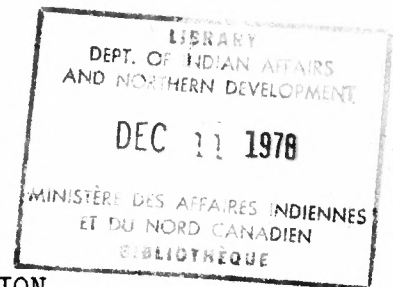


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RECOMMENDATIONS ON QUEBEC INDIAN
EDUCATION

A.R. Jolicoeur

Research and Consultant Services Division
Education Branch October 1973



RECOMMENDATIONS ON QUEBEC INDIAN EDUCATION

BY

A. R. JOLICOEUR

A former Quebec Regional Superintendent of Education of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, A. R. Jolicoeur, provided to the Department a report on native education. The attached material is, with minor editing, the recommendations of the report.

The recommendations and viewpoints expressed in the report are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by the Department.

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1. Nutrition and Health

The writer develops the theme that all persons have equal rights to education. However, children of the poor, including Indians and Inuit, cannot exercise these rights because malnutrition and other deficiencies and neglects diminish the child's potential by age four. A combined effort on behalf of Indian Affairs and health officials is needed. He recommends:

- That steps be taken in order to eliminate the fragmentation of nutrition programmes;
- That to attain this objective, agreements be reached between the Department of Health and the Department of Indian Affairs in order to set up efficient and unified working mechanisms;
- That on the reserves, a nutrition expert, represent the government , and work with the families as regards nutrition matters;
- That the duties of this employee be basically the same as those of the Montreal Diet Dispensary;
- That the Social Welfare Branch authorize the supplementary food required;
- That cases requiring medical care be referred to health professionals;

- That the ultimate objective to be attained always remains Indian and Inuit independence and their taking of their own affairs and future in their own hands.

2. Day Care Centres

The writer thinks that the setting up of nurseries on underprivileged reserves is of primary importance in order to ensure maximum intellectual potential development among young children and to better prepare them for school. With respect to the setting up of nurseries on reserves he recommends the following steps and standards:

- Give parents all the information concerning the situation of their children and also inform them of the work accomplished elsewhere by the day care centre system. This information could be given through adult courses within the framework of the community-school.
- Upon the parents' request, the organization of the nurseries could then be looked into. Participation of the Band Council and of parents is essential to the success of the undertaking.
- A committee made of parents and a social worker could, after having studied the cases, determine the types of nurseries which best meet the community's particular needs.
- The administrators' first concern would be to ensure the availability of a highly qualified and competent staff.
- With respect to the location of the nurseries, the standards set by the Ontario Department of Community and Social Services should be met.

- The Ontario standards should also be met as regards equipment and the number of children for each technician.
- It would also be valuable to follow the recommendations of the Child Welfare League of America Standard for Day Care Service.
- In order to avoid fragmentation of services at the level of the population, the nurseries should function within the framework of the community-school.

3. The Community School

A major recommendation refers to the adoption of a "community school" approach to education. The writer uses as his model the Flint Michigan system and sees as main emphases the following perspectives:

- Bring parents near to the school and have the school become an institution that is really integrated into the community.
- Present a common front in the fight against poverty from every angle.
- Avoid fragmentation of programmes.
- Enable the population and the individuals to identify, on their own, their problems and their needs, their objectives and the programmes which best meet their requirements.
- Combat the state of dependence by making it possible to solve the greatest number of problems through the use of local resources and talent.

- Have the teachers get out of their isolation in the classroom and enable them to accomplish valid work, by reaching the families which are the primary source of learning problems in school.
- Enable the school to truly play its role; to radiate its influence over the entire community and give knowledge not only to children but to the entire population. The knowledge given in the school will be as varied as the needs of the community. Population as well as individuals wish to know the whole truth as regards their situation. They want to know their history and rediscover their fundamental values. Also, in order to reassert themselves, to set their own objectives and determine the programmes that suit them, they must know what their rights and privileges are, what the economic resources of the reserve and region are, what kind of help they can receive (technical and financial) and what kind of obstacles hinder their development such as malnutrition, ill health, inadequate and unsanitary lodgings, inactivity, alcoholism, lack of sleep, etc...
- In one word, the community-school brings forth no ready-made programme or solution; it creates instead an atmosphere that is propitious to the development of collective and individual awareness and to action. It respects people's human dignity by enabling them to make enlightened decisions concerning their present state and to set the objectives to be reached.

4. Community School Personnel

The writer makes a number of recommendations regarding the successful operation of community schools.

- It would be unthinkable to consider the setting up of one or more community schools without making sure beforehand that competent, motivated and well-trained personnel are available.
- Personnel must be chosen with care. Adventurers would be eliminated as well as people seeking job security; preference would be given to competent candidates who are strongly motivated to work with children and parents.

4. (a) Training and Personnel

The personnel training programme should include the following points:

- Knowledge of the child's psychic reality, of the etiological factors that make him psychologically different.
- Knowledge of the reality of the child's family, social, economic, psycho-social and cultural environment; that is, to have an overall view of the on-the-spot socio-academic environment.
- Start off from this reality utilizing educational means adapted to the child's development and socio-cultural mentality. Have the child maximize his capabilities through a positive image of himself and of the school so that he may participate in a dynamic way in today's and tomorrow's society.
- Know the history of the Indians and of the Inuit as well as their contributions to today's civilization in order to draw from past and present the elements that are likely to revive their fundamental values and rouse respect for their culture.

- Have some knowledge of group therapy and be able to work with parents or other persons involved in the community's development.
- Know the Department's organization, objectives and available resources.

4. (b) The Social Educator

The social educator is the only new member to be added to the personnel already on hand in the schools. His work is essential to the functioning of a community school. He must be chosen carefully and in view of his personal qualities, his specialized training, his drive and his knowledge of the environment. He and the principal make up the community school's basic team. The social educator must have competence recognized by a university that gives courses in Community Education or at least specialized training given by an organization like the Flint Mott Program.

4. (c) The Principal

In the text the writer emphasizes the principal's importance. He also describes his duties and proposes a training programme in order to ensure the proper functioning and the efficiency of the community school.

5. The Programming Committee

In each region, there should exist a well-organized and well-established programming committee having the following duties:

- (a) Ensure the authenticity and the efficiency of the methods and programmes applied in the schools, in the community schools in particular, and evaluate the progressive results among the entire population.

Programmes, even those believed to be the best, should not have a permanent nature; instead they should evolve continually, and remain sufficiently flexible to be able to meet the new needs of the community and the various aspirations of groups and individuals. Programmes are authentic when they correspond to true needs, as expressed by the parents themselves, in order to attain particular objectives.

(b) Provide efficient professional assistance in the development of programmes as well as the necessary teaching material. Several reserves are remote. Even when the school's personnel is competent, it cannot gather the required teaching material or entirely develop the programmes adapted to the needs of the community. This requires time and research while the community school's educators are involved in their work.

(c) Evaluate new initiatives. Teachers are often accused of being given up to routine and of never leaving the beaten path. This is due to lack of expertise. To innovate, one must truly know one's business and have an overall view of persons and things, which implies good professional training.

There are, however, experienced educators who have introduced new teaching methods and who have had good results but who did not remain with the Department. It will be up to the programming committee to find innovating teachers, to evaluate their methods, to guide and encourage them.

It is probable that certain new methods make a valid contribution to pedagogy. These methods should be publicized and their application should be recommended so that as many children as possible can benefit from their use.

(d) Set up a personnel training programme. The programming committee, because of its particular duties, knows the philosophy of the various programmes being used on the reserves. It is also aware of their complexity and their practical requirements. More than anyone else, the programming committee is able to establish the level of competence and efficiency of the personnel in charge of the application of programmes and to recommend training courses either for new teachers or for those who will take over such roles as principals and social educators. In order to ensure continuity of native development work, training courses for more competent teachers wishing to become principals or social educators should be established and an eligibility list should be developed. This procedure could create sound competition among the personnel and could also increase the level of competence of teachers.

(e) Keep well informed of progress in the field of education sciences and have more research done if necessary. The sciences of education are constantly evolving. It is said that knowledge is renewed every ten years in this age of technology. Education professionals who have become school administrators can spend limited time studying. They are busy with the administrative side of their work. They say they are cut off from their profession.

They are therefore not able to evaluate various ideas or teaching concepts that are put forward by recognized educators and often by lay men. Research will frequently be required to evaluate these proposed procedures or ideas.

(f) It is up to the programming committee to keep school administrators informed of the latest pedagogical developments. Several discoveries that have been made in recent years have transformed the education sciences. Greater importance is given to preschool education and to the development of the child's intellectual potential before the age of four.

(g) The programming committee will also have to establish contact with other committees throughout Canada and elsewhere. To work in isolation is to deprive oneself of the experience of others and it is also to deprive others of one's own knowledge. The losers of such isolation are the children.

6. Composition of the Programming Committee

The programming committee should be made up of experts in different fields of education sciences. The quality of the professional training of the members of this committee is important. We would be repeating errors of the past if we relied too often on experts from outside the Department and if we applied measures that were not appropriate to or integrated into general development action. There should be experts in whom we have confidence inside the Department and they should have appropriate salaries.

The programming committee should exist within the provincial Department of Education. It would then be easier for it to reach the many Indian and Inuit students attending provincial schools as well as children in federal schools.

To be efficient, however, the programming committee must listen to what the people have to say. It should not impose its views or its programmes since the latter are determined by the people themselves in order to meet precise needs. The community must know the whole truth on what concerns it; it will then be able to set its objectives and define its needs.

The effectiveness of the programming committee depends on its liaison with the community-school; this implies unity in its action and a great deal of flexibility at the level of decisions and attitudes. Unity of action is impossible if this action is fragmented and becomes confused with that of various Branches. One loses contact with the Indians themselves and so one makes decisions for them without considering their real needs. Until the provincial organization becomes truly effective, the Department of Indian Affairs must not hesitate. It must set up a programming committee that is to support the action of the community-schools and stimulate the positive work that is to be carried out on all the reserves.

7. Role of the Economic Development Section

The Indians and Inuit must know all the facts about what concerns them. They need this knowledge to be able to establish their

objectives, determine their needs, and define the programmes necessary to their development. Knowledge of the economic resources of the reserve and of the region is essential if the Indians are to become aware of their situation. It is also essential to the defining of objectives and it will help in the establishing of education programmes that are truly appropriate to the needs of the community and of the individuals.

In schools, the economic resources of different countries are taught quite naturally. Shouldn't the resources of one's region be taught first? Perhaps some teachers lack background to give lessons in the economic resources of the reserve or of the region. They may lack teaching material or references on the matter and they may not be qualified to create such a programme on their own. With respect to this matter, the duties of the economic development section should be the following:

- Prepare a complete inventory of all the natural resources and economic possibilities of each reserve and their region.
- Include in these reports the circumstances liable to affect the present living conditions of the communities such as: job opportunities, categories of jobs available, working conditions, possible participation, salaries and probable income, etc.
- Submit data to the programming committee in order that it make a pedagogical presentation of it that is adapted to adult and student levels on the reserves concerned.

8. The Teaching of Fundamental Values

The authentic culture of a people cannot exist at the same time as the "culture of poverty". The Indians of yesteryear were naturally proud and independent. They were brave and felt responsible for the life and well-being of their family and group. There were no rich and no poor among them. They willingly shared with others knowing that one day they would receive. They respected the elderly and took the advice of the wise. Moreover, they respected the freedom of each individual and felt that it was the duty of each to find the best means to accomplish the best deeds.

To live in poverty and dependence, on the other hand, is to lose one's pride. It is to lose one's self-esteem, to devalue oneself in the eyes of one's children and of the group. Dependence generates submissiveness. Bravery no longer exists. One no longer faces up to danger and runs away from difficulties. The workman quits his job and the student drops out of school. Welfare allowances are the essential element of survival. One learns to manage with very little and not to think about tomorrow. The future offers no hope. One lives in the midst of deprivations and social problems of all sorts. Individuals no longer have the resources required to meet their primary needs such as food, clothing and lodging. Children are diminished physically and intellectually.

Those who look at these people from far away will think that the people refuse to work because they are lazy and apathetic. This is not the case. Dependence, malnutrition and privations have

undermined their physical qualities and weakened their moral values.

They have become part of the chain of poverty which will only be broken if it is attacked from every angle at the same time:

nutrition programmes, day-care centres, community-schools, collective awareness and revival of the authentic or traditional values.

According to experts, the fundamental values still exist at the sub-conscious level of the individuals. They must be revived so that they may again motivate the people. This can be done by the programming committee preparing programmes which are adapted to the children and the adults and which contain the essential principles for the teaching of fundamental values. The committee will also have to make sure that the teachers and particularly the principal and the social educator are perfectly aware of the nature of the fundamental values and of the pedagogical methods used (see "Modern Indian Psychology" by John H. Bryde). Now and then, the committee will have to evaluate progress made and suggest changes if need be. The Indians and the Inuit themselves will have to participate in the adaptation of the programme to their community.

9. The Teaching of History

The teaching of history must provide the Indians and Inuit with reasons for being proud of their race; it must also give non-Indians reasons for respecting and appreciating Indians and Inuit. For these same reasons, the contributions of the Indians to today's civilization will be included in the programme. Thus, the Indian

will realize with pride that he is at home not only on the reserve, but throughout the entire country.

Discrimination seems to exist at every level of society. This is due to the way history is taught. It is not taught properly because history books are discriminatory and lack objectivity. It is therefore the entire population that is ill informed and this causes discrimination and fosters all sorts of stereotypes as regards the natives.

In view of the fact that the Department is responsible for Indian and Inuit education, it must not remain inactive in the face of this situation. It must react quickly and take effective measures in order to improve school manuals, history books and teaching of history. This problem goes beyond particular provincial jurisdictions and should be dealt with at the national level.

- As an immediate measure, we recommend the hiring of a person at Headquarters who will be in charge of the teaching of history. His qualifications and duties have been enumerated in the main body of the study.
- The regional programming committee will need to provide teaching material and guides as regards the history of Indians and Inuit in general and the history of reserves in particular. It will be remembered that the teaching of history must serve as a basis to the teaching of fundamental values.

10. The Use of Tests

In some places in the past inappropriate use was made of tests. In provincial and federal schools unqualified persons gave psychometric tests and analysed the results without being aware of the cultural and experiential factors that could affect the results of the tests. We believe that the tests are useful and necessary in certain cases. It would be preferable to adopt a policy similar to that given in the Quebec Corporation of Guidance Officers Act, which is to hand over these instruments of psychic measurement to qualified persons only. Psychologists and guidance officers would be authorized to use these tests. It would also be wise to hand over the administration of tests to specialists in Indian and Inuit education. Indian and Inuit education brings up problems of adaptation. The services of psychologists are necessary since problems of adaptation concern psychology more than any other human science. The use of psychometric tests appears to be necessary in order to be fair with the children, to enlighten the teachers and to provide the elements essential to the orientation of students.

11. Gifted Children

It is now known that some pedagogically retarded children are in fact "too intelligent" for the rhythm of learning of a normal class. They become bored, develop attitudes of inattention and laziness and very quickly lose all interest in studying. Minority groups, more than any others, cannot afford to lose members who may one day become their leadership. Gifted students should be brought to the attention of the education psychologist. In agreement with the school and the

administrators, advanced programmes could be created for these students to enable them to develop at their own rhythm throughout their school year.

12. School Integration

Studies have proven that Indian or Inuit children can draw many benefits from attendance at public schools. The various groups thus have the opportunity to know each other better and to appreciate each other. It is known that the knowledge non-Indians acquire of Indians through school books or movies helps spread many stereotypes. We have therefore perpetuated the existence of a theoretical and folkloric Indian who has never existed and who bears no resemblances to today's Indian or Inuit.

Integration reproduces, at the level of the school, demographical and social conditions with which native students will be faced later on in life. Values acquired through contacts with other groups cannot be found in books, movies or even in systematic teaching on reserves. We could say that school integration provides experiences necessary to the development of realistic attitudes. Knowing others helps one to understand oneself better. This awareness of oneself and of others seems to constitute a valuable asset even for those students who will choose to earn their living on a reserve.

School integration can provide all these advantages and many more (school organization, options, specialization, etc..) if it is carried out under normal conditions. It would be unrealistic to

believe that integration could correct all problems in education. The transfer of schools to the provinces does not constitute in itself an element of progress. The Metis of Western Canada as well as the underprivileged parents of our large cities have been sending their children to provincial schools for a long time. Their children do not succeed any better in school than those of Indians and Inuit whose socio-economic level hinders their development.

The integration in schools of groups of children of different racial origins will be obviously advantageous to each group if the children have similar socio-economic backgrounds. It seems that the integration of groups of poor children with groups of children from prosperous families has few positive results. In this case, it would appear that the underprivileged children quickly realize that they cannot compete with the other pupils. Gradually, they develop a negative feeling towards themselves and their race. School results as well as the adaptation of the children to the social environment will surely be affected. Instead of advocating massive integration of children from certain disadvantaged reserves with children from prosperous families, would it not be preferable to encourage, on a more selective basis, attendance at certain public schools? The choosing of the best prepared children could be carried out by a committee made up of the principal, the teachers concerned and the school psychologist.

We feel it necessary to undertake further studies in order to determine certain standards which could better guide administrators and parents with respect to decisions they must make concerning the placement of children in schools off the reserves. School integration at all levels as well as successful studies will bring up serious administrative problems as long as the fundamental causes of school failures remain, that is, all that hinders the child's normal development from birth to the age of four. The child who is unable to benefit from the advantages of school integration will probably be unable to become part of the labour force later on.

- Public schools that accommodate a sufficient number of native students, particularly those schools whose construction was subsidized by the Department of Indian Affairs, should develop an internal atmosphere that is acceptable to the parents as well as to the Indian and non-Indian students. Among the many means that could be used to develop their atmosphere we suggest the following:

1. Renewal in the teaching of history.
2. Programmes of a cultural nature.
3. Offer an Indian language as an option at the secondary and college levels.
4. Appear inviting to parents as well as to Indian and non-Indian students. For example in the Flint area, where Blacks and Whites are equally accepted, the walls of the entrance halls, of the administrators' offices and of the classrooms are decorated

with pictures depicting elements of the White as well as the Black culture.

5. Indian and Inuit teachers and administrators must be found for these public schools. Several Indian educators now refuse to work off reserves for fiscal reasons. This situation should be the object of a special study in view of the seriousness of the problem.
6. How can parents be brought into closer contact with public schools? To answer this question properly, it will be necessary to take many factors into consideration such as: remoteness, the socio-economic level of the reserve, etc... In most cases, however, we feel it is necessary to have the school board hire an educator of Indian origin. The employees would have the same duties as the Home-School co-ordinators of British Columbia.