

One tradition that must be preserved is that of the various dances, and the traditional styles of dress. This does not mean that we should put on shows just for the benefit of tourists; and other curiosity seekers, though this too does have a measure of value. Rather, the dances should be explained to our young people so that they will understand the meanings behind the dances. If this means a revival of some of our old religious beliefs by way of explanations, then by all means let us have a revival. Other people within our Canadian society would soon realize that the religious beliefs and practices of our ancestors were not at all pagan, as the history books would have us believe; on the contrary, they would be astonished to learn that most of the basic principles of the established Indian religions and those of Christianity are similar.

Another of the basic principles of our former culture which we would do well to preserve is that of unity and cooperation. As you very well know, one lonesome Indian is not very effective in any of his endeavors to advance the cause of his people unless he has the backing and support of the whole group behind him. We must of necessity unite, and each of us must contribute our share of wisdom and industry if we are to achieve any degree of progress. None of us can afford to sit back and let only one or two do the work. Can you imagine our people being out on a buffalo or a moose hunt two or three hundred years ago, if three-quarters of the tribe sat back and said, "Oh, I can't take part, I'm too shy; besides, I don't know how to do anything right." Why, we would not be here at all today if that had been the case. Yet this is exactly what we see time after time; people go to a meeting and just sit back, letting two or three do the talking. (usually the three are white.) If they do say anything, it is usually after the meeting when it's too late. Whether you think in Cree, in Saulteaux, in Ojibway, in French, or what have you, if you have something to say, it is up to the group to decide if what you do say is "right" or "wrong". If you think of anything that is relevant to the topic at hand say it - say it in a reasonable and rational manner, of course, but say it. We must do our own thinking and our own work; apathy and indifference cannot be allowed to impede our progress any longer.

Along with apathy and indifference goes ignorance. All of these adverse attributes can be overcome in the long run by formal education. It is never too late to learn, and the older people can benefit by some type of training; even more important, however, we must ensure ourselves that our children receive a good education. Don't leave it all to Indian Affairs. Take an active part and show interest in the education of your children. Just think, if your child was to be able to make his living and contribute to the welfare of the band, in the past he had to be taught how to hunt and trap and fish. Education in modern ways of living is just as important for survival and welfare today, as was education in the ways of hunting and fishing and gathering in the old days. It is up to us to begin solving some of our own problems.

We cannot loll around and dwell on the past grievances and injustices. We can however select those aspects of former culture which will be of benefit today - especially unity and cooperation - and we can learn by the mistakes that have been made in the past. We cannot afford to stay on the sidelines nor return to the wild; this is something I could not suggest. What I am suggesting is that we do now as our forefathers did over the past ten thousand years. Evaluate our environment, then take action to cope with and overcome the adversities which threaten to overwhelm us. Unity, cooperation, and most of all, participation, will not fail to be of great benefit to us in our struggle for equality and progress.

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