

# letters

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funny stories during intermissions. Cal Dupree, the moderator, asked for volunteers to tell jokes. Katherine Peter was brave enough to get up and tell a few jokes.

On the third day I went to a workshop where the Navajo teachers from Arizona did a demonstration with about eight or ten of their second grade students. They sang some Navajo songs with the first teacher. The second teacher did Navajo literacy with them. They read some Navajo stories about the sun, stars, and moon and sky in general. I think with the third teacher. And then they had a discussion about the stories. All this was done in Navajo.

They were so cute talking among themselves and they didn't utter a single English word. Next the Pueblo people from San Juan, New Mexico, did a demonstration. Steven Trujillo demonstrated willow basket making. He said that's what he teaches in class. And a really neat elderly lady named Margaret Garcia demonstrated pottery making. And another talked about their program in general. And they invited the audience to participate in pottery making. Some people did.

I watched for a while. And I started talking to Governor Frank Cruz, who is from San Juan, New Mexico. He was telling me about San Juan.

He invited me to their festival. The way he described it, it sounds like it's similar to our potlatches. He said if I go there I'll be welcome in anybody's house. And I'd be invited to eat wherever I go.

He said their belief is that the more people they feed, the more food comes back to them, which is like our belief that the more generous you are in giving food to people who need help, the luckier you are in getting food. And then when he found out I was from Alaska, he said to Steven Trujillo who was making the willow basket, "Hey, this girl is from Alaska, give her the basket when you finish it."

I thought he was just kidding. And then when Steven Trujillo finished the basket he put it in my lap and said, "Now we go to Alaska." I was so surprised and touched I couldn't say anything for the longest time. So I'm going to send both him and the governor a really nice present. I haven't decided what yet.

And then a lady named Dolly Yazzie and Laura from one of the Arizona school demonstrated how they recorded songs for their schools. They recorded it in her garage. And they took it to a recording studio, and made it into records.

They use the music from songs like "The Inchee Winchee Spider" and use it to teach numbers. So they demonstrated how they use music to teach different subjects. And then Laura sang some traditional Navajo songs. One of them was a corn grinding song.

Then a young man named Barney Mitchell who must be in his twenties also talked about Navajo art and music, and the Navajo philosophy. He sang some songs, all different kinds of songs, including some love songs.

He showed us a pair of moccasins and talked about the philosophy behind it. He said the sole is called Mother Earth and the top is Father Sky, and the Navajo people are in between it. And then he showed us a blanket weaving frame.

How they think of the thread

## REAA presidents and superintendents meet . . .

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boroughs. We're going to consider the new school districts just like cities and boroughs to the extent that the law will allow. It's your operation. We're here to help," Lind said.

Speaking on behalf of the State Board of Education, Thelma Langdon, from Anchorage, said, "The members of our board are as enthusiastic about the second phase of this new era in education as they have been about the first phase that began with passage of Senate Bill 35 (calling for establishment of the

winding around and around the thing as embracing people love. His whole presentation was very neat. And when he asked if anybody had any questions, a young girl raised her hand and requested that he sing some love songs for us. So he sang a few more songs. A very good singer.

Next the school principal from James Bay, Quebec, talked about their program called the Cree Way Project, which was very interesting.

And then the Stoney people from Morley Reservation in Alberta, Canada, talked about their program they talked about how about three or four years ago. They start talking about how children need to learn about their culture in school along with the traditional classes. And how the best resource people are elderly people who grew up the Native way. So they started a program called the Stoney Wilderness Center, which I think is similar to our Survival School. They showed slides of it. Except that part of their objective is to help get rid of prejudice. So they travel all over to talk about their program and recruit students, including in Germany.

So all in all I really enjoyed the conference. It was a conference run by Indians for Indians, very informal. There were a lot of great Indian people there.

I don't know who all planned the conference. But I know one of them was Shirley Johnson. And seems like the whole show was run by Wilfred Garcia of San Juan, New Mexico. They did a really great job.

I just really, really wish that more people from Alaska could go to a conference like that. I know a lot of people from around home who would just love going to a meeting like that. It's the kind of meeting that makes you wish you were a singer or speech maker. I think I could do pretty good when studying Athabaskan linguistics, but I'm a dud when it comes to singing and speech making.

Another good thing about Arizona was how inexpensive the food is. We went to a place called the Big Apple. I had spare ribs with all the trimmings and delicious apple pie with about six inches of whipped cream, all for \$5.00.

Next year they are planning to have the meeting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. This is an annual meeting and they plan to alternate the meeting place between Canada and the U.S., having it in the U.S. one year and Canada the next year.

I would like to see more people go the NABEC, especially those involved in education.

If you have any questions about this report or next year's meeting, you could write to me at: Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 and I will try to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
Eliza Jones  
June 1976

new districts) in June of 1975.

"This year has been filled with many new happenings in education across the state: the setting of the regional boundaries, the creating of 21 new school districts, the election of the board members to operate these new districts, training sessions to assist the new board members who will assume the responsibility, teacher contract negotiations in one of the regions, and next week (July 1) the official takeover by all new boards of the operations of their schools.

"This is truly an exciting time to be involved in the education process in Alaska, especially in the unorganized borough," she said.

Langdon spoke in support of the new local school committees established under the new law to assist the school boards in their decision-making process.

"These local school committees have and will be most helpful if they are given a meaningful role to play," she said.

Lind complimented the Department of Community and Regional Affairs and its commissioner, Lee McAnerney, for their assistance in setting up the new rural district boundaries.

"I was amazed at the speed and efficiency with which the department was able to assist all the hearings and determination of the boundaries," Lind said.

Bill Overstreet, executive secretary of the Association of Alaska School Boards, noted that establishing local self-determination was a fitting way to celebrate the Bicentennial in Alaska.

"I can't imagine anything that is really more appropriate by way of a Bicentennial celebration than the very concept of bringing in self-government in education," Overstreet said.

He urged the board members to exercise their new authority, power and responsibility to operate public schools in their respective areas "in a manner consistent with local needs and desires."

"You have broad latitude to do as you see fit," Overstreet told the group, "but you also have basic limitations. The first thing you need to realize is that now that you are established as the boss, the constitution protects your employees.

They have the right of free speech, they have the right to second guess you, and you simply have to learn to live with that. Your authority as boss is not without limits even in retaining a staff. . . You've got an awful lot of authority, but along with the authority you've been granted are obligations, and one of them is that you must bargain with employees."

Overstreet also urged the school board presidents to make full use of the community school committees.

"They can be a liability if you don't," he said. "I would urge you to set up some procedures whereby you can give them responsibilities and call on them to fulfill those responsibilities."

Ernie Polly, coordinator of the Department of Education's Planning and Research and moderator of the conference, re-emphasized the grass roots theme of the conference.

"I think that the theme has been established that schools are like government in that they are designed for the people," Polly said. "There is a chain of communication to maintain to make sure the schools are responsive to the people."

"It's a symbol that is incredibly important and quite frankly it hasn't even been established yet. The community school committees are at the very base of the grass roots definition. If

the community school committees do not inform or reach joint positions with the local boards and the State Board, that means the State Board of Education will make decisions that result in a hit or miss operation. Ms. Langdon's invitation for you to maintain this chain is not simply a matter of courtesy. It's an absolute necessity for accurate operation of the state government in terms of being responsive."

## Wind . . .

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and technology.

"And the Nelson Lagoon gives us an exciting opportunity to test our wind equipment in a village situation," he said. "It will provide the villagers with electricity to run their lighting, televisions, stereos, and other small appliances. Also, we can provide power for larger items, such as washing machines on an intermittent basis. But of further importance is the opportunity to cut the cost of fuel by 20 to 30 percent by running stack robbers, a simple device that attaches to the pipe of an oil stove to save fuel."

The Cold Bay project will utilize an existing power distribution grid to provide a portion of the energy needed at the large state airport located there. Northern Power and Engineering Corporation, their local utility, will provide significant manpower needed to build and maintain the project. The records of the National Weather Service at Cold Bay show that location to be one of the best in the state for wind power generation."

"The Skagway and Kodiak locations are still in the planning stages for their best use," McConkey said, "but we may

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### BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS GENERAL ASSISTANCE

The purpose of BIA general assistance is to provide financial assistance to Alaskan Natives who do not receive help from other public assistance programs. Eligibility requirements include:

- (1) Being an Alaskan Native
- (2) Not having enough money to meet living needs
- (3) Meeting financial eligibility requirements
- (4) Not receiving any other form of public assistance

If you feel you may qualify, you should go to your local BIA office and apply for assistance.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS