that it is true." That attitude is indicative of how we should approach our task of bringing scientific knowledge within the tribal circle. As Indians we know some things because we have the cumulative testimony of our people. We think we know other things because we are taught in school that they are true. The proper transition in Indian education should be the creative tension that occurs when we compare and reconcile these two perspectives.

Property and Self-Government as Educational Initiatives

Indian students tend to look at education as a formal institutional experience. Core courses, graduation requirements, and electives when taken in sufficient quantities produce degrees and certificates. We are then authorized to perform certain functions in the adult world or become qualified to move on to the next level of educational complexity and attainment. In recent decades practical experience, the summer and semester internship, and on the job training have begun to supplement formal academic studies, and the development of the paraprofessional in a number of areas offers a temporary resting place for those who are still uncertain of the attractiveness of the profession. Substantial education begins when the student, well-trained in a profession, actually begins to perform professional tasks. At that point the accumulated experiences of applying abstract knowledge and principles to real-life problems and duties provides the final educational opportunity. We learn as we live and bring ideas and actions together.

In America the practical side of learning is taken for granted and in most instances is regarded as a higher activity than mere book learning. That is why we say that things are "academic" when we mean that they are essentially useless and have a certain degree of novelty. But the glorification of the self-made man, the worship of the school of hard knocks, and the demand that leadership have practical experience in identifiable fields means that we cherish what we have been able to accumulate in the way
nature of education and what non-Indians seek to accomplish with it. Whatever Indians are asked to do must be done from within the traditional Indian perspective, from a critical examination of the nature of the task, and with the understanding that professional expertise is but a specific body of knowledge existing within the gulf between the two cultures.

Indian students must therefore look at their professional education not simply from its set of coherent internal logics which make the professional field unique but also from two additional perspectives. How does what we receive in our educational experience impact the preservation and sensible use of our lands and how does it affect the continuing existence of our tribes? These questions must always be asked during the educational years of training. There will not often be good answers because of the difficulty in applying abstract information to existing human communities. Nevertheless, Indian students will find a much more rewarding educational experience if they raise these questions in every educational content in which they find themselves.

During the 1950s, Congress authorized a program of rapid termination of federal trust responsibilities for American Indians. The policy was ill-conceived, seeking to reduce federal expenditures which were minimal, and badly executed, allowing private banks to exercise a restrictive supervision over the assets of tribes which lost their federal eligibility. Virtually no development of tribal assets occurred during this period and educational programs were generally oriented toward vocational training and relocation of Indian families to designated urban areas. With the New Frontier and the Great Society programs came a radical redirection of Indian programs. Economic development was stressed and the federal government began to provide scholarship funds for Indians in higher education.

We have been living in the era of self-determination since about 1966 and, although appropriations suffered immensely during the Reagan and Bush years, the trend of policy has firmly supported preserving tribal life and enhancing the powers of tribal self-government. The two major thrusts of federal policy from the very beginning have been the education of the next generation of Indians in the ways of the white man and the exploitation and/or development of the reservation resources. Today the government seems intent on stressing the economic aspect of Indian life to the detriment of its educational component, a policy exceedingly shortsighted in view of the continuing economic crisis of the United States and the limited resources which Indian reservations actually contain.
Self-determination grew like topsy over the past three decades and it never was clearly defined at the onset of the era. It was a concept which originally surfaced in international relations to describe the desire of formerly colonized peoples to break free from their European oppressors and take control over their own lives. These peoples were, for the most part, geographically distinct and distant from their former colonial masters and consequently independence, while painful, seemed more logical because the connections established by colonizing powers seemed and were wholly artificial. Indian tribes, with the possible exception of western and north slope Alaskan villages, have always been viewed as internal to the United States and hence part of its domestic problems. That the Supreme Court has continually characterized Indian tribes as foreign to the United States in cultural and political traditions is difficult for most people to understand so they make little effort to do so and prefer to consider Indians as simply another racial minority, albeit one with considerably fascinating habits.

Self-determination inevitably had to take on a different meaning when applied to Indian tribes and reservations and since the original goal of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations was to delay termination of federal services until such time as tribes achieved some measure of economic parity with their white neighbors, self-determination in the Indian context basically has meant that Indians can administer their own programs in lieu of federal bureaucrats. Education was conceived as the handmaiden of development and one need only look at the fields in which Title IV fellowships are being given to understand that federal higher education programs were meant to train a generation of people who could function as low-level bureaucrats in drastically underfunded programs which were intended only to keep Indians active and fearful of losing their extra federal funding.

Two major emphases characterized Indian economic development. Tribes were encouraged to allow major American corporations to control their energy resources in exchange for a few token jobs and a small income. Employment programs were designed to provide temporary wage labor in fringe industries that were themselves in danger of disappearing. Some wage industries, such as the moccasin factory at Pine Ridge, attempted to exploit the public stereotypes of Indians, and others such as recreational ventures placed the Indian workers in the permanent status of servants to a rich non-Indian clientele. Administration and management have thus become the favorite programs of the federal government and private foundations, the belief being that Indians feel more comfortable in performing menial jobs or watching their forests and coal reserves being exhausted if some token Indians were involved.

Unfortunately, administration and management have never been areas in which Indians have excelled. They require that people be viewed as objects and that masses of people be moved and manipulated at will in order that programs achieve maximum efficiency. This kind of attitude and behavior is the antithesis of Indians’ ways as is the fact that management and administration are always dressed up in “people” language to make them more palpable. Many Indians did not realize that the programs they were administering were designed to manipulate people and they unintentionally transformed administrative procedures to fit Indian expectations. The result was that program efficiency declined and some programs fell apart even while an increasing number of people were being served. Many programs considered as failures from the non-Indian perspective when considered from the Indian side of the ledger have been outstanding successes even if they have given bureaucrats ulcers.

Indian education of the past three decades has done more than train Indian program chiefs however. While Indians have been penetrating the institutions of higher learning, the substance and procedures of these institutions have also been affecting Indians. Indians have found even the most sophisticated academic disciplines and professional schools woefully inadequate because the fragmentation of knowledge that is represented by today’s modern university does not allow for a complete understanding of a problem or of a phenomenon. Every professor and professional must qualify his or her statements on reality and truth with the admonition that the observations are being made from a legal, political, sociological, anthropological or other perspective. These statements then are true if confined to the specific discipline and its methodology by which they are formed. That they represent little else may escape the professor or professional but it does not escape the Indian student who often dismisses theory, doctrine or interpretation when it does not ring true to his or her experience.
The revolt against social sciences is not simply a few Indian activists criticizing anthros and the suspicion with which Indians in science and engineering view theories in their fields. Rather the problem is the credibility and applicability of western knowledge in the Indian context. The objections are easily understood. Western technology largely depletes resources or substitutes a mono-cultural approach to a complex natural system. We tend to hide this fact by talking about production rather than extraction but this linguistic acrobatics is not sufficient to escape Indian critique. Social science in the western context describes human behavior in such restrictive terminology that it describes very little except the methodology acceptable to the present generation of academics and researchers. While an increasing number of Indian students are mastering the language and theoretical frameworks of western knowledge, there remains the feeling of incompleteness and inadequacy of what has been learned.

More importantly, whatever information is obtained in higher education must, in the Indian context, have some direct bearing with human individual and communal experience. In contrast in the non-Indian context, the knowledge must simply provide a means of identification of the experience or phenomenon. It helps to deal with specific examples to illustrate the point. A western observer faced with the question of how and why certain species of birds make their nests, is liable to conclude that it is “instinct”. And this identification of course tells us nothing whatsoever but it does foreclose further inquiry because a question has been answered.

In the Indian context the answer would involve a highly complicated description of the personality of the bird species, be it eagle, meadowlark, or sparrow; and the observed behavior of the bird would provide information on time of year, weather, absence or presence of related plants and animals, and perhaps even some indication of the age and experience of the particular bird. In this comparison Indian knowledge provides a predictive context in which certain prophetic statements can be made. Western science, for all its insistence on reproduction of behavior and test conditions and predictability of future activities, provides us with very little that is useful.

Indian knowledge is designed to make statements that adequately describe the experience or phenomenon. That is to say, they include everything that is known about the experience even if no firm conclusions are reached. There are many instances in the oral traditions of the tribe in which, after reviewing everything that is known about a certain thing, the storyteller simply states that what he has said was passed down to him by elders or that he marveled at the phenomenon and was unable to explain it further. It is permissible within the Indian context to admit that something mysterious remains after all is said and done. Western science seems incapable of admitting that anything mysterious can exist or that any kind of behavior or experience can remain outside its ability to explain. Often in the western context the answer is derived by the process of elimination. Thus with the theory of evolution, it is accepted primarily because other explanations are not popular or are distasteful.

Western engineering presents a special case. Its validity depends primarily on its ability to force nature to perform certain tasks which we believe are useful to human beings. Its knowledge derives from physical experiments and more recently on complicated mathematical formulas which predict certain kinds of phenomena if certain kinds of things are done under conditions controlled by human beings. There is no question that if we restrict our understanding of the world to particular things we want to do and set up the conditions under which they must occur, we will have some spectacular results. But we do not really understand nature or the natural world, we simply force natural things to do specific tasks and we measure the results and construct theories which describe what we have done. We have not yet asked ourselves whether in forcing nature to behave in certain controlled ways we have not set in motion other forces which nature must make manifest so that our demands can be met.

Today there is no question that we are approaching the time of an ecological breakdown. We have identified certain aspects of our interference with nature and believe these things to be the cause of the deterioration we have observed. We have no way of knowing how things relate to deterioration because our context is too small. Would the widespread use of electricity, for example, have anything to do with the ozone problem? Does increased radiation have anything to do with the rapid disappearance of amphibians around the world? Is cancer a function of crowding of people together or is AIDS a function of chemically treated foods and chemical disposal into domestic water supplies? When we begin to ask questions that try to bring by-products of our technology into new
combinations so that we can test effects and do further investigations we
are virtually helpless because we have no good context within which to ask
the questions that should be asked and we must spend immense amounts
of time and energy simply identifying the proper questions.

When we take all of the knowledge we receive in colleges and
universities along with our certifications for professional work and per-
haps even for managerial activities, we are led to believe that we are
prepared to exercise self-determination because we are now able to begin
to compete with the non-Indian world for funds, resources and rights. But
we must ask ourselves, where is the self-determination? What is it that we
as selves and communities are determining? We will find that we are
basically agreeing to model our lives, values, and experiences along non-
Indian lines. Now the argument can be made that since we are geographi-
cally within the United States we must conform to its values, procedures,
and institutions. At least we must do so if we are to measure success
according to the same standards and criteria. And all of our education
informs us that these standards are nationally acceptable and may indeed
even be universal throughout the cosmos.

It is increasingly apparent, however, that the myths of western
civilization are also the cause of its rapid degeneration so that it is
hazardous to measure ourselves according to those standards. As a nation
we no longer produce wealth as much as we borrow from the future. If an
individual really wants to make money he or she would do better to master
complicated tax laws than to start a new business. Professors stand more
chance of getting their ideas accepted if they are immensely popular with
their peers than if they actually have something to contribute. The
possible existence of a Supreme Being is a great embarrassment to religious
people. Poor people are or should be incubators and organ donors for rich
people. Wisdom consists of frequent appearances on television shows. Athletes
need not be skillful but they must win regardless of the circum-
stances. Any form of activity in any other country can be regarded as a
threat to the United States - and of course all forms of activity within the
United States are threats to its security. It is exceedingly difficult to
distinguish between American moral values and bumper sticker slogans.

The practical reality of these insights provides both the criteria for
public success and the uncomfortable feeling among educated Indians
that something is missing. Most Indians do not see themselves and their
relatives within the popular American truisms, and they are greatly
embarrassed when other people force them to acknowledge that these
criteria really are accepted by a majority of Americans. Minimally, western
mythology describes a society that is not even polite and that is the key to
understanding how to transcend the attitudes and perspectives of non-
Indian education so that Indians can determine for themselves and by
themselves what they want to be even if they are wholly within the
 confines of American society.

When we talk of the old days and old ways we frequently give special
emphasis on the manner in which people treated each other, the sense of
propriety, gentility, and confidence which the elders had. Being polite
springs primarily from a sense of confidence in one's self and one's
knowledge about the world. Indian narration of knowledge about the
world fell into a particular format; and out of a plenitude of data, the
speaker would choose the set of facts most pertinent to the explanation.
He or she would formulate the story so that it ended on a proper note - oh han as the Sioux say. Now, a person cannot bring a teaching to a close,
invoke the right response in the listener so that the information is taken
seriously, and have some impact without closing off the discussion on a
proper note. Real knowledge creates politeness in the personality and you
can see this trait in many wise non-Indians. It is, in fact, their foremost
personality trait.

In the past three decades, while the movement for self-determination
was proceeding, we have witnessed a drastic decline in politeness and
civility in Indian communities. Indian meetings are many times difficult
to attend because they consist of little more than people clamoring for
attention and people busy impressing each other. The outstanding char-
acteristic of Indian students today is the emergence of politeness as a
personality trait. Science and engineering students more than others now
seem to possess this most precious of all the old traditional personality
traits. Here we may have an indication that the current generation of
Indian youth is moving beyond the boundaries established for self-
determination after the non-Indian pattern and now stands ready to bring
something entirely new to the process of applying western scientific
knowledge to Indian problems.
If this observation is correct, then we will witness some very unusual things happening in Indian communities in the future. Indians who are now working at the professional level particularly in science and engineering will work their way through corporate and academic institutions and begin appearing as independent consultants and as owners of small technologically oriented businesses working in ecological restoration and conservation areas. Research institutes headed by Indians will begin to appear on certain college and university campuses doing complex research projects. Almost all of this first generation of Indians will be active in traditional religious practices even though many of them will be living away from their reservations. One or two of these people will write extremely sophisticated papers and books that will be highly regarded by their professions.

Indian students in colleges and universities will begin to combine majors, putting together unlikely and unpredictable fields and having some degree of difficulty doing so because of the inability of departments to reconcile the students' interest within traditional western disciplinary relationships. An increasing number of Indian students will choose very specific new majors which represent non-Indian efforts to do interdisciplinary work and which are almost wholly outside the fields that are being chosen by present Indian students. Indian graduate students will be doing very sophisticated dissertations and in hard sciences highly, innovative research projects.

Indian community colleges will begin to show an increasing non-Indian enrollment, some people being non-residents who come to these schools specifically to study with certain tribal elders. The number of four year community colleges will dramatically increase and community colleges themselves will begin to appear on the national scene in scholarly conferences and meetings. Most of the larger community colleges will have their own publishing and TV production programs and some of them will be producing programs for national educational television. Some faculty at reservation community colleges will begin a thriving consultant business as state and private universities far away from the reservation want to establish working relationships with the tribes. Community colleges will play an increasingly influential role in tribal economic and political problems and programs.

Tribal governments will develop new ways to organize the reservation communities and will develop specific programs for a wide variety of land uses. Tribal governments will have a considerably larger role in determining high school curricula and some reservation high schools will have entirely new formats for study and graduation. Formal and informal networks of elders will begin to resolve some of the reservation problems radically changing the kinds of topics that tribal councils are asked to handle. New and smaller communities will be built in different parts of the reservation eliminating the concentrations at agency towns and having new kinds of local governing powers. Self-determination will not be an issue because people will be doing it in forms which even they will not recognize.

Although it appears easy to make vague predictions concerning the future of Indians and education, none of these ideas are ad hoc concepts. Rather, everything flows from the original idea of education acting as the motivational force in self-determination. The policy makers three decades ago assumed education would radically change Indian young people while also assuming that they would hold, as a constant, the value of returning to their tribes to take the lead in development projects. Higher education really was thought to be higher than the knowledge and experiences that Indians brought from their homes and communities. It might have been more complicated but it was too departmentalized and consequently the chinks in the armor were all too apparent and left most Indian students with a feeling of having an incomplete knowledge. Unable to bring academic knowledge to its proper unity, more and more students are supplementing the shortcoming of western thought by placing it in the context of their own tribal traditions.

Once the process of supplementation began it would naturally follow that individuals would begin to compare specific items of western knowledge with similar beliefs derived wholly from the traditions of their tribes and we see this process now emerging as an identifiable intellectual position of this generation of Indians. It will take a considerable period of time for a new theoretical posture to be developed by this generation but some individuals are well on the way to doing so. As a new perspective is formed individual Indians who have moved completely through the institutional structures will pull all conceptions of Indians beyond the
ability of western ideas to compete, and this conceptual shift will focus attention on the cultural knowledge of the community colleges. Once community colleges articulate a new conception of what it means to be an Indian and an Indian community, the rest of the shift is apparent and predictable.

In a previous article we discussed the fact that much of the American education is really just training and indoctrination into the western view of the world. Basically this view is held together by the sincerity of its followers. It does not have an internal consistency of its own except in general methodological patterns whereby information is classified. Indians, over the long run, are exceedingly hard to train because they get easily bored with the routine of things. Once they have understood and mastered a task it seems like a waste of time to simply repeat an activity and so for an increasing number of Indians the training which is received at institutions of higher learning only raises fundamental questions which are never answered to their satisfaction.

We can visualize the effects of education on Indians as follows. Non-Indians live within a world view that separates and isolates and mistakes labeling and identification for knowledge. Indians were presumed to be within this condition except they were slower on the uptake and not nearly as bright as non-Indians. In truth Indians were completely outside the system and within their own worldview. Initiating an accelerated educational system for Indians was intended to bring Indians up to the parity of middle class non-Indians. In fact it has pulled Indians into the western worldview and some of the brighter Indians are now emerging on the other side, having transversed the western body of knowledge completely. Once this path has been established it is almost a certainty that the rest of the Indian community will walk right on through the western worldview and emerge on the other side also. And it is imperative that we do so. Only in that way can we transcend the half millennia of culture shock brought about by the confrontation with western civilization. When we leave the culture shock behind we will be masters of our own fate again and able to determine for ourselves what kind of lives we will lead.

The Perpetual Education Report

The Secretary of Education is conducting a new study of Indian education this year and the task force is busy putting together a document that will provide policy guidelines during the next several years. In authorizing the report the secretary is following an age old and revered tradition in Indian education: it is better to talk about education than to educate. The ink will hardly be dry on this report before another organization, or another federal agency, has the urge to investigate and the cycle will begin again. From the Rev. Jedidiah Morse in the 1820s through Senator Kennedy to the present the refrain is the same: “we are not doing anything, we need more money, and Indians need to be involved.”

Why is it that, in spite of sincerity oozing from every pore in their bodies, investigators of Indian education reach the same dull, stifling and uncreative conclusions? Educational professionals argue that the problems are always the same, that the federal government never has adequately funded its educational branches and consequently each report is basically dealing with past and existing inadequacies. I don’t buy it. Big city school superintendents give the same argument and when you give them additional funds they add an incredible number of bureaucrats, cut classroom budgets, and fancy up a few motivational programs and begin laying the ground work for a new bond issue. That Washington educators would do less is difficult to believe. Graduate schools of education across the nation teach these people that abusing the taxpayer is their ONLY function.