

Editorial—

Sources of Strength

We would like to remind our native people once again, especially our younger people, that their positive strength lies in what they are—products of their own ancestors whose blood courses in their veins.

From time to time, we hear some people say that the learning processes of the native children in Caucasian schools are being held back because they or their parents persist in holding on to the old times. We

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unequivocally disagree with this concept because it is one way of weakening the will of the native people. To force the native youngsters to forget what they are, or what they were, is to undermine their very spirit of being. It is more probable that if the native child has a thorough knowledge of his own background and heritage, he would be more equipped to learn the new concepts of life he will be subjected to from here on in.

Spain was never quite able to make Mexico exactly like Spain. Great Britain made a dent in India. Nor was France able to contain Vietnamese. The United States itself failed badly in Americanizing the American Indians. All of these are rather dismal failures. If cultural spiritual wars were written, these would have to be recorded as spiritual defeats. Cultural spirit of man anywhere in the world is a formidable opponent. Its defeat by force only creates shells in human forms that are pliable as putty. These types of people are miserable examples of mankind who neither have a spirit of their own nor will of their own.

A native Japanese, despite his particular culture, can become a superbly educated man in an American university. Frenchman, Chinaman, Russian, German, Korean and other nationalities can do the same. Why not an Aleut, Indian or Eskimo in Alaska.

We do not believe that a cultural heritage of a people is a deterrent to proper education. The deterrent would be when the native student has been divested of his identity in which case he would be partially alienated to his own people nor would he altogether feel that he belongs to the new culture he is studying.

During the recent World Eskimo Olympics at the University of Alaska's Patty Gymnasium, the Upward Bound native students performed their Eskimo and Indian dances. Their dance performances might not have been as artfully done as their elders might have done them, but what stood out was their obvious spirit, pride and confidence with which they performed. They had something more than fun in doing what they did. Those persons who have been in charge of their orientation toward college studies should be warmly commended because, no doubt, the students will enter college with a little more courage than they would have been if their heritages had been ignored.

We will say again that the strength, spirit, will and courage to persevere is the cultural background of a people. Time proven heritage is one of the finest equipment a native person can have because the system has enabled his ancestors to conquer untold dangers and pitfalls that constantly faced them in their severe environment. This strength properly infused into the learning processes can be a source of pride in the venture of education that our young people will be seeking from now on. It cannot be a deterrent because it was, also, an achievement intricately and profoundly established by our ancestors which gave them will to persevere in facing some of the greatest odds ever faced by man.