



Bulletin

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THE FUTURE AND INDIAN AND ESKIMO EDUCATION

The following passages are from a recent speech to the Canadian Association for Indian and Eskimo Education in Toronto by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Mr. Arthur Laing:

...The Indian and Eskimo people have learned the ways of the bush, of the North and of the wildlife upon which they depended - usually from within their family. Now that the modern world has broken into the ancient solitude, they require a different kind of training....

If they are to be given a reasonable choice of options, they must be so equipped that one of the choices they can make is to take advantage of the Canadian economy and make a living from it. By "taking advantage", I mean that they must be able to find employment at good wages, must be equipped with skills that industry requires, skills which will give them a reasonable assurance of earning a living....

I believe that our educational opportunities must also include a path by which young Indians and Eskimo people can take advantage of university education, but I am convinced that, for the overwhelming bulk of these young people, the principal need is to be equipped to make a living in the world of today....

In the North we face a situation which, while not unique in the world, has many factors not often encountered in a group. The problem of isolation and difficulty of transport..., the enormous gulf between the Eskimo culture and that of Canada as a whole, the failure of the ancient resources upon which the Eskimo settlements depended have combined to present to us a serious and difficult problem.

It is not surprising that the educational programme in the North reveals the tensions between

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the old ways and the new. A trouble-free synthesis is impossible. The basic consideration in setting out curriculum and teaching procedures in northern schools is "cultural inclusion" - a system still being evolved, which will offer the child a standard of education comparable to that in the South, while at the same time taking into account the northern heritage of the children....

The key to the teaching process is the teacher, and this is where the emphasis of northern education lies. The teacher has a special role, not only in having to make up for the gaps in the teaching material - which will be with us for some time to come - but in reaching out across the cultural gap to draw his pupils to him in the learning process.

TEACHER TRAINING

In the junior grades, the teaching-assistants have been of invaluable assistance to the teachers. They are the bridge between the two cultures. In order to enhance the utility of this bridge, we will be starting next autumn with a teacher-training programme at Fort Smith for Indian and Eskimo people....

This training will meet the standards of the Canadian school system as found in the South and will produce teachers equipped to deal in the native language of the children and with the historic, cultural and other differences which are very real and a part of northern life.

A similar training programme for teachers' aides in Indian schools is to be operated by both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Manitoba.