

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE IN INDIAN EDUCATION

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## THE PROBLEM

### I. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The awakening of America to the needs of her minority groups during the past decade has created interest, encouraged studies and directed the placement of priorities to groups which have long been almost totally neglected. The Indian, Montana's minority group, is among those who are now gaining recognition for their needs, especially in the field of education. This writer lacks the first hand knowledge and experience in the field to be any authority on this subject. It was therefore decided that a review of the literature in the field of educating the Indian would be the nearest contribution that could be made to the subject.

Because the Indian's education is affected by many interrelated facets, the literature in the subject area is quite vast. While there was little difficulty in obtaining information in the general subject area, many problems were encountered in attempting to locate specific data.

The review of literature was initiated in the library of Montana State University, where available sources were carefully checked. Since this information did not seem to be complete, inquiries were sent to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington D. C., the Rough Rock Demonstration School, the Window Rock Indian School, the Pine Ridge School, and the Montana State Library in Helena, Montana.

Pertinent information from the replies received have been incorporated in this work and are appropriately acknowledged.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to review the current literature in Indian Education and to determine specific problems, trends and new innovations in this field.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF INDIAN EDUCATION

The first Indian education was provided by the missionaries in the early 1800's. The purpose of this education was to civilize and Christianize the Indian. Although several Protestant efforts were initiated, the most effective group was the Catholic Church who's priests came to live with the Indians rather than living near them.

Late in the 1800's and with the advent of numerous treaties, the Federal government began to take an active interest in the Indian's education (10:27). The major purposes of the government sponsored schools were to civilize the Indian and free the children of the language and habits of their savage and untutored parents. The civilizing process was intended to be accomplished as rapidly as possible. Completely ignoring tribal differences, the infant members of hundreds of tribes were thrown together indiscriminately. The speaking of tribal languages was forbidden in order to encourage the learning of English. This ban was enforced through corporal punishment. Little children, barely seven years old, were taken from their parents and shipped sometimes thousands of miles from homes without knowing what it was all about. Then they were housed in dormitories completely different than anything they had ever known. Not to be overly sentimental, imagine your own little six year old torn from you against your will and taken to Mexico or China,

forbidden to speak English and placed among persons who spoke a foreign language. All his inbred habits of dress, bathing, care of hair, sleeping and eating are violated. At night he would be herded into a bed in a vast, cheerless, colorless room with a hundred other motherless homesick boys. We did this to Indian students for twelve years, then sent him back to his tribe and commented on how strange they were to prefer their primitive ways after being exposed to our civilization (6:111). Fortunately, most of this kind of education is past history.

Responsibility within the Federal government for the Indian's education has varied through out the years. Initially the U. S. War Department supervised this activity. Later the Department of the Interior gained the responsibility which it handled through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Now we find the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare as well as the BIA involved in the Indian's education. This has resulted from the policy of admitting Indians to the public schools which was first begun in 1934 (38:34). Responsibilities for Indian education have varied among the states. Wyoming contracted with the Federal government in 1955 to assume the responsibility for the education of all the Indians within the public school system. (29:15). In 1968 Arizona and New Mexico still had 2/3 of their Indian children in Federal schools (21:23).

Throughout the history of Indian education we have encountered problems, many of which have never been solved. Over and over again the white man attempted to change the Indian into a model of himself

with no results but failure. Time and time agains we were to learn that the Indian's education had to be extremely practical (5:88). One of our major difficulties came in refusing to take an understanding attitude toward the Indian's wish to have his children instructed in the tribal customs and philosophy. Repeatedly the schools fought it because they found it took the children away from learning the capitals of Europe and how to spell "sophisticate". The missionaries fought it because they felt that learning Indian superstitions would keep the little Indians from learning about Moses smiting the rock and Lot's wife turning to salt (5:120). We also failed to recognize that primitive people develop earlier than we do and therefore marry earlier. Often this results in a need for adult education rather than our traditional programs (5:121). Perhaps the greatest danger in the education of these primitive people is that we try to force our own concepts upon them. Literary education is overemphasized, intellectual ability or memory is stressed and a divorce between the system of ideals inflicted from without and those which the child absorbs from his own people resulted (5:22).

Many of the early attempts to create white men of the red men resulted in making misfits who did not fit into either culture. The white man has learned only through terrible mistakes that he cannot turn the Indian into a Northwestern European. Recently the problems of Indians have been brought to the attention of the American people. Now we are beginning to understand that ethnology, environment and the economic situation of the tribe are extremely important factors which need to be considered. For the first time

we are recognizing that perhaps not all should be forced through the same course of study (5:87).

## CHAPTER III

### MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING INDIAN EDUCATION

#### I. LANGUAGE

Perhaps the foremost problem which the Indian has in attempting to understand the white man, to assimilate with him, or to be educated in his schools, is the language barrier. Associated with the language difficulty have been the cultural differences and a completely different way of organizing life, of thinking and of conceiving the underlying assumptions about the family, the state, the economic system and even man himself (34:28). Hall goes so far as to state that language such as Navajo and English are so different they force the speaker into two different images of reality (34:28). Learning English has been a much more difficult proposition for the Indian than for an English speaking person learning any European language. The red man's language has no similarity to ours. No sounds are the same. Meaning and values vary so greatly that even when words are spoken and understood, communication may not have taken place. The beginning Indian first grader must not only face the new world of classrooms and a new culture, but also in many cases cope with a language which he has not previously heard (32:7). Indian children are often able to read fairly well but with little or no comprehension (5:131). They are able to do this because of a unique ability to memorize and imitate without ever understanding what they are

doing. Reasons for poor reading and the subsequent nearly universal lack of success within the classroom are many. They vary from a lack of understanding our culture to difficulties in articulation because they don't use lips or teeth in speaking (5:131). The Indian has difficulty in comprehending the tenses since time does not represent the same meaning to him as it does to us. The past, present and future are problems he has not encountered previously (16:142). Mastery of language skills is undoubtedly one of the most important ways of feeling secure and confident in another culture. People tend to transfer their pronunciation habits to any subsequent language they learn. The tendency is to equate the nearest sound found in one's dominant language with that of a second language which can lead to the total distortion of communication (10:22).

Language difficulties can be directly related to other problems with the Indian student. There has existed a vast gulf between his home environment and the environment found in school. He frequently comes from a home where his parents speak only the Indian language or a few simple English words. These children, thrust into an unfamiliar school environment retreat into whispers and try to hide their lack of confidence and self-assurance behind impassive faces. Limited in abilities to communicate or to overcome emotional problems, they often fall several years below the proper grade level. Individual attention has been impossible because of the inadequate teacher-student ratio. Silent children have been embarrassed to reveal their lack of comprehension (33:3). Sometimes prejudices can even develop as a result of language inability. Indians generally come from homes

that have not accepted the standards of cleanliness, sanitation and personal manners typical of the white man. This correlated with language problems often causes the outside world to label the Indian with stereotyped attributes such as laziness or stupidity (4:183).

Realizing the slowness with which the language patterns of any group change helps one understand why Indian groups do not acquire English more rapidly (4:397). Many Indian groups have little contact with the white man and when he does he can use an interpreter. As the first Americans they feel they shouldn't need to learn a new language which also causes changes to be made slowly. Often the simple resistance of the older people can unconsciously be passed to the children which again slows the acquisition of English. With all these forces working against him the Indian child cannot surmount his language problems without some very capable and patient assistance.

## II. VALUES

A very basic problem for the Indian in the white man's world has been the cultural differences in the two groups and the resultant differences in values. To illustrate the huge gap between the two groups the following examples of contrasting values are included:

(1) harmony with nature vs. conquest of nature, (2) awareness of the present vs. concern for the future, (3) belief in mythology and the supernatural vs. the scientific approach, (4) respect for the aged vs. emphasis upon the youth, (5) cooperation and maintenance of the status quo vs. competition and scaling the ladder of success, (6) anonymity and submissiveness vs. individuality and aggressiveness, and (7) belief in giving vs. desire to save (11:239).

Often the public school teacher has not been aware of these differences. This teacher may not be able to prevent problems from developing within the classroom. An even worse situation could occur when the teacher actually causes problems because of her lack of understanding. The middle class teacher who lets her own set of values dominate in the classroom has not been highly successful.

Indian children often do not respond to our social pressures because they are unknown to them or are not valued by them. For example a teacher who threatens her Indian student with low grades if he does not study is not motivating that student in the manner she would a white child. The Indian prides the ability to get along and he would rather have neither high nor low grades. At the same time an Indian will not normally respond to a threat in the same

manner as children in our own culture. One measure of the Indian's value of our schools has been their dropout rate of three times the national average (36:21). Indians do not usually give advice, coerce or ask one another for favors as the white child might. Thus several avenues of discovering an Indian child with difficulties have been closed. Indian children will not interrupt when another is speaking or speak to someone when he is busy (10:16). Indians respond to the social pressure of shame but the teacher should realize that the Indian will feel very badly when shamed rather than just a temporary uncomfortable feeling. On the other hand Indians are not accustomed to praise and thus typical reactions can not be expected from them because they haven't experienced them (11:146). Because of the differences in cultural values a teacher must be very careful about interpreting the behavior she sees in her Indian students. What she sees and what the student actually feels may be very far apart. Teachers need instruction in the value system of their Indian students to understand behavior, to properly utilize motivation and to help the Indian realize he is accepted. This knowledge will also help the teacher avoid alienating her Indian students (19:13).

Indian students have not had a very high self-concept because of the repeated failures of their families and other Indians in the white man's world. One study found an almost unanimous feeling that Indian children are less capable of achieving desirable goals and ultimately becoming productive members of society than their white counterparts (41:229). Here we see a whole community who has decided that the Indian cannot make it. The white population views the pro-

blems as a lack of innate ability and family support rather than faults of an inadequate school program. The Indian sees that others preceding him have not been successful and therefore assumes that he will not be successful either. Can we expect good results from children when all people around them evidence lack of confidence in them (41:229)? As the Indian child progresses in school he encounters more and more evidence of his inadequacies. Many activities by other children and the teacher tend to support his hypothesis of his self-perception. When he has convinced himself of his unworthiness he begins to live up to the expectations of others. When he does this, he proves to the others that their opinions were correct and they act to give the Indian more impressions of his little value (19:4). This inadequate self-perception carries over into the adult life and perpetuates itself into the next generation. Positive aspects of Indian history have not been taught in our schools. Education can be a shattering experience when one is taught nothing but negative things about himself (28:37). Just before his death Robert F. Kennedy said in a campaign speech, "Indians believe themselves to be the lowest in intelligence of any minority group. In one study Indian twelfth grade students had the poorest self-concept of all the minority groups tested." (37:30).

One can see from the sources available that one of the major problems we have had is bringing the self-concept of the Indian into line with reality. Educators need to develop better ways of helping the Indian improve his self-concept.

### III. ENVIRONMENT

Quite naturally the Indian's problems in the larger culture are basically because of the training in his home which conflicts with the larger culture. Traditionally the home has been where the learning process is initiated and in the Indian home the socialization process has been accomplished to a large extent by the grandparents. The grandparents have long been the 'teachers' in their culture and they have been resentful when another institution encroaches upon their rightful domain. Many of the grandparents haven't been educated and they do not place much value in the manner in which the white man educates. The feelings of the older generation should and do rub off on the young Indian children. Most Indians have made their way as simple farmers and herdsman and they have not felt the need for formal schooling. These occupations have not required a substantial education in order to experience some success (19:2).

The Indian student has not been among the most regular in school attendance. The problems of the family come ahead of anything else so if a funeral, holiday, celebration, or other tribal activity comes up the Indian student does not worry about missing school. His low attendance rate then contributes to his lack of success in school. This completes the vicious circle since lack of success has been one of the reasons that Indians fail to value the white man's education.

Generally the Indian home has little to compare with the white man's. Although adequate in the Indian culture, many of the things

the home lacks can be detrimental to the Indian's education. An example has been the lack of electricity which has made it difficult to study in the evening if the student wanted to do so. Other facilities such as running water and indoor plumbing have not been prominent in the Indian home. A public health survey of the late 60's indicated that 90% of the Indian homes on the reservation are considered substandard, with 79% of them being without running water (35:23). Poor sanitation facilities have lead to higher rates of illness contributing to poor school attendance and less success in school. Additionally the lower standards of homes result in the Indian continuing to be rated as second class, which supports the continuing poor self-concept.

Unemployment on the reservation has ranged from 40% to 70% (35:23). This has affected the education process by prolonging the Indian's low self-perception, causing an inadequate diet, preventing the treatment of illness and precluding a general uplift in morale. A long range affect which measures the Indian's problems has been his life expectancy of 43 years compared with the 68 year average for the nation as a whole (35:23).

If the environmental problems on the reservation have been bad, the situation for the Indian off the reservation has been just as bad. In 1960 an estimated 140,000 had left the reservation to find his way in the white man's world. One out of three of these returned, discouraged, disillusioned and dejected. They were often subjected to racial prejudices which compounded with their attitudes and inadequate education prevented any degree of success (35:23).

The Indian then has been doubly handicapped. Unable with reasonable success to remain on the land, they have been equally unable to establish a new life elsewhere. While many are victims of prejudice, much of their difficulty in adapting to urban life - or in remaining attuned to rural life - stems from the true inadequacy of their cultural background for the modern environment, urban or rural (12:5).

The Indian has faced frustration in nearly every direction which he has turned. People have often said that his only salvation would be in the schools but this has been impossible when he fails even there. Overcoming these problems may be possible if educators begin to understand the Indian as he needs to be understood and then apply that understanding with diligence and intelligence.

## CHAPTER IV

### INDIAN EDUCATION TODAY

Three types of schools have been in operation for the Indian. These include public schools, private and mission schools, and the BIA schools. BIA schools operate only in areas lacking adequate public education or where boarding home care is needed in addition to the educational services. Current sources disagree as to the actual number of BIA schools in operation. In 1968 one source quoted 246 schools with an enrollment of 51,234 Indians plus 19 dormitories for 4,268 children who attended public schools (31:26). Another 1968 source indicated a total of 224 schools with 147 day schools and 77 boarding schools plus 18 dormitories. This source compared very closely with the first in total student count which reported 56,000 students (34:4).

The only Federal schools for the Indian in Montana and Wyoming are located on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. A boarding school for 285 elementary and high school students is located in Busby, Montana and a one room three-grade school is operated at Birney. Browning, Montana has a dormitory for the Blackfeet students attending Browning Public Schools (29:15).

Although there are no Indian colleges, five Federal schools offer vocational and/or technological training beyond the high school. If an Indian student desires to go on to a college or university, the BIA has available grants and loans if the following conditions

are met: (1)  $\frac{1}{4}$  or more Indian blood, (2) member of a tribe served by the BIA, and (3) lives on the reservation or other Indian-owned trust lands (31:25). Getting an Indian into college poses other problems. Twelve years of intensive academic preparation has been more than most Indians have been willing to suffer through. Despite the obstacles however, enrollment of Indians in our colleges has been increasing. In 1968 there were an estimated 5,000 enrolled compared with about 400 ten years prior. (26:14). Progress can be seen in comparing the various generations of the Indians. The first generation exposed to formal schooling tends to drop out about half way through elementary school. The second generation tends to complete grade school and the third high school. Not until the fourth generation do any fair percentage get into college (1:39).

The Indian people are young. They have a mean population of 17 compared to that of 28 for the general population. Because they have a larger percentage of school age population they should be more directly affected by education than the general population. Evidence reveals they have not been so influenced. Other measurements have been equally discouraging, as we find in 1968 only 58% of the Indian children graduated from high school compared with 74% of the general population (26:14). On the brighter side of the coin we find the percentage graduating has increased over the previous years. The percentage graduating from high school is roughly equivalent to the percentage that graduated from grade school ten years ago. (6:6).

Studies have been attempted to determine the most effective type of school for the Indian. None have been able to specifically

indicate one type as superior and all have shown their shortcomings. Typical was a study in Minnesota using the three types of schools for comparison. Red Lake School has an all grades, segregated Indian school Pine Point School has an all Indian elementary system and an integrated high school. Cass Lake has a totally integrated system. All three schools meet the standards for public schools but all three also fail to meet the needs of the Indian student. Red Lake has the highest graduation rate over the past nine years with a percent of 40.8. In 1968 35 out of a possible 70 graduated for a percentage of 50 which shows a general increase. All but two of the graduates attempted higher education but most dropped out immediately indicating that an all-Indian school merely postpones the culture shock. Red Lake does have an all-Indian school board, custodial staff and maintenance staff but has only one full time Indian teacher. In comparison to Red Lake, Cass Lake has an average graduating class of 36.8% of their beginning students. In 1968 seven of 16 graduated. Small numbers make it difficult to determine if this represents a significant increase. Cass Lake has an Indian elementary nurse. At Pine Point the Indian has fared least well. There, the graduating average reaches only 24.7% with 5 out of 13 graduating in 1968. Pine Point has one part time teacher and a principal who are Indians (27:1-14).

The controversy continues as to which type of school best suits the Indian. Most research has indicated that we have failed in whatever type we advocate. We have not yet found the most effective type of education for the Indian.

An advantage of the public schools has been that Indians and whites grow up together and learn to understand one another faster (3:46). Indian children in constant association with white children acquire English fluency more rapidly than other Indians. These children find English necessary as a means of communication. Boarding schools tend to produce more white culture and attitudes than day schools because of their prolonged exposure. Boarding schools have the best attendance records because the Indian has been removed from the daily influence of the home (4:398). Children do better in public schools because they are more closely associated with our culture than students from the BIA schools. Academic achievement and attendance patterns of full blood and mixed blood Sioux were investigated in one Federal school. The mixed bloods missed fewer days of school, were socially more mature and scored higher on tests than did full bloods. This is the result of exposure to the white culture and not a result of intelligence, for everyone is born with the same innate ability (3:42).

Figures vary as to the percent of children in each type of school. The Department of the Interior prepared a report indicating that in 1967, 56% of all Indian children were in public schools, 34% in BIA schools and 10% in mission and other private schools (31:23). The Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs reports for the same time period that over 60% are in public schools, 32% in BIA schools and 6% in mission and other schools (21:7). The majority of the Indians still attending BIA schools are in Arizona and New Mexico. Kelly states that 56,000 of the 132,000 school age Indian children in the

United States reside in these two states (10:11). The BIA reports nearly 2/3 of the children in these two states are still in their schools (21:23). Among the children in these two states, not one in a hundred started school with a knowledge of English or of the non-Indian world around them. Other states have reported much higher percentages of their Indian children in public schools. Montana reports that in 1968 82% attended public school (29:15).

The money spent for Indian education has been hard to determine because of the several agencies involved and the mixing of Indian children into the white school system. The BIA's budget for 1968 was \$250 million of which more than half went for education. This compares with the 1969 budget of \$263 million which again earmarked half for educational purposes. The BIA's budget has included expenditures for the Bureau's own system as well as aid to the public schools where Indian children are enrolled (34:5).

In 1957 Congress made provision for educating Indian children in public schools because testing and evaluation programs carried on by the Bureau clearly indicated that Indian children in the public school were able to achieve better than in BIA schools (11:237). This could be another fallacy in our planning for the Indian when we give him tests standardized for our own culture and discover that children exposed to our culture do better on it. On the other hand if they are to succeed in our culture it may be wise to test them with our yardstick.

Testing accomplished on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation indicates that 40% of the students are behind in reading. At Busby, 41%

showed a lag of two or more years in reading skill among students in the elementary grades. At the St. Labre Mission School, 52% of the students needed remedial reading work. Students at Lane Deer revealed a reading deficiency of two or more years in the elementary school and an even more serious situation exists in the high school (16:140). These results have been typical of any culturally deprived group who normally show less achievement and lower intelligence quotients than our white middle class. We also know that typically these scores drop as the child grows older. Byrde indicated that the peak performance for the Indian is in the third or fourth grade (3:43). He also found however, that the Sioux at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, tend to show a lag during the first three years of school and then rise up until about the 7th grade when they begin to fall off (3:51). Even with these discouraging indications we find that education seems to be getting better, for the lower grades have been achieving higher standards than the students in those same grades four or five years ago (8:14). Even though the Indian has been subject to the educational handicaps common to all minority groups in our country such as poverty, isolation and unfamiliarity with English, Indians have scored better on tests than all but white and Oriental-American students. This belies the belief that minority students raised in the city are better off because the Indian youngster generally has been the only one raised away from the heavily populated areas. It also refutes the idea that the reservation background prevents him from learning. Actually as a whole, Indian students have been found to be very quick and sharp (32:4). Again many

of our findings have been affected by the imperfect tests which we have designed for our own culture.

Too often we have failed to check the Indian children's environment within the school to look for reasons for lack of success. The major contact in the school, the teacher has often been ill equipped or unsuited for teaching these youngsters. One per cent of the Indian children have had Indian teachers or principals. The same survey reports that 25% of the elementary and secondary teachers that have had Indian students in their classroom would prefer not to teach them (37:30). What a shame it is that we have people in classrooms who do not like their work. What a tragedy for the poor youngster who must suffer the consequences. A study in Arizona found a wide array of attitudes prevailing in teachers. They ranged from the stereotype of a lazy bum with no intelligence to those who were attempting to establish Protestant morality to the group who were enthusiastic and felt they could learn from the Indian as well as teach him. Among the group surveyed, only 11% had special training for teaching the Indian, 13% were Indians themselves and 14% were 60 years or older. The group listed motivation as the biggest problem saying that what works for the white child does not work for the Indian (19:5). It remains imperative for the teacher to develop some insight into the differences and similarities between the community in which the Indian lives and the one in which the teacher lives. The teacher who sees through the eyes and hears through the ears of the Indian child will be in a better position to present the academic problem and to develop rapport with the child (19:32).

The alarming suicide rate among the Indians has been reported as ten times the national average. This caused particular concern because a large percentage of the suicides were by youths between the ages of 14 and 21 (25:7). Sufficient concern has been shown in Browning, Montana to set up a suicide clinic where the distraught youngster can receive assistance (23:3). It has not been in operation long enough to receive any evaluation of its success.

Another measure of our lack of success in teaching the Indian has been the drop out rate which is twice the national average. Neither the dropping out process nor the dropout are well understood. Most people assume that the student disliked or rejected school and so he left. In the case of some Indians however, they indicated they did not want to leave school and that they were really pushouts or kickouts instead of dropouts. Again we should be looking at cultural differences to determine the actual problem or situation (11:247). A Montana study completed in 1968 disclosed that there were 7% and 12% more males than females in the eighth and twelfth grades respectively while the non-Indian students in the same grades were almost equal. The lower proportion of Indian females suggest that they drop out of school more often than males (22:7). A possible reason for this difference is the fact that sports tend to hold the male in school longer and Indian girls tend to marry earlier than do whites.

One study shows that attitudes held by the Sioux, Negro, Puerto Ricans and Whites toward education were startlingly similar. Both the Sioux and the working class parents wished their children to continue school because graduating from high school guarantees employment (11:225).

Indian education has been changing although painfully slow. We are realizing some of the serious mistakes we made in the past. While there are many areas needing extensive work, there are some reasons for optimism. Perhaps the best summary of the current conditions of Indian education was expressed by Commissioner Bennett. He estimated that if the rest of the nation were to stand still for twenty years, the educational level of the people on the reservation could be raised to be equal to that of the general population (19:27).

## CHAPTER V

### NEW IDEAS IN INDIAN EDUCATION

An idealistic purpose of education for any indigenous people has been to help these people adjust themselves to modern life, protecting and preserving as much of their own way as possible (5:81). The Merriam survey in 1928 was the first major attempt to determine what was happening in Indian education. This study set the pattern for a set of objectives established in 1935 by the BIA. These objectives were: (1) to give students an understanding and appreciation of their own tribal lore, art, music and community organization, (2) to teach students, through their own participation in school and local government to become constructive citizens of their communities, (3) to aid students in analyzing the economic resources of their reservation and in planning more effective ways of utilizing these resources for the improvement of standards of living, (4) to teach, through actual demonstrations, intelligent conservation of natural resources, (5) to give students first-hand experience in livestock management, use of native materials in housing and clothing, in subsistence gardening, cooperative marketing, farm mechanics, and whatever other vocational skills are needed to earn a livelihood in the region, (6) to develop better health habits, improved sanitation, and higher standards of diet with a need to prevent trachoma, tuberculosis and infant disease, (7) to give students an understanding of the social and economic world about them and to aid them in

achieving some mastery over their environment, (8) to serve as a community center in meeting the social and economic needs of the community and (9) to provide the training necessary to obtain and hold a job away from the reservation area for those students who desire and need such training (1:20). Peterson conducted a study in 1946 on 4th and 8th graders which revealed 38% of the Indians investigated were at or above their grade level and only 4% were more than five years educationally retarded. A followup study in 1950 was done to determine if the 4th graders measured in 1946 still maintained their clear cut superiority as 8th graders. They had achieved higher standards than their counterparts who had been in the 8th grade in 1946. Thus an upsurge in their education was indicated (1:26). These basic studies have been a focal point for those who seek to improve the Indian's education through new ideas.

In the Fall of 1968 kindergartens were initiated for the Indian students. The purpose of the kindergarten, to help children adjust to school more easily and thereby ease their whole school career, seems ideally suited for the Indian who has many more adjustment problems than our own children. With the hope of offering the Indian child a real chance to improve his education, the BIA opened 35 kindergartens for the first time in September 1968 (32:5). Because language has been the first real obstacle the beginning Indian student faces, these new kindergartens all have bi-lingual teacher aides from the local community to assist. The bi-lingual aide, a new idea itself, should do much to accomplish the mission of the kindergarten.

There is a tremendous need for the development of curriculum

materials. A unified program directed to this task failed because the practical needs of all Indians are not the same. Using a picture of a cow and relating it to a glass of milk has little meaning for the Eskimo or the Navajo when they have never seen a cow or a glass of milk (22:25). The basal readers have been unsuited for Indian students. Trying to follow Dick and Jane through a city part or a zoo has been as stupid as having Harlem kids read about grandfathers farm with all the animals he has never seen. We are still learning that the best curriculum is the practical one with experiments and demonstrations. For the plains Indians, one attempt has succeeded when many scholastic subjects were studied using their background in the cattle industry as a base. Thus agriculture, science, math and economics were all taught with examples completed from the beef industry. These subjects were successfully taught in the day schools but the same idea did not work at the boarding school of the Navajo. A different common base which is meaningful to that group must be used with different tribes (1:31).

Even though the BIA recommended as early as 1935 that we recognize the appreciation of tribal lore, arts, music and community life, we have only recently initiated classes in the Indian schools emphasizing these areas. The Navajo at Rough Rock, the Sioux at Pine Ridge, and the Blackfeet at Browning, have been receiving instruction in Indian culture, history and traditional philosophy. Dr. John Byrde has developed a new course that will be used in BIA schools on the strengths and historical significance of American Indian heritage (20:28). The school in Browning has integrated into its regular 18

week course in Montana history, a section devoted to the plains Indians and the Blackfeet Nation (20:29).

Other worthwhile approaches have been applied after a realistic evaluation of the problem. Many Indian college students were failing and having to drop out of college. It was assumed by many that they simply did not have the background necessary for success. A study revealed however, that one primary cause for failure was sufficient study time was unavailable because the Indian student was working in order to have enough funds to continue school. As a result of these findings one tribal council set up a special program to employ about 350 students during the summer. College students were given priority but high school students were accepted if vacancies existed. They received a small portion of their salary during the working period with the rest placed in savings and made available to the student just before school started in the fall (17:13).

In Tucson, Arizona, a special project was started in a junior high school for students from low socio-economic backgrounds who were bi-lingual and needed an educational system especially designed for them. Teacher teams who had experienced earlier successes were brought in and permitted to develop the instructional material they thought was best. The project had three goals: (1) to help the minority to discover and take pride in his dual heritage, (2) to promote self-analysis, self-awareness, self-respect and self-direction, and (3) to provide both active and vicarious experience beyond books so that the student could extend his concept of community and better communicate with his environment (13:185). The plan has yet to prove

its success but one indication of its partial success has been its holding power. Dropouts were three times more frequent among students not included in the project (13:186).

Kelly has recommended that the Head Start program be made available on a year around basis for Indian children ages 3, 4 and 5. He also suggests that the typing room, gym, shop, library, and study hall be made available to any student at times convenient to the student even during the summer (9:44). Perhaps more studies justifying the need for this type of program will have to be completed before our government will spend more on these recommendations.

Another program has been under way with the Navajo at Bah-ha-li. Again, wherever possible, the concepts have been developed from elements which the children are familiar with. Art has become an important subject because many of the students are very competent artists. They approached science from some aspect of the natural environment. Arithmetic began with numbers in a flock of sheep or goats and developed from there (10:36).

In 1968 the Secretary of the Interior in cooperation with the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, was directed by President Johnson to establish a model community school system for the Indian (40:1). In the 1930's the BIA was able to stimulate a desire for learning and one of their avenues of approach was through the community school. Further development was impeded by war, the population explosion, another war, sputnic and war again. Funds were not made available to expand upon the concept and so it lay dormant for several years. President Johnson recreated interest in the idea and

the school at Rough Rock has provided the greatest working model.

The story of this school will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VI

### ROUGH ROCK: A NEW INNOVATION

The right to be wrong and the right to be right are privileges of a democracy. The Indian however, has not had this right to be wrong. In the field of Indian education, we have been wrong so many times that perhaps we should give their education back to them where it probably belongs. This has been done at Rough Rock, Arizona (20:1).

Rough Rock has been unique in that it is the only true community school serving the American Indian (39:15). Its location 17 miles from the nearest paved road, and over 100 miles from the nearest town with a population of 2000 illustrates its isolation. Very few adults living in Rough Rock have been to school or speak English.

The heart of the school program started in 1966 with the involvement of the Indian parents and the leadership of the all-Navajo school board. The school was established upon two concepts: (1) cultural identification - an Indian can retain his identity with his native values and culture while at the same time learn to master the Anglo culture and to take his place in the Anglo world if he wishes and (2) local control - the Navajo people are showing the world that the Indian has the desire, interest and ability to guide their own education (28:15).

Roessel, the first director of the school, attributed its initial success to three factors. First the unanimously elected all-Navajo school board controlled the policies of the school. Secondly, the

community has been deeply and sincerely involved in the school activities and academic life. This in spite of the fact that the school serves some 1200 people scattered over more than 800 square miles. Finally, cultural identification existed where both the Indian and the Anglo culture were intertwined in the classroom. This 'both-and' approach to education was born at the Rough Rock school.

Children were encouraged to speak both English and their native tongue in the classroom. Some classes were taught in Navajo to see if retention of the material would be better. In addition, students were taught to read and write in their own language.

The Merriam survey of 1928 revealed a need for the community school for the Indian. Over the years, lack of funding, little high level interest and lack of adequate staff have prohibited implementation of this idea (28:46). Rough Rock has been different from other schools because it has been truly a community school rather than a child-centered one. Here interest surrounds adults, teenagers, and dropouts as well as the regular school children.

The school board originally began with five members but was expanded in September 1957 to seven members so that two districts previously unrepresented would have a voice (28:58). Of the original five members, only two had any type of formal education. Later only one member, the president, had been educated or spoke English. This board truly runs the school for they have felt free to disagree and veto some of the proposals and recommendations made by Mr. Roessel.

The board of directors from the corporation which made the school possible, the Demonstration In Navajo Education Corporation (DINE)

established the authority for the school and represented the ultimate control. School board meetings have been held once a week and more often if necessary. Meetings with the board of directors take place once a month.

One idea which the school board conceived is the Navajo Curriculum Center which they established in March 1967. Translators, writers of children's books and elderly Navajo men who taped legends and stories have been incorporated as a part of the center. The idea of the center was to prepare seven elementary school level books for Navajo children. The seven books were to be Navajo legends, mythology, history, biographies, current programs in progress and two supplementary readers.

In February 1967, the board provided for the unique effort of preserving a significant phase of the Navajo culture. They established training for the medicine men apprentices. This program was in keeping with the 'both-and' philosophy of the school and was designed to remedy the situation of medicine men dying without teaching their ceremonies to other Navajos.

The two major needs in a project such as this were identity and voice. When the Indians realized that they had identity and voice they began to feel that the Rough Rock School was theirs (28:122). Helping the Indians realize the school was their own was accomplished through several media: (1) The Navajo language was not only permitted but encouraged and taught, (2) Navajo culture and history was taught in the classroom, (3) A majority of the staff and teachers were Navajo, (4) Nearly all the students were Navajo, (5) Navajo arts

and crafts were taught and displayed in the school, (6) Parents lived in the dormitories on an eight week basis to serve as dorm parents thus eliminating problems of runaway children and giving parents first-hand knowledge about the school. With the help of parents, instructional aides and VISTA personnel, the teacher/student ratio was reduced to 1 to 10 compared to many schools with a ratio of 1 to 30, (7) Each teacher was expected to visit the home of each pupil at least twice a year and the parents were encouraged to visit school at any time, (8) The child was considered the property of their parents and could go home for visits every weekend if he so desired. Non-Indian teachers were encouraged to go home with a family for a week so they could better understand the community and their problems. Some of the things that were encountered for the first time were hauling water from a well ten miles away, chopping wood for cooking, and having bread, coffee and a little mutton for dinner (28:42). (9) Adult education was an important strength of the school, (10) In-service staff training was provided for all members. All employees attended a two-week orientation period before school opened in the fall on the history of the Navajo. (11) A variety of auxiliary services provided assistance to the community, such as the laundry, and recreation areas, (12) The school encouraged community members to learn and become skilled Navajo craftsmen. (13) The school provided employment opportunities for many. The school board eliminated educational requirements for several jobs and dropped the salaries accordingly. Some of these jobs were put on a rotating basis so everyone would be given a chance at them. The first year

over 60% of the adult community derived some direct benefit from the school (39:9). These features plus parental involvement by local control have made the program successful (28:122).

The Rough Rock Community has been very aware of their new school. In a 1967 survey, 30 families were picked at random from the 84 who had children in school. Of the 28 respondents only one was unable to identify at least one difference between their school and the other schools on the reservation. Also 23 of the 28 knew there was a local school board and 21 could name the five school board members (28:164).

The history of Indian education reveals that the Indian has never had any say about the type of education he desired. Decisions were made by so called experts whose back door approach was saying the Indians were incapable of making their own decisions about education. It seems so strange in a land where we had valued local control of the school so highly we have failed to see the need for the Indian having his own local control.

The school at Rough Rock has represented a crucible for two major experiments in Navajo education - community involvement and cultural identification. Great strides are being made in both endeavors and indeed it may serve as a pattern for other such schools across the country. But as at Rough Rock, it will have to include a willingness to innovate between the tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of Economic Opportunity (28:211).

Rough Rock has proven that American public education can be controlled by the people it serves and that an effective partnership can

be established between the professionals and the people - with the control and leadership in the hands of the people (39:11).

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### I. CONCLUSION

This paper traced the early history of Indian education from the period of the missionaries, subsequently as a function of the ward department and finally developing as a responsibility of several governmental agencies. The early purposes were to change the Indian from a savage to a member of our culture. Finally the purposes become more realistic and attempt to preserve the heritage, traditions and customs of the Indian while providing at the same time the means to communicate and exist in our society.

Many factors have and will continue to affect the Indian's education. The major ones center in the language difference, value difference and environmental background. The multitude of diversities cause most problems to be many sided and affected by many elements. Our own understanding of the differences between the cultures is an extremely important aspect of the education of the Indian.

There are many different situations existing with each tribe throughout the United States in the field of education. Because of the different agencies, people, and tribes involved, no two problems seem to be much alike. The three major types of schools have been evaluated to determine the one most suited for the Indian. No school seems to be much more successful than any other and all are

full of deficiencies. Indians in public schools seem to assimilate faster and therefore have been more successful in tests and other measuring devices designed for the white student. Indian students are not achieving at white student standards however each year seems to bring some improvement. Indians would probably reach the level of his white peer in about twenty years if the white population made no improvement.

Many new ideas have been tried in Indian education. Some seem fairly successful. Others have failed and have been discarded. We have been gradually ridding ourselves of many old stereotypes which we have clung to for so long. More new ideas are needed in order to adequately teach the Indian.

Rough Rock school represents a unique innovation in educating Indians. Although the community school was proposed in the 1930's by the BIA, a lack of funds and interests kept it from developing until now. The progress of the Rough Rock school will be watched closely in order to see what applications can be made to other learning situations across the country.

The Indian's education has made significant progress in the past few years, however there is much more to be accomplished if they are ever to be equal citizens.

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer found the subject extremely broad for the purpose of the paper. It was sometimes frustrating not to be able to locate

more specific information in certain areas, however because of the broad area covered in Indian education it was very difficult to adequately sum it up in a professional paper. Many interesting and significant items were omitted in the interest of brevity. Only the most unusual or the most dynamic were included to represent the idea to be put across. It is recommended that future investigators limit themselves to a specific tribe or area in order to do the subject justice.

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