

# FINAL REPORT



# Kwiya

*"Towards a new partnership in education."*



# THE JOINT COMMISSION ON INDIAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING



## FOREWORD

There comes a time for every nation on earth to stand and be counted. This is the year, this is the place, we are those nations.

Look closely at our past. Tradition has proved that we are survivors. We did not conquer the earth, but walked in respect, acknowledging the Creator who gave us life, and who loaned us this land.

We are known to have used tools in our survival, and we have embraced progress, for we needed those implements that would help us become self-sufficient. We looked on education as one tool vital to the self-determination and preservation of our people.

In the past, education for us has meant the separating of children from parents, the stripping away of parental responsibility, and the silencing of protesting voices. Today we are regaining our voice, recognizing our responsibility and now we want our children restored.

To grow wise in a life-long journey beginning at birth. Parents are the first teachers, the home is the first classroom, and the community provides the first learning environment.

We have a vision that all Yukoners teach each other about a new partnership, to prepare all of us for the future.



# LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

To: *Honourable Piers McDonald  
Minister of Education and Advanced Education  
Government of Yukon*

*Mary Jane Jim  
Vice-Chair, Social Programs  
Council for Yukon Indians*

On January 6th, 1987, we were appointed to undertake the responsibilities of the Joint Commission on Indian Education and Training. At the time the Commission was instructed to:

*"investigate and report on the reasons why many of Yukon's Indian people have not taken, or have been unable to take full advantage of educational opportunities presently available to the Yukon society in general, and on where the education system has been unable to meet their specific needs."*

and to:

*"provide the Government and the Council with recommendations for changes to procedures, practices and policies which would assist in making the education system more responsive to the needs of the Indian People of the Yukon..."*

During the course of the Commission we have met with over 500 interested individuals and organizations, compiled many hours of transcripts, and consulted numerous "experts" both within Yukon and in other jurisdictions.

# PREFACE

## Background

The Joint Commission on Indian Education and Training had its initial beginnings with a commitment in 1985 by the Minister of Education to re-examine the state of Indian Education in Yukon. Various planning committees were struck to discuss how the issue might be addressed. The outcome of these discussions was that the Minister of Education, Government of Yukon and the Vice-Chair for Social Programs, Council for Yukon Indians would jointly sponsor a Commission on Indian Education and Training to investigate and report on all aspects of Indian education in Yukon.

The "first" Commission was appointed in August of 1986 and given a seven-month time frame to complete their report. The Chairperson and Commissioners resigned in December of 1986, without making their report. In January 1987, a new Chairperson and Commissioner were appointed to begin anew the process of investigating, reporting and recommending on issues concerning Indian education.

Several principles were given to the Commission to guide its activities. These included:

*" — a strong sense of involvement and commitment to the process by all participants;*

*" — acknowledgement and recognition that the Yukon Indian people have a role, as do all Yukoners, in the education system, a system which greatly impacts on their ability to take full part in the economy and society of the Territory;*

*" — acknowledgement and recognition of Yukon Indian people having equal say in the education of themselves and their children;*

*" — recognition that policy development is only effective when those most affected have input into that development."*

The Commission not only accepted these principles, but extended them to include a strong commitment to the spirit within which the Commission





was created. In doing so, the Commissioners made every attempt to listen to what Indian people themselves had to say about education.

The Commission found that there was both tremendous interest and concern among Indian people about educational issues affecting them. This is demonstrated by the volume and calibre of the testimony before the Commission.

In listening to the people in the Yukon, the Commission began to understand that the solutions required to address the issues facing Indian people are far more complex than had been anticipated by the Commission's Terms of Reference. They could not be solved simply by changing Department of Education "procedures, practices and policies".

This understanding of the complexity of the issues begins with an understanding of the social history of Indian education in Yukon.

Early educators, at first Missionaries, and later the Federal Indian Affairs branch, failed to understand the unique social and cultural circumstance of Indian people. Through the use of residential schools, attempts were made to destroy Indian culture. The goal was to assimilate Indian people. This experience socially and emotionally damaged many Indian people and has



indirectly damaged subsequent generations, just as if the residential schools still existed today.

The Federal and Territorial Governments have assumed responsibility for Indian education without the participation of Indian people. This responsibility was assumed, first through residential schools and, more recently, under the terms of the Federal Territorial 1964 *General Tuition Agreement*. Indian people's responsibility in this process has been to give up their families and way of life to accommodate and adapt their ways to meet the demands of non-Indian society. Over the past half century the burden of failure has, unfairly, been placed upon the shoulders of Indian people.

During the process of its hearings the Commission discovered that education is as much a part of the natural heritage of Indian culture in Yukon as it is a part of the heritage of people whose ancestral culture is Scottish, German, English and many others. Canada has borrowed generously from European cultures in building our present system of education. It is time to accept the cultural traditions of Indian people within our contemporary education system.

The Commission's report demonstrates that past Governments, both Federal and Territorial, have failed to live up to their obligations. They have failed to provide Indian people with a minimal, socially acceptable level of education. Despite an increasing gap in levels of educational attainment and participation between Indians and non-Indians in Yukon, effective education reform has not been initiated.

The Commission has been asked by many people "What is to be done?"

To this question we have responded that Indian education is at a crossroads in the Territory. Life without education has created an endless cycle of dependency for Indian people. This cycle must be broken. The responsibility for Indian education must be restored to Indian people. The public education system in Yukon has forgotten that it is parents — not the State — to whom the system of education must be held accountable. This common understanding, which is embodied in the recognition of the need for local control and parental responsibility in education in most jurisdictions in Canada, seems to have been overlooked in regard to the provision of education to Indian people in Yukon.

The theme of the Commission's report and recommendations 'Towards a New Partnership in Education' reflects the requirement to actively involve Indian people in the direction of education reform in Yukon.



## Scope of Report

The Commission has focussed its discussion on four general areas of concern:

- education in Yukon, past and present;
- levels of education attainment and participation by Indian people;
- the general social and cultural circumstances of Indian people in Yukon;
- the need for specific education reforms.

## Organization of the Report

The report is organized into five separate sections: Background History; Equality of Opportunity; Formal Recognition of Indian Culture; Representation and; Future Directions.

Each chapter, except the first, concludes with a recommendation. Each recommendation is explained by a concluding statement. In addition, the final chapter of the report describes various strategies for achieving the essential aims of the first three recommendations.

In addition, the Commission has reproduced three research papers prepared by Commission consultants as well as a transcript from each of its community hearings. These are provided under separate cover.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## RECOMMENDATION #1

**“THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA  
AND YUKON OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZE  
EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN  
EDUCATION FOR INDIAN PEOPLE”**

The Commission observed that the adoption of the language of ‘equality’ by officials and politicians in the past has not led to equality of opportunity for Indian people, in practice. The Commission has recommended the entrenchment of the principle of equality of opportunity in education in law as an effective remedy. It has also suggested that the 1964 Federal-Territorial *General Tuition Agreement* be renegotiated with the full participation of Indian people.

## RECOMMENDATION #2

**“THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA  
AND YUKON FORMALLY RECOGNIZE INDIAN  
CULTURE AS PART OF YUKON SOCIETY”**

The Commission believes that, in order to be responsive to the aspirations of Indian people, the education system and public institutions, generally, must take steps to formally recognize Indian culture in Yukon. The Governments of Canada and Yukon must recognize the existence of many First Nations in Yukon. Public policy, and especially education and training policies, must reflect this reality.



### **RECOMMENDATION #3**

**“THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND YUKON RECOGNIZE THE IMMEDIATE NEED FOR AN INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF INDIAN PEOPLE”**

The Commission considered that, in addition to providing suggestions for education reform, it was necessary to provide some instrument for the effective representation of the interests of Indian people during the process of reform. Accordingly, the Commission has recommended, as an interim measure, the establishment of an Indian Education Commission.

### **RECOMMENDATION #4**

**“THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIAN PEOPLE, INITIATE SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE, POLICY AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS OF YUKON’S EDUCATION SYSTEM”**

The Commission recognizes the need for the Government of Yukon to put in place new structures and processes to facilitate the development of legislative and policy reform. Accordingly, the Commission has proposed specific legislative, policy, and organizational strategies to complement the Commission’s recommendations. They reflect findings from community hearings and the Commission’s own research. They are intended to serve as a starting point and to inspire further thinking in these directions. The Commission supports refinement of these strategies, but only in close consultation with Indian people and, as required, with the Government of Canada.





The Commission calls upon the Governments of Canada and Yukon, the Council for Yukon Indians, and First Nations in Yukon to accept the Commission's recommendations as a starting point for education reform.

All the Commission's recommendations or suggestions are made without prejudice to the Land Claims process. They reflect the tone of community input that educational concerns are broad ranging and in urgent need of action.



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# BACKGROUND HISTORY



*"The residential school syndrome has produced a whole generation of alienated peoples who are now expected to parent and offer a positive attitude to their children presently attending public schools. Alcoholism has not always been a factor in native communities but has become increasingly a major problem faced by native people. A direct result of poor human relations skills, parenting skills, and low self-esteem, there has also been an obvious increase in family breakdown."*

*Commission  
Hearings*

During the 1950's, the Department of Indian Affairs increased its support of residential school education for Indian children. With the return of Indian soldiers to Canada after World War II, the Canadian conscience was stung by the idea of Indian men voluntarily fighting for a country that did not recognize their full citizenship. In response to this, a 1946 Joint Committee of the House of Commons and Senate recommended that a new Indian Act be written to facilitate the gradual transition of Indian people from a position of wards of the State to full citizens.



## SINCE THE INTEGRATION OF INDIAN STUDENTS INTO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, THE COMPLEX ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH INTEGRATED EDUCATION HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED BY YTG EDUCATION POLICIES.

In the late 1950's, changing social attitudes in Canada led to the decline in separate schools for status Indians, gradually giving way to the integration of Indian students into public schools. However, Indian Affairs policy did not alter its fundamental commitment to assimilation.

*"The Indian Affairs Branch used to use the word assimilation but recently we have been using the word integration...Presently, I think the Indians are much more happy with the word integration than assimilation."*

*Alberta Indian  
Education Centre  
Publication, 1975*

The integration of the majority of status Indians into public was provided for under agreements between the Territorial and Federal governments to upgrade school facilities. The first agreement was in 1958 for the funding of an integrated school at Dawson City.

In 1960 a *Committee on Education* was commissioned by the Government of Yukon to investigate on the advisability of having both Territorial and privately operated schools. It was also asked to make recommendations concerning the integration of the responsibilities of the

Indian Affairs Branch and the Territorial Government relating to the education of Indian students. The Committee recommended that integrated day and residential schools be established wherever possible throughout the Territory. Eventually, 16 agreements in all were concluded with the Federal government. The principal agreement was the 1964 *General Tuition Agreement* which determined the respective responsibilities of each government for the funding and delivery of educational services to Indian students.

*"In recent years there has been a growing interest by Canadians in the problem of integrating Canadian Indians with the life of Canadians in general. There is no doubt numerous reasons for this awakening of interest or perhaps stirring of conscience. Not the least of these reasons may be the fact that Canadians, consciously or unconsciously, have pursued an apartheid policy, or policy of racial segregation, with respect to the Indians of this country which, if continued, might have disastrous results."*

*1960 Committee  
on Education*

The report of the 1960 *Committee on Education* cautioned that integration of Indians and non-Indians was basically a





*"One of the difficulties faced in the early years of this new venture in integrated education was that some of the classes at Selkirk St. School were overwhelmingly Indian, and objections were forthcoming from white parents who felt that the educational levels were being depressed by Indian students inadequately prepared for the grades in which they had been placed. The level of spoken English was also a factor which worried many white parents. Eventually the Territorial Department of Education agreed to keep the number of Indian children in all classes to less than 50% of the enrollment of each class. To accomplish this, some Indian children had to be bused in each day to Whitehorse Elementary School in downtown Whitehorse.*

*1968 M.A. Thesis,  
University of  
Alberta*

sociological problem and an extremely complex one. The Committee argued the problem must be faced realistically. This vision of an integrated education system in Yukon was not always greeted with sympathy or willingness by all parents.

Despite the cautions of the 1960 *Committee on Education*, the Government of Yukon did not formally recognize the complexity of problems associated with integration until much later. In 1972, the Government of Yukon commissioned a second independent *Committee on Education* to investigate, among other things, the special needs of Indian people in the public school system. The Committee's report made a number of recommendations with respect to Indian education. However, it prefaced all but one of these with the condition that any



additional costs be identified for special funding approval by Federal authorities.

The recommendations of the 1972 *Committee on Education* had little effect on the provision of educational services for Indian students. A paper entitled "Indian Educational Adaptations in the Yukon and Suggested Future Activities in this Area" was prepared by YTG in 1974 for the Federal government's consideration. It is a matter of debate between YTG and Indian Affairs as to whether or not this paper was actually received or rejected.

In November, 1976 The Yukon Legislative Assembly called upon the Government of Yukon to respond to "Motion 15". Motion 15 asked for a statement of the government's present policy regarding Indian education, together with its future policy and legislative intentions. In response to this motion, the Government of Yukon brought forward a major policy statement. This statement acknowledged past oversights in meeting the educational needs of Indian students and recognized the need for special initiatives.

*"It is conceivable that we have not understood the extent of our responsibility in an integrated situation and have contributed to the problem facing us at the present time."*

*Response to  
Motion 15,  
November, 1976  
Yukon Legislative  
Assembly*



## **PAST COMMITMENTS BY GOVERNMENTS, RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIAN PEOPLE, HAVE NOT BEEN MET.**

The Government of Yukon's policy of making Indian education programs contingent upon special funding from Indian Affairs inhibited education reform since the 1970's.

However, some attempts at reform did occur after 1976, such as the establishment of the cross-cultural coordinator and remedial tutor programs, and the development of curricula materials and elective native language courses. These came about, primarily, as a consequence of increasing pressure by Indian organizations and as initiatives begun at the local level. The availability of special funding from Indian Affairs was an important factor in many of these initiatives.

Control over special Federal funding for Indian education became a contentious issue between the Yukon Native Brotherhood and the Government of Yukon. A growing awareness within the Government of Yukon that, with Land Claims negotiations a separate system of education was a distinct possibility, contributed to further delays in education reform. Subsequently, commitments to reforms and their timing became caught up in unresolved, complex jurisdictional questions.

By 1978, the Government of Yukon had

come to the opinion that the Federal government must make a basic decision - either support the existing, unified, Territorial education system or be prepared to establish separate Indian schools. It was reasoned that public opinion would not support special concessions which would allow Indian people a role in the direct management of education programs. The Government of Yukon felt any Federal actions which promoted this option would be divisive in nature and tend to promote racial tensions. Since 1978, jurisdictional issues have pre-empted progress towards reform.

The Government of Yukon's responsibility for Indian education, based on the General Tuition Agreement of 1964, requires the "same educational opportunities and instruction" to be offered to Indian students as to others. There continues to be general confusion and a lack of consensus to what is meant by this requirement. Since 1964, the Government of Yukon has narrowly interpreted this requirement as an obligation to provide only "equality of access" for Indian students to facilities and instruction, despite its stated intention to do otherwise.





*"We certainly have not been remiss in providing equal facilities for the status-Indian students but this is not enough. There are specific educational services which are required to ensure the integrated school situation is effective and meets the needs of the status-Indian student. We are prepared to investigate and ultimately recommend policies which will provide an adequate framework in which our educators can develop adequate and appropriate educational programmes to meed (sic) the needs of the Indian student.*

*Response to  
Motion 15,  
November, 1976  
Yukon  
Legislative  
Assembly*

In 1967, the Federal government agreed to do away with the direct payment of tuition fees for Indian students. This was done by adding the fees to the calculation of the Territorial deficit transfer payment. However, only the financial terms of the 1964 agreement were replaced by the agreement of 1967. Significantly, the other terms and conditions of the 1964 agreement remain in effect today. One important clause of that agreement commits the Federal Minister not to interfere in the delivery of education, but provides for the right to inspect the schools for the purpose of evaluation.



*"Nothing contained in this agreement shall confer upon the Minister any right of supervision over curriculum, the administration of teaching personnel, the methods or materials, instruction or management generally of the Territorial schools; provided, however, the Minister or any other person authorized by the Minister shall have the right to inspect for the purposes of this agreement from time to time and at any reasonable time those schools attended by Indian students."*

*1964 General  
Tuition  
Agreement*

While the Federal Minister still retains legal responsibility for Indian education in Yukon, the current absence of an updated agreement between the two levels of government, with specific periods for review, has caused confusion as to which level of government is accountable for Indian education. As established under the terms of the 1964 agreement, the Territorial government is responsible for the delivery of education services and the Federal government accountable to Indian people for assessing whether or not the objectives of the agreement have been attained.

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# EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY



## THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON'S POLICY OF EQUALITY OF ACCESS HAS HIDDEN THE FACT THAT INDIAN PEOPLE HAVE NOT BEEN WELL SERVED BY EXISTING EDUCATION SERVICES

The Government of Canada has and continues to make provision for Indian education in Yukon through the 1964 *General Tuition Agreement* with the Government of Yukon.

Since 1964, the commitment of the Federal government to the agreement's objective to provide "the same educational opportunities and instruction" for Indian as non-Indian students has been interpreted narrowly, without the benefit of evaluation to see whether the needs of Indian students are being met.

The Government of Yukon only recognizes its obligation to provide for the education of Indian students in terms of a policy of "equality of access" to facilities and instruction. This has led to a situation where neither government is willing to accept responsibility for failures in Indian education policy in the Territory.

The policy of equality of access assumes that what students bring to school, in terms of skills, are equal. It also assumes that educators are to provide the same level of instruction to all students. It is well known that students do not come to school with equal levels of skills or life experiences. Therefore, by treating unequals as equals, the objective of the education system - to provide students

with a minimal, socially acceptable standard of education - will not be achieved.

It is important to note that the Government of Yukon's policy of equality of access appears to have been extended to more recent Federal/Territorial agreements, such as Human Resource Planning and Apprenticeship Training. The focus of the policy has been to maintain open access to Indian and non-Indian students. Any efforts to make up for the existing inequities in education has not been evident.

*"The Department does not distinguish along ethnic lines in developing its statistics."*

*April, 1987  
Department of  
Education*

The Government of Yukon has not attempted to evaluate the impact of its education policies. At present, the Department of Education does not maintain a system-wide information data base which would permit such an analysis. Consequently, the Department is unable to respond to requests for specific data on Indian student performance.





*"There is something fundamentally wrong with an information system that can infer fairly accurately and quickly the value of wildlife resources harvested as food, but cannot generate even ballpark figures for the number or proportion of Native students who have completed grade XI."*

*Dr.C. Urion,  
Professor of  
Anthropology &  
Education*

This policy of equality of access, as it exists today, denies Indian people in Yukon equal opportunity in education.

*"Davis (1982) did a very extensive study of C.T.B.S. test scores in Yukon....Test of variance showed...the mean scores for white students approximated the national means. The mean for Indian students were uniformly lower, and by grade 8 the differences were usually in the range of 1.6-2.0 G.E. units."*

*"...Sharp (1985) in his research analyzed C.T.B.S. test results...It found that performance (among rural students) decreases with increases in grade level."*

*Quoted from  
Commission  
Research Paper*





Often, educators have assumed, in the absence of little information, that the cause of the problem of low levels of educational attainment among Indian students resides with the student or the parent. The Commission rejects this assumption that Indian students or parents are to blame without making any effort to research the validity of this claim. The Commission also notes that the Department of Education has made no significant effort to research the causes of these low levels of educational attainment.

*"Perhaps, if we haven't heard about any problems, it is because none exist."*

*Quote from  
Kwiya Briefing  
session*

This lack of research and information is, in part, due to the Government of Yukon's policy of 'equality of access' which discourages rather than encourages enquiry into education policy issues.



## A POLICY OF EQUALITY OF ACCESS, IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN YUKON, HAS RESULTED IN A LESS THAN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION FOR INDIAN STUDENTS”

Education policies have resulted in a growing gap in academic performance and participation between Indian and non-Indian students. The negative impact is evident from a variety of data collected by the Commission. This data gives an indication of the current levels of educational attainment among many Indian people in Yukon.

*“...a full 12% of Indians 15 years plus have no schooling. This compares to 1% for non-Indians;*

*“A full 35% of Indians 15 years or over have grade eight or less as their highest level of schooling. This compares to 8% for non-Indians.*

*“Only 1 in 20 Indian people over 15 years of age has completed grade 12, compared to 1 in 12 non-Indians over 15 years of age;*

*“The rate of functional illiteracy among Indians over 15 years of age ranges over 50% in some Yukon communities, compared to a high of 16% among all communities for the non-Indian population;*

*“...more than one out of every four Indian students in Yukon schools, for all grades, either fail or drop-out every year. ”*

*“...30% of students drop-out or transfer from rural schools between grades 9 and*

*10 and close to 50% leave between grades 10 and 11.”*

*“Sharp in his research found that 48% of young adults in rural Yukon do not take part in any post-school training activity.”*

*“...Indian people are disproportionately over-represented in Basic Training Skill Development (BTSD) programs (at Yukon College) which provide for basic upgrading to a grade 10 level. Similarly they are under-represented for skill and apprenticeship programs.”*

*“...Although close to 52% of Yukon Indian beneficiaries have a grade ten level...for many of them some upgrading would be required before they could enter career or trade training.”*

*“An examination of C.E.I.C. data by age category shows that approximately 57% of the BTSD course students are between 25 and 44 years of age, 34% are 20 to 24 years, and 9% are 15 to 19 years.”*

*“It has been clearly demonstrated...that the probability of completing high school, for students that come from rural communities where senior grades are not offered and boarding out is the only alternative, are not good.”*

*“...the Department of Education has a good variety of special programs available and that within their resource capabilities try to distribute the programs*





*to rural schools. However, on balance the urban schools benefit more from (sic) availability of special programs than to (sic) rural schools.*

*"Communities that are classified as having a high proportion of Indians in their population tend to have higher proportions than the Yukon rural average (48%) of their young adults who don't take post-school training. These include Old Crow (65%), Pelly Crossing (94%) and Ross River (67%)."*

*Quoted from  
Commission  
Research Paper*

Significant numbers of Indian people have been denied the opportunity for skill training and education which are prerequisites to success in the wage economy.



## LESS THAN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION FOR INDIAN STUDENTS HAS RESULTED IN A LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIAN PEOPLE WITHIN YUKON SOCIETY

Levels of educational attainment are a reasonably accurate predictor of future earnings in the wage economy. 1981 Census data shows the consequences of the education system's failure to prepare Indian people for full participation in the wage economy.

*"Unemployment rates are 21% for Indians compared to 6% for non-Indians."*

*"A much larger percentage (44%) of Indians are not in the labour force than non-Indians (20%)."*

*"The average Indian income in Yukon in 1980 was \$8,864 while for non-natives it was \$16,665, close to 50% less."*

*"Forty-seven per cent of all natives who earned income in 1980 earned less than \$5,000 for the year."*

*"Indians with 18% percent of the total population earned 7.9% of total Yukon income in 1980."*

*Quoted from Commission  
Research Paper*

The policy of equality of access, as practiced in our education system, has led to great wastage of human and educational resources. It is evident that Indian people have paid a significant cost, in terms of human capital, for the failure of this education policy.

Dependence on the traditional, subsistence economy may be a matter of economic necessity, rather than choice, for many Indian people in Yukon. Yet, even here the total value of the subsistence economy is of equal, if not greater value, to non-Indians as to Indians.



## RECOMMENDATION #1

### **"THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND YUKON OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION FOR INDIAN PEOPLE;**

The Commission recommends a policy of equality of opportunity be implemented in Yukon in order to ensure the equitable treatment of Indian people within the education system and to restore 'cost-effectiveness' to government education programs.

It would be a meaningless gesture for government to adopt a policy of equality of opportunity if it were not committed to its implementation. Since concrete measures are required to dispel skepticism within the Indian community regarding government pronouncements, three initial steps are required:

- (i) the Governments of Canada and Yukon, together with Indian people, re-negotiate the terms of the 1964 *General Tuition Agreement* to ensure acceptable educational standards for Indian people are achievable;
- (ii) The Government of Yukon incorporate the principle of equality of opportunity in legislation, as a legal obligation to all people in Yukon;
- (iii) The Government of Yukon take

immediate steps to develop a system-wide educational data system to monitor educational outcomes for students and re-allocate resources as necessary. It must also be accessible to communities to aid them in local educational decision-making.

*"Equal education opportunity demands that, where what the children bring to school is unequal, what the school puts in must be unequal and individualized to ensure that what the school produces is at least equal on the basic levels of achievement"*

*E.W.Gordon:  
Toward Defining  
Equality of  
Education, 1974*

Equality of opportunity in education seeks to re-distribute educational resources to where they are needed most. It focuses its attention on the outcomes of such things as the academic achievement scores measured by standardized tests. It uses these scores to determine how and where educational resources will be focussed to bring levels of skill attainment up to acceptable standards.





The major difference between a policy of equality of access and equality of opportunity in addressing education issues is the manner in which the distribution of educational resources is determined.

A policy of equality of access requires standardized inputs, such as curriculum and teaching hours, for all grades and schools and measures overall efficiency in terms of least cost. By contrast, a policy of equality of opportunity first determines the educational need for individualized or class inputs, and only then decides the relative allocation of educational resources, based on needs.

By focussing on the need to equalize short-term costs of education among

schools and students, (and in Yukon, between Indian and non-Indian educational needs) a policy of equality of access has overlooked the longer term costs to society associated with students failing to meet a minimal, socially acceptable standard of education.

For example, under-investment in education for students may well result, later in life, in additional costs to society in terms of social welfare payments, unemployment benefits, increased health care costs, etc. Whereas, the extra costs associated with compensatory education programs will last only a few years. The additional costs associated with students who become unproductive adults will be much higher and extend over a far longer period of time.



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The Commission's Terms of Reference asks for cost-effective recommendations. Cost-effectiveness in education decision-making means that, when resources are limited, meeting the education needs of the most disadvantaged must be the investment priority for government. Only after these needs are met, can consideration be given to attempts to equalize expenditures between various education user groups.

If this is true, then Government of Yukon education programs, based upon a policy of equality of access, are not cost-effective. This is demonstrated in the low levels of educational attainment, employment, income and labour force participation of Indian people in Yukon and the absence of any significant level of additional investment in Indian education.



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# FORMAL RECOGNITION OF INDIAN CULTURE





## **THERE IS A SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDIANS AND NON-INDIANS. YUKON INDIAN SOCIETY IS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

The Indian people in Yukon represent a diversity of cultures and a plurality of interests and circumstances. The multicultural context of Indian society in the Territory has never been formally recognized by either the Government of Canada or Yukon. Lack of recognition at the official level has had significant implications in terms of educational outcomes for Indian students and Indian participation in the economy.

The Government of Yukon's unwritten policy in education has been to mini-

mize cultural differences between Indians and non-Indians and within Indian society itself. The Department of Education has only recognized Indian culture in their attempts to accommodate local content.

*"Again, they go back to the same concept...they don't want to treat native people as different, they don't want to admit that they're different... they don't want to recognize us as being different, they go back to the concept, yes we are*



*different but everybody else is different. We've got Chinese people here, and we've Indonesian and Arabs as well so why don't we have a cultural day for them? But looking at it, realistically, what is the percentage of native people within the Yukon?"*

*Commission  
Hearings*

There is a history of confrontation between the Government of Yukon and Indian organizations due to this lack of recognition of cultural differences.

A submission by the Yukon Native Brotherhood to the 1972 *Committee on Education*, noted that the lack of formal recognition of Indian culture was a major barrier to the success of Indian students within the public school system.

*"The fact that your Education System has been a failure with Indian students is no matter of chance for we believe that the poor, unhappy lot of the Indian child is the product of your system that has little regard for their differences, way of life, traditions, culture, needs or interest.... Thus in school, this conflict of the Indian and whiteman culture confounds and puzzle Indian children making them withdrawn, stifled and eventually destroying their personality and motivation for learning."*

*Yukon Native  
Brotherhood,  
1972*

In 1976, the Government of Yukon acknowledged that current education

policies were insufficient to meet the needs of Indian students. It recognized the existence of cultural differences, but official acknowledgment did not recognize the need to involve the Indian community in educational decision making.

In Yukon, as in other parts of Canada, low levels of academic achievement by Indian students has often been attributed to cultural differences. The goal of cultural education programs is to increase the relevance of school activities to Indian students and motivate them towards higher levels of academic achievement.

*"We've placed such an importance on academics that they've forgotten the spiritual.... Definitely a loss of spirituality for Indian people, I feel that we've really lost touch with that part of ourselves. I think that it's part of like when they say, you'll get the best of two worlds, one world technical, the other is spiritual...their abilities are far beyond what is here."*

*Commission  
Hearings*

There are significant educational benefits associated with cultural programming. Efforts in Yukon to include Indian cultural programs in schools have been constrained by a lack of flexibility in programs and rigid curriculum requirements, as dictated by a centrally administered system of education.

Consequently, Indian culture has been incorporated within the definition of local content. It has been blended in with





other elements of local learning materials, such as books on placer mining and environmental science. In this context, the concept of 'Indian curriculum' has little relevance to the Indian community.

The Commission heard on several occasions of government plans to introduce cross-cultural training for teachers and government employees, to be organized and put on by government employees. At the same time, the Commission heard of a local Indian band being refused its offer to put on a cross-cultural program for teachers at local schools. This example demonstrates how government is capable of promoting a perception of responsiveness to Indian people, yet at the same

time, continuing to deny the responsibility for those things which belong to it, in this case, Indian culture.

Therefore, it is quite possible for governments to adopt a policy of official recognition of cultural 'differences' which has quite the opposite effect of motivating Indian students.

It would appear that the greatest obstacle to improved participation by the Indian people in the education system is the desire by government to retain exclusive control of the management and delivery in education and training. To date, the attitude of officials has been that the communities must earn the right to manage their educa-



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tional affairs. Unfortunately, this attitude supports the continued existence of educational policies of assimilation which, in the past, have resulted in student failure and withdrawal from the education system.

The school, to be successful, must address the students' basic needs. These needs are attention, affection, approval and acceptance. The history of Indian education in Yukon, especially the experience of Indian people who attended residential school, has been the denial of autonomy in decision-making. The education system has not responded to the Indian students' and the communities' needs. Instead the school has insisted that the community conform to a central administration's desire for control.

*"If we, as adults, do not strive to succeed in all that we do, how can we ask our children to set goals for themselves and succeed?"*

*Ed Gamble,  
Mayor Angoon,  
Alaska*

The combination of negative education experiences of the residential schools, and an organizational culture within government which resists devolution of responsibility to the Indian community, poses the greatest obstacle to Indian student participation and success within the education system.

Any reform in Indian education must recognize that it is the school's responsi-

bility to involve the community. The school's lack of involvement in the Indian community has been the major obstacle to the success of the integrated education system in Yukon for Indian people.





### **RECOMMENDATION #2**

## **“THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND YUKON FORMALLY RECOGNIZE INDIAN CULTURE AS PART OF YUKON SOCIETY;**

The absence of involvement of the Indian community in the school is a serious problem. There is a need to refocus efforts towards looking at ways of enhancing community participation in education. This must happen in terms of curriculum, as well as other aspects of the school environment. There is a need to redefine the goals of the education to meet the needs of the community.

Cultural education is not just an end in itself, but a way of encouraging participation and involvement by the Indian parent and community in the school. Until educators actively promote and encourage parents in communities to take greater responsibility for their own and their children's education, isolated efforts to improve levels of academic achievement of Indian students are



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likely to have limited effect. In Yukon, this means transferring responsibility for centrally controlled aspects of schooling to the community wherever possible.

Formal recognition of Indian culture, as incorporated into the design of all Government legislation, policies and organization, must recognize the following principles:

- (i) that there are not one but many First Nations of Indian people in Yukon;
- (ii) Government must provide Indian people at the community level with the necessary authority and resources to ensure their effective involvement in all aspects of education.



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# REPRESENTATION





## **THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE NEED FOR THE EDUCATION SYSTEM TO BECOME ACCOUNTABLE TO, AND RECEIVE DIRECTION FROM, THE INDIAN PARENT AND COMMUNITY**

Indian people are not effectively represented through the existing system of local school committees and advisory boards. This is due to negative experiences with the education system in the past as well as the ineffectiveness of these advisory structures. Indian people do not participate in a forum where their presence may be used to legitimize the goals of the non-Indian majority.

*"...Canadian parents, in general, do not subscribe to the principle that the State has the right to forcibly separate them from their children and determine the nature of the education their children should receive. Is there any reason why the Indian citizens of Canada should not have the same right to control the destiny of their children as other Canadians enjoy?"*

*1960 Committee  
on Education*



*"...we've never heard...from our School Committee, to say, what do the Band people want? You know (we're) 50 per cent (of the ) students of the whole community, we haven't heard once."*

*Commission  
Hearings*

The unwritten policy of the Government of Yukon, with respect to parent participation on school committees, has been to adhere to a utilitarian principle of "the greatest good for the greatest number".

This is not a democratic principle appropriate to an education system serving two distinct populations with significant cultural differences.

*"...I went to F.H. Collins and while I was going there I got suspended for missing days and the only way I got back was to go in front of the Board of Education (school committee) or something, and I got back in ...I was suspended again after that anyhow. ...they said the only way I could get back in is if they dropped me down to (to) pre-vocational. And when I got put in that program I found it too easy, I was way ahead of everybody else and I was just getting bored and just felt I wasn't learning anything because that was what I had already learned from the class I was already in so I just quit....I only went to F.H. Collins for about six months...the options I had put in for... I never got any of them. I got drafting...I started skipping because I didn't understand what I was being taught."*

*Former F.H.  
Collins Student*

Prior to 1972, each Local School Advisory Committee had direct access to the Superintendent of Education. Today, the advisory role of school committees has been significantly weakened and is not as important as it once was.

*"Provision has been made for local input through School Committees but duties of these committees are basically advisory and, as a result, do not have the fiscal and policy responsibilities and accountability which school boards in provinces have."*

*Response to  
Motion 15,  
November, 1976  
Yukon  
Legislative  
Assembly*

School Committees have become a barrier limiting the access of the parent to education decision-making. Committees and parents must now work through three different levels of departmental management. Unfortunately, the outcome of the gradual weakening of the role of school committees and other advisory structures has been to enhance the control of the Department of Education at the expense of the parent and student. Advisory boards, such as College Community Campus Advisory Committees, have evolved to become similar, powerless structures.





**PAST COMMITMENTS BY GOVERNMENTS, RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR GREATER INDIAN PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION, HAVE NOT BEEN MET.**

The role and function of school committees, advisory boards and the Education Council, as they exist today, do not reflect the recommendations of the 1960 and 1972 reports of the Committees' on Education, commissioned by the Government of Yukon.

The 1972 *Committee on Education* recommended regular discussions take place between the Yukon Native Brotherhood and the Government of Yukon towards improving education services to

Indian students. Unfortunately, the pattern which evolved - one of hastily called meetings, usually to deal with serious issues or potential crises - did not lend itself to significant reform.



*"Because there are a number of communities in the Yukon that have large Native populations and because to date there has been little evidence except in one that these populations have taken an active part in educational affairs we would commend the suggestion of the Yukon Native Brotherhood that an Indian Education Committee would be formed in each community."*

*1972 Committee  
on Education*

Also in 1972, the Minister for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jean Chretien, announced a policy of Indian control of Indian education. However, in a letter addressed to all Yukon Band Chiefs, August 10, 1973, he revised this policy statement saying that the principles of local control and parental responsibility had to be viewed within the context of the Territorial system of education.

*"...In recent statements in educational policy each Territorial Department of Education has upheld the basic principles of the new policy - parental responsibility and local control....I believe that the governments of both Territories are most willing to establish education programs acceptable to the native communities."*

*Jean Chretien,  
Minister of  
DIAND, 1973*

To date, the principles of parental responsibility and local control have not been implemented within the education system.

In 1976, the Member of the Territorial Legislature responsible for Education committed the Government of Yukon to provide for the participation of Indian parents on school committees by some other means than majority election. This commitment has never been met.

*"Although the School Ordinance makes provision for the democratic election of school committee members, the legislation is not necessarily effective with respect to Indian parents. There is a degree of suspicion and timidity on the part of Indian parents and these attitudes often result in the process of participatory democracy being ignored. There is no easy solution to this problem, but some initiative is called for on our part."*

*Response to  
Motion 15,  
November, 1976  
Yukon  
Legislative  
Assembly*

In 1978, the Territorial Government did establish a Territorial Education Council with ten members, including two seats reserved for minority (Indian?) representation. It is at the discretion of the Minister of Education to appoint members to the Council to represent minority interests.





*"We had a union for the teachers, an association for the administrators - we needed something for the children; no one was representing the children's interests. So I said, let's have a school board for the children."*

*Ed Gamble,  
Mayor, Angoon,  
Alaska*

The current level of Indian representation within the education system in Yukon is not in keeping with the national policy of the Department of Indian Affairs. Nor is it in keeping with the significant role Indian Bands play in southern Canada where many operate their own schools or have guaranteed seats on local school boards.

The Government of Yukon has been delegated responsibility and is accountable to the Minister of DIAND for Indian education in Yukon. Governments have obligated themselves to specific and general reforms, the most important of which is recognition of Indian parental responsibility and control in local education matters, yet those changes have not taken place.

The absence of direct Indian parental responsibility and local control over education, in spite of past commitments to such policies by Federal and Territorial governments, can be cited as one major reason for the re-emergence of the call among some segments of the Indian population for a separate school system.





### **RECOMMENDATION #3**

**“THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND YUKON RECOGNIZE THE IMMEDIATE NEED FOR AN INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF INDIAN PEOPLE”**

The Commission recommends the immediate establishment of an Indian Education Commission to provide for the direct representation of Indian people within the education system.

This Commission would:

(i) be appointed by Indian communities and the Council for Yukon

Indians;

- (ii) be recognized by the Governments of Canada and Yukon;
- (iii) be a process to provide for the representation of Indian education interests until Indian parental responsibility and local control in education is restored;



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- (iv) provide for the representation of Indian education interests at the community level until Indian parental responsibility and local control is restored.



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# **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**





## **THERE IS A NEED FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIAN PEOPLE, TO SHOW NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN EDUCATION**

There is a fear of speaking out publicly on education issues among the Indian community, teachers, and education officials, based on a perception that the Government discourages criticism.

During the course of its hearings the Commission listened to many hours of testimony in Yukon communities. The Commission discovered, through its hearing process, that Yukoners are reluctant to speak out publicly about the education system. This perception was

shared by most individuals and education officials the Commission met with. There was also doubt expressed about the likelihood that the government would amend or change policies. Yet, there remained a genuine interest in expressing concerns and being heard.



*"Despite the magnitude of the problem, we have confidence that there is potential for positive growth and development change. There is definitely (a) possibility for our Band government and non-native peoples to cooperate for change."*

*Commission  
Hearings*

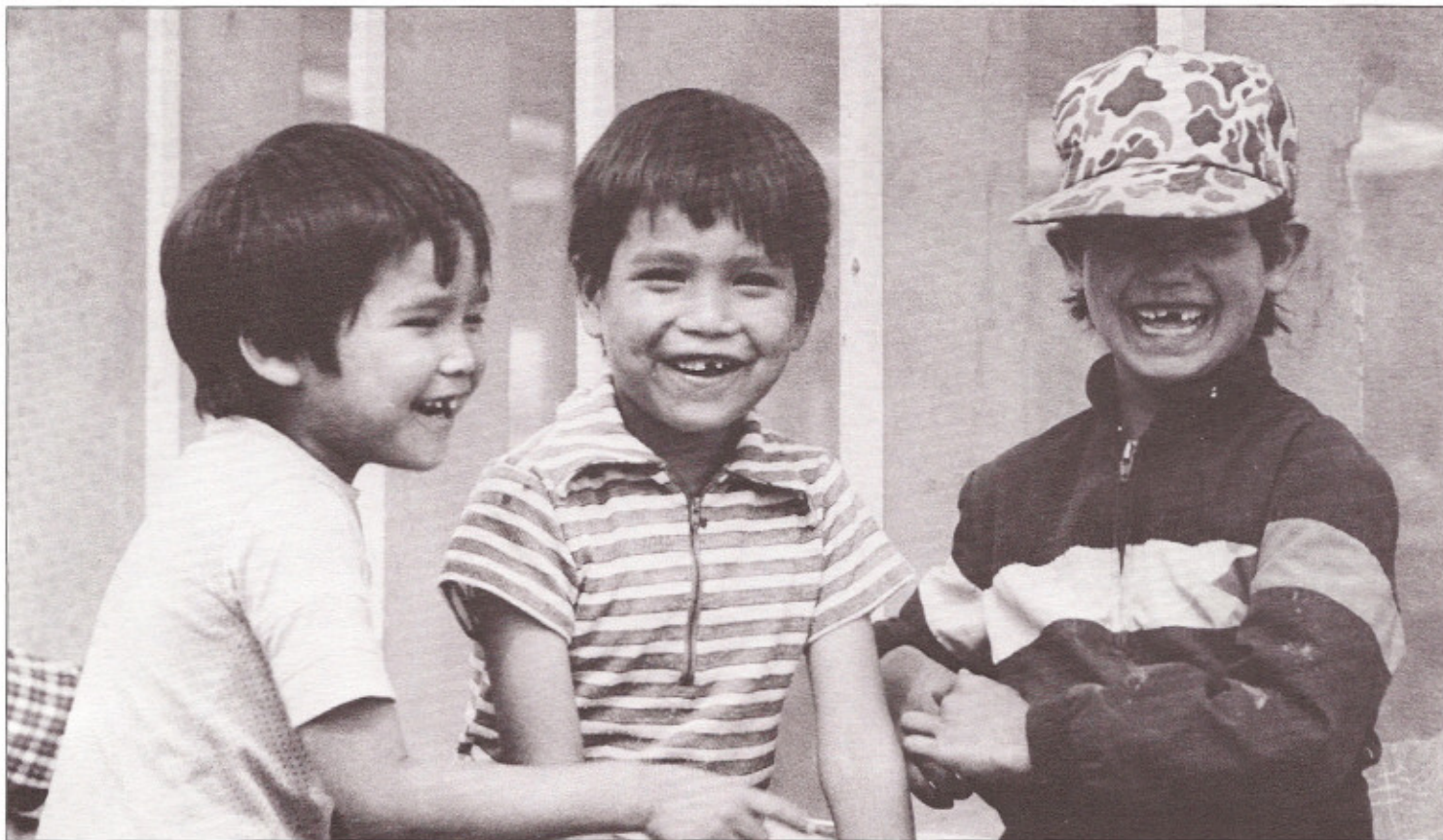
The Government of Yukon, in the past, has not responded to suggestions for reform in support of Indian education concerns. There is a need for the Government to demonstrate leadership by initiating new policy directions. These changes must be accompanied by a demonstrated willingness to work with the Indian community.

The Commission has recommended the establishment of an Indian Education Commission to fulfil this immediate requirement. However, it will be necessary to put in place new structures and processes to facilitate the development of legislative and policy reform. For example, the Federal-Territorial 1964 *General Tuition Agreement* respecting Indian Education requires re-negotiation, but only with the direct participation of Indian people. As well, the absence of an adequate information data base and policy research capability is a major obstacle that needs to be overcome.

Education reform can only be achieved by working in partnership with Indian organizations. The Government of Yukon, through its immediate dedication of resources to address legislative, policy

and structural deficiencies within the education system, can signal educators and the Indian community that it is sincere in its efforts, and its intent.





#### **RECOMMENDATION #4**

**“THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIAN PEOPLE, INITIATE SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE, POLICY AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS OF YUKON’S EDUCATION SYSTEM”**

#### **STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATION REFORM**

The following legislative, policy, and organizational strategies complement the Commission’s recommendations. They reflect findings from community

hearings and the Commission’s own research. They are intended to serve as a starting point and to inspire further thinking in these directions. The Commission supports refinement of these strategies, but only in close consultation with the Indian Education Commission



and, as required with, the Government of Canada.

Governments and Indian representatives should adhere to the following principles in determining priorities for reform:

- The meaningful and effective involvement of the Indian parent and community through recognition of local control and parental responsibility;
- Recognition of the need for equality of opportunity in education and training for Indian people;
- Acknowledgement of the need for devolution of program authorities and resources to Indian people at the community level;
- Acknowledgement of the need to provide Indian people with the opportunity and the means to promote and develop Indian culture as part of Yukon Society.

## **STRATEGIES: EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY**

1. Implement regular evaluation for all aspects of the education system's performance;
2. Develop procedures for the collection of comprehensive education data;
3. Develop comprehensive system-wide diagnostic procedures for measuring the efficiency and effective-

ness of community level education programs;

4. Introduce comprehensive secondary school programs in rural Yukon communities and discontinue the policy of boarding-out rural students;
5. Improve incentives and contractual arrangements to attract and retain more experienced educators in rural schools;
6. Extend the right of Indian people to equality of opportunity in education and training of all government-sponsored programs, bilateral agreements and contractual arrangements with the private sector;
7. Utilize existing arrangements to take full advantage of the resources and expertise available in other jurisdictions. For example: Gateway School District, Tok, Alaska; School for Social and Human Development, University of Alaska, Fairbanks; and the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa.

## **STRATEGIES: FORMAL RECOGNITION OF INDIAN CULTURE**

1. Review all appropriate legislation to ensure formal recognition of the multicultural nature of Indian society;
2. Devolve responsibility to Indian communities for local curriculum



- development and adaptation, including special programs of cross-cultural education for teachers and government employees;
3. Develop policies for increasing the visibility of Indians art and culture in schools, public offices, institutions and the community through programs of cultural enhancement and support;
  4. Recognize the need for scholarship programs and other award systems to provide specific incentives for Indian students.

## **STRATEGIES: REPRESENTATION**

1. Develop a process for effective representation of Indian community interests within the education system;
2. Separate the Policy Development/Community Consultation aspects of the Department of Education from its operational components, through separate lines of accountability to the Minister, to facilitate the devolution of responsibility for education to the communities;
3. Develop a plan for the orderly transfer, to communities of Department financial and management responsibilities for schools and community campuses;
4. Recognize in legislation the right of Indian communities to public fi-

nancing for separate school systems where demand warrants;

5. Devolve to communities responsibility for social and human resources planning and training programs, including special compensatory programs to assist early school leavers and those experiencing 'residential school syndrome';
6. Integrate, at the community level and under community direction and control, social and educational services;
7. Devolve to communities Ministerial responsibility for the hiring of principals and teachers.