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NEWSLETTER

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TALK ON HAISLA CULTURE

DECEMBER 7, 1973 - KITIMAT, B.C.

BY GORDON ROBINSON

During all the talks up to now, I've been listening to points which the speakers have made. And where Indian culture came up so often I started to wonder - just how much Indian culture do these people really know?

This afternoon I would like to tell you of facts about Indian culture. I don't want to dwell on the mythological part of Indian culture because my wife always tells me that I tell myths and tales. So I'm going to tell you about housing, marriage customs, clothing and food. Things of that kind. I'm going to confine myself to the period before the coming of the Europeans.

Let me tell you something about housing. If you go to K'San you'll see that the housing, in all the old days, was a community type of housing - huge buildings composed of a frame of massive logs covered with cedar lumber. There is a framework of an old Indian community house at Village Island. There you'll see that the roof frame is composed of massive logs two and a half feet in diameter and fifty to sixty feet long. There are three of them; one to support each corner, and one to support the center. It probably doesn't mean much to a person who doesn't understand but standing in that village is where I first became aware of these timbers.

Now the Indians didn't have any type of machinery. They didn't have any cranes. How did they get those timbers up there? It's about fifteen feet off the ground. How did they do it? I didn't know at the time but I made it a point to find out. And it turns out that it's such a simple matter! To me that's a lesson. A situation that we don't understand seems so mysterious but when we learn the truth - the facts themselves are basically simple.

How did they get those big timbers up there? I asked a man named David Shaw, and found that it was so easy that two men could get them up there. They used a simple engineering principle plus the weight of the log itself. "They used a box," he said.

They first built a wooden box about six feet square, and found the center of the log by measurement. They decorated the log, then rolled it onto the box and up close to the upright posts which would later support the log beam.

One man got onto one end of the log and pressed that end down in the manner of a seesaw. The second man then built up one end of the box under the raised end of the log by nailing a small log onto the box.

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They continued to raise the log by seesawing it and building up the alternate sides of the box until the log reached the tops of the supporting posts. They then rolled the log onto the upright posts and it was in place. Two men could do it, and yet to us who don't understand the process seemed so mysterious.

I am convinced that there's not one other Indian person in this room who has thought how the old Indian people could do so many apparently mysterious things. Indians are not stupid! The old folks were just as smart as you or I, only in their situations and with their problems. We could learn from them. There are many things they could do that we wouldn't think of now.

Another part of Indian culture that was most interesting was marriage customs. Now I have to be careful - I see my sister-in-Law monitering what I am saying.

Marriage was considered such an important matter in a person's life that it wasn't entrusted to the whims of the young people. Marriages were arranged, mainly by the parents or quite often by the clan itself. They chose a mate for a young man. This young man and all his clan would go to the chosen one's house (the house that belonged to the parents of the young woman.)All the clan members would bring presents and all the presents would be given to members of the clan of that girl. When the others returned home, the young man stayed in that house. The custom was called "Ga-Ga-ka". Now "Ga-Ga-ka", roughly translated, means "bride purchase" but it wasn't as rough as it sounds. The English translation doesn't give the right connotation.

The young man stayed in his father-in-law's house up to three or four months. Then there was a return ceremony called "Tay-na-kwa" where the young couple was escorted back to the young man's father's house. Presents were exchanged again. Only after that second ceremony was complete was their marriage considered final.

The reason that I mention this marriage custom is that those marriages seldom failed. Very seldom did a man ever leave his wife or a wife leave her husband because the marriage involved clan prestige. If a man left his wife or his children he'd have the whole clan down his neck. Maybe in our present way of life the divorce rate is so high because there is no involvement with the marriage of young people among the clans. Maybe it's time we examined that particular custom. The fact that the parents had a say in the young people's marriage wasn't all bad. It seemed to guarantee the success of the marriage. Maybe we should tell this to some of the people down in Hollywood.

Transportation was also part of the Indian culture. The coastal people were very lucky that cedar trees were so plentiful in this area; great big cedar trees. That's what made their transportation possible. They built canoes from cedar trees.

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The way that they built them was quite ingenious. They had only stone axes. "Doo Wees" as we call them. It took two or three days to cut down a tree. And after a tree was felled, there was the problem of cutting its ends off and hollowing it out. There again the old folks showed their ingenuity by using fire. They burnt the ends of the log off, and then used fire to shape the inside of the canoe.

That the Haisla people used fire to build their canoes became known by other people, other tribes. "That sounds simple! Okay, we'll use fire too!" And they felled a tree and built a fire on it. Then they went home. In the morning, of course, there was no tree! It had all burnt up.

Our people did use fire, but they controlled it. The old folks used dampened sand to shape the outline of the canoe on the log. They controlled the fire in that way. A skillful man needed only to remove the charcoal and his canoe was ready.

Clothing was another very important part of Indian culture long before Hudson's Bay and Woolworth's came into this area. The skins of animals, of course, were the easiest to prepare for clothing.

They also used the wool of the mountain goat. Shortly after a mountain goat lamb is killed the fur is easily removed. You just used your hand and pulled the wool off the young animal and kept it separately. When you got home, your wife spun it into yarn, and you handwove it into itmes of clothing. The Cowichans claim that they invented the heavy wool swaater but actually it was used all over the coast. All Indian groups used the wool of the mountain goat to make clothing.

However, the most prized clothing and blankets were made from a material called "Kwa-Nalth." We call the yellow cedar tree "Kwa-na-lus" and Kwa-nalth was made from its bark.

In the spring of the year - in June which is the period of peak growth - the bark of trees is easily removed. At that time the women from the village would go to that little mountain near Anderson Creek; we called it "Kwa-Kwa-Na-Las-Dums", the "Yellow cedar Mountain", the place where yellow cedar bark was available. The women would go there and they would strip the bark off the trees in varying widths and as long as they co ld strip it. They would tie it into bundles and then take it down to a slough located near Alcan's Smelter site. That particular slough seemed to have the right chemical content. The women would take the bark, steep it in that creek, put rocks on it to keep it immersed in water, and allowed it to ferment.

After a period of a month or so, the women would return and separate the rough outer bark from the cambium layer. They would discard the rough outerbark. Then they would take the cambium layer and lay it on a flat surface. With a rock or other heavy object they would beat it until it came out a big woolly, fluffy mass. They would dry it, spin it into blankets. That was their "Kwan-Nalth". "Kwan-Nalth" was just as prized as Hudson Bay three and a half point blankets; it lasted

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just as long, and was just as warm. It was often made into cloaks and warm inner clothing--fine pieces of clothing.

They made other fabrics. They made rough outer garments from the cambium layer of red cedar bark. It didn't need that much preparation, and from it they made a rough outer-wear which shed water. It was called "Wawk-See-Wa" which means "Something you can see through." It had holes in it, and didn't look waterproof, yet it could shed water and was worn strictly as a shower-prooof garment.

Let me go into the matter of food. The preparation of food was a major occupation during the summer months. The Haisla who lived in this area were quite fortunate in that there was such an abundance of food during the summer months. There was no need for hunger provided a person cared to put forth some work. They developed a teamwork between the men and the women. The men, of course, were the hunters, and the women were the preparers. The family unit was actually an economic unit.

Salmon, of course, formed the basic food supply. There were many ways of gathering it. It amuses us now that Indians generally are thought to be a threat to the salmon runs. We are severely restricted in our effort to get salmon for food in the belief that Indians are a threat to the salmon run. Not true! If the Indian had been a threat to the salmon run, then by the time the Europeans arrived, there would have been no salmon. The fact that there were still huge quantities of salmon available proves my point; the Indian was no threat to the salmon run.

We are told that there were two weirs built on the Kitimat River. One was built at Sand Hill and the other was built further upstream - I'm not quite certain of the exact location. In the spring of every year piles would be hand-driven into the river bed. Then the women would knit spruce roots onto frames which had small openings. These root frames were allowed to drift downstream onto the piles. That way the river dammed off excepting one large opening. Upstream from that large opening would be a great big woven basket. The salmon, in its effort to swim upstream, would find the hole in this fence and would go through right into the basket.

All they had to do was to wait until there was enough salmon in the basket, dump it, and return the basket to the weir. In a short time there was enough fish for everyone in the community. Those weirs were left in the river until everyone had their winter's salmon supply. Then the weirs were removed and stored for next year's use.

The Indian appeared to understand that he didn't dare remove all the salmon from the stream, because he thereby would have destroyed his future food supply. That's why I can tell you that Indians are simply not a threat to the salmon runs.

I'm not going to go into the process of drying salmon. It was smoked. Smoked in many varieties, but basically smoked. There are many old ways that the Indian himself does not now follow, and certainly that is one, catching salmon by a weir.

There was an interesting fishing method developed by the Kemano people down on the Gardner Canal. There's a sandy beach there, quite wide - the only sandy beach on the Gardner Canal. I would say that it's probably a hundred yards wide and stretches across the bay, quite long. In the spring the Spring salmon appear to feed and rest in that area. On a moonless night - the darker the better - teams of men would go out in their canoes (usually three men to a canoe) to spear these salmon.

It's interesting the way they speared them. Usually there would be a man on the bow with a harpoon, a second man in the middle of the canoe with a torch made out of split cedar doubed with spruce gum. This was set on fire. And finally a man on the stern paddling the canoe and guiding it over the sand as the tide came in. This was usually in shallow water three or four feet deep.

As the man in the middle periodically exposed the torch, any salmon in the vicinity would become blinded by that light. The man in the stern would guide the canoe over to the salmon and the man in the bow would spear it. They would make a sporting event out of it. The man on the bow would keep spearing until he missed. He could spear only as long as he hit. When he missed he had to go to the stern and guide the canoe.

How did they develop that markmanship? That was interesting too. Johnny Paul mentioned this to me. I asked him, "Did they practise using the spear?" He said, "Certainly. All winter they had practised how to use the spear." Their houses were big - as big as this room. (size of four classroom put together). They would divide the young men up into two teams with one team on each end of the room. They would then implant a pliant sapling with its top about so far (four feet) off the floor. They would attach a cup-shaped target to the top of it. Then they would space these young men about twenty feet apart. The object was to hit that target with blunt-ended lances, each six or eight feet long and just as heavy as a harpoon would have been. The target, being pliant, would bend and throw the spear back at you. The object was to hit the target and then catch the spear on the rebound. You do that all winter, and by springtime your aim is getting pretty good.

That's how they caught the Spring Salmon in that area. I guess it would be highly illegal in the eyes of the fishery department today.

Further on down the coast there's another little Indian village called Klemtu. The way they caught their winter's food supply was quite interesting, and has long since been forgotten by most Indians.

They are sea-dwelling people and one of their most plentiful kinds of fish in that area are black cod. But it's a very deep-dwelling fish. It's very seldom that you can catch black cod less that two hundred fathoms deep. These people developed a way of catching black cod. For the preparation of equipment they had to know the local area, the material that they needed. Some smart individual went into the forest looking for fallen and decayed spruce trees. We all know that the main part of the spruce tree decays quite rapidly when the tree is fallen. But the

part of the limb that was embedded in the tree itself decays at a much slower rate. It's a very hard wood; it lasts much longer than the rest of the tree.

This person took one of these knots home and split it into fine pieces about the size of a pencil. Then he would steam it for a long period of time and bend it into a shape with the ends overlapping and tie it in that position. It would cool and harden. For some reason that particular material retains a very strong spring quality. It will remain in that shape and has a very strong pinch to it long after it has cooled. From this material they developed their way of catching black cod that is called "Ka-Ka-uck-Da-Yoo". I can't translate that quite literally but it means "lip pincher".

The wood didn't pierce the lips of the black cod, it merely pinched the lips. This would immobilize the cod. They made ropes out of twisted red cedar bark and set strings of lip pinchers out in the ocean using rocks for weight. In time they would pull up the fish lines and also all the black cod. But you couldn't lift them out of the water, because once you do that, these things will slip off. So they would just bring them to the surface of the water, gaff them, and the black cod would be brought aboard.

That way they had an easy method of getting cod, but it must have involved a lot of research, a lot of thought, a lot of planning on their part. How did they know what material to use? How did they know that the black cod could be immobilized like that? They must have been smart people!

I won't dwell any more on fishing because there were many other food supplies the Indians used.

They used roots. It amuses me to hear people from the eastern seaboard say they eat fiddleheads. The Indians didn't eat fiddleheads; they didn't want them. There were lots of them all over the place. They discarded them, but used the root of the fiddlefern. We called it "Taybam", and I would recommend them to those adventurous types who like to try new kinds of foods.

You can find "Taybam" in the fall almost anywhere in the forest. It's a nutritious type of fern easily identified. You can find "taybam" on old fallen logs, on the tops of stumps, at the base of cliffs. It's easily removed from the ground; you can kick it out, whereas all other types of fern which are not edible are very difficult to dig out. When you see this fern, and it will be the size of your fist, it looks like a bunch of bananas. It will be upside down, with the fiddlehead up on top. You can twist it out of the ground and break one of the fingerlings. This fingerling would be bent and round. Taybam is the only type of fern with a round fingerling. All the others are flattened or have corners. Break one of those fingerlings. It will be brittle if it's the right kind. If it's not the right kind it will be limp. Once you have broken it, the inside will be a pale green colour, All other inedible

kinds are white. It's only the green, brittle, round kind that's edible. You gather these, dig a hole in the ground, cover them with about four inches of earth, build a fire over it and leave it there overnight. In the morning you can peel the rootlets and they taste like sweet potatoes. Nourishing and available anywhere in the forest - if you should ever become lost while hiking this is good information.

It's interesting to note that mountain goats survive on taybam during the winter months. If you want a little hint, you will find mountain goat concentrated at the base of cliffs during winter. This is also their undoing sometimes. The root grows at the foot of these big cliffs and the mountain goat concentrate there because of the supply of fiddlefern roots in those areas. It is also the area where snow comes avalanching down the mountainside and the mountain goat instead of finding life sometimes finds death there.

Back in history families would go and gather taybam by the - I was going to say sackful, but they didn't have sacks - basketful. They would probably fill half a dozen or ten baskets if they wanted. They would carry these into the corner of one of their houses and bury them there. When they wanted to use it for food they would take half a dozen or so and bury them in the hot ashes of the hearth in the evening. By morning it would be cooked and ready for breakfast. You can't do that if you've got electric heating in your house today, but it was done in the olden times when houses had earth floors.

Down on the tide flats there were several kinds of good edible roots - at least they used to be good edible roots before Eurocan polluted the whole of the flats.

The main type was buttercup roots which we called "Glix-Sam" - a fine-tasting root about the size of your pencil and about as long. In late fall, after the plant has withered or in early spring before it has started to grow, groups of women would go to the flats and dig these Glix-Sam. They would form them into four, five or six bundles and would take them home, steam them, chop them up or mash them (whichever way they wanted) and mix them with berries. Again it tastes something like sweet potatoes. They were just as nourishing for starch was a food that enabled them to survive. This root could also be dried and preserved for winter use. It formed one of the basis of their diet.

There were many other kinds of edible roots which the Indians used at that time. There's one that is quite good eating and is still found today - the lupin. You can find it in some gardens if you are the adventurous type. It's a very tasty root. When your wife isn't looking dig up the lupins in your garden. Wash them thoroughly and then eat them just the way they are. They taste something like celery and are just as nourishing.

There is a certain type of clover root which is very fine, pure white and crisp. I would say that I don't think any of the young folk who were on the panel last night have tasted them but Tommy and I have.

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When they talk about Indian culture those young people have forgotten a lot. Maybe that's why I'm here - to provide you with information about forgotten parts of Indian culture.

There's a wealth of berries in this area - fruits of all kinds. One of the most interesting is the crabapple which is interesting to me because it is the only fruit which the Indian cultivated. In Kildala Arm there are orchards of wild crabapples which were planted by family groups. Even today there are some people in the Indian village who consider those areas as their growth of wild crabapples. In the old days it was valued so much that it was bequeathed to a relative on the death of the individual who owned them.

Maybe you people wouldn't appreciate the taste of wild crabapples. As I always say, there are three varieties. There's the sour; extra sour; and super-duper sour. They're so sour that they can easily be preserved in their own juice. In the old days they would boil them, than take the crabapples out of the cooking vessel to allow them to cool and save the water in which they had been cooked. After the water cooled - they put the crabapples back into it and put a weight on them to keep them immersed. The crabapples would stay like that for years without any other preservative. In winter they would be prepared; mixed with other berries or with hemlock bark and you could eat it as a desert. That's how they got some of their vitamins I suppose.

That was one way of preserving crabapples. They also mixed them with oolichan oil to preserve them.

Another fruit which they preserved and used in quantity was the huckleberry. That's one of the fruits our people don't use anymore, or at least we preserve it in a different way. Today we freeze it or preserve it in jars.

At that time, however, groups of women or family groups would go about twenty miles down the Douglas Channel in August. They would camp there. The men would go hunting mountain goat on the mountains or they would go fishing for salmon. Meanwhile the women would pick large quantities of berries. On the mountain-sides there are slide areas. There is a lot of snow with many slides and these kept the mountain-sides almost bare. There's no heavy timber there. Instead there were huckleberry bushes which could withstand the winter snow-slides. Women would go to these slide areas and pick berries by the basketful. Then they would strip the bark off the hemlock trees. The bark would come off in sections almost like plyboard, and they would turn up the ends to form a large container. They would build racks; put these boards on it; put the berries in the container and crush them. Then they would build a slow fire underneath and allow the warmth of the fire to evaporate most of the juices. The remains would be a thick jam almost like your jam today. That would be called "Laxsta". It was put into containers and would preserve itself in its own juices. If they wanted to preserve it for longer periods they just kept the fire going until all the juice was gone. They would then take the remains, or mash, and form them into cakes

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about a foot square and an inch thick. They would allow it to dry in the sun. And that would be their dried fruit. In the winter all they needed to do was to take a small piece; soak it in water and mix it with crab apples and there was your fruit for the winter months.

So they had salmon, other fish and berries. They also had meat supplies. There was deer which was easily preserved by smoking.

To me the most interesting meat that they preserved was mountain goat. This formed such an important part of their diet that each family owned its own mountain or "Wow-ess". This was their own hunting area. Even today traplines are called "Wow-ess" or "Mountain". When hunting season came (a period in early September which is the last good weather of the season) family groups of a man and two sons, or a man and his son-in-law, would go to their own mountain. They would make a sort of a sporting event out of hunting. All they would bring was their weapons - no extra clothes, no cooking utensils, no food - just their weapons. They had to make a kill on the first day. It's mighty cold up on the mountain tops and when they killed a goat they carefully skinned it out. They were careful not to get any blood on the skin. That was their blanket for the evening. Roll yourself up in a mountain goat's hide and you'll be just as warm as a goat. And smell like it too!

They carefully removed the tripe - the stomach of the goat. They turned it inside out and washed it thoroughly. Then they turned it back into the original position. The abdominal cavity of the mountain goat is lined with a layer of fat about half an inch thick. This covers the whole of the abdominal cavity. I would suppose the goat makes a reserve food supply out of it. They cut this fat into little squares and put them into the stomach They chopped up the liver, heart, some meat, and put all that into the stomach too. Then they added some water. Next they would look for a flat rock on the bare mountainside. They would heat up the flat rock. They would also put three or four small stones into the fire and allow them to get hot. When the flat rock was absolutely clean. Then they would take those loose stones and put them into the stomach and tie it up tight. They would then take the whole thing; put it on the hot rock and start rolling it. (If you left it there on one side it would be burned through) They kept rolling it during the whole of the cooking process. In time, when the rocks were cooled, the container or stomach would harden, and it would stay rigid. They cut the top off; drank the juice and ate the meat. It was a very delicious concoction. It was nourishing and if the stomach was that big, they'd have a three or four day food supply. A Scotsman heard about it and he added oatmeal and gave it a bad name.

Now all their food supply was preserved - smoked or whatever. They still needed some fresh meat. How they got that fresh meat is, to me, really quite revealing. I'm talking about the time long before there were any guns in this country.

During the summer months when the streams were low, one or two of the older men would go to the dried or almost dried stream beds. These men would carry a pole on their shoulders and would tap the trees along the stream. You would think they were "out of this world" if you saw them tapping the trees. When they found a hollow tree they would cut a hole in it about a foot in diameter. After they had cut a hole in that hollow tree, they would go looking for another - until they had three or four hollow trees cut. Then they would go home.

Later on in the season, when the salmon had come up the stream, the bear would come along catching the salmon. The bear would become accustomed to seeing these holes in the hollow trees. When the bear became sleepy in the fall he would climb into one and go to sleep inside. When the Indian needed fresh meat in January and February - all he had to do was to go look inside the hollow trees which he had previously prepared. It was all there ready for him. He had fresh meat with no need to preserving it. Some person sold the Indian a freezer and spoiled that happy situation.

During all the speeches here, when I was listening to people talking about Indian culture - it dawned on me that this is the type of materials that you, the teachers, should have in your possession. Information on the basic, everyday Indian culture which the Indian himself has now forgotten.

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INDIAN EDUCATION AS I SEE IT

BY GORDON REID

SPEECH TO KITIMAT DISTRICT TEACHERS AND EDUCATION 479 CLASS

How do I see Indian education at the Secondary School? I cannot speak too knowledgeably about the situation at all schools but I feel many of the problems are basic and therefore the solutions are the same in nature.

In speaking of problems and solutions I am speaking of only those students who have problems, and the possible or probable solutions to these problems. Not all of these educational problems are peculiar to native children, as they are as diverse as any ethnic group. These expressions and opinions are not the feelings and thoughts of native people; they are mine alone and if they can be agreed to by most, I am glad..

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I base my opinions on what I consider to be a fairly diverse personal background. I grew up on a reservation and off. I have gone to Indian Residential Schools and public schools, I have felt prejudice and acceptance, I have worked for a living as a logger, fisherman, construction worker, as a lab technician, and for the last thirteen years as a teacher educator and administrator. I think I can speak of and sympathize with the native student with a fair degree of understanding.

As I look at the education of native students at High School I cannot help but feel we are selling them short of the basic requirements in their education. These requirements I put into three categories; involvement, responsibility, and an understanding teacher.

By involvement I mean the involvement of the people, white and native, and of their heritage. This is why we are here today, this is why Indian education seminars have been held in the past and will continue to be held in the future, this is why many of you have driven hundreds of miles to be here at this gathering. But what are you going to do about it after you leave here? Over the past seven or eight years I have been to many seminars of this nature and yet to date I have seen so little done anywhere in B.C. Many overtures have been made, mini-courses developed, art programmes started, Indian history and culture taught in a week or by a visit to K'San, but nothing ongoing. It's like scratching where the mosquito is biting but leaving him there. We are not getting to the root of the problem.

When speaking to those involved, it's a vicious cycle of buck passing. The teacher says it's the principal, the principal says it's the superintendent, the superintendent says it's the government, the government says it's the teachers.

Where does it start, and who is going to start it? I would guess you will have to. And how do you start it? Through a lot of hard work and open-minded administration. Develop Indian orientation programmes that can run paralled to and enrich those that you are teaching now. If you are unfamiliar with the topic don't try teaching it yourself; the kids will know and it becomes a mockery. Hire someone to come in and teach it. There is money available. Local history, early Indian history, local geography, Indian geography, location of villages and why, customs, traditions, are (not just the drawing of it but understanding of it) myths and legends. Teach these along with their counterparts in other ethnic groups, so as to teach mutual understanding and appreciation of the heritage of others. Teach an acceptance of each other. There are some classes in my school that if you walk in and said "Indian", every one's heart would start pounding and boom "How come?" It hasn't been accepted. Indianism today is the "in thing" among the establishment but it certainly hasn't established itself in society as yet.

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English should be taught as a second language or second dialect very early in a native child's education and continued until he shows good proficiency at it. Many of the failures at school can be attributed to the child's lack of understanding of the spoken and written English language. He does not understand and is afraid to express himself in front of a strange group. These children feel inadequate even in the company of others from the same reserve. This feeling stays with many of them through High School, University, and even after they become teachers.

Provision should be made to de-emphasize French as an academic requirement and have it replaced with a local native dialect. Most of the native people are bilingual.

A qualified native person should be hired as a teacher aide to assist in the teaching of native children who are having learning problems. These people should be paid by the school board at the basic salary scale for those on a letter of permission. You must establish pride, professionalism and tenure with the job. Don't forget you are purchasing a service that no provision has ever been made to train. This person does not need to hold university credits, or high school graduation, and believe me, they will do just as good a job as you are doing. I feel that wherever there are fifteen native students who are having learning difficulties, one of these people should be hired.

This person, of these people, whom you hire will not only be of benefit to the scholastic needs of the child, but will form a very necessary communication link with people on the reserve. We often hear about how hard it is to establish communication with the people on reserves, but what communication approach has been used. A visit once a year or so. Remember that these people, through training, by law, and by economics, have been forced in the past to withdraw from you and establishment. You in your enlightened condescending approach are not going to get them to flock around you just because you stepped on their reserve and smiled at them.

So what do you do? You keep going back to show that you are truly concerned and that you need their help and advice on the responsibility and the discipline of their children, their ideas on the types of programs we should be teaching. There are some very intelligent Indians, even if they are not educated.

Responsibility! Are we teaching native children responsibility? How much is our fault? With today's approach to Indianism, I feel that in a lot of ways we are doing the native students a disfavour. We cater to their needs, but demand little in return. We are afraid to.

An Indian student received money for all his educational needs, clothes, books, fees, materials, etc., and a monthly stipend. What is his responsibility or his parents responsibility? Their child can, if he doesn't like the school, or if his parents don't like the school, go to any other school in B.C. and if he doesn't like that school, he can move again! Now I grant you that some of these children need assistance and certainly must be helped but by gosh there are a lot that don't and these are the ones taking advantage of it. What are we doing to these children? Literally we are training

them to be welfare recipients. I cannot help but feel that this is educationally unsound logic. What can we do instead? Funnel a good part of this money into group homes, meaningful programs and hire extra help. And let's have the Federal and Provincial powers work together. The movement of these children from one school to another is having a detrimental effect on their achievement. In some instances it is setting them back one semester and in some at least one or two subjects. It also projects itself noticeably in the drop-out rationale. In our school the transfer-in ratio is three to one, native to white, and the withdrawals or drop-outs are three to one, native to white.

I feel it is time that Indian parents were brought into the schools and guidelines were established for the responsibility and discipline of their children. Who is to say that if my child is a holy terror you can't spank him when he needs it and when I say you can. That's a daily event. A lot of parents feel this way; a lot of the native parents that I have spoken to and white parents too.

I wish to state here again that many of the things I am saying are not peculiar to Indians alone, and I do not mean all Indians.

And now teachers - the most important resources we have, and the most unpredictable. Their effectiveness is governed by two things; their understanding of their students, and the programs they will teach. Will the programs be academic stuffing and regurgitation, or will they be realistic and practical, which will serve the needs of the child best. Will they be allowed to explore new avenues, or will they follow the curriculum guide? Which is the safer? Which will reach the kids, or which will turn them off? In terms of the needs of native children, with their materialistic and practical background, with their closeness to nature and their understanding of it, where will their success lie? Will the teachers understand the needs and aspirations of the child and the parent? Does the teacher know what it is to be on the low end of the socio-economic scale? Can they relate? It is not easy.....and Education 479 is not required to teach Indians.

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MAY YOU BE INFORMED THAT OTHER PHONE NUMBERS TO THE INDIAN EDUCATION RESOURCES CENTER ARE:

228 - 4662

228 - 6254

228 - 6325

...../14

FROM A DROP - OUT
ABOUT DROP - OUTS AND EDUCATION

Before I begin, I'd like to state my motivation. I've always wanted to help Indian students in some way, especially in encouraging them toward a good education. As you read you will see why.

First, I'd like to say that I fully agree with Gerry Williams (in his letter in your December issue - Volume 4, #4) that is imperative that everyone get a grade twelve education. Very, very, often, since I quit school, I've wished to be holding my Graduation Grade 12 Diploma in my hand. I quit school in Grade 11, with promising grades in most subjects.

I have known and seen many cases where a young lady in her late teens or early twenties, who has quit in Junior High, is compelled to return to school when the opportunity meets her. I find this very encouraging when they go through with it.

On our reserve we are fortunate to have a friend and Day Care Supervisor who cares about Indian Education for all ages, which is very encouraging to us who care about and want to do something about education.

I feel that most of us, who have been drop-outs and feel ready to continue our education now, are not aware of our potential but we know it's there and just needs a spark of encouragement and confidence to get in motion.

Also, I've found that at the age which I quit school, there was a need in me to learn more of life itself, which isn't taught in school. It's a time when you don't want to sit still in a classroom and instead want to be outside concentrating your thoughts on your own physical, emotional and social needs. At this time, our minds are most agile in the learning of life itself, although our society does not provide our schools with these resources in mind. Instead, we are expected to be learning the fundamentals of Math, English, Science and other compulsary subjects.

Consequently, this conflict between the needs of the teenagers and the needs of the society's schools results in Drop-outs.

Now that I understand more of myself and life, I'm ready to meet the opportunity to continue my education as a sincere and helpful adult.

Here's hoping that my letter might be of help to someone on their way to a worthy education.

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A LIFE SKILLS ALTERNATIVE

BY TERRY BERSCHEID

INTRODUCTION

Life Skills is a program designed to meet the needs of each student in his interactions with other people. In the following article Terry Berscheid gives examples of how a Life Skills program has helped various people. He then explains some of the theory behind the approach taken in teaching the course, and illustrated the practical steps a student takes in evaluating and changing an interaction skill.

A LIFE SKILLS ALTERNATIVE

To many educators, the alternative to traditional methods of educating is to be found in innovative techniques.

In innovative education, rule number one is to design and present programs that meet the needs of the target population - that is, the students who will be taking the course.

Life Skills is an innovative course.

A 16-year old student had a past record as a school drop-out despite a higher-than-average intelligence, and had been in continual trouble with the police. He entered a course designed to help him meet his needs. As part of a group of learners, he found a place for himself among his fellow learners, and became friends with a 58-year old man, with whom he would have previously had nothing to do.

A young mother of four children had her children removed from her twice in recent years. Her husband had disappeared when she was first confined to a mental health institution. She lapsed into complete helplessness, then entered a group course, found herself and learned skills that are helping her cope with her problem.

After several years of work in a variety of fields, one man hoped for a new career working with and for people by entering a program employing innovative techniques. After taking that course, he took a position that allowed him to commit himself in helping others.

These people enrolled in Life Skills courses, and through their group experience, they found a way to reach their goals.

Life Skills is a program designed to meet the <u>student's</u> needs (as opposed to meeting the needs of the administration as quite often happens). It's objectives are for the learner to examine and <u>apply</u> a problem-solving system to his daily attempts at interaction.

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Interaction when two people are together, they use a variety of skills to enhance their communication. Some people are more skillful in communicating - they use these skills more effectively.

Problem-solving. Unfortunately, problems are usually considered to be negative aspects of one's life: that is we feel that a problem is not a normal state of being. In Life Skills, however, we consider a problem as being a challenge, an opportunity to use our skills of interaction.

Life Skills, then, examines the skills of life, of interaction. These skills are examined in terms of the learner's present competency in using the skill, the learner practices and evaluates his performance of the skill and then applies it to an out-of-group situation as soon as possible. When he has used the skill outside the group, he reports back to the group on his success and therein received encouragement to continue his efforts at interacting effectively.

The history of the Life Skills course's development can help us understand why this method can be effective. It started when the Province of Saskatchewan and the Federal Government's Secretary of State agreed to set up an incorporated, non-governmental developmental project, Saskatchewan Newstart, whose objective was to research and develop programs of education that would be specially tailored to the needs of "disadvantaged persons", particularly adults. Saskatchewan Newstart had a five-year charter and among the programs that were developed by this organization was Life Skills. When Newstart's charter expired, the Department of Manpower and Immigration assumed the roles of the project, forming the Training Research and Development Station in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

The Developers of Life Skills first examined the already-existing programs in adult interpersonal development, then isolated the skills used in interaction, and determined the factors involved in the use of these skills. Finally, they chose the most efficient and least time-consuming means of developing these skills - the group.

The "group" consists of between 10 and 15 people, preferably a mixture of men and women of varying ages, and, if more that one race is represented in the community, a "racial mixture". The group's function is to assist the member in his evaluation of his skill performance, help him determine how to use the skill appropriately and responsibly, based upon each member's personal experience in using the skill, effectively or otherwise, provide feedback on his skill practice, and offer the encouragement and support the member must have if he is to successfully adopt the skill as part of his repertoire. With the guidance of a competent, qualified "coach" - a group leader skilled in group methods and dynamics - the use of the group can shorten the time the learner requires to complete his program of behaviour modification.

Up until now, I've talked about skills, but I have not defined what a "skill" is. In order to know just what I am talking about, select a convenient time today and approach someone whom you either do not know, or hardly know at all. Enter into conversation with this person, but

throughout your conversation try to be aware of what you, and the other person are doing to enhance your interaction. For example, what makes you feel that the other person is communicating with you? What is he (or she) doing that tells you he (or she) is interested in what you are saying.....

These skills are the basis for effective communication and interaction.

There are five components to a complete life skills program. These segments examine the areas of the "self", "family", "job", "community", and "leisure".

The skills of communication and interaction are very important in a person's developing his "self" - his "who am I?" and "who am I in relation to this person, and that person?"

Once a learner has begun his introspection of his "self", he can then begin to examine his use of these skills in the areas of "family", "job", "community" and "leisure".

In each session of life skills, a four-phase guide is followed; stimulus, evocation, application and evaluation.

STIMULUS: The coach choses an exercise, experience or some other device that will identify the skill, and the student demonstrates his competancy in using the skill. Very often, the stimulus is so designed that the learner uses the skill without being aware that this skill is to be examined.

EVOCATION: Now, if identification of the skill had not happened in the Stimulus phase, the skill is identified and the student examines his ability in using the skill effectively and appropriately. He receives feedback from other group members on his competence in using the skill.

APPLICATION: The student recalls times past when he used the skill effectively or ineffectively; and if he is not satisfied with his competancy in using the skill, he then practices using it, with the help of the group. Then he considers occasions in which he could use the skill to enhance his interaction with another person.

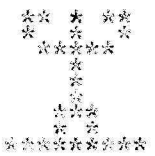
EVALUATION: The student evaluates his skill performance twice: 1) at the end of the session he analyzes his present competency in the skill as compared with his previous competency, and 2) after using the skill in a "real-life" situation he reports back to his group on his degree of success and/or failure, and if he feels the need, will practice the skill in the safe setting of the group before using it outside the group a second time.

Among the organizations which have sponsored Life Skills courses are the federal and provincial governments, social and service agencies, including the YWCA and community groups; schools and colleges; the Canadian Mental Health Association; penal institutions and large corporations. The program is being conducted across Canada and in many of the United States,

and most recently the World Health Organization at the United Nations has been adapting this course to meet the needs of many of the developing countries.

Technical and informative data on Life Skills is available through Canada Manpower's Training and Research Development Station, Post Office Box 1565, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. S6V 5T2

In British Columbia, information about Life Skills programs being conducted in the province may be obtained from Mr. Terry McNamara, c/o Camosun College, Victoria, B.C. or Mr. T. Berscheid, Re-lease Developments, Merritt, B.C.



VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE TOUR

SPONSORED BY

FIRST CITIZEN'S FUND

FOR

STUDENTS IN CHETWYND LOCAL # 102

BY PETER COURTORIELLE

A six-day educational field trip to Vancouver, sponsored by the First Citizen's Fund, commences On January 7, 1974 for Yvonne Paquette, Lana LaLonde, Bernice Badine, Geraldine Redhead, and Peter I.J. Courtorielle, students of Chetwynd Elementary-Secondary School. They were accompanied by Malcolm Calliou, a school board employee and also the president of B.C.A.N.S.I. Local #102.

A few of the many places visited over the six-day period were the University of B.C., Vancouver City College, The Queen Elizabeth Theatre, the headquarters of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the Dept. of Indian Affairs and B.C.A.N.S.I. headquarters, where they met the president Fred House.

All of these introduced the young people to new faces and ideas as well as to city life and a foretaste of what is to come. Likewise it revealed to them the resources available in the city to further careers and educational ambitions.

On Friday January 11 at the Vancouver Indian Center a talk was given by Dr. Adams, president of the Metis Association of Saskatchewan, on "Indian Heritage". Afterwards, they met Chief Dan George who wished the young visitors good luck in their future endeavours.

Commenting on the trip, Mr. Malcolm Calliou said, "Good to know there are resources and organizations now available and accessible to our Indian people in B.C. The trip for my companions and myself was a most rewarding experience."

Lana LaLonde, a Grade 10 student, said, "Very good experience for me to meet other people outside of Chetwynd. I saw for the first time, the fantastic arts and crafts of our various Indian tribes in B.C. It is encouraging to know there exists organizations and associations by and for our Indian people. We all certainly benefited in one way or another from our trip to Vancouver".

Vocational Guidance Tour sponsored by First Citizen's Fund for students in Chetwynd Local #102.

We like to thank the First Citizen's Fund for funding this educational field trip to Vancouver for our Indian children on behalf of the B.C. Association of Non Status Indians, Local #102, Chetwynd, B.C.

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NEWS FROM LITTLE RAVEN
NURSERY AND KINDERGARTEN - SAANICH

We are one of several Kindergarten Schools on the Island that are Community owned and operated.

Little Raven is administered by the Saanich Indian School Board. The Board is comprised of the four Chiefs of the Saanich Peninsula and four representatives from each Band. From Tsartlip Reserve we have Chief Charles Elliott with representative Tom Sampson, from Tsawout - Chief Lou Claxton with representative Norman Underwood, from Pauquachin we have Chief Norm Williams and representative Max Henry, from Tseycum we have Chief Gus Bill and representative Mrs. Yvonne Bill, an administrator, Mr. Sammy Sam and the Board secretary Mrs. Geraldine Underwood.

Our teachers are all Native Indian with the exception of the Kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Lucy Whitehouse who has been with the staff of Little Raven for several years.

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The enrollment for Kindergarten is 29 pupils which is in operation from 9 to 11:30 a.m. and Nursery with 22 pupils from 12:30 to 3 p.m.

We are now going into our third term in our new building. For the grounds surrounding the building we are providing a cultural background for the children. We have had a miniature long house built and during the summer we hope to have a totem pole carved where the youngsters can watch the progress of this particular project. It will then be mounted on our adventure playground.

During the school term we take the children on several field trips. These trips include the Provincial Museum in Victoria, local Bakeries, the Saanich Firehall and an exchange visit with a non-Indian Kindergarten from Gordon Head. We spend alot of the summer exploring our beautiful beaches on both Tsartlip and Tsawout. These trips provide the youngsters with a terrific learning experience.

The following is a list of what a child gains from Pre-school:

1) They begin to learn who they are and what they can do. - self-identity, self-worth, individuality.

2) They assume a greater responsibility in caring for themselves and their belongings.

3) They learn to handle their bodies and emotions with skill.

4) They learn to communicate more effectively.

5) They have the opportunity to develop an awareness of the world in which they live.

6) They have the opportunity to experience the joy and beauty of literature, art and music.

7) They find satisfaction in both individual and group endeavours.

Since we have been in operation we have had several good reports of our former pupils who are now in grade school. We have had several visitors to the school who have written back to the Board expressing their keeness as to what we are doing for our children.

We would like to invite any of you to drop in to exchange ideas or just visit awhile.

In Brotherhood,
A.M. Claxton, Supervisor

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NEW MATERIALS IN THE CENTER

RATING SCALE: ***** Excellent. Would make a good addition to a Band or School Library.
**** Very Good
*** Okay
** So-So
* Poor

- Dr. David Wyatt

** The First North Americans. By Margaret K. Zieman. 96 pages. McLelland & Stewart. $4.95.

This book, intended for students in the late Primary grades, attempts to outline the prehistory of the North American Indians and their ways of life at the time whites came. Unfortunately, it is filled with errors and misinterpretations. According to the author the first Indians lived in caves later, a mysterious group of "Shellfish Eaters" occupied the Coast of B.C. It is probable that these ideas came from the author's misinterpretations of archaeological evidence. She doesn't do any better in describing tradition Indian life-styles - She uses misleading ideas of "advanced" and "undeveloped" to describe various groups. All in all a reader would be more mislead than enlightened by this book.

* Agouhanna. By Claude Aubry. 112 pages. Paperbacks. $0.95.

Agouhanna, a story for children in the late Primary grades, tells of an Iroquois boy's emergence into manhood - He goes on his first hunt, acquires the bear as his spirit-helper, falls in love, saves his village from an attacking war-party, is chosen by his Chieftain father to be the new Chief, and marries.

Unfortunately, the story seems to have been based more on the author's notions about Indian life than on his knowledge of the Iroquois. It presents an all-too-familiar picture of traditional Indian life - War and hunting were the most important occupations, a boy's training focussed on these jobs as a preparation for becoming a Chief, a Chief ruled a village and led it in war, women were second class citizens. Iroquois life was very different from this stereotype. First, life did not revolve around hunting, but around the growing of corn and festivals marking different points in the growing cycle. Second, the Sachems and Chiefs (there were more than just one per village) were concerned with peaceful activities - and decisions were made democratically, through Council decisions. Third, because the organization of social life was based on the female line (a child was a member of its Mother's Clan, not its Father's), women were very important. They chose a new Chief when a previous one died (a boy could not succeed his Father as Chief and his Father had no power to choose) and also arranged marriages (individuals had little say in the matter and love was of little importance).

All in all Agouhanna would seriously mislead a young reader. It presents a false view of Iroquois life and a stereotype of a supposed general Indian way of life.

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***** Sea and Cedar: How the Northwest Coast Indians Lived. By Lois McConkey. 32 pages. J.J. Douglas Ltd. $4.95. Grades 4-6 and up.

This book presents a brief outline of traditional Northwest Coast Indian life, illustrated by Douglas Tait's black-and-white drawings.

The book is good in that it contains no false information and little that is misleading. It may be criticized for over-emphasizing the relationship of technology to environment and for not going into sufficient detail in explaining some aspects of life - particularly social life and ceremony. But in general the merits of the book and its usefulness to primary school readers far outweigh its faults.

***** Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood. By Jane Willis. 199 pages. New Press. $8.50.

Geniesh is Jane Willis's Indian name. This is her account of growing up on a James Bay Indian reserve and of her years in residential school, separated from her family. The story is told with the sense of humour and strength that, judging by the experiences she recalls in the book, were necessary in order to survive the years in Residence school.

***** The Days of Augusta. Edited by Jean E. Speare. 80 pages. J.J. Douglas

A collection of short narratives about life around Soda Creek, in the Cariboo country of B.C., by Mary August Tappage, an 87 year old Shuswap woman. Black & white photographs.

(Janet Poth Boston)

**** Artifacts of the Northwest Coast Indians. By Hilary Stewart. 173 pages. Hilary House. $12.95

This book is good for both the general reader of Northwest Coast Indian history and the student of archaeology. Stone, Bone, and antler artifacts from Adzes to Zoomorphic Bowls are illustrated. The author discusses making and using some of the artifacts and their place in Northwest Coast Indian culture.

(Janet Poth Boston)

NOTE: A Boy of Tache, by Ann Blades, should have been given 5 stars (top-rating) when it was reviewed in December.

The Journal of American Indian Education, one of the leading journals in the field, has offered us a discount subscription rate. If 10-19 people subscribe through the Indian Education Resources Center, the rate drops from $3.50 to $2.98. If 20 or more subscribe, the rate is $2.80. If you are interested in subscribing, please send us your name and address.

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WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR NEWSLETTER. IF YOU WRITE AN ARTICLE OR LETTER THAT WOULD BE USEFUL TO OTHER PEOPLE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, WE WILL BE GLAD TO PRINT IT.

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NOTICE: IT WOULD BE VERY MUCH APPRECIATED IF PEOPLE MOVING - WOULD INFORM US OF THEIR NEW CHANGE OF ADDRESS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF NOT RECEIVED UPON ONE RETURN OF THE INDIAN EDUCATION NEWSLETTER -- YOUR NAME WILL BE DELETED.

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