

casserole

a supplement section
of the gateway

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Despite hang-ups, hang-overs, a green-horn editor and illness unto death, Casserole has somehow tossed together another dish of goodies for you, the lucky students.

WUS chairman Sylvia Van Kirk unclouds the issue around World University Service on C-3. For those of you who've been wondering, now is as good a time as any to find out the facts. Tutoring Indian and Metis kids is a sharing experience, and Gail Evasiuk covers that story on C-2.

With another slant on Indian education, Marj Bell reviews a summer on the reserve. She was one of several students sent out by the Inter-cultural Education Committee and the Department of Indian Affairs to find out about the practical side of teaching native people.

Our cover-girl this week was shot by Peter Johnston. Wonder what she's thinking?

A story of 30 students in the slums

By GAIL EVASIUK

Last year thirty students from this university left the comfortable hallowed halls and journeyed into the slums.

With the nebulously defined purpose of tutoring welfare children, the volunteers, grouped in male and female pairs, visited Indian and Metis homes twice weekly.

A sidewalk with few boards, a door with no glass, a kitchen with not enough chairs for all the kids, a sun-porch used as a bedroom, an un-painted house with no furnace, and no running water—these were just a few of the sights unveiled to the students.

ONLY MILK

The cupboards contained only milk for the baby. The rest survived on pancake and onion sandwiches.

The tutor-pupil relationship became secondary to that of friend-friend during discussions between the children and the students, who soon discovered all is not rosy at school for the welfare child.

Because the present school system is so oriented to financial class, school is frustrating. Although pre-schoolers appear to be bright and eager, the older children do not. After attending school, they become more achievement-oriented and more concerned with personal problems.

Realization of cultural limitations causes psychological withdrawal and development of a defeatist attitude. Very few advance past grade eight or nine. One sixteen year-old had failed four or five times.

FAILING PROCESS

"If a grade has not been failed before grade six, the failing process sets in soon after that," said Warren Larson, Arts 3, one of the volunteers.

He said a definite lack of understanding on the part of the teachers is a contributing factor to the failure rate. Most teachers come from typical middle class backgrounds and are used to working with the same class of people. Never bothering to acquaint themselves with the home situations of the children, they tend to overlook difficulties the kids encounter at school.

Although most are nice, honest kids, there are few jobs for them when they enter the labor market. Unable to qualify for employment because of cultural deprivation and lack of education, they drift from odd job to odd job working mostly as seasonal laborers. Males in the eighteen to twenty age group are seriously under-employed and are limited to living at home.

Because of advances in automation, within five years even the seasonal jobs will not be available for these people, Brian Watt, science 3, predicted. Thus, after dropping out of school, the only alternative left to the young adults is for them to drop into the welfare chain. Because of large families, one family will produce six or seven other families for the chain and the process is perpetuated.

Being victims of circumstances, the parents are not responsible for the situations their children are placed in, Larson and Watt stressed.

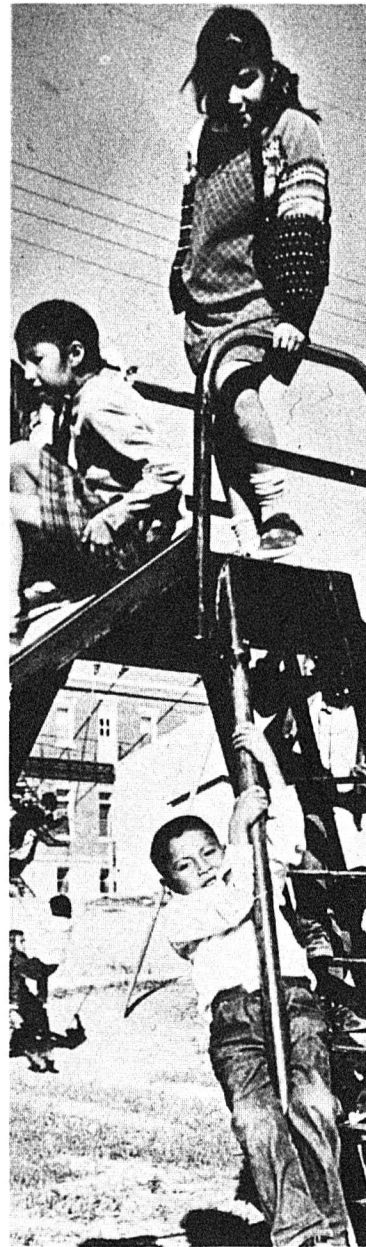
In most families there are at least eight or nine children. In one family, the mother was left to manage fourteen children alone.

In another, although the father had been self-sufficient by trapping and lumbering, at sixty-five poor health prevented him from working. It hurt his pride that he needed welfare to survive.

The migration from rural areas to the city necessitates welfare, Watt said. Then the first welfare generation contributes to the chain.

The older children are used to taking much responsibility, the volunteers found.

In one case, a nine year-old girl has the responsibility of doing all the ironing and looking after the younger children in a family of seven.



HEADED FOR FAILURE
... by grade six

Children are more withdrawn in mixed company of different economic and social classes. Thus volunteers concerned themselves mainly with "trying to get to know and be comfortable with the families," Larson said.

By exposing the children to unfamiliar parts of society, the children were given a taste of things that normal white Anglo-Saxon children regard as part of every-

day life. Fields trips, including visits to libraries and museums, were an important part of the social training relationships. The outings also enabled the mothers to do things in the house they did not normally have time to do.

The tutoring idea stemmed from a meeting of the Alberta Service Corps in fall 1967. From there, Brian Watt decided to do what he could to help a family in Edmonton. He and his partner visited a family in need of help suggested to them by Terry Garvin of the Community Development Branch. From them, the idea spread, and soon fifteen couples were helping fifteen families.

The idea of male-female pairs worked because it allowed for such variable situations within the homes as families with many little children, shy teen age girls, and the blind, Watt commented.

As students successfully initiated and carried out the tutoring system last year, Garvin would like to see "the university become more involved because it has something to offer."

"But you need something more than a person with just a solid academic background," Garvin explained.

NEW FRIENDS

The families made new friends, the children's attitudes to school improved; their outside contact was extended. Parents still phone the volunteers for help with personal problems.

In one case, four children had failed the previous school year, but none failed the year the volunteers were with them.

The parents expressed real love, concern, and interest in their offspring, Watt and Larson said.

"They are as high a quality of people you would find anywhere, it is the circumstances that limit them," Watt commented.

"The operation was successful because there is a desire by those who appear to need this kind of service for the service to continue," Garvin said.

And the service is continuing. Plans are under way to continue the project with a de-emphasis on homework. Instead, educational games will be played and children will learn without realizing they are learning.

All time offered is volunteered; there is no pay other than the rewards new friendships and experiences offer.

Anyone who genuinely feels they would like to "do their own thing" this way for the school year may contact Brian Watt at 488-3647.

Introducing to the U of A campus . .

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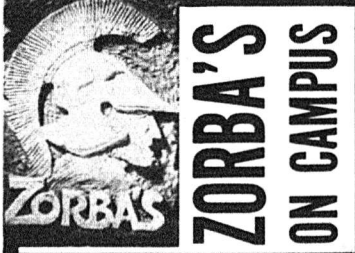
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