

"SEVERAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WERE FORMERLY BROUGHT UP AT THE COLLEGES OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCES; THEY WERE INSTRUCTED IN ALL YOUR SCIENCE; BUT WHEN THEY CAME BACK TO US, THEY WERE BAD RUNNERS; IGNORANT OF EVERY MEANS OF LIVING IN THE WOODS; UNABLE TO BEAR EITHER COLD OR HUNGER; KNEW NEITHER HOW TO BUILD A CABIN, TAKE A DEER, OR KILL AN ENEMY; SPOKE OUR LANGUAGE IMPERFECTLY; WERE THEREFORE NEITHER FIT FOR HUNTERS, WARRIORS, OR COUNSELORS; THEY WERE TOTALLY GOOD FOR NOTHING. WE ARE HOWEVER NOT THE LESS OBLIGED BY YOUR KIND OFFER, THOUGH WE DECLINE ACCEPTING IT: AND TO SHOW OUR GRATEFUL SENSE OF IT, IF THE GENTLEMEN OF VIRGINIA WILL SEND US A DOZEN OF THEIR SONS, WE WILL TAKE GREAT CARE OF THEIR EDUCATION, INSTRUCT THEM IN ALL WE KNOW, AND MAKE MEN OF THEM."

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REMARKS OF AN IROQUOIS CHIEF
AS QUOTED BY
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 1794.

NOT MUCH HAS CHANGED IN THE EDUCATION OF AMERICAN INDIANS IN NEARLY 200 YEARS. INDIAN PEOPLE ARE STILL TRYING TO MAKE UP 200 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL DEFICITS. MY GRANDMOTHER OFTEN SAID, "GOING TO SCHOOL AND GETTING AN EDUCATION ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS AND THEY DO NOT ALWAYS HAPPEN AT THE SAME TIME." OVER 75% OF INDIAN STUDENTS WILL NOT GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL. LESS THAN 10% OF AMERICAN INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ATTEND COLLEGE AND WITH A FLUNK OUT RATE EXCEEDING 65%. STUDENTS ARE GENERALLY UNDER- PREPARED AND NOT ADEQUATELY READY FOR RIGOROUS DISCIPLINE OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION. THE ATTRITION RATE IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNICAL DISCIPLINES IS OVER 75%. RECENTLY, ON

A WESTERN RESERVATION MANY STUDENTS SIMPLY DID NOT CARE IF THEY EVER LEARNED HOW TO READ AND WRITE. IT DOES NOT TAKE 200 YEARS TO LEARN TO READ & WRITE. THAT IS A FRIGHTENING PROBLEM. MANY INDIANS ARE HEADING FOR THE LINES OF PERMANENTLY UNEMPLOYED--A LIFETIME OF NON-OPPORTUNITY.

EDUCATION IS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR FOR THE SURVIVAL OF INDIAN PEOPLE. LEARNING HOW TO READ AND WRITE IS NOT THAT BIG OF A TRICK. THE MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE THAT ANY INDIAN COMMUNITY HAS IS THE MINDS OF ITS YOUNG PEOPLE. 200 YEARS AGO INDIAN YOUNGSTERS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THEIR ROLE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITY BY THE AGE OF 14 OR 15. THE LESSONS THEY LEARNED WERE CRITICAL TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE TRIBE. IN MY VIEW ALL AMERICAN INDIANS ARE TALENTED & GIFTED. THE CREATOR BESTOWED SPECIAL GIFTS TO INDIAN PEOPLE - DANCE, SONG, SPEAKING, WRITING, ETC. WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE UNLOCK THOSE SPECIAL GIFTS.

NOW MORE OFTEN THAN NOT--MANY EDUCATED NATIVE PEOPLE DO NOT RETURN HOME TO THEIR TRIBES OR ARE ALIENATED FROM THEIR PEOPLE DURING THE EDUCATION PROCESS. THE "BRAIN DRAIN" OF MANY TALENTED TRIBAL MEMBERS AND RESERVATIONS REQUIRES ATTENTION. WE CAN'T EDUCATE OUR OWN PEOPLE TO GET RID OF THEM. TRIBES NEED TO PROVIDE A CLEAR MESSAGE TO ALL STUDENTS THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND THE ROLE THEY WILL PLAY IN THE FUTURE.

DURING THE LAST 20 YEARS THE INDIAN TEENAGE SUICIDE RATE HAS INCREASED 1000%. RESEARCH SHOWS THE MAJOR REASONS ARE THE LACK OF INDIAN ROLE MODELS, FAILURE TO LEARN IN SCHOOLS AND A

DISCONNECTION BETWEEN THEIR TRIBAL TRADITIONS AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.

COMPOUNDING THIS PROBLEM IS DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE. ONE QUICK HISTORY LESSON--200 YEARS AGO INDIANS HAD THE LAND AND THE WHITE GUYS HAD THE BOOZE--NOW WE HAVE THE BOOZE AND THE WHITE GUYS HAVE THE LAND. MY FATHER OFTEN LAMENTED THAT MANY ONEIDAS LOST THEIR LAND AS A RESULT OF BOOZE. THE FACT IS THAT 50 TO 80% OF AMERICAN INDIANS ARE GENETICALLY PREDISPOSED TO ALCOHOLISM. IT IS SOMETHING THAT WE ARE BORN WITH AND THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT. IT IS SIMPLY CHEMICAL - NOT CULTURAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, OR SOCIOLOGICAL. ALCOHOL IS TO AN INDIAN LIKE KRYPTONITE IS TO SUPERMAN. THE GREATEST THREAT TO INDIAN PEOPLE IS INTERNAL - 200 YEARS OF CULTURAL SUICIDE - THE EXTERNAL CHALLENGES CAN BE HANDLED -INTERNAL SELF DESTRUCTION HAS TO BE UNACCEPTABLE.

LET'S LOOK AT SOME VERY ROUGH AND GENERIC ETHNIC COMPARISONS. NORTHERN EUROPEANS ARE 10 TO 15% AT RISK, IRISH PEOPLE ARE 30% AND JEWISH ABOUT 5%. IF THESE STATISTICS WERE REVERSED THE PROHIBITION LAWS WOULD STILL BE IN EFFECT. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOWED THE TRAGEDY OF ALCOHOL ABUSE TO CONTINUE. THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION CONTINUES TO CUT GOVERNMENT FUNDS FOR TREATMENT. IT IS WRONG TO SEE YOUNG INDIAN PEOPLE DRINKING LYSOL ON SOME RESERVATIONS. IT IS WRONG TO SEE YOUNG INDIAN PEOPLE SNIFF TYPEWRITER CORRECTION FLUID (WHITE OUT). IT IS WRONG FOR ONE RESERVATION TO EXPERIENCE 25% OF THE NEWBORNS TO BE STRIKEN WITH FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME. IT CONTINUES TO BE WRONG FOR INDIANS TO

BE IN PRISON FOR ALCOHOL RELATED CRIMES.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IS THAT IF YOU KEEP INDIAN PEOPLE RELATIVELY UNDEREDUCATED AND DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL DEPENDENT WE WILL NEVER GET IN A POSITION TO DEAL WITH TREATY RIGHTS, EFFECTIVE EDUCATION REFORM, HUMAN RIGHTS, HEALTH OR LEGITIMATE SELF-SUFFICIENCY; AND SELF-DETERMINATION WILL REMAIN A DISTANT DREAM.

RECENTLY A STUDY ENTITLED - "A NATION AT RISK" - REVIEWED SCIENCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN 19 INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES. SCIENCE EDUCATION IN AMERICA IS RANKED 15. I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW SOME COMPARISONS WITH OTHER SOVEREIGN NATIONS. JAPAN IS NUMBER ONE. WHAT DO JAPANESE STUDENTS DO DIFFERENTLY. STUDENTS IN JAPAN WILL COMPLETE 60 HOURS OF SCHOOL-RELATED WORK OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL EACH WEEK--THEY ATTEND SCHOOL 5 1/2 DAYS PER WEEK AND ATTEND 240 DAYS PER YEAR. ANOTHER INTERESTING ASPECT IS THAT ORIENTAL STUDENTS TREAT THEIR BOOKS WITH REVERENCE.

BY THE AGE OF 15 INDIAN STUDENTS HAVE WATCHED 18,000 HOURS OF TV AND AN EQUAL AMOUNT OF RADIO. THE ONLY ACTIVITY THAT COMES CLOSE IS SLEEP. STUDENTS ARE CHOOSING TO BE ENTERTAINED AND NOT EDUCATED.

STUDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION WILL COMPLETE CALCULUS IN HIGH SCHOOL. MANY GERMAN STUDENTS SPEAK AND WRITE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE BETTER THAN MOST AMERICANS.

THE SUCCESS OF ANY STUDENT IS DEPENDENT UPON INVOLVEMENT OF THE PARENT OR A KEY ROLE MODEL DURING THE CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING YEARS. THE COMMON THREAD FOR MOST SUCCESSFUL INDIANS IS THAT THEY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT MENTOR--SOMEONE WHO REALLY BELIEVES IN THEM. WE NEED TO DO MORE RESEARCH ON WHAT MAKES SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS SUCCESSFUL RATHER THAN ANALYZING THE CHARACTERISTICS FOR FAILURE. THIS IS A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT. THE CHALLENGE IS GETTING PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES. - IF YOU BELIEVED IN YOURSELF YOU CAN MAKE IN SPITE OF THE SYSTEM. MY FAVORITE QUOTE IS BY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT -" YOU CAN ONLY BE INFERIOR IF YOU GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION" - WE ARE DONE GIVING PERMISSION.

THE BIA IS CURRENTLY EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF TURNING THE BOARDING SCHOOLS INTO INSTITUTIONS OF EXCELLENCE; MAGNET SCHOOLS IN SCIENCE, FINE ARTS, HEALTH AND A SCHOOL TO HANDLE SPECIAL NEED STUDENTS. WE ALREADY HAVE A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS FOR PRIVATE PREP ACADEMIES. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE IS INTENAL AT THE BIA AND INDIAN PEOPLE WHO RESIST CHANGE.

TRIBES NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LONG-TERM INVESTMENT WE CAN MAKE. OFTEN TIMES

TRIBAL RHETORIC SUPPORTING EDUCATION IS JUST TALK. BEHAVIOR, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT ARE VITAL AND MUST BE CONSISTENT.

WITHOUT AN EDUCATION INDIAN PEOPLE WILL HAVE FEW CHOICES FOR

SELF-DETERMINATION AND ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY. EDUCATION IS A

POLITICAL ACT.

IN THE FUTURE, TRIBES WILL BE REQUIRED TO CHART A COURSE OF EXCELLENCE. INDIAN PEOPLE SHOULD NOT ACCEPT INADEQUATE OR MEDIOCRE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE SHOULD BE DESIGNED BY TRIBAL MEMBERS AND FULLY SUPPORTED BY THE TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS. AS TRIBES SEEK STRATEGIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--THE LEADERSHIP WILL NEED TO CONSIDER LONG-TERM MANPOWER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS NECESSARY FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE ONEIDA TRIBE COULD OFFER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS FOR THOSE PURSUING DEGREES IN HOTEL MANAGEMENT, ACCOUNTING AND OTHER RELATED PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH THE HOTEL EMPLOYMENT NEEDS. THE TRIBAL LONG-RANGE PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS NEED TO COMPLIMENT EACH OTHER. THIS WILL THEN PROVIDE A CLEAR MESSAGE AS TO WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO TRIBAL MEMBERS AND ALSO AFFORD AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MANY OF OUR PEOPLE TO RETURN HOME AND APPLY THEIR LEARNED SKILLS AND EDUCATION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES.

A SENECA CHIEF COMMENTED IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, "WE WANT THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS FOR OUR CHILDREN--THE HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND BEST OF OUR TRADITIONAL VALUES--THIS WILL INSURE THE SUCCESS AND SURVIVAL OF OUR PEOPLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY." WE CAN'T LET OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION INTERFERE WITH THEIR THINKING AS INDIAN PEOPLE.

THE PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS ARE INTERCONNECTED. WE NEED TO USE

THE WISDOM OF THE PAST--KEEPING IN MIND THE REVERENCE FOR THE
LAND AND UTILIZE AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT MEETS OUR NEEDS. I
LEAVE YOU WITH ONE THOUGHT--NO ONE IS GOING TO SAVE US BUT US.