

FEBRUARY 11, 1972

Action corps

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the Union of New Brunswick Indians spoke to Action Corps here on campus. In his remarks, he suggested that "in order for an educational system to be valid it has to propagate a culture. This has not happened for the Indian". He went on to say that although the provincial schools were nominally integrated over a decade ago, no true integration took place - yes there was an integration of bodies, but neither an integration of cultural content in the curriculum nor a change in the orientation and attitude of teachers to accommodate Indian children took place.

In contrast to this idea of cultural integration in the schools, the Department of Indian affairs believes that the maintenance of a cultural identity could be achieved at the community and family level. They cite such examples as the Spanish, Indian, Scottish, and other minority groups who seem to have adequately retained their heritage by such a method. However there are more difficult problems confronting an Indian than a Frenchman or Scot with such an approach in Canadian Society. Consider the difficulties of a typical youngster fresh out of Indian cultural surroundings attending a whiteman's school for the first time. His language

difficulty, appearance, poverty and shyness make him especially vulnerable to rejection from his peers. His teachers are often incredulous about his incomprehension and there are insensitive to his problem of adjustment. Mr. Nicholas suggested that an integrated teachers program might better prepare the teachers for their contact with Indian students. Too often, teachers fail to put themselves outside the walls of the classroom to understand the Indian student. For example, Mr. Nicholas stated that in all his years at provincial high school, he could not once remember seeing one of his teachers on the reserve. Indian children often suffer an identity crisis that is usually most severe in grades 7, 8, and 9 and many kids drop out of school. There is a noticeable lack of Indian content in the curriculum, or when it is mentioned usually in a negative way. Why not elevate the role of the Indian in New Brunswick to the level of the loyalists (or at least the Acadians!)? Added to this, the Indian child often does not receive the reinforcement and encouragement from his home environment to continue his education that we - white middle-class bourgeois - receive. Are these problems posed by the Indians themselves beyond solution and if not, what can be done today?

There have been some good ideas in response to these problems, such as placing schools on reserves at least up to grade six. Also, some interesting programs focussing on university level minority cultural courses have been initiated at Dalhousie and McGill University (hey, about UNB, people?)

Here in Fredericton in 1969 some students got together and attempted to bring together a few of those problems and offer their help. This was the humble beginnings of Action Corps, but by no means the be all and end all for providing the solution to the problem of Indian education today. Working with the chief and Indian parents who were members of the Indian and Non-Indian Goodwill Association a program was set up whereby the students would travel to the reserve three nights a week and help the kids with their homework. Originally they were tutoring in the reserve school but have since switched into the children's homes.

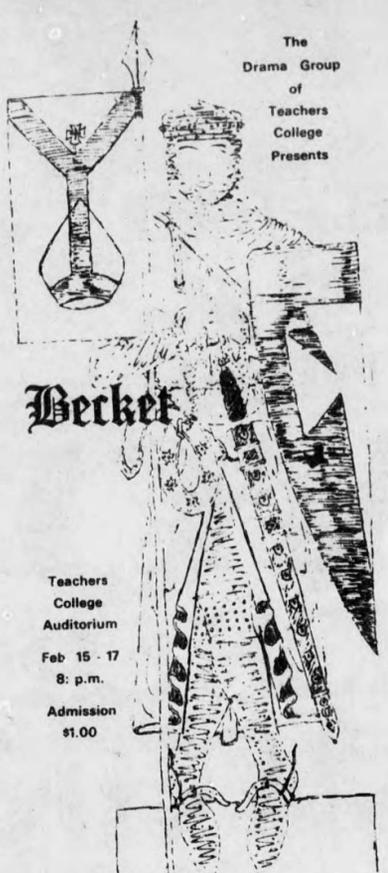
At present, Action Corps teaches in six homes to about twenty kids on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights. The philosophy of Action Corps states that "... the purpose of this association shall be to render social and/or educational service to the community at large. The nature of these services will be determined by the needs of the community." Just how successful is Action Corps?

Well, immediately, if marks are any criterion, last year there was a noticeable improvement in the grades of the children

tutored on the Kingsclear reserve. But volunteers only consider this a small part of what they are trying to achieve. On a longer range and of greater importance are all the benefits that can flow from the normal interaction between the volunteer and the Indian. For example, by simply listening to the children and asking about their culture, heritage and language, volunteers can aid in the build-up of the kids' pride in themselves as Indians. With the volunteers just being there and showing a genuine

interest in the Indian student, perhaps they can ease the strain of contact with the whiteman which he will encounter in the classroom and later on in life. It is also an excellent opportunity for the volunteer to emphasize the value and importance of an education and to think seriously about his life and career. Ideally, Action Corps ultimately hopes to work itself out of its role of tutoring the kids and to be replaced by the Indian children themselves.

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Changes in SE curriculum

By ANDY WATSON

Summer work experience may cut down on the laboratory requirements for surveying engineering students according to curriculum changes approved by senate on Feb. 8.

The curriculum committee report refers to the changes as "a variant of the co-operative education concept". The

program integrates the training offered by the department of surveying engineering with that offered by employers. In the new program, "each group will do what it does best; the de-

partment will teach theory and principles, the employers will provide on-the-job training and practice."

Students will be required to complete six months of employment and to submit two reports on their experiences.

Those who do not participate in this program will do special labs and complete an undergraduate thesis.

The report quotes Dr. Gottfried Konecny, head of the S.R. department: "At present most students get good experience during their summer employ-

ment and consequently find some of the laboratory exercises an unnecessary load."



Photo by Ken De Freitas

UNOWHO with UNOWHO doing UNOWHAT.

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