

Ms. Helle only identified Eskimo physician . . .

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nights and weekends as a lab technician in the Swedish Hospital in Seattle while she was in medical school.

Because of a total lack of exposure in high school, chemistry was very hard for Dr. Helle. Her graduating class at Nome High School consisted of nine students from a student body of 35. The only laboratory course that was offered was physics. "I was never bashful to admit I was dumb and needed help. If you let them know that you need help, they're willing to

bend over backwards to help you," says Dr. Helle.

Self-discipline, organization, and a willingness to admit her deficiencies and ask for help enabled her to overcome a poor academic background. And Dr. Helle allowed herself one night a week for relaxation. "I would go out and howl," she remembers.

After four years of college, four years of medical school, and one year internship, she became a practicing G.P. (General Practitioner).

Dr. Helle was in private practice for five years, but the

hours were very long. She and her husband felt she needed more time with her family, so she went into public health she would have regular hours.

Thus, she sacrificed some of the rewards of her profession for her family and children, but she does not regret this and claims that the Eskimo devotion to family is an important cultural characteristic which should not be permitted to die.

Today, Dr. Helle has a law degree from the University of California at San Diego, does counseling and practices

industrial medicine.

It has been a rewarding life and Dr. Helle is glad she made the sacrifices necessary to become a doctor. "There's something really satisfying about having somebody come in to you with an injury or health problem of some kind, and you sitting down and diagnosing it, and treating it, and watching them respond. You really feel like maybe you've accomplished something," she comments.

Her advice to students is to ask questions and never be afraid to appear dumb. "Don't stand

back." She also recommends studying as much science as possible as soon as possible. For women students, she recommends a specialization because then you can limit your hours more easily.

(Editor's Note: Another Native Alaskan physician, Ronald Brockman, an Aleut, is completing his final year of residency at PHS Hospital in Tacoma, Washington.)

(Reprinted from Association Of American Indian Physicians Newsletter)

Maine Indians follow Alaska suit . . .

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was through education that his people made their first successful bid to control their own destiny.

In 1966 the responsibility for the education of Maine Indians was removed from the state Indian bureau to the Dept. of Education, but many of the tribe feared a fight to locally control schoolboards which the transfer made possible.

"They were afraid they might lose what they had, but we argued, what did we have to lose; We had nothing," Newell recalls. "We were the most isolated of all Indians, and the strongest linguistically and culturally."

In 1970 the Indians won from the Maine legislature the right to control their schools and bilingual education was first on the priority list of Newell's Indian Township.

"We applied for an \$18,000 grant to plan a program and they funded the entire program—\$80,000," Newell recounts. "I was asked to take the job of running it but I wasn't sure I was the right man."

The linguist had dropped out of two schools before winning a degree from Harvard, and had so much difficulty writing, he'd had to talk professors into accepting term papers on a tape recorder.

Still, his thesis had been done on the Passamaquoddy language—a study of an earlier "obituary" of the language done by a white scholar in the 1950s and his interest in carrying on the culture was extreme.

Newell set out to make his program a national bilingual model and he's accomplished that mission. Today linguists come from all over the United States to study his teaching methods and his second graders are doing fourth grade work—in both Passamaquoddy and English.

Yet the future of his culture is not certain.

"It's up to the community—what it wants us to be in another generation," he reasons. "We can be totally assimilated. We can retain what we want of our culture. Or we can go back to 300 years ago."

"This is a crazy, mixed-up

generation. Some say that English is the only academic way. Many feel the language is worth saving—that it is about all we have left of our culture.

"I say, let's develop our kids so they can make better choices than we had a chance to make."

Which ever way they go, the Maine Indians will have a sounder material base from

which to work than in past generations. After gaining control of education, they lobbied Congress for permission to be considered for Indian funds under OEO programs and have just laid groundwork for Bureau of Indian Affairs recognition.

Jobs are still a problem, but most Indian homes now have sewer and water; Indian Town-

ship recently landed a \$2 million housing project through HUD (which Newell heads), and built a \$25,000 commercial campground.

As for their land claims, the eastern Indians have reason to be optimistic.

"Every court decision has gone with us and each judge has written a stronger statement

than the last in our behalf," Newell reports happily. "The governor hasn't gotten the message yet, but I think that day will come soon."



ALASKA NATIVES



1776

While General Washington was leading his troops against the British, approximately 74,000 Eskimos, Indians and Aleuts were living in the land we now call Alaska in much the same way they had for at least eleven centuries. They lived in widely separated communities all over the face of Alaska. Many of them were nomadic, and followed the animals they hunted along the shores of seas and rivers and across land masses. They were rugged, resourceful and proud people.



1876

Almost ten years had passed since the United States had purchased Alaska from the Russians. The Native people of Alaska continued to live off the land much as they had always done, but now a piece of paper said the land belonged to the United States. By the beginning of the twentieth century whalers and traders, miners and missionaries had penetrated to almost every corner of the territory, and things were beginning to change.



1976

Almost five years have passed since the enactment of the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act. The Alaska Native people have regained pride and stature as well as benefiting from land and money made available by the settlement. But the Bureau of Indian Affairs realizes some people have failed to enroll for these benefits and so a second enrollment has begun.

Anyone who is at least 1/4 Alaska Indian, Eskimo or Aleut; who is a U.S. citizen; and who was born on or before December 18, 1971 and living on that date, is eligible for benefits under the Claims Act. You need not live in Alaska or even have been born there. It does not matter if you are adopted, a stepchild or otherwise removed from your family.

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