

Northwest takes bilingual innovations abroad

BY MARGIE BAUMAN
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Northwest Arctic School District representatives have been invited to introduce their innovative cross-cultural education program at an international meeting of educators in Canada June 17-21.

"We hope to make a case for this unique concept of integrating the bilingual, cross-cultural education program and also to get back input other people might have on how we view this

integration," said George White, school district superintendent.

The idea of a school curriculum which presents all subjects in all grades from kindergarten through high school in a cross-cultural manner has been a long term goal in this predominantly Inupiat Eskimo region of Northwest Alaska. The school district is just now in the process of hiring people to set up the program, and write lesson plans and materials, White said in a telephone interview with the Tundra Times Friday. The new curricu-

lum is to go into effect in September, 1978.

The paper written by the school district's curriculum director, Dr. Helen Roberts, for presentation at the Canadian conference, is based on two years of community efforts to put the program into effect.

The First Congress on Education, sponsored by the Canadian School Trustees Association, was inspired by a recently completed study of Canadian educational policy, undertaken by the Paris-based Organization for Econom-

ic Cooperation and Development, (OECD), White said.

OECD was set up through a convention in Paris on Dec. 14, 1960 with member nations including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Recognizing the many issues

raised by the OECD report on Canadian educational policy, the Canadian School Trustees Association decided to invite its colleagues from member nations to discuss and exchange information on concepts of educational policy.

Northwest Arctic school district representatives will include school board members Mary Schaeffer, Sophie Ferguson and Evelyn Conwell, Dennis Tiepelman for the Mauneluk Association, Roberts and White.

"We'll also have the opportunity to attend other workshops and seminars dealing with other educational issues and hopefully we'll get a lot of ideas," White said.

Cross-Cultural Impact

White said the Northwest Arctic's curriculum committee recently traveled to Kodiak, St. Mary's, Bethel and the Iditarod school districts, where "they saw some neat things, but nothing like what we are attempting to do."

Northwest Arctic envisions an educational program in which cross-cultural concepts are included in all phases of the curriculum, from athletics to history, to language and science. "In stead of having a little separate program, it will become an integral part of the total one," White said. Plans are to draw on regional history, including the economic development of NANA Regional Corp. and area villages, plus the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 for curriculum materials.

"By integrating this with more stringent language and mathematical standards, we hope to enable the child to see both worlds and to gain a greater self respect for his own culture. We hope we can show the children that they can be successful in their own culture and as a result of that, their success will carry over to the white man's culture," White said.

"It's a total community program. It's what the board wants, what the people want and we're going to do it," he said.