

BLA policy for bilingual education

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so that we deal with what is important to us as individuals, as tribes and as a community as well as looking at what is happening in the rest of the state and the rest of the world because we do not live in isolation from that."

Demmert said to reflect the community schools should teach bilingual programs, oral history and Native art forms, including music.

He said the school must find out how Natives learn their language and culture. Then it must adapt its teaching methods to Native learning styles.

According to Demmert, if the school does not integrate its curriculum with community needs and values, children will become alienated, they will lose their self-respect, develop a poor or negative self-image, and suffer from a conflict of cultures.

Such psychological problems, Demmert said, will result in poor school attendance and lower academic standards.

Schools should not only reflect the community, but should meet the needs of the community as well, according to Demmert. Education must provide students with the skills needed to feed and clothe themselves, he said.

Educational research suggests that a program to provide students with such living skills must come from the community itself and not from outside, Demmert said.

Demmert stressed that the community itself must decide what its needs are and what skills students need to develop to meet those needs. Demmert said professional educators serve neither to impose curricula on the community nor to direct the process of education in the community.

Instead, he said, professional educators have two roles: 1—to ensure that schools work together with parents, students and other professionals in the community to devise an education program relevant to their needs and 2—to provide a wide range of options for the local communities to choose from.

As Director of Indian Education programs for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Demmert said local communities don't direct B.I.A. schools because of "too many ingrown problems."

These problems include, he said, rigid rules and regulations, inability to change fast enough to adapt to new conditions, political intrigue and lack of control over how the money is spent.

"Once we spend money in a particular area we seldom change," he said. Therefore, he suggested, the B.I.A. has worked best in supplemental programs, where money is added onto existing budgets for special groups to solve special problems.

But, he said, the basic budget of the B.I.A. does not change. "Many of us have been through the formal education system and have biases we need to work through, think about and analyze very carefully."

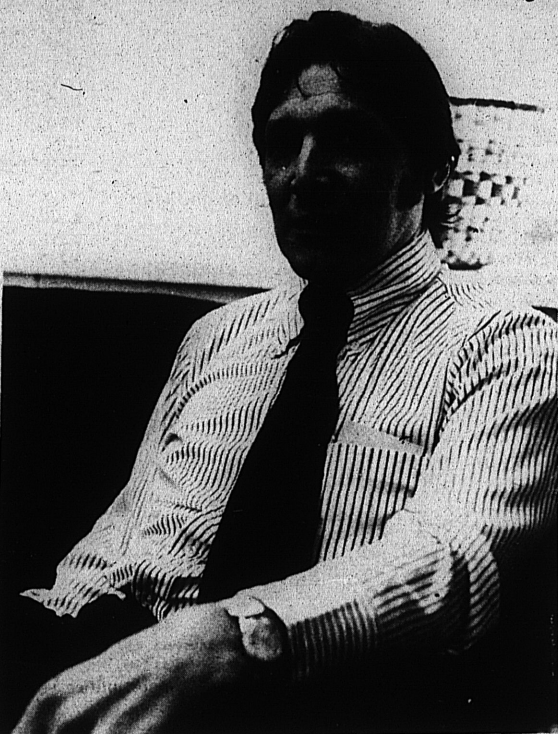
Demmert added, "We should look at whether or not under the formal systems established we can give that kind of flexibility needed. One lady told me she

wanted to teach the Native language in her community but she couldn't do it because she would have to go outside the community to get permission to do so, she became frustrated and unable to do the job she wanted to."

Although he stressed the importance of community control of curriculum, Demmert

or irrelevant traditions of formal education and educators have the flexibility to design programs consistent with what the community wants students to learn.

Although he called for reform in education, Demmert, nevertheless, said Native Americans need formal education. In fact, he said, we need to "strengthen



WILLIAM DEMMERT, JR., a Tlingit who has a Harvard doctorate, is the director of education programs for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Demmert had also taught at Fairbanks' Main Junior High School.

(Lael Morgan Photo)

called for in-service programs to train teachers in the values, customs and needs of the communities they teach in.

Demmert said teachers of Native Americans need to develop skills in coordinating programs set up by educators, tribes, parents and students "to meet the goals of the group as defined by the group."

Demmert described what he considered a relevant academic program as that which uses "businessmen, artists and skilled craftsmen in tandem with standardized textbooks and locally-developed curricula."

When students join with members of the community and professional educators, "it becomes possible to teach process as well as product in teaching; each person learns by doing," he said.

Demmert said the most effective schools are tribal or contract schools, where local communities contract with the B.I.A. to run their own school programs.

He said these schools succeed because local communities control them, parents accept them, they operate free from outdated

it and make it more relevant and effective."

Demmert, part Oglala Sioux and part Tlingit. He was born in Klawock. He has a bachelor's degree from Seattle Pacific College and a master's from the University of Alaska.

From 1960 to 1970 he worked as teacher and administrator in Alaska and Washington. After developing a bilingual program at Klawock, he entered the administrative career program at Harvard University, where he received his doctorate.

After graduation from Harvard he helped begin a national Indian education association. Later he was a consultant to a Senate education subcommittee on Indian education. His work with the subcommittee led to the passage of Title 4 of the Indian Education Act.

After the act was passed, he worked for the U.S. Office of Education to implement the act. Eventually he became deputy commissioner.

In March, 1976, the B.I.A. named Demmert to direct its Indian education programs.

*In the battle that goes on through life
I ask but a field that is fair
A chance that is equal with all in strife
And to dare*

*And if I should win
Let this be my code
With my faith and my honor
held high*

*And if I should lose
Let me stand by the road
And cheer as the winners go by.*

-author unknown



"THEY'RE GONNA PUT me in the movies, they're gonna make a big star out of me, they're gonna put me in the movies and all I have to do is act naturally," may be famed dog musher George Attla's theme song. The "Huslia Hustler" will play himself in a Ralph Little production. The board of directors for Dayon, Ltd., in which the former North American and Anchorage Fur Rendezvous champ is a stockholder, approved last week in Anchorage to provide \$270,000 for the feature. Little, a California filmmaker, had previously shot "The People of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta."

(Joyce Zimmerfield Photo)

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