

Poem Points Out Education

A poem written by an unknown Native Alaskan boy back in 1930 was used at last week's Tanana Chiefs Conference Convention to point up the importance of Native education today.

Dr. Lou Jacquot, executive director of the Alaska Native Human Resource Development Project, said the poem shows that the boy was exceptionally gifted "but probably ended up with no more than an eighth grade education."

Titled "The Loon," the poem follows:

"Spirit of wilderness —
Song of Desolation —
Rover of the Deep —
Thy mournful cry I hear.

Through the still air,
When the day is dying
In the Western sky;
Thy monotonous cry
Sounds long and drear.

When dawn streaks the east,
And my dreaming eyes are
scarcely awake,
Still I hear thy cry
Through the murm'ring sky.

Child of the Desolate Lands —
Rover of the Wildest Strands —
Thy cry of distress can dart
Cold chills through the stoutest

heart."

"No one knows what happened to that young man as he grew up, but many of you here at this convention probably have a good idea," said Jacquot. He speculated that the talented boy probably "counts himself lucky if he survived until today without ending up in jail or in a TB ward."

Jacquot said that through education, the waste of what Natives have to offer in all areas of life must cease:

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"Never before have the Native people — particularly the young — been so much in need of training and skills to fulfill the tasks laid before them."

The speaker called for Native Corporations to offer themselves

as a training ground for the young by providing active intern programs. He exhorted corporation leaders not to fear young competition, not to create "closed shops of their people's corporations as some have done already."

Jacquot said that long after the difference concerning land

and money are settled among the Natives, education for the people will remain.

Said Jacquot, "The Native corporations and associations should not merely look at themselves as cold-blooded economic entities such as are the white corporations, but rather as corporations with public consciences."