

'More Doors Are Open Today'

An Expert Discusses Higher Education And His People

By MARGIE BAUMAN

Lou Jacquot's concerns for improved higher education for Alaska Natives range from the need to fill job slots with regional Native corporations to preserving traditional philosophical and political leadership.

In general, there is more going for higher education of Native people in Alaska than elsewhere in the United States, but there is still room for improvement says the energetic director of regional Native affairs for the Center for Northern Education.

Jacquot, a Tlingit Indian who holds a doctorate in education from the University of Oregon, has studied extensively the relationship of Alaska Natives and higher education in this state from 1960-72.

Native leaders today working within and outside of the regional corporations are tapped 'time and time again for very good jobs, so there is plenty of incentive for education,



DR. LOU JACQUOT

Jacquot told the Tundra Times.

"The oil companies are running all over the place looking for Natives that can do the work; not just token Natives," he said.

These and other job opportunities Jacquot says he was not aware of when he started his dissertation on Alaska Natives and education. "But by the time I was through looking through all the data I accumulated it's unbelievable the way the doors are open today, more so than ever before," he said.

"There is incentive too to go back to the regions, who are crying for college graduates, he said. And the University of Alaska meanwhile is attempting to contact regional people to find out their needs and see what the university can do to help. "The new president (Dr. Robert Hiatt) is wide open to this idea. His door is open and I'll be in there talking to him," Jacquot said.

"What I'm concerned about its long range needs, stretching 20-30-40-100 years. That is how about our philosophers, historians, poets, and writers. Those who can tell the story of

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the Native people in the Native people's way. How about our intellectuals. Are we going to forget them? I'm concerned that the university, in the great pressure to produce people for the short range period, might in the Native sense anyway, forget about the Native intellectual. That would be a great crime," Jacquot said.

"When we had the land claims movement, it was pushed through by politicians, because it was a political issue. But when they did that, these vigorous young men, these Native politicians who pushed it through did not have the old type of leadership that we traditionally had out in the villages. The old timers who could bring all the people together and settle an issue in a statesman-like way, he said.

"So the land claims was pushed through and that was a tremendous achievement, but almost immediately when it was pushed through, AFN, for example, collapsed practically at the same time," Jacquot said. "This was because we didn't have our statesmanship, we didn't have our intellectual

leaders or our philosophers. They had been pushed into the background. Even today, the Native leadership lacks this kind of a guideline; they lack the input of intellectuality," Jacquot said.

Jacquot feels that the land claims act, faces years of litigation, but that meanwhile it has done a great deal for the Native themselves. "It's given them a base start again; to continue their culture. It's given them an endowment, not really for the people living today but for future generations. Once the people grasp that idea, they're going to quit a lot of this internal bickering and eliminate a lot of the rip-offs that are starting to grow," he said.

"The people themselves will do it, but this is why we need our philosophers, our intellectuals. We need to have people who spend their time telling the people, like Howard Rock (editor of Tundra Times). We need 100 Howard Rocks out amongst us in Alaska. We don't have them. We lost them; either lost them or they died of old age or they just turned their backs because of all the young, vigorous political push for the land claims," he said.

In the middle are the village people, who want their children to understand the old ways, but also, when they grow up, to be comfortable in the new ways too. Time and time again, Jacquot says, educators ask the village people how they should do that. "They say it's not their problem, it's our problem," he said. "They say you are the professional educator. Why can't you do it?"

Back when Jacquot was a child Native students were not encouraged to go to college. "My first inclination of capability came in the Army, when I wrote answers to test questions and was offered a chance to go to Officers Candidate School. I figures if they offered me that I must know a little bit of something," he said.

After the Army, Jacquot used the GI bill for further higher education and eventually received his doctorate. Now he wants to help other Native students do the same.

Through the Center for Northern Education, Jacquot is trying to analyse throughout the needs of Native Alaskans in higher education and help the state and the university of Alaska meet those goals.