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INDIAN EDUCATION

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POLICY & PROGRESS

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R.M. Hall  
Education Officer, Education Branch  
Department of Indian Affairs  
and Northern Development  
Ottawa, Canada

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Presented at the Convention of the Alberta Indian Education Association, Lethbridge, Alberta, October 9 & 10, 1975.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are all aware that the pattern of Indian education is changing very rapidly and the process is continuing almost unabated.

For several years now, the Indian people have expressed concern about and interest in the education of their children. These concerns resulted in the Indian people nationally expressing themselves through their national organization, the National Indian Brotherhood in the policy statement on education entitled, "Indian Control of Indian Education", which was presented to the Minister on December 21, 1972.

It is a very fine document as it lays down clearly and concisely the Indian point of view on almost all phases of education.

It is not necessary for us to spend too much time on the details of the paper as you are all aware of its contents, but from time to time I will be referring to it just to refresh our memories on what was said. Speaking on the Indian philosophy of education it says, "In Indian tradition each adult is personally responsible for each child to see that he learns all he needs to know in order to live a good life". Applying this basic concept to modern times, the policy

says:

- "- Pride encourages us to recognize and use our talents as well as to master the skills needed to make a living.
- Understanding our fellowmen will enable us to meet other Canadians on an equal footing, respecting cultural differences while pooling resources for the common good.
- Living in harmony with nature will insure preservation of the balance between man and his environment which is necessary for the future of our planet as well as for fostering the climate in which Indian Wisdom has always flourished."

These are worthy and high ideals for any educational system.

As was noted earlier, there is great emphasis on the responsibility of the parents and in the policy statement this is defined to mean that, "Indian parents must have control of education with the responsibility of setting goals".

Then it outlines, "the four areas which require attention and improvement, i.e. responsibility, programs, teachers and facilities".

It is pointed out very clearly that responsibility means control, control over the budget, type of school facility, the hiring of teachers, curriculum development, etc. When the children attend a provincial school control means that "laws will

make possible responsible representation and full participation".

It is in the area of curriculum that we find the greatest emphasis. We will not take time to go over all the policy regarding curriculum, but in essence it says, "the Indian parents must develop a program which will maintain balance and relevancy between academic/skill subjects and Indian cultural subjects".

Since you people are mainly teachers, I can assume that you are very familiar with the policy on teachers but because it concerns you let us briefly review what is suggested.

"It is evident that the Federal Government must take the initiative in providing opportunities for Indian people to train as teachers and counsellors".

and further concerning non-Indian teachers:

"During initial training programs there should be compulsory courses in inter-cultural education, native languages and teaching English as a second language", and concerning paraprofessionals: "More Indian teacher-aides and more Indian counsellor-aides are urgently needed", and "It should be the aim of the paraprofessional to encourage young people to continue their commitment to Indian education".

The policy also deals with facilities and services which we will not discuss at this time.

The final section of the policy deals with integration and the concluding paragraph says:

"The success of integration is not the responsibility of Indians alone. Non-Indians must be ready to recognize the value of another way of life; to learn about Indian history; customs and language and to modify, if necessary, some of their own ideas and practices."

Having reviewed the Indian policy, I would like to review the Minister's reply to the presentation. This, of course, is the basis of our present educational policy.

On February 2, 1973, the Minister, the Honourable Jean Chrétien, sent a letter to Mr. Manuel, the President of the National Indian Brotherhood, which was his reply to the policy paper, "Indian Control of Indian Education". This will be the crux of much of what we will be dealing with later. Because of its importance, I believe it would be some benefit to advise you of its contents. The letter says in part:

"Dear Mr. Manuel:

In your letter to me of January 26, 1973 you requested my approval of your policy paper 'Indian Control of Indian Education' and a commitment from me that my Department provide the educational services defined in your paper.

I liked the paper and its proposals and I agree completely with the paper's basic position of Indian parental responsibility and local control in education in partnership with the Federal Government. With the new authorities for transferring control of education to Band Councils, officials of my Department are ready to work out procedures for effective transfer including band training if required.

The paper is a significant milestone in the development of Indian education in Canada. I wish to assure you that I and my Department are fully committed to realizing the educational goals for the Indian people which are set forth in the policy proposals. In consultation and co-operation with the National Indian Brotherhood, the provincial Indian organizations and Band Councils, my Department can begin immediately to effect the desired educational changes for the Indian people on reserves and Crown land.

Your desire to await my official recognition of your paper before it is publicly released is understood and appreciated. I extend to you and the National Indian

Brotherhood an invitation to participate in meetings with the staff of my Department to work out suitable means for implementing the recommendations expressed in your paper

Yours sincerely,

Original signed by  
Jean Chrétien

Jean Chrétien.

This established a basis for discussion and how to implement the recommendations.

The June 1973 issue of Indian Education gives a lengthy report on what happened as a follow-up to the above. In it is a report of a statement on Indian education as presented to the Minister at the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Indian Affairs and Northern Development under the dateline of May 24, 1973.

We will not take time to deal with the full report as I am sure many of you read it and it is easily available for the asking. I will quote only the sections which would appear the most significant to teachers.

"We want to see native people making their own decisions and becoming fully involved in education. I know that when parents are closely and deeply involved with schools, the children get more support for their educational endeavours. That kind of two-way communication makes education more useful and more effective. Only when the people are involved can the classroom reflect the culture of the students. Only when culture is taken fully into account, can education be fully rewarding".

*Analysis*

As a result of the policy adopted by the Department in accordance with the Indian policy, the following are the directions in which action would be taken. I will not attempt to give these in detail but only to indicate the intent and substance.

- "1. The Department will do everything possible to involve native people in school management and administration.
2. There will be no transfer of the federal education program to a provincial system without the clear consent of the Indian people.
3. The Native Cultural/Educational Centres Program was announced in June, 1972. This program provides for financial grants in response to project proposals initiated by native people.
4. Special efforts are underway to adopt curriculum to Indian needs and to enrich school programs with Indian content.
5. At the request of Indian bands and organizations, native language instruction is being provided in an increasing number of schools both federal & provincial."

We have reviewed the policies of the Indian people as well as the policies of the Department. These have become the basis for action.

It is now two years since these pronouncements were made so let us look at the third step in your theme for this convention-progress.



Perhaps the most significant and spectacular item is the actual takeover by the bands. This takeover varies from complete takeover of the educational system to small beginnings such as the takeover of one program.

There are about six schools which are now under complete control of Indian bands. It appears, and wisely so, that the majority of bands prefer the go slow approach to takeover and they are feeling their way, e.g. taking over only programs that they feel that they can operate successfully. The trend seems to be that as the bands obtain more experience and more expertise in management they are prepared to accept more and more programs.

I do not wish to burden you with a great many statistics, but a few illustrations should help us to see what has happened to date. We should remember that most of this progress has been made in the short period of two years.

We now have a total of 505 bands operating one or more of the educational programs. This means that they now control \$10,600,000 of educational funds.

What are some of the most frequent programs to be taken over? The most common is school committees. Some 176 bands now operate them completely. This

is not surprising as it was through school committees that the Indian people first became directly involved in education. School committees were the first form of local school board. By and large, school committees have been successful and they certainly were the vanguard in the establishment of Indian control of Indian education. Another area which the people moved into early was library services. This is understandable because the purpose of this takeover was to make available the combined library facilities of the school and the community to all of the people of the community. Today, 185 bands operate such a service. A program which came under local control was transportation. This gave the people an opportunity to enter into business for themselves as well as supplying employment to band members. Now, 121 bands operate the entire school bussing program. In addition, there are several more bus operations by individual members working through contracts with the Department.

One of the fastest growing band operations is the control of instruction or a part of it. There are now 146 bands operating some or all of the instructional budget. This is particularly true in the hiring of teacher-aides, language teachers, etc. The budget in this area under band control is over \$2 million dollars.

There is not one section of our educational budget that is not now operated by at least a few bands. Other popular programs that are band operated are guidance, student allowances, adult education and so on.

If anyone is interested in the statistics of any particular program, feel free to ask during the questioning period and I can supply the statistical data for the program in question.

The need for curriculum development was clearly recognized in 1973 with a special budget of \$905,000. The development of curriculum was dominated by Indian input which is as it should be. I believe that the development of curriculum is one of the most difficult aspects of an educational system, and I am pleased to note that the next speaker has knowledge in this area and it is hoped that he will devote some of his time to this topic in the hope that we will all gain in knowledge of this subject.

It is essential that the people themselves have a major input into curriculum and the interest shown by them indicates that they accept this responsibility.

We now have about 60 innovative programs and large quantities of curriculum material such as readers in the native language, readers highly orientated to the Indian

way of life and used in teaching English as a second language, etc.

The development of curriculum is studied by on-reserve curriculum committees.

At the present time there are about 130 curriculum committees.

Because of the awakening for curriculum change, we find most of the provincial Departments of Education involved in developing culturally enriched curricula for native students.

One of the most interesting changes which has come about in the field of curriculum is the introduction and development of native languages into the classroom. Judging from the requests from the band councils for the teaching of the native language, there is a real and far-flung concern that the native language is in danger of being lost as it was noted that too few of the children could speak the language fluently.

When the opportunity came to introduce the native language into the classroom, there was a great lack of teachers and teaching materials.

In many areas it was discovered that the main source of the native language was the older people of the reserve and in many instances these people were brought into the school system to teach the language. It gave the older people a sense

of satisfaction and achievement to know that they were making a very worthwhile contribution to the education of the young as well as serving the people by assuring that the language was being preserved. At the same time, other people were busy preparing the written word, in many cases this was almost extinct, so that today we have primary readers in the native language.

Today, most provincial school systems and universities acknowledge the native language as meeting the language requirement of the school and university curriculum.

Never before has the climate been so promising for the expansion of bilingual-bicultural programs for our native peoples, and I believe that at the present time people working in all sectors of native education are capitalizing on current conditions and social attitudes to forge ahead with these programs.

The stated aims of our native language programs, therefore, are to:

- encourage the development of the native language and to facilitate the move from a native language to the English or French language
- develop a positive attitude toward the native language and ~~either~~ or both of the two official languages
- encourage the development of basic educational skills, concepts and processes, first in the native language and later in English or French

- develop a positive attitude toward the native language and either/or both of the two official languages
- encourage the development of basic educational skills, concepts and processes, first in the native language and later in English or French
- develop a sequential program of teaching English or French as a second language.
- stimulate interest in school and a desire for further education.

Two types of language programs are being offered in some schools. In the first, the mother tongue of the majority of the children entering the school is used as the medium of instruction for all subjects.

In the second, the mother tongue is taught as a subject of instruction from kindergarten through to the completion of high school.

A measure of the rate of expansion of the native language program in Canada is the fact that from a single course in 1969-70 we now have 174 federal schools and 34 provincial schools offering programs in a total of 23 different native languages.

A major problem is staffing. Much of the instruction is done by teacher-aides and native language instructors. It is hoped that many of these people will become fully qualified teachers in the future so that the program can be assured of continuity and progress.

At present, there is a major effort underway to increase greatly the number of native administrators and classroom teachers. While the proportion of native people working in all aspects of native education is 34%, if we look at the number of principals and teachers, we find that only 10% of these are native people.

This lack is presently being partially compensated for by the employment of 543 native teacher-aides who operate mainly in the junior grades. In addition, 19 native language instructors are employed.

Current needs have necessitated the devising of special programs to increase the number of native teachers at a faster rate. These programs have certain important common elements. They stress:

- 1) standards of student performance equivalent to regular programs
- 2) individualizing programs
- 3) strongly supportive counselling service
- 4) heavy reliance on nurturing professional relationships between the students and their practice teacher-mentors
- 5) the minimizing of culture alienation

The Province of Ontario introduced a plan a year ago for the training of native student teachers. Without going into detail, it consisted of a combination of

formal instruction during the summer months and training on the job during the remainder of the year. This process continued over a three year period. The program started with 96 students. This summer was the second summer of training and 88 of them returned for further training. They will, if they complete another year, become fully qualified teachers.

Along with the training of native teachers, there has been an increased effort to train non-Indian teachers to become more knowledgeable of Indians so that they will be better teachers of Indian students.

Almost all universities now offer courses in Indian education and some universities have programs which make it possible for students to take a major in Indian education. Often, native people are involved in the instruction of these students.

The Department has a definite policy that all teachers in their employ have some training in Indian culture and cross-cultural instruction.

It is in the area of paraprofessionals that the greatest increase in educational staff has occurred and it is also in this area that the greatest number of native people are employed. These now total nearly 1500 people.



It is also in this area that many of our present problems have arisen, particularly the problems of salaries and of training to upgrade the paraprofessional to professional status.

The problem of salary arises because not all paraprofessionals can be fitted into a federal salary grid. The majority of them can, as they are employees in the student residences and they fall into the category of WP's and MSP's. This works fine as long as the employees are Federal civil servants but now there are many who are hired by either school boards or bands. In general, an attempt is made to pay these people a comparable salary, but there is no binding salary grid that assures them a salary with increments and the other elements of security that all workers desire.

Another area of concern is the qualifying of some employees to a professional level without taking the usual professional training that those who are already qualified have to take. These people are frequently trained by special courses and programs that are established in colleges and universities, but a new dimension has been added and that is the training of such people by agencies other than those usually associated with such training.

The professionally qualified people feel that it is a watering down of their profession to allow people to enter into the profession without the traditional training requirements and standards.

The main group in these categories are counsellors, classroom teachers and language teachers.

There has been much negotiating taking place to solve this new and unique problem, but there are several unresolved situations at present.

Coming back to the initial discussion on paraprofessionals, we find that of the 1500 paraprofessionals in education, the largest group, are employees of the Department, but these are not a majority.

There are 600 employed by the Department, about 300 employed by school boards and about 300 employed by bands.

The student resident employees account for about 555 such employees. This program, of course, has been in existence for a long time but the number of Indian people employed has constantly increased.

The newer programs are the social counsellors and their counterparts in B.C. the home school co-ordinators. These, along with the counsellor technicians, which appears to be a third name for nearly the same thing, total in all 231 employees. These people have made a tremendous contribution to the educational program. Most of them are native people and they can communicate with the students and the parents as well as the schools, frequently, more effectively than can non-Indian people. The program has expanded so fast that it has been difficult to control without inhibiting it which we do not wish to do.

The long term problem is to train these people to full counsellor status. It is a matter of training those already on the job as well as new entries which are much easier to train as they can be trained before they enter the work force.

Another large category of paraprofessionals is the teacher-aides. They now number 556, including the part-time and the number is split almost evenly between

Federally employed and band employed. Basically, these are Indian people who act as aides right within the classroom and they have been very effective because they understand the students, their language, their customs and their feelings.

Many of them are becoming very adept at imparting knowledge (teaching if you like)

There is concern from various groups that these people are a threat to teacher standards. There is also concern from the other side that these people should be receiving more salary, perhaps as much as a teacher.

The Department encourages the use of teacher-aides in classrooms but must have some regulations as to the number employed in relationship to the number of students enrolled. The second long term objective of the Department is to have all the teacher-aides who wish to do so become professionally trained qualified teachers. The Department puts forth large sums of money in the training program for this purpose.

One of the most interesting programs in Indian education today is the native language instruction. Because of lack of teachers with the knowledge, paraprofessionals had to be recruited to teach the language. We now have some 40 native language instructors. The instructors have very definite objectives regarding tenure and salary which must still be resolved. These people are employed by the Department (14), by the school boards (8), and by the bands (15). This, of course, complicates the problem of a uniform agreement.

We all agree that it is very desirable to have the paraprofessionals in our education system. It is also agreed that it is very desirable to find a

permanent place for such people and an on-going program to increase their numbers and to obtain a greater percentage of qualified people so that the paraprofessional, given time, will become a professional but whose talents so badly required now, can be utilized when training is carried out. It is largely agreed that these people desire special consideration because of their unique qualities and experience that do not fit into the normal training programs. The Department is prepared to make allowance for these, as are most training institutions. This is done by granting them mature student status which allows them to enter university without the usual prerequisites.

The final program I would like to discuss is the newest and perhaps the most interesting - The Native Cultural Education Centres Program.

The Indian people have felt for a long time that their culture was being threatened and that they themselves must act to preserve it. This received the full support of the Department and a five year plan was embarked upon.

The program offers native peoples the opportunity to plan, organize and direct activities of their own. These activities have no institutional form in the sense we understand for the traditional school system. In fact, they are evolving outside the formal and regular school system.

The Native Cultural Educational Centres are:

- experimental, educational environments based on native cultures;
- planned, developed and managed by native peoples;
- primarily for adults and pre-school children;
- a focal point for cultural, education activities and program emphasizing native relevancy over the usual educational process;
- examples of new approaches to education to be adapted by school systems or educators when teaching native people.

The program was first approved in principle by the Cabinet in July 1971. It was originally co-funded by the Secretary of State and our Department. In June 1972 the first five centres were given financial assistance. In 1974 the program was transferred to our Department.

Today, there are about 50 centres operating. These vary from being almost provincial wide to those embracing a single band. The width and depth of programming varies from arts and crafts only to approaching college status.

It is a program that allows more native input, than any other program in the Department. This year, the program will probably reach 5 or 6 million

dollars. Funding is based on a per capita grant in an effort to establish equality of opportunity.

The program is nearing the end of the fifth year and an evaluation and projection is necessary to establish the program on a permanent basis. This will be done by the Department with help from the Indian people.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that this is a review of the policies and programs of the Department. It has not been possible to cover in detail all facets. However, perhaps some specifics could be discussed during the question period.

In conclusion, the Department feels that the Indian people can be justly proud of their achievement to date in attempting to reach their ultimate goal - control of education. The task is far from over but the indications are that the program will continue in an orderly and responsible manner culminating in a system that is efficient and acceptable to all.

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