

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 292

RC 006 988

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TITLE The History of the Education of the Alaskan
Eskimo.
PUB DATE Apr 73
NOTE 40p.; Paper presented at the Northeast
Anthropological Association Meeting, Burlington,
Vermont, April 1973

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; *Cultural Background; Economic
Factors; *Educational History; *Eskimos; Industry;
*Living Standards
IDENTIFIERS Alaska; BIA; *Bureau of Indian Affairs

ABSTRACT

The development of formal education for the Alaskan Eskimo was traced back to the 1799 schools operated by the Russian American Company through the current expansion of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. It was maintained that the growth of these educational institutions undermined traditional Eskimo values, self respect and confidence, and general modes of living. Recent attempts to correct this dilemma using Eskimo legends and the Arctic physical and social environment were described. This paper also focuses upon the Eskimo's future, using industry and natural resources. A few recommendations for effecting change are offered, such as: (1) formal education should be of the highest quality; and (2) teachers should be Native or at least Alaskan and preferably teach in the Native tongue in lower elementary grade levels. (Author/FF)

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THE HISTORY OF THE EDUCATION OF THE ALASKAN ESKIMO¹

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Paper presented at the Northeast Anthropological
Association meeting, Burlington, Vermont, April
1973.

RC006988

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THE HISTORY OF THE EDUCATION OF THE ALASKAN ESKIMO
(abstract)

The development of formal education for the Eskimo of Alaska is traced from the emergence in 1799 of schools operated by the Russian American Company through the expansion of Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) schools to the present time. It is maintained that the growth of these educational institutions has functioned to undermine traditional Eskimo values, personal self-respect and confidence, and their general mode of living. Some recent attempts to correct this dilemma will be described. The paper also focuses upon the future of Eskimo life in terms of industry and natural resources. Some recommendations for effecting change are offered.

Scene: Summer, 1918 Alaska
Eskimo gathered at reindeer fair.
Commencement of ceremonies
saluting the flag
Singing of "My Country 'Tis of Thee"

"It was exceedingly impressive to see old, decrepit Eskimos, men and women struggle to their feet and hold that salute. I noticed some of the old folks, who did not thoroughly understand the salute, holding their hand over their eyes and I saw their lips move, as in prayer. There are no people who love and honor the Government more than do the Eskimos."

(Anonymous 1919:356)

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"The (B.I.A.) has been the single most retarding influence on Native people because of its desire to perpetuate itself and keep the Natives as wards."

- former Alaskan Governor and U.S. Senator Ernest Gruening as quoted in Movitz (1969:12).

*

"What's come out of this is that Eskimos are people. The anthropologists want to keep them apart and study them, the politicians want to use them, the big companies want to exploit them or ignore them. Suddenly, they're appearing here, militant, and against all the clichés."

- Prof. G.W. Rogers in the New York Times (1969:2).

• Anthropologists have traditionally been keenly interested in the Eskimo. Certainly, it seemed strange for Franz Boas et. al. that such a "primitive" people as the Eskimo should have been able to have such an advanced technology as to be able to survive an Arctic winter. Perhaps it was this apparent paradox which led so many anthropologists to journey northward in search of an answer.

Today, anthropologists are still involved with the Eskimo, but the emphasis has shifted somewhat from an analysis of the material culture to an examination of patterns of culture change, and psychological adjustment to acculturative factors. This shift in interest has been more one of necessity than one of mere fashion, since the Eskimo over the past few decades have changed drastically. In short, most no longer live as they once did. Indeed, most young Eskimo do not think, in both terms of content and cognitive structure, the same way as do their parents! This difference is not one of degree but of kind.

The Eskimo are geographically split into parts of four different nations. The 80,000 Eskimo are found in the eastern edge of the Soviet Union's Siberia, the western and northern rim of the U.S.A.'s Alaska, the north of Canada, and Denmark's

Greenland (New York Times 1969:2). The governmental goals for the Eskimo are to be, respectively, well-aculturated Soviets, Americans, Canadians, and Danes. Greater governmental aid by the Soviet Union and Denmark has succeeded in transforming the Eskimo into better Soviets and Danes than Americans or Canadians (Hughes 1965). Now, however, the Eskimo are beginning to seek an end to the idea of total assimilation without, at the same time, being deprived of the accessibility to Western goods (New York Times 1969:2). The young Eskimo, in particular, wants what Western technology has to offer without losing his or her identity as an Eskimo. It is this challenge, their most dramatic and crucial, which faces the Eskimo today.

This paper shall be limited only to those Eskimo presently living in Alaska, and be focused upon processes of education. It is the Alaskan Eskimo who face the most uncertain of futures in the coming few years, and it has been their system of formal education which has produced the greatest cognitive alteration in the past and will most likely continue to do so.

Alaska is a vast land mass of more than a half million square miles of mostly tundra. Indigenously, the population is comprised of four groups: 1) the 5700 highly acculturated Aleuts, an Eskimo-like people, of the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands, 2) the also highly acculturated Haida/Tlingit Indian group of the southeastern part of Alaska near the state capital, Juneau, 3) the considerably less acculturated Athabaskan Indians who range into the interior of Alaska even above the Arctic Circle to the Brooks Range, and 4) the least acculturated 25-30,000 Eskimo whose villages dot the coastlines

of the Bering Sea, the lower Yukon River, and the Arctic Ocean and slightly into the interior (Chance 1966). These 60,000 Alaskan Natives form only one-fifth of the state's total population (New York Times 1970b:12; Bylin 1971:24). The remaining 80% are whites with the highest per capita income in the nation (Movitz 1969:8). This is the essence of the socioeconomic paradox of America's rapidly closing last frontier.

We shall begin with a brief chronological history of institutionalized education among the Alaskan Eskimo and then continue into an examination of what the problems are now and what, if anything, is being done to combat them. Specific proposals will later be offered. It should be remembered throughout that the relationship between the Eskimo and whites has been characterized as one of both exploitation and neglect (Mendelsohn 1967:728). Fortunately for the Eskimo, this relationship has been characterized more by the latter than by the former.

The culture history of the Eskimo obviously did not begin with the first recorded white contact, but certainly with the beginnings of Eskimo culture itself. Since we are here concerned exclusively with the formal aspects of Eskimo education, we shall deal only with the Eskimo after initial culture contact.

It was in 1741 that this occurred between the Russians and the Aleuts (pronounced "Al'-ee-oots"; Ray 1968:22; Gubser 1965). Initially, contact was friendly as they traded furs for material goods, but by the end of the eighteenth century, the Russians began to use the Natives for their own exploitive purposes virtually destroying traditional Aleut culture and

decimating their numbers (Gubser 1965). The Russian American Company began in 1799 establishing schools for the natives of southwest Alaska (*ibid.*; Novitz 1969:8). The Russian Orthodox Church also established some missionary schools. These closed, however, when Alaska was sold to the U.S.A. in 1867 for an inexpensive, even for them, \$7½ million. The reason the Russians sold the land mass to Seward was not for the money so much, but rather to drive the U.S.A. as a wedge between Siberia and England's Canada and foster antagonism between the two English-speaking nations (Gubser 1965). It should be noted that while the Russian missionary and company schools closed, the Russian Orthodox Church continued and is still vital in the community life of some Native villages in southwestern Alaska even today (Oswalt 1961:11)!

A missionary once declared: "The Russians gave them ...schools and the Greek religion, ...the only thing the United States has done for them has been to introduce whiskey" (Smith 1967:440). By and large, for seventeen years until 1884, when the U.S. Bureau of Education under the direction of Sheldon Jackson was finally awarded a meager \$25,000 for the education of all the Natives of Alaska, this was quite true (Anonymous 1959:28). Culturally, the Eskimo, having devised a set of sophisticated material tools for the severity of Arctic life, were always interested in how things worked (Gubser 1965). Indeed, it would not be wrong to suggest that informal Eskimo education is heavily occupied with the techniques for mechanical design (Hamilton 1931:145). It is little wonder that initial contacts with Eskimo north of Nome was one of heavy trading.

At first the Eskimo were fearful of the Arctic explorers' intentions. But once trading began the Eskimo exhibited an excited curiosity as to how these Western implements operated. This curiosity and strong desire to trade furs for Western goods eventually led to a large-scale decimation of fur-bearing animals and to a dramatic alteration of Eskimo material culture (ibid.).

New England whalers started up the coast of the Bering Sea as early as the 1850's. By the early 1880's the numbers of whites in search for the economically lucrative whale had grown enormously (Chance 1966). With temporary summer jobs for Eskimo along the western and northern coastlines, they also brought tuberculosis, influenza, syphilis, other diseases for which they had no natural immunity, and alcohol (ibid.; Wolman 1969:609). The number of Eskimo rapidly dwindled. The native population did not reverse this downward trend until 1912 (Gubser 1965).

Sheldon Jackson, a Presbyterian minister, felt it necessary for the Eskimo to be taught about God. To do this, however, they would have to know English. With the help of the U.S. Commissioner of Education John Eaton, who began pressuring for federal appropriations for education in Alaska as early as 1870 to no avail, Jackson finally succeeded in establishing the U.S. Bureau of Education in Alaska for which the educating of the Alaskan Natives became its primary task. Jackson soon consolidated all political power under himself and ruled the bureau rather like "Napoleon" (q.v. Smith 1967:141). At first all of the teachers were missionaries also, but their

interests turned increasingly secular as they faced the difficult task of teaching their students English so that they could read (e.g., the Bible, etc.) and mathematics so that they could transact business at the village trading store. Jackson stated his imperialistic intentions clearly: "If the natives of Alaska could be taught the English language, be brought under Christian influences by the missionaries and trained into forms of industry suitable for the territory, it seems to follow as a necessary result that the white population of Alaska, composed of immigrants from the States, would be able to employ them in their pursuits, using their labor to assist in mining, transportation, and the producing of food When the native has thus become useful to the white man, he has become a permanent stay and prop to civilization, and his future is provided for!" (Smith 1967:442). Jackson urged all his teachers to bring with them copies of Dickens, Shakespeare and the like. It was to the Eskimo's great fortune that Congress never appropriated more than \$50,000 during Jackson's reign, holding down all negative effects to a minimum (ibid.).

In 1892, Jackson decided to bring the Eskimo one stage up toward civilization from "savage" hunting to "barbaric" pastoral (Hamilton 1931:143). It would not have been too unlikely if Jackson had been influenced by L.H. Moran's Ancient Society, published fifteen years earlier. He began importing reindeer from Siberia with at first Chuckchi and later Lap^{land} herders to teach the Eskimo how to herd the animals (Hughes 1965:29). This program of importing reindeer continued for a decade (Smith 1967: 444). Eventually, the herds grew to 600,000 by

1930 and were mostly Eskimo-owned. However, perhaps through over-grazing, mis-management, or some other possibility, the number dwindled down to 25,000 by 1950 (*ibid.*). There now are 50,000 reindeer in Alaska (Chance 1966).

At the turn of the century the whaling industry was rapidly dying, just as some of the Eskimo were getting a foothold into the operations, due to over-hunting of the whales (Chance 1966). Simultaneously though, gold had been discovered in western Alaska, and Nome, an Eskimo community on the Bering coast, was rapidly transformed into a bustling Klondike town of 20,000 prospectors and prostitutes (Clark 1951:402). The gold rush also brought young families with children who clamoured for a good educational system. They despised Jackson who seemed to be wasting funds supposedly ear-marked for education on reindeer (Smith 1967:445).

Under pressure from these new white families, Congress passed a law in 1900 enabling school districts to be incorporated within so-called "cities" (Henderson 1931:408). Territorial schools thus began on a local level. By 1905, the Bureau of Education became involved exclusively with Natives (*ibid.*). In the following year, Jackson was finally replaced (Smith 1967:445). The period of the "white man's burden" came to a halt; the period of bureaucratic paternalism and over-protectionism of the Eskimo was to begin (*ibid.*:446).

With Jackson, who many in Congress considered to be a religious fanatic, out of the way and with Alaska on the verge of becoming an official territory, which it did in 1912 when the Organic Act created Alaska's legislature, Congress

was prepared to spend considerably more for the health, education, and industry of the Native (ibid.; Henderson 1931:408). The name of the bureau was changed to the U.S. Office of Education and by 1914 every Eskimo village of 100 or more people had a school (Jenness 1962:13). Professional teachers were being replaced by the secular missionaries. The Eskimo were thrown into a situation which has proven to be more involving, more totally engrossing, and from which there was to be no turning back. Nor perhaps could there ever be, at least at this present point. The Eskimo could withstand the onslaught of Western technology in their midst; they could continue with their numbers cut in half by foreign diseases; they could even cope with a wide-scale decimation of the large game herds and seal from which they subsisted (Hughes 1965:30); but no culture could remain intact when a consciously-designed and carefully carried out program bent on sending in white agents to each community to change the way their children think continues year after year (Carlson 1966). The white teacher teaches the children Western skills not in addition to but in replacement of Eskimo skills; Western patterns of thinking is engrained into the minds of the Eskimo youth in place of, rather than as well as, Eskimo patterns of thinking. It is to this point which we shall later return.

The prohibition on territorial legislation of education was removed in 1917 and the Uniform School Act was immediately drawn up which created the Territorial Board of Education with a commissioner of education (Henderson 1931:408). The bill also opened up the Alaska Agricultural College and the

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School of Mines which was later to become the University of Alaska located in the town of College, four miles from Fairbanks, in the Athabaskan heartland. It was not until considerably afterwards that any teachers education program, even on the smallest scale, would be instituted (Tiffany 1958:9)

The 1920's was a period of relative prosperity for a few Eskimo. The reindeer herds were still growing and a sudden market had developed for fox pelts (Chance 1966). At the same time, however, the decimation of the inland caribou herds had driven the least acculturated Eskimo of the Brooks Range up to the north coast (Gubser 1965). Indeed, the combination of uncommonly severe weather and few seal and walrus to hunt led the villagers of Little Diomed Island, only $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Soviet Union, to hang to death their two shamans! According to all accounts the weather did improve afterward and the seal and walrus returned (Carlson 1966:105-106).

The supervision of the reindeer herds was shifted to the Alaskan governor's office in 1929, and two years later the entire Alaskan Division was removed from the Office of Education and placed under the control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (Smith 1967:446). If the 1920's held out a glimmer of hope for the Eskimo, the 1930's certainly destroyed it. The reindeer herds previously mentioned dramatically reduced. The fox pelt industry collapsed. The winters seemed yet more severe. The Depression did not permit for any Alaskan development. With significantly less game to hunt, the search for food was considerably more difficult. It was lean times for the Eskimo, too (Chance 1966).

The 1940's and early 1950's brought a drastic alteration in the folklore of most Eskimo as seasonal and permanent construction and maintenance job opportunities were opened with the advent of U.S. military bases during World War II and later, with DEW-line bases during the "Cold War" (ibid.). Many Eskimo moved with their families to the larger towns and villages such as Barrow, Nome, and so forth in search of job opportunities (Hughes 1965:30). Frequently, they would also take the family back into the interior to camps during each summer to hunt and fish when game was most plentiful and daylight above the Arctic Circle continuous (Chance 1966). The interaction between Eskimo and military personnel had an enormous effect upon traditional community social structure (ibid.).

Today, the Eskimo are primarily within a market economy, although many continue to hunt and fish during the summer months. In Point Barrow, the most northern town in Alaska with an Eskimo population of 1,350, for example, there are pool halls, a movie theater, numerous stores, and widespread usage of mailorder catalogues (ibid.). Snowmobiles have replaced dog sleds and recording tapes is a favorite pastime. Teenagers learn to dance the latest North American songs and social visiting may go on until all hours of the morning (ibid.). The Eskimo people have apparently been divided into two distinct "cultures": one roughly over thirty, and the other under thirty! The gap between generations, in terms of cognition, technology, and behavior, is more of an abyss than a mere gap (q.v. ibid.).

But in terms of economic differentiation a more profound gulf is the one that divides the Eskimo and other Natives from the Alaskan whites. It is not untypical for there to

be, as is actually the case in the village of Golovin (70 miles from Nome), a white-owned salmon factory on the edge of an Eskimo village which with a loan from the Small Business Administration refuses to hire any village residents but would rather bring in whites from Anchorage to operate the factory, and keeps the factory open for only one month of the year rather than four or five months when fish continue to pass through in order that it may make a quick profit (New York Times 1970a:37). In other words, private industry in north and western Alaska is not only very rare, but even where it does exist it is usually only highly seasonal and would employ few Eskimo. All but unskilled jobs, of course, require some degree of good education. It is on this level that the Eskimo has most been failed by the superstructures of white America. White education promised the Eskimo better living conditions, an abundance of Western goods, and greater general happiness. But for the most part it has delivered only a destruction of the traditional culture, a worsening in the living conditions, and increase in general misery (q.v. Movitz 1969:8,12). Essentially, the task of "civilizing" the Eskimo through Western education, which could be equally and correctly termed subverting the traditional culture for our own imperialistic purposes, has been hopelessly bungled by sheer incompetence and mismanagement in the BIA (ibid.:12).

This paradox was first made clear by a report on Alaskan Native education issued by Charles K. Ray in 1959, the same year, incidently, when Alaska was admitted as the 49th state, after a three-year study (Anonymous 1959:29). Among the

conclusions reached were that Natives are far behind whites in verbal skills. Natives do worse in academic achievement and psychological adjustment when put into schools with non-Natives (ibid.). Consequently, it's better to be separate if unequal! Among the other findings of the study are that forty per cent of the Natives are over the average age for their level of education. Promotion is based upon ability to speak, read and write English, not Eskimo. English and math are the worst subjects for the Native. General qualifications of teachers were found to be unsatisfactory. Facilities were inadequate. There was only one overcrowded government boarding high school, which was forced to reject two out of three new applicants for the 1958-59 school year, being maintained in all of Alaska. This bottleneck on the secondary educational level adversely affected the elementary and higher educational levels (ibid.).

Ray further indicated, "Native parents have higher educational aspirations for their children than do many teachers. Over fifty per cent of the teachers questioned felt that a high school education was not necessary for Native students" (ibid.). Moreover, many teachers were ill-equipped to deal with the very special situation of teaching in a community where they may be the only white isolated in a frozen tundra. Rapid teacher turnover, oversized classes, an excessive teacher load, substandard and inadequate school buildings, and the use of textbooks in English geared for North American suburbs were some of the other problems pointed out (ibid.). The Ray report recommended such things as instituting vocational

education, replacing poor or ill-equipped teachers, lengthening the school year, constructing cottage-type housing facilities for high school students, and advocated designing new educational materials concerned with the Native environment and their daily life (ibid.:30). The proposals were relatively mild in terms of what actually needs to and needed then to be done, but they were extremely significant since they were the first such proposals which were ever brought to any public attention and they encouraged numerous other examinations of the education of the Alaskan Natives to occur.

To take one of the problems pointed to by the Ray report as an example (i.e.:that of using English texts for Eskimo children) we shall examine why the Eskimo child is irrevocably handicapped from the very start. I will quote extensively from an excellently written and quite poignant passage from Jones (1971:200) who has quoted from an article in the Anchorage Daily News ("The Village People," 1966) which was taken from Salisbury (1966:62).

"(the student) enters a completely foreign setting - the western classroom situation. His teacher is likely to be a Caucasian who knows little or nothing about his cultural background. He is taught to read the 'Dick and Jane' series.

Many things confuse him: Dick and Jane are two white children who play together constantly. Yet, he knows that boys and girls do not play together and do not share toys. They have a dog named Spot who runs around yapping and does not work. They have a father who leaves for some mysterious place called 'office' each day and never brings any food home with him. He drives a machine called an automobile on a hard covered road called a street which has a policeman on each corner. These policemen always smile, wear funny clothing and spend their time helping children cross the street. Why do these children need this help?

Dick and Jane's mother spends a lot of time in the kitchen cooking a strange food called 'cookies' on a

stove which has no flame.

But the most bewildering part is yet to come. One day they drive out to the country which is a place where Dick and Jane's grandparents are kept. They do not live with the family and they are so glad to see Dick and Jane that one is certain they have been ostracized from the rest of the family for some terrible reason.

The old people live on something called a 'farm' which is a place where many strange animals are kept - a peculiar beast called a 'cow,' some odd looking birds called 'chickens' which don't seem to fly, and a 'horse' which looks like a deformed moose.

And so on. For the next twelve years the process goes on. The native child continues to learn this new language which is of no earthly use to him at home and which seems completely unrelated to the world of sky, birds, snow, ice and tundra which he sees around him."

It is not just the Dick and Jane readers which are so ludicrously irrelevant to Eskimo life. Most textbooks used in both elementary and secondary BIA schools make no reference at all of the Eskimo. Those which do, however, make only scant mention of them in passing and are usually grossly distorted, dated, ethnically libelous, or simply untrue. The only mention of the Eskimo in Knowing Our Neighbors Around the Earth by N.Carls, E.M.Templin, and F.E.Sorenson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1966:94) is that they eat seaweed (Anonymous 1971:45-46)! Whether this has ever been an activity of any group of Alaskan Eskimo is certainly dubious. Most assuredly, no Eskimo in Alaska eats seaweed today.

A passage from Exploring Our Country by O.S.Hamer, D.W. Follet, B.Ahlschwede and H.H.Gross (Chicago: Follett; 1962: 364) reads: "'At the Eskimo village everyone rushes to greet us. We tell the American schoolteacher and his wife that we have come to see how the Eskimos live. The first Eskimo home we visit is a skin tent. This is a summer house...Inside the house is a seal oil lamp used for light and heat and cooking.'"

This was justifiably criticized by a report presented to a Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education (a person who is at least one-fourth Eskimo is considered a legal "Indian" by the U.S. Government). It began, "This is probably the worst case of discrimination against the Eskimos.... Why do the authors differentiate between the American school-teacher and the Eskimos; are not the Eskimos also Americans? This story is supposed to have taken place at Point Barrow, Alaska. In this large, bustling town, Natives are more likely to cook on conventional stoves. Despite a later insinuation in the text, these people know of electricity, telephones and normal canned and dried foodstuffs. They buy a great many of their clothes and household items through mailorder houses. They do not depend entirely on whales, walruses and seals as the authors would have the reader believe" (Anonymous 1971:46; also cf. Chance 1966). The most horrifying thing about such passages as these are that they are from textbooks which not only mislead and instill prejudices in the white children who may read them, but that these are the required texts for Eskimo children. What sort of ethnic respect may be retained by an impressionable Eskimo child who is told to read this nonsense? It can only serve to confuse the child struggling with a foreign language (i.e.:English) and to detract from their sense of self-respect and pride in their culture.

Textbook bias does not exist only on the elementary school level but in the B.I.A. high schools as well. A typical example of how a modern publishing firm can put out a book with eighty year old inaccurate (in the sense that only the

Canadian Eskimo built snowhouses) data combined with a ninety year old anthropological theory of human evolution is Geography of the World by L.O.Packard, B.Overten and B.D.Wood (Macmillan Co.:New York; 1959:58). It unabashedly declares, "'Primitive peoples take from the earth what happens to be found in the regions in which they live. The Eskimos and the Lapps obtain all the necessities of their simple lives from the animals of the locality. To this they may add a crude shelter of stones or skins or blocks of snow."

These and other passages tend to tell more of the ethnocience of white attitudes toward the Eskimo than about the life of the Eskimo. The white conception of an Eskimo, as established in today's Western media and as originally conceived in the 1930's and 1940's in the elementary classrooms of North America (q.v. examples of what was taught in old issues of School Arts Magazine, Grade Teacher, The Instructor, American Childhood, et.al.), is one of a cuddly, furry being who keep rubbing their noses together..While this is certainly a more benign conception than the Bonanzaland, 'the-only-good-Indian-is-a-dead-Indian' conception of the Alaskan Indian, it is a fundamentally unreal and dehumanized one. The Eskimo high school student of today has it one over his Athabascan counterpart with the following false white conception: "'The hunting people of the Alaskan interior (Indians) are not particularly notable, but the Eskimo along the coast had made remarkable adjustments to a forbidding climate" (quoted from Land of the Free (sic.) by J.W.Caughey, J.H.Franklin and E.R.May; New York: Benzinger Brothers; 1967:44 in Anonymous 1971:47). White attitudes have uncessingly dictated, up until only the past very few years with the rise of 'Indian

Power', that all Indians be feather-bonneted, face-painted, innately evil, and run around half-naked taking scalps. For this reason, the Eskimo, who were always depicted fully clothed and peaceful though merely caricatured representations of what they actually were, may have been slightly spared some of the more heinous atrocities inflicted upon the Athabaskan.

Besides textbook bias, besides the fact that the texts are written in English, rather than Eskimo, besides the fact that these texts are also completely irrelevant to Eskimo habitat, culture or society, the moral bankruptcy of the situation, in terms of political autonomy and psychological independence, comes through most clearly when we examine the nature of the formal educational structure itself. To begin with, most teachers are neither Eskimo nor Alaskan. They are white and recruited from the continental U.S., usually one of the Pacific Northwest states (Tiffany 1958:9; Ray 1968:22). They are often idealistic 'young marrieds', but frequently ill-prepared for the environmental and cultural shock of this 'nether-world' of sub-zero temperatures and perpetual winter darkness (Tiffany 1958:9; Carlson 1966). Many respond by insulating themselves from the community, or conversely, demand that their will be forcibly placed upon all. It is, unfortunately, the rarer one who allows his or her situation to be turned into an opportunity for mutual growth. This dilemma is often compounded by the occasional female teacher in search for a husband in Alaska where the male/female ratio is still quite high (Tiffany 1958:10).

What is most striking is the differentiation in life styles between the white teacher and the Eskimo. The average

salary paid to teachers in Alaska is \$13,570 per year (New York Times 1972:2). This is by far the highest average salary paid teachers in the U.S.A. (which is \$9,265), though it must be indicated that the standard of living is 25% higher in Alaska than it is for the 'lower 49' and as much as 74% higher in the more remote sections of north Alaska (Movitz 1969:8). Only Hawaii and New York City approach the cost of living found in Alaska. However, the contrast between the white B.I.A. teacher and the Eskimo is an ever-present reminder to the Eskimo of their relatively lowly position. The large, multi-roomed, brightly-painted, well-constructed, heated school house with hot and cold running water, an automatic towel dispenser and usually the only flush toilet in the village contrasts dramatically with the gray, one-roomed hovels made from driftwood, if available, or scrap metal salvaged from military base dumps which are built for the average family of seven (Chance 1966; Oswalt 1961:11; Hamilton 1931:143; Wolman 1969:609; Johnson 1965:194; Movitz 1969:6). Incidentally, the U.S. Government has subsidized a plan to build fabricated homes for the Eskimo, but it is the very rare family that can afford the \$9,500 that it would cost (Movitz 1969:6). The average Eskimo family earns from \$1,000-\$2,000 per year (New York Times 1970:12; Movitz 1969:8). It is little wonder that 25% of all Natives are de facto forced onto welfare and another 25% collect unemployment insurance during the summer hunting and fishing months (Movitz 1969:8). Indeed, some estimates have placed the total figure for the Eskimo at as much as 85% of the total Alaskan Eskimo population (cited in the NRC

television special: "The Ice People," 1970). Meanwhile, the white teacher is provided with pleasant living conditions and numerous other fringe benefits by the B.I.A. (Ray 1968:24). As a matter of fact, many teachers own and operate their own private airplanes in the more remote villages (ibid.:23)!

The obvious question, with such an inequality in modes of living between the Eskimo and the white teacher sent in from the outside and with such a strong sense of egalitarianism as is found among the Eskimo, is why don't they kick the rascal out? Why do they permit such an unequal setup to continue? The answer seems to lie in the very nature of Eskimo life itself. In search of this answer, we shall now briefly look at the Eskimo community as it presently exists.

The range of variations in size and distinguishing characteristics of Eskimo communities is enormous. They may range from a settlement with very few families to a bustling town like Nome, which is only half Eskimo in population composition. However, we may make several generalizations. Eskimo villages over the past few decades have become fewer in total number, more permanent, and larger in size. Each village usually has a cooperative trading store, a church, and a school building. The school has numerous functions. It is often used by the public health nurses, and occasional doctors and dentists who may be passing through. The short-wave radio, which is constantly in use for various inter-village communicative purposes, is kept in the school house. Frequently, village organizational meetings and social events such as a community dance are held there, as well. Consequently, the school house

has become the focal point of community life for adults as well as children. In many respects, it has replaced the karigi, or men's ceremonial house.

Similarly, the B.I.A. teacher has replaced the shaman. It was the shaman who wielded any power in traditional Eskimo life. It was he who was greatly feared by the populace. Likewise, it is the white teacher who knows what the books that their children are being taught say. It is he who has intimate knowledge and accessibility toward all of western technology. Indeed, it is also he who knows how to operate the short-wave radio to contact a doctor (re: shaman) in times of illness or a sudden emergency. It is he who carries a first-aid kit. Subsequently, the teacher is frequently called upon by the community to act as an arbitrator, to settle disputes, and to solve the unsolved. In other words, rather than rejecting his authority, the adults come to place him in a position of, if not esteem, awe! This, however, may be on the verge of changing with the growth of Alaskan Native nationalism, particularly among recent Eskimo high school graduates and college students and dropouts, as we shall note below.

The B.I.A. teacher, who often teaches two or three grades in one class and often works on a double shift with grades one to four in the morning session and grades five to eight in the afternoon due to overcrowding and an insufficient teaching staff, does not teach high school students. When Eskimo adolescents finish the eighth grade, they leave home for four years and travel usually thousands of miles to one of the

few highly regimented high school boarding schools never to see their friends, parents, or community until they either fail or graduate. Regimentation is antithetical to Eskimo values, but the rule at these schools. In speaking of ethnic self-respect, a group of Eskimo high school graduates said: "When they don't trust us in high school..., we don't trust ourselves....You bathe at a certain hour...you eat at a certain time...you must go to the library at a certain time...you get your mail at a certain time...they lead us around by the hand...we want to grow up but they won't let us...."

Then came the all-too-poignant realization: "It's the same thing with our parents...they won't let them grow up either.' For 'they', we can substitute the government, the schools, the missionaries, in short, the Establishment" (Salisbury 1966:66).

Of those Eskimo who go to school, 60% graduate the eighth grade and 28% graduate high school (1966:63). When the male high school graduate returns home he rarely stays for long. He is of no use to his father since he cannot hunt or fish and he begins to lose status in the village. The same also applies to the female who returns home. She is no longer skilled at skinning animals, cooking, and making clothing. Other village girls may think she has become too good for them. Thus, Eskimo high school graduates become marginal people. They are trapped; they are victims of two cultures. They cannot remain at home with nothing they can adequately do. Nor can they attain a good job in a city with only a high school degree from a B.I.A. institution. Consequently, many go on to college. Indeed,

one-eighth of 1965's entering freshmen were Natives, and predominantly Eskimo, on B.I.A. scholarships.

but while many enter college, few remain to graduate. The Native is twice as likely to drop out. Indeed, over 50% do drop out in their first year. While 28% of the Eskimo, as previously mentioned, do graduate high school, only 2% graduate college. This may be a result of the fact that, besides competing against whites in a white cultural milieu which utilizes the English language exclusively, the Eskimo are brought up to cooperate rather than compete. Arctic survival has necessitated that the aboriginal Eskimo share, reciprocate and genuinely cooperate with their peers, instead of engaging in activities of a more competitive nature. It is one thing for modern Eskimo teenagers to cooperate with each other in an all-Native high school. It is quite another thing for those Eskimo who do graduate high school to be placed in a mostly white college where scholastic survival is based on the idea of each man or woman to him- or herself! The whites have been raised to compete, the Eskimo to cooperate. Once again the Eskimo has been placed in a position by the whites and by his own good-hearted naivité to play the game of modern technostructural survival by the rules of the white man.

There appears to me to remain two alternatives for fundamental change left open for the Alaskan Eskimo in the 1970's: 1) change the game, or 2) keep the game but change the rules. By 'changing the game' I mean from one of modern technostructural survival back to one of Arctic habitat survival. By 'keeping the game but changing the rules' I mean designing

a new material culture amenable with traditional values by having the Eskimo themselves autonomously (though with anthropological expertise if requested) selecting out from the Western technological potpourri what would bring about this goal. It is the latter alternative which will undoubtedly, though not necessarily exclusively, be opted for by the Eskimo on both the community and the associational levels. Since it is axiomatically accepted here (cf. Lévi-Strauss, de Saussure, Chomsky, et.al.) that structure shapes content, it is to be expected that by changing the rules the game will change to some degree anyway. Thus, it is to be hoped that while tomorrow's Eskimo will not have to give up such things as the snowmobile, he will not be forced to syncretically take up the material circumstances and value orientation of suburbia, or even more horrendously - the rural ghetto, as well. We shall explore these alternatives further after we continue our history of the Eskimo from the Ray report to the present (1972).

While the condition of the Eskimo has not been substantially improved, the past six or seven years has produced dramatic changes, particularly of a political and educational nature, overflowing with promise and potential. While the coming Alaskan statehood was perhaps the greatest boost for the publication of the Ray report, it may have ironically been the excitement of statehood itself which postponed any fundamental response to the report. Five years after it was released, initial token action was taken. It was in the summer of 1964 that a pilot program for Eskimo high school graduates planning to continue on to college was inaugurated to ease the way for these students.

The following year the Head Start program was begun. This was the forerunner of the present Alaska Rural Educational Development program based at the University of Alaska. Beginning with Fall, 1969, new books have been introduced into the Eskimo curriculum in a small (forty in April, 1971) but growing number of schools. Realizing that Eskimo children were struggling with words for which they had no concepts, the Dick and Jane readers were slowly being replaced with books on Eskimo legends and the Arctic physical and social environment. Images frequently utilized include: moose, caribou, a cache, a ball game at night, and a pregnant mother being airlifted by bush plane in order to have a baby. This process is not only continuing but apparently accelerating. Other changes are occurring, though on a limited basis. Stories are being rewritten to have the format of a play, in order to create a more dynamic quality. A story of historical fiction on past relationships between the Eskimo and Indian groups is now being used in two hundred rural schools. Mrs. Ray Nicholson, a teacher, is presently writing biographies of important Eskimo figures for classroom use. Perhaps most significantly is that a limited number of Eskimo teachers and aides have been trained and have been permitted to teach small children in the Eskimo language rather than English. The new thrust emerging is to design new and unique ways to stimulate a sense of dignity and pride in being Eskimo among the children. Professional educators are coming to realize that a child needs self-respect before he can successfully learn.

It is to be hoped, I think, that if formal education

is to continue for the Alaskan Eskimo it should be "first-class" quality education. That is, learning techniques should be progressive, innovative, involving, creative, and experimental. The classroom situation should instill a sense of pride of being and dignity of cultural worth rather than detract from it. Teachers should be Native or at least Alaskan and preferably teach in the "native tongue" at least in the lower grades. English should be taught as the primary foreign language from the first grade on up, though. The school children should not feel alienated from the experience of being in a school building. Consequently, the architecture of the school houses should be modeled from Eskimo architecture. If, for example, the scrap metal huts of a village are gray, then the school house should neither be bright red nor yellow but also gray. The traditional culture of the Eskimo child should never be ignored, glossed over, or denied in the learning process. He or she should never feel that the school, the teacher and the equipment represent something inherently better than what he or she has been enculturated into. These and other critical tenants of contemporary Alaskan Eskimo education are now first beginning to become adhered to, but still have a long way to go to attain complete or even adequate fruition.

In attempting to postulate what the ideal system of education for a given acculturating, though hopefully not assimilating, culture would be, it is necessary to raise the question of: education for what? The system of education should be synchronized with the prevailing or projected subsistence pattern. If not, it would be irrelevant. For instance, teaching Eskimo to read

Shakespeare would be ludicrous if they were to become year-round hunters and fishermen when adults. If English literature were to become a substitute for Eskimo myths and legends it would be poignantly disastrous. If, on the other hand, Eskimo were to be recruited for top positions in government or private "enterprise" the educational system had better render them fully prepared. This leads us to the obvious conclusion that education does not exist in a vacuum, nor should it be described or treated as if it were within one. We shall now briefly note some of the more significant recent developments concerning the Eskimo in Alaska which is not of an educational nature.

These focus around two interrelated issues: land and oil. After statehood, land rights became a question. Land rights for the Eskimo seemed to be a contradiction in terms for the naive white American politician and administrator since a) the U.S.A. had bought all of Alaska from the Russians a century before and we have the deed to prove it, and b) the "nose-rubbing" Eskimo live near the North Pole and everyone knows from those countless elementary school projects from the 1930's and 40's (q.v. back issues of The Instructor, School Life, School Arts, etc. and cf. p. 16 above) that underneath the ice was the Arctic Ocean! Subsequently, the Eskimo was viewed erroneously as a naturally landless people. With this ideological framework in mind, it is little wonder that the Eskimo were even denied the insufficient and meager reservation land that the continental U.S. Indians were granted.

In any event, land did become an issue in the 60's. This

led to the creation of the Alaskan Federation of Natives (AFN) in 1966 and later the more radical Friends of Alaskan Natives (FAN). The formation of the AFN represents a dramatic response under dire conditions. The traditionally hostile Eskimo, Aleuts, Athabascans, and Southeast Alaskan Indians banded together to insure that the government would not usurp the very land their villages rested upon. It was political organization for cultural and even human survival. Things were bad in Alaska. The 1960 census showed that 70% of the Natives were still politically isolated in over 200 villages. The per capita income was \$1,000 per year. The life expectancy rate was still only 35 years. Unemployment was over 80%. One Anchorage journalist wrote: "Their traditional life is being destroyed and nothing is there to replace it" (New York Times 1970⁶:12). Yet, the Eskimo does desire political autonomy and first-class citizenship. Three answers remain: education, jobs, and land.

Concerning land: ^(NEW YORK TIMES 1971) AFN initially asked for 40,000,000 acres with \$500,000,000 over ten years and 2% rights in perpetuity to the oil. This was changed to 60,000,000 acres when a study was completed indicating that this is what is required to meet minimal subsistence needs. FAN rightly asked for 133,000,000 acres, \$5,600,000,000, 5% of the oil, and total Native control over its administration. When oil became an issue and it appeared that three-fourths of Alaska's land would remain frozen by Udall until the dilemma was resolved, the federal government lamely came up with the offer of a mere 7,500,000 acres which was immediately hailed as a victory for the Native in the New York Times. With the oil rush of 1969 and the environmental

backlash of 1970 it became clear that Congress would have to do something to help unclog the wheels of Alaska's impending development. Beginning with a bill from the House of Representatives in 1971 and followed by a more generous one from the Senate a few weeks later, the Native was granted 40,000,000 acres, money, and an interest in the oil. The AFN is suing for more and hopefully may win.

(ROGERS 1970)
Concerning jobs: where an industry was established near a village, usually the employer sought employees from the outside rather than from the Native community. With the promise by the major oil companies to employ Natives at the oil drilling sites, the completing of the pipeline takes on a whole new urgency. But perhaps it is in actuality a false urgency. Indeed, when viewed from a broader perspective the construction of the Alaskan pipeline may prove to be the final death blow to Eskimo culture and the Alaskan habitat.

To begin with, the knowledge of oil in Alaska is not by any means new. Citings of oil date back nearly a hundred years. Oil on the North Slope has been reported and documented repeatedly year after year. When the oil at Prudhoe Bay was re-discovered in 1967 and 1968 it became significant not because the oil drillers found something unexpected. It was expected! It became significant because it became clear that a joint effort of a few major oil companies at this time could extract that oil at a minimum of investment and gain a maximum of profit. The oil rush of 1969, when the state of Alaska became a vested interest in the affair when it gained \$900,000,000 in revenues from the oil companies, reached a crescendo not

because there was oil on the North Slope, but because there was cheap oil up there.

In the Spring, 1970 the "Earth-Day" people (Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Friends of the Earth, etc.) succeeded in obtaining a court order to stop the construction of the 48" high pipeline which would extend eight hundred miles from the coast of the Arctic Ocean across the shifting permafrost through the avalanche-ridden Brooks Range and into the tundra of the Athabaskan interior down to Fairbanks and onward to the port town of Vaduz on the south Alaska coast. EDF et.al. claim, and probably correctly so, that there would be frequent oil spills and that the existing herds of caribou would alter their patterns of migration, consequently upsetting Alaska's delicate ecological balance.

But Atlantic Richfield, Standard Oil, Hess, etc. are not ready to lose what now amounts to a five billion dollar investment. They have taken out full page ads in magazines and sixty-second TV commercials falsely contending that the North Slope oil is vital to the future energy supply of the U.S.A. This of course is sheer nonsense. Very recent oil discoveries have uncovered off-shore reservoirs east of Juneau considerably larger than what may be obtained from Prudhoe Bay. A similar finding was made within the past few months along the eastern seaboard. Other sources are potentially available, but then offshore drilling is more costly than accosting the human and physical environment of the Arctic tundra. Moreover, oil deposits are now being tapped in such areas as Nigeria and Indonesia. What must not be overlooked is the fact that if the quantity of oil consumed in the U.S is to double over

the next twenty years, which is the primary raison d'être for the pipeline cited by the large oil companies, our major cities would be rendered hopelessly uninhabitable. It would be little solace knowing our nation has a sufficient amount of oil fuel to run the country, while the bulk of the populace peer in bewilderment from behind gas masks! Obviously then, the nation's supply of fuel power must come from less polluting sources than oil, and this should only be utilized on a selective basis.

Nevertheless, the investing oil companies have spent millions on public relations for the Alaskan pipeline. Indeed, a September, 1971 issue of the reactionary U.S. News and World Report points to forty million dollars of idle pipeline rusting away while a court decides in favor of Alaska's coming economic prosperity through oil or its impending ruin. It wasn't until early 1972 that the Department of the Interior ruled in favor of permitting the pipeline. However, the issue is still tied up in court as of ^{DECEMBER} ~~MARCH~~, 1972.

Despite the promise of jobs for the Eskimo in a jobless land, it appears that the construction of the pipeline could inevitably be catastrophic. As the Eskimo would be drawn to under-employed positions working for the oil companies, if they would hire them at all, they would leave their villages. Since Eskimo cultural life resides within the remote community, this would be disastrous. Furthermore, though the many millions of large game animals have dwindled to less than one million in Alaska, the Eskimo can only hope to fall back on the natural resources of the land if need be provided that it be not drenched

in oil. Heavy industry, centralized, belching out enormous clouds of black soot, and leaking oil pipes dividing the habitat into new ecological zones are not the answer for rural development among the Alaskan Eskimo.

The answer may instead lay in a decentralized, light or even craft industry. Jobs should ideally be brought to the village, rather than the Eskimo be brought to the factory or plant. It also should be multi-faceted. That is, the Alaskan Eskimo should not be limited to, defined by, and at the mercy of the ups and downs of one single industry. There should be varied pursuits. Vocational education could play an important role in this regard.

When we raise the question of what prospects do we hold out for the future of formal education among the Alaskan Eskimo we are, in effect, asking the question of what is to become of the Eskimo people and their culture. With the assistance of anthropologists, economists, and other Arctic specialists on hand if requested, the Eskimo themselves must decide through village council meetings, regional meetings, and inter-ethnic associations (i.e.: AFN and FAN) what is to be the fate of each community. If game and fish are plentiful in a given area, then year-round hunting and fishing should be presented as a viable alternative to the members of the community. If a village decides to do away with formal education then the teacher must leave. In other words, decision-making should be democratic, politically autonomous, and be based upon selecting out from a set of realistic possibilities. It is my guess that faced with such a critical decision few communities would

opt for a return to traditional subsistence patterns, even where feasible which would be rare if at all, and just as few would opt for total assimilation into mainstream Americana. Besides the light and craft industries previously mentioned, some form of community-based white-collar or clerical occupations may develop. After all, the Eskimo youth of today are being trained specifically for such work, clerical work tends to demand greater cooperation than other occupations, and advanced communication linkages render centralization of clerical duties potentially meaningless. Education, jobs and land are three interstitially connected factors which must be considered together when groping for a series of programs for the Eskimo of Alaska. It is the Eskimo himself who must ultimately decide. It is the culture of the Eskimo which must be at least substantially retained. It is the Eskimo way of looking at things, a quality more valuable than oil, which should not and must not be lost.

NOTES

1. My sincere appreciation is extended to Dr. Solomon Miller of the New School Graduate Faculty in New York, N.Y. for support and advice in the completion of this paper. All responsibility for any of its faults ~~are~~, of course, solely mine. ^{'S}

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