

Conference addresses certification

(C) P. M. IVEY

Three basic statements voiced continually in many different ways wove themselves around each workshop and general session of the 3rd Bilingual/Bicultural Conference in Anchorage, April 6 - 8.

Improve communication between the Native communities, Alaska Department of Education and the Alaska Native Language Center of the University of Alaska.

Preserve Alaska Native languages and cultures.

Develop a workable plan for certification of bilingual teachers.

STATE COMPLIANCE

The communication gap momentarily snapped shut during the conference among the 150 Native educational leaders, ANLC, Alaska Department of Education and federal government officials. All worked hard getting closer to an acceptable solution for compliance with decisions handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in the Law vs. Nichols case to provide adequate methods of teaching English as a second language in the 21 Rural Education Attendance Areas of Alaska. All worked hard to provide an adequate standard for teaching Native languages and preserving Native cultures.

SHOW AND TELL

Irene Reed of the Alaska Native Language Center moderated the Show and Tell workshop. Native bilingual educators from across the state demonstrated their methods for teaching their Native language and teaching English as a second language.

WRITING SYSTEMS

Walter "Babe" Williams moderated a workshop for solving conflicts in writing systems for Native languages. Areas of concern were to identify conflicts, to provide a basis for further planning, and the utilization of Native advice.

"Formerly, Native leaders were called in to give advice in a situation that was already pre-planned, irritating many," according to Williams.

The most urgent need in Native communities is to identify Native leadership and gain its support, so that a cooperative effort can be undertaken.

"We must improve the communication gap between the Alaska Native Language Center and the Native communities," Williams explains. "It is futile to expect the Native leaders to take an active role if they are not informed."

"Implement Native language teachers on all grade levels, so that they become very familiar with the writing system. It is not enough to accumulate facts and knowledge."

Other workshop participants stressed that any writing system must be consistent; teachers should know the alphabet of the language they teach, and that changes in the writing system for Native language they teach, and that changes in the writing system for Native languages must be minimal.

MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Wally Olson's workshop on multicultural materials development skills brought out that the Native communities have the responsibility to tell the teachers what they want their children to learn. Teachers must learn the art of teaching, translating ideas

and meanings from culture to culture.

NATIVE HERITAGE

Dr. Walter Sobeloff from Sheldon Jackson College indicated that Alaska Native heritage is being lost when not written down, and presented the following resolutions:

PRESERVATION of Native culture is one of the most beautiful gifts to the world and must be preserved as close to the original form as possible.

It is important to exchange ideas and values in other ethnic cultures.

RESOLVED, that preservation of Native culture be supported by the 3rd Bilingual/Biculture Conference.

The conference also accepted another resolution Dr. Sobeloff presented on **SUBSISTENCE LIFESTYLES**.

The lifestyle of our forefathers depended for its very existence on fishing, hunting, and other subsistence methods of

living.

This type of survival on the land is not part of the formal curriculum.

The present formal educational institutions have a negative approach to perpetuating this lifestyle, and if this lifestyle is to be preserved,

RESOLVED: that credit be given to secondary school students to learn subsistence techniques for hunting and fishing of their forefathers.

ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE

Emily Brown, educator and author, stressed the importance of improving the teaching of English as a second language. It must begin in the home, according to Emily. "I didn't learn English until I went to school, and have had to struggle with it all my life."

Emily's workshop demonstrated the teaching of English as a lively art in the classroom. Educators discussed the difficulty they had in finding ways to translate English into the Native languages because the lan-



MARSHALL LIND, addresses conference

Photo By RUIZ ROZELL

guage structures are so vastly different and often there are no equivalent Native words for the English counterpart.

FILM ON TUTORING

A workshop participant showed a film on structured tutoring of English as a second language developed by the Utah Navajo Development Council in

Blanding, Utah. The Garrison method of structured tutoring is used extensively by Tony Schuerch, instructor with the Kotzebue Extension Center with encouraging results.

The uniqueness of this method is that specific materials outline step by step instructions

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for the tutor and reading materials geared to the lifestyle and age of the individual being tutored. Tutoring is done on a one-to-one basis. In this way, anyone who already can read effectively may be the tutor.

Earlier, Schuerch had stressed that the method is success oriented in that tutors are instructed to give only encouragement to their students. Then, the student, rather than being pushed, progresses according to his or her own capabilities.

The Navajo Development Council has similar tutoring materials for mathematics.

X-CED PROGRAM

D.M. Murphy is director of the X-CED program responsible for setting up classes for certification for bilingual teachers.

Murphy indicated that he wants to set up these classes in all parts of the state, and that presently these facilities are only available in southwestern Alaska for the Yupik language.

The Native people must be more political and let their legislators and Native leaders know that they want these classes in their area before he can set them up.

Murphy explained that the X-CED program funds come solely from grants. He only knows for a year at a time if there will be funds enough to continue the program, so teacher turnover is great because of the job insecurity generated by this type of funding.

BILINGUAL TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Fred Bigjim indicated that there needs to be a statewide effort by the University of Alaska to achieve certification of bilingual teachers, and the only way this effort can be reached is by adequate funding.

Bigjim also said that teacher certification for bilingual teachers and teacher aides is not an issue that is going to be "slid under the door."

The workshop proved there is a unified effort of bilingual teachers to obtain certification. One way is to obtain a degree.

"We feel that the University of Alaska is responsible for delivering those courses to those individuals to that degree, and we will continue to pound on their door," stated Bigjim.

CERTIFICATION RESOLUTION

Bigjim urged that the conference adopt his workshop's resolution that:

Bilingual teachers are a necessity in many classrooms.

Bilingual teachers are very concerned about the education of their students.

Bilingual teachers have shown by their work in the classroom that they are excellent teachers.

Many bilingual teachers have complete control of their students in the classroom and are noticeably underpaid as teachers.

Bilingual teachers are in continual jeopardy because bilingual programs are, for the most part, funded by grants.

Those bilingual teachers are not certified and do not have the tenure rights of certified teachers.

RESOLVED, that this conference elect a committee of three to prepare certification requirements for bilingual teachers and they be implemented.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that certification requirements be adopted, taking into consideration their unique language and cultural abilities.

PERMANENT FUNDING RESOLUTION

Bilingual children have the right to be taught their own language in Alaska schools.

No permanent certification process for bilingual teachers is in existence to allow them to continue teaching for long.

Bilingual teachers are not always treated as full members of teaching staffs in schools.

Education is not a fully continuing program in rural schools.

RESOLVED: that bilingual education curriculum responsibilities become part of the foundation supported program in the state of Alaska to secure permanent continuing funding as part of the school system.

LOCAL NEEDS RESOLUTION

Regulations restrict the proper carrying out of the bilingual education program.

Bilingual teachers are being denied certification because they require degrees.

Native children are being deprived of their Native culture and heritage because of absence of (qualified) bilingual and bicultural teachers.

RESOLVED: that the Department of Education make it a priority to adhere to local needs and bilingual/bicultural programs.

Bigjim's workshop stressed local level training for certification and support from local school administrators.

Workshop moderators expressed concern that more native leaders were not present at the conference. Our children are the future of Alaska; the proper education of our children is vitally important. These feelings permeated the conference.

Total dedication to the educational needs of all children in the Great Land typified the participants of the 3rd Bilingual/Bicultural Conference, government official and educator alike. If their determination to open up communication among them-

selves, to work out a system for certification, to bring an acceptable method of teaching English as a second language, and to preserve native language and cultures is any indication of the solutions to come, concerned Alaskans can take heart.