school and in those yet unborn who will be entering a steadily improving school system in the next generation. A sound educational system is the most effective contribution that Canadians can make to the progress of the Indians. Through education the Indian can hope to compete for stable jobs in the highly competitive labour market. As educationists you know only too well that today's employers insist that their employees should have completed at least Grade 10. Many insist on Grade 12 education and some on even higher academic grades. Good schooling is essential, therefore, if the Indian wants to move off the reserve into a society where he must adapt himself to a different and more competitive set of values. Education helps him too, to find assurance in the non-Indian culture which is often rather strange, and perhaps a little frightening, to him. The Indian Affairs Branch instituted its placement programme in 1957 and quickly realized that the change from the reserve to urban life is a highly challenging and often disturbing emotional experience for young Indians. A few cannot take the transition and return to their reserves. The majority stay. Education has given them enough self-confidence and assurance to make the transition successfully.

Education also prepares the Indian to assume more responsibility in the management of his own affairs on the reserve. Band councils are administering their communities in much the same manner as the councils of rural municipalities. Of the 571 bands in Canada, 188 draw up their own spending budgets. They make by-laws to regulate such matters as sanitation, road construction, housing and welfare.

There has been a slow but steady growth in the number of school committees. The aim of these committees is to foster gradually a greater measure of responsibility on the part of the Indian community for the management of local educational affairs, the development of educational facilities and the proper use of government and band funds for educational purposes. These committees assume direct responsibility for action or recommendation with regard to school attendance, truancy, care of school property, attendance at non-Indian schools, P.T.A., and Home and School associations, special disciplinary problems, band fund appropriations for school activities and scholarships from Band funds. In addition they act in an advisory capacity in respect of school accommodation, annual school maintenance and repairs, recommendations for tuition grants, joint agreements with non-Indian schools, extra-curricular activities, more particularly sports, special holidays, reserve roads in relation to school bus routes, as well as other related matters.

Now let me outline what the Indian Affairs Branch is doing in the field of Indian education. I venture to say that few school systems have accomplished as much as the Branch has undertaken in the last 10 years.