

I would like to comment briefly on both of the topics. First of all, on education.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we the members of the steering committee of the Alaska Federation of Natives are here to review with you some of the reasons why we feel that a bill for the settlement of the Alaska native land claims should be passed with our suggested amendments. I would like to present some information on education that is related to this subject.

The history of the Indian education programs has been less than desirable ever since its inception. The pendulum has been swinging back and forth between two philosophies—get the Indian off of the reservation; keep the Indian on the reservation—these philosophies have not been little felt in Alaska although we have only one reservation.

The present trend if not halted will drain all aggressive and talented young natives from the native country. This is caused by the distant high schools and vocational training programs not to mention the relocation concept.

I don't think that it is the intent of the Federal Government to destroy a way of life. As President Johnson recently stated that we must encourage some of our people to live on the farm, in rural America. He said also that he intends to go back to the farm himself. We must stop moving people to where the industrial development is and start moving the industry to the people. This is part of the answer to our problem in Alaska.

One of the serious problems on the native education is the separation that has been demanded between the child, the family, and the community. If this practice is permitted to continue we will negate the whole educational progress. We must adhere to the concept of the community school. We must demand and allow participation from the native people in all aspects of the educational process. The community must feel that it too is educating the child and to accept this transmission there must be both bilingualism and cultural pluralism.

When we mute a child's first language we are destroying the system by which the native child thinks and expresses his concepts and intelligence. The native child and the white child are supposed to compete in learning. The white child churns ahead in an undisturbed cognitive linguistic system. The native child must hold up significant cognition until he learns the master communications system—English. This is one of the main reasons why our native students are having a major dropout problem on the university level.

The schools in Greenland faced this problem many years ago. They taught the Eskimo in his own language for the primary grades of this school career then the Danish language was introduced in the fourth year.

There is still a further value in the native tongue and that is that it keeps the personality in a functioning whole and allows for an improved self-identity. One other minor contribution of the native tongue would be that it contributes toward more internalization and educational reasoning. In this case language is considered as culture.

As we examine the record, more and more evidence turns up that quite functionally the child with a whole culture has a greater chance of retaining a whole personality than a child from a lost or fractured