

# This Process Educated Them Right Out of the Village

The present Alaskan educational process takes native children out of their homes, families, and environment for four to eight years of schooling.

"This process educates them right out of the village," stated the Tanana Chiefs' Education Committee at a three-day meeting held at the University of Alaska June 4, 5 and 6.

Mitch Demientieff, President of Tanana Chiefs, proposed a new approach to education, one in which the school curriculum would develop the skills needed "to make a living at home in the village."

Demientieff, formerly Chief of the village of Nenana, said the present system also applies constant social pressure on young native people to get a job once the educational process is completed.

"No longer can they return home and pursue their forbears traditional life styles. Many times these young people are caught in the middle — no longer knowledgeable of native ways and not really understanding the non-native ways."

The Tanana Chiefs are now in the process of working with the school system to develop a curriculum that will enable native youth to "make a living" in the villages.

This curriculum would include such subjects as complete fish processing and the fur industry, and would provide a comfortable livelihood for those pursuing such careers.

The Tanana Chiefs represent

approximately 43 villages, with the Education Committee involved in all phases of education affecting those villages as well as those which affect urban native youth.

The three-day meeting was held at the Center for Northern Educational Research. CNER Director, Dr. Frank Darnell arranged for a varied agenda of speakers from the Center.

Dr. Darnell explained the overall function of the Center, which provides resource teams and research data to improve the quality of education for Northern peoples.

Dr. Michael Krauss of the Linguistics Department spoke to the Chiefs' Education Committee on the urgency of keeping native languages alive. Of nine languages spoken in the Chiefs' region, there are now only eight of the 42 villages in which the children speak the language fluently.

The Committee heard a disturbing report from Judith Kleinfeld on the Boarding School students. Dr. Kleinfeld's study showed an alarming growth rate of depression and suicidal-type problems related to boarding school situations.

Mike De Marco described the education plans for the new North Slope Borough School District, which will operate the schools at Anaktuvuk Pass and Pt. Hope beginning this year.

The two schools, formerly part of the State Operated School system will now operate under local direction and control

from the Eskimo communities.

Effects of prejudice on both the minority student, as well as its effect on the majority student were discussed by Frank Berry and Vivian Moore of

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CNER. They proposed a series of communication workshops throughout the state to address in part the question: What is true cross-cultural education?

How community government can be either beneficial or detrimental to school operation was the subject of a talk by Jack Chenoweth of the state's Department of Community and Regional Affairs.

As part of the three-day meeting, the Tanana Chiefs Education Committee established a \$5000 Doyon Scholarship fund for native students. Doyon, Ltd., is the profit-making arm of the Chiefs' organization.

Information regarding the scholarship can be obtained by writing or telephoning Eleanor Laughlin, 102 Lacey Street, Fairbanks; 452-1746.