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FROM OVERSEAS -

FINAL REPORT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN POLICY REVIEW COMMISSION

URBAN AND RURAL NON-RESERVATION INDIANS

In 1977, drawing on a series of Task Force reports, the American Indian Policy Review Commission presented to the U.S. Congress its final report.

The following extract relates to the Education Section of the social needs assessment.

I am sure readers in Australia who are concerned with the education of Aboriginal people will find in the report a great deal of interest and of relevance to their own attempts to provide an effective educational service to Australian Aborigines. Readers who would like to discuss the issues further are invited to write to the Editor.

" Conflicts between Indian people and white society regarding the education of Indian children have been historically consistent. Initial attempts to educate or "civilize" the Indian child placed extreme hardship on his parents, the community he lived in and most of all - the child. (See historical review.)

During early periods of Indian-white contact, Indian children were often forcefully taken from their families and delivered to off-reservation schools far from their homelands. There the Indian child faced a series of demoralizing experiences, his hair was cut, his traditional dress taken away - and under fear of punishment- he was prohibited from speaking his native language and practising native religion. Among the most serious of these hardships, however, was the fact that these events occurred outside the control of the Indian parent and when the Indian child returned, he and his parent were all too often cultural strangers.

Testimony after testimony reveals that, by far, the desire to have greater control over the education of his child heads the list of urban Indian educational needs.

Current statistics indicate that Indian educational achievement levels are rapidly catching up with U.S. education levels,⁽¹¹⁾ (See table 5.) but as much of the testimony stresses, this is only a part - be it a significant part of many educational objectives that must be served.

TABLE 5
SCHOOLING COMPLETED, BY AGE AND SEX, FOR U.S. TOTAL;
URBAN AND RURAL INDIANS⁽¹²⁾

Level of schooling completed and age group.	Percent of total population					
	Males			Females		
	United States	Indians		United States	Indians	
		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural
8 years of school or less						
16 to 24	11.0	12.0	23.0	8.0	11.0	19.0
25 to 34	11.0	17.0	35.0	10.0	17.0	34.0
35 to 44	19.0	29.0	52.0	15.0	26.0	48.0
45 to 64	33.0	40.0	63.0	30.0	36.0	60.0
65 and over	61.0	69.0	84.0	55.0	61.0	81.0
High school graduates						
16 to 24	66.0	48.0	26.0	71.0	48.0	30.0
25 to 34	72.0	58.0	39.0	71.0	53.0	36.0
35 to 44	61.0	45.0	25.0	63.0	46.0	24.0
45 to 64	46.0	37.0	19.0	49.0	38.0	19.0
65 and over	24.0	18.0	7.0	29.0	22.0	8.0
4 or more years of college						
16 to 24	6.5	1.9	.1	6.1	1.4	.4
25 to 34	19.0	8.9	3.0	12.1	5.8	1.9
35 to 44	17.5	7.8	2.4	8.9	5.0	1.2
45 to 64	10.8	5.6	2.0	7.1	4.1	1.7
65 and over	6.3	4.1	.6	4.9	3.7	1.1

(11) Urban Indians, in particular, show notable strides. But the figures, when interpreted, reveal that a substantial number of individuals included in the urban high educational attainment count may well be those who migrated to urban communities from rural areas. Comparatively similar enrolment figures between the two groups add significance to such a theory. (See table 7.)

(12) U.S. Bureau of the Census, "1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics, U.S. Summary," PC(1)-D1 "Subject Reports: American Indians" PC(2)-1F.

NOTE: Table 5 reveals that although the percentage of educational attainment levels of urban Indians are better than those of rural Indians, and that in lower levels of education they are catching up with average attainment levels of the U.S. population, the percentage of urban Indian attainment levels falls significantly behind at the high school and college level.

The following are basic needs identified in areas of education:

1) NEED FOR MORE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN EXISTING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

As noted earlier, there have been historical prohibitions on Indian parent involvement in the education of their children. Testimony indicates, however, that these opportunities still form a significant problem.

In urban areas, Indian people seldom find themselves in positions to favorably influence the educational policies and priorities of citywide school boards, district school boards, or State boards of education. Indians in the urban setting are a minority of minorities and have achieved little success in making their needs known.

Special programs targeted for Indian children, Johnson-O'Malley and title IV of the Secondary Education Act of 1972, have begun to provide a wedge in allowing parental involvement, but even these fall short. Among the most common complaints are:

1. Target programs for Indian educational needs have often been mismanaged or misused.
2. Target programs, inadvertently, are beset with complicated policy and regulation.
3. Target program funding is unstable.
4. Target program goals and objectives are predetermined by persons or groups far removed from the Indian community.
5. Target program funding is limited.

Indian parents and community leaders in urban areas have consistently urged that Indian parent committees and administrators of such target programs be given:

1. Technical assistance in understanding complicated regulations and funding processes.
2. Stable funding bases upon which they can be assured of educational continuity for the Indian children participating in the programs, and upon which coordination among other Indian groups can exist without fear of intergroup competition for limited funds.
3. More viable roles in target program policy formation.

Testimonies indicate that obtaining initial funding for target programs can be especially difficult for urban groups. They are often forced into competition with reservation groups, or must seek endorsement from unresponsive educational systems for program implementation. Application for funding has been noted to be of particular difficulty, high levels of expertise and tremendous amounts of energy must be directed toward the application process. As a consequence, fund seeking in and of itself, becomes a priority all too often at the expense of other educational goals.

(2) NEED FOR MORE CHILD CARE CENTERS

With greater proportions of Indians falling in low-income categories, and increasing proportions of female heads of households,⁽¹³⁾ it is no surprise that quality child care centers was a commonly expressed need among urban Indian communities.

Educational statistical reports indicate that although Federal and local preschool programs (Head Start and others) have involved significant numbers of rural Indian community students (See table 6), such programs suffer little use by Indians in urban communities. This deficiency further defines the need for increased opportunity in this area. Preschools and Head Start programs when properly instrumented have provided a means to alleviate problems of language and poor educational adjustment of the minority and indigent child. Eligibility for such programs include children of the urban Indian poor, but urban Indians do not participate to the fullest extent. This may be a result of costly regulation, as some testimony indicates or a result of a desire for specifically Indian-oriented programs.

.....
(13) HEW report, Ibid., p.62. "The disparity between need for and availability of an adequate income for female heads of households is an important issue for Indians, particularly in light of the increase of this type of household in their population."

Nonetheless, as an HEW report states,

On the basis of their high incidence of poverty and language disability the 3- to 4-year-old urban Indians qualify for programs such as Head Start, yet only 11 percent are enrolled in any program.(14)

Administrators of existing child care programs urged that in addition to the need for more adequate funding support, day care centers might well be able to meet current needs were it possible for them to share facilities with existing Bureau of Indian Affairs programs. Particular facility needs include transportation, vehicles, and space.

Furthermore, child care program administrators urged that Indian children be given access to Indian Health Service facilities and services for regular dental checks and physical examinations. The initiation of such good health measures, they stated, would no doubt assure the development of good health maintenance for the child's family as well.

TABLE 6.

ENROLMENT IN SCHOOL FOR PRESCHOOL-AGED INDIANS⁽¹⁵⁾

Population group:	Age 3-4 (percent)
U.S. total	13
Indian total	14
Urban total	11
Rural total	15

Table 6 reveals that attendance in preschool-age level educational programs falls below that of U.S. average and notably below rural Indian average.

Among special day care needs for Indian children reported were:

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(14) Ibid., p.47

(15) U.S.Bureau of the Census,"1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, U.S. Summary," PC(1)-C1: "Detailed characteristics, U.S. Summary," PC(1)-D1; Subject Reports: "American Indians," PC(2)-1F.

- a) Additional audiovisual equipment.
- b) Speech therapy, and special education programs.
- c) Psychological services.

Among special day care program needs reports were:

- a) Increased parental involvement.
- b) Employment of Indian staff, and their subsequent upgrading via formal/informal education programs in child development, family living, day care administration, child health and so forth.

It is important to note that the extent of parental involvement in day care programs in active communities has been twofold:

1. *Child service.* Involves extensive communication between the child's parent, his instructors, and administrative personnel of the center regarding the need of the individual child - his educational, healthful, and emotional growth.
2. *Day care administration and policy formation.* Includes parental involvement in some of the day-to-day administrative concerns. Includes community education activities to involve the Indian parent in a unified community advocacy for the child care center, as well as for related educational needs for his child.

(3) NEED FOR INDIAN CULTURE AWARENESS IN EXISTING EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Indian parents note with much anguish that, in addition to the racial-based harassment many of their children receive from other students in urban public schools, the children are often taught by instructors that are insensitive, poorly informed about Indian heritage and culture, and are basically incompetent to provide such services.

But instructors and fellow-student shortcomings are only a part of the problems Indian students face - as one spokesman states:

The books within the education system still
stereotype us, mock us and tell inaccurate
stories of the American Indians.(16)

.....
(16) Omaha testimony.

Parents indicated a desire for culture awareness programs for the non-Indian, as well as for their own children. Several parents noted that there were sufficient employment opportunities available on reservations, and were it possible for their families to have remained in more traditional Indian communities, the education of their children would have included traditional Indian types of education. These parents, therefore, felt that courses about Indian heritage and culture, at a minimum, should be incorporated into existing educational programming and requirements in public schools attended by Indian children.

Indian parents and administrators urged prompt affirmative action in hiring of teachers, counselors and administrative personnel. They further urged that schools assume more viable roles in seeking special Indian education programs (Johnson-O'Malley: title IV), and in assuring that fair and unbiased textbooks be utilized in the education of their children.

Among course requirements, other than cultural heritage courses, Indian parents urged that supplemental courses in Indian affairs, and reservation policymaking be made available.

Particular counseling needs include: college preparation, financial aide processes and tribal educational grant processes for high school aged students, as well as sensitive personal and academic counseling.

(4) ADULT EDUCATION NEEDS

Although many Indians migrating to urban areas from rural Indian communities are recent high school graduates (see table 7), there are still numerous adults in urban communities that need and desire basic adult education.

Presently, the Bureau of Indian Affairs offers programs in adult basic education on reservations, but educators in urban Indian communities point out that on-reservation programs lack many basic support functions (adequate transportation to and from classes, child care, etc.) and have relatively high per-pupil costs that inhibit the full utilization and development of these programs.

Urban Indian adult education programs, conversely, though in a better position to offer more comprehensive supportive services (child care, transportation, accessibility to facilities, instructors, and so forth) often find themselves ineligible for much-needed BIA funding for textbooks, teacher expenditures, et cetera. Existing

urban Indian adult education classes are overcrowded, and are quickly filled with individuals, often recent arrivals from reservation communities, who desire to improve basic skills in English. As many of these students later return to reservations and then return back to urban areas after periods of brief employment et cetera, urban Indian adult education programs find the need for coordination with similar on-reservation adult education programs essential.(17) But due to current interpretations of on-reservation program policies, this process has been dampened.

TABLE 7.
ENROLMENT IN SCHOOL FOR INDIANS BY AGE (18)
(in percent)

Population Group	Age 3-4	Age 14-17		Age 18-24	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
U.S. total	13	93	92	37	27
Indian total	14	88	86	26	21
Urban total	11	87	86	27	22
Rural total	15	88	86	25	20

Note: Comparisons of the proportions of Indian youth currently enrolled in school in urban and rural areas present a far more positive picture of educational attainments than the college graduate data present. The data, however, also lend support to the theory that there is an exodus from rural areas by young Indians who have completed their basic education.

The rate of enrolment by Indian youth 14-17 years old is virtually the same in both urban and rural areas, indicating that in both these areas young persons are remaining in school at the same rate. Yet a comparison of the years of schooling completed by young Indians living in urban and rural areas shows great disparity. If the disparity is not due to a greater dropout rate among rural Indians - and current enrolment figures suggest that they are not dropping out at a greater rate compared to urban Indians - the imbalance could be explained by the fact that those Indians living in

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(17) Problems associated with this migratory pattern will be discussed in the housing section of this report.

(18) U.S.Bureau of the Census, (1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, U.S.Summary," PC(1)-C1;"Detailed Characteristics, U.S. Summary,"PC(1)-D1; "Subject Reports: American Indians," PC(2)-1F.

rural areas who have completed school have left rural areas for urban locations. By doing so, the overall percentage of high school graduates among rural Indians decreases and the percentage among urban Indians increases.(19)

(5) CONSUMER EDUCATION

Without a doubt, urban Indians, particularly those migrating from rural Indian communities, possess limited information about general day-to-day urban living and this limitation contributes significantly to feelings of powerlessness, and so forth. To some extent the need for consumer education pervades every area of concern under examination by this task force. Particular sections on housing, legal aid, employment, and so forth will attempt to deal with these independently - but such treatment cannot be understated in this general area of concern.

FINDINGS

There is an historical lack of Indian parent participation in the educational processes of Indian children. (See historical summary.)

In urban areas Indian people are seldom in a position to meaningfully influence the educational policies of existing school systems, as Indian parents form a small proportion of the urban population.

A. Parents, in addition, have urged:

1. That they be given technical assistance to enable the development of Indian educational target programs (JOM, title IV), and facilitate parent participation in policy formation and grant processes.
2. That additional facilities for child care be developed and that child health maintenance programs be an integral part of child care programs.
3. That cultural sensitivity and course relevancy be encouraged in existing educational systems.

.....
(19) Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. A Study of Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of Ethnic Minorities Based on the 1970 Census, vol.III, American Indians, p.45.

B. Educational administrators have urged:

1. That Indian adult education programs in urban and rural areas, particularly those servicing bilingual persons, coordinate programs, where feasible, and initiate a sharing of resources.
2. That the development of policies encouraging co-ordinative, rather than competitive efforts between local Indian education target programs be instituted.

C. A variety of findings, as noted in this section (Education) and others (health, housing, employment, etc.) indicates that there is need among urban Indians for sensitive availability of consumer education covering all aspects of urban living.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the establishment of Indian parent groups be encouraged, and

That meaningful technical assistance to aid such groups (1) in applying for Indian target program grants and (2) in approaching existing educational systems regarding particular needs of their children be made available.

That the development of additional child care programs and facilities be encouraged. That health maintenance, services for Indian children, through a cooperative effort of existing Indian Health Services and Public Health clinics, for Indian children be encouraged.

That coordination between rural BIA adult basic education and existing urban Indian adult education programs be developed and that where feasible, this coordination include a sharing of facilities and resources.

That similar coordinating efforts be made regarding Indian education target programs.

That agencies addressing sensitive and meaningful consumer education for Indians be developed and, where already in existence, encouraged. And, that advocacy for funding for such programs, as well as the compilation of data supporting the need for such programs be undertaken by such agent or agency responsible for the care and trusteeship of Indian people."

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