

Tesuque Pueblo
Route 1, Box 59
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear Friend:

The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico feel that it is time to take action to bring about an improvement in the educational program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is insisting upon an Institute of American Indian Art for a select few, while thousands of Indian children have no school. The enclosed press release states our position. The letter amplifies it. It is just to let our friends know what we are doing and to ask them to do what they can to help us in our efforts to have an adequate program in Indian education. We shall never get anywhere without it.

Not only is it important to abandon the Institute of American Indian Art, which is a symbol of Bureau failure to understand the needs in Indian education, but on the positive side, we need to insure a sound, modern program in Indian education that will bring the Indian to a level equal to that of the white man. Thank you for all you can do to help.

Martin Vigil, Chairman
All-Pueblo Council of New Mexico

July 5, 1962

Dear Friend:

Enclosed is a copy of a press release concerning the recent meeting in Santa Fe with officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs concerning the Institute of American Indian Art. The press release contains a statement of the Pueblos' position in this matter, and we are writing to some of our friends to let them know how we feel about it.

Unemployment is a very serious matter on the reservations. Indian education is only half that of the non-Indian population. There are 1,600 Indian children out of school just in this area.

It is idle to expect that economic development of the reservations will provide a solution while Indian education is at its present level, for we shall be unable to manage our affairs and we lack the money to hire outsiders to do it for us. We shall be compelled to continue to look to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

We need a first-rate senior high school in Santa Fe, so that Indian students will be equipped for college. We need first-rate elementary and junior high schools, too, of course; in fact, we need a first-rate program of education in the Bureau, with stability and the kind of direction and leadership that will enable teachers and children to know from one year to the next what the program will be.

Indian youth needs vocational training, so that useful skills can be acquired and jobs can be found that will relieve unemployment. There is no hope of our ever being able to work out our situation without adequate education.

Instead of meeting real needs, a substantial sum of money is to be spent for an Institute of American Indian Art for the "arts elite." We do not need it and do not want it, and we protest the expenditure of funds for this purpose while Indian children are not in school because of lack of classrooms, while the average of Indian education is at the fifth grade level, and while unemployment is so serious a problem on our reservations.

The Congress was very generous with the Bureau's appropriation for the current fiscal year, because a very large percentage was to go for education and there was an awareness of the needs in Indian education. The Institute of American Indian Art is not realistic and cannot be justified in view of what is needed.

The All-Pueblo Council has condemned this useless and unjustified extravagance and asks that steps be taken immediately to abandon the Institute of American Indian Art, that the Bureau's education policy be reviewed and the system brought into line with Indian needs, that a vocational training school be established in Santa Fe and that a first-rate senior high school be set up. While the funds that will be squandered on the Institute of American Indian Art will not, alone, be sufficient to do what needs to be done, these will contribute very substantially toward an adequate and realistic program.

At the Santa Fe Indian School, there used to be a vocational training program of a sort, but this was discontinued. Then the high school was abandoned and a junior high school was substituted. And now the Institute of American Indian Art! The children, as well as the teachers, are confused and bewildered, to say nothing of the Indian people.

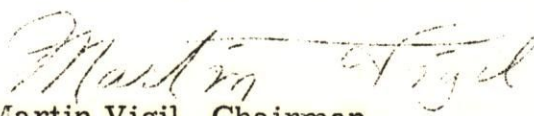
All this does not serve the cause of Indian education. We need an Indian education program by modern educators who see the need for a solid school program and are able to bring about the improvement that is so greatly needed.

No effort was made to consult with the Indians when this new program was planned. If, after all these years, the Bureau's Branch of Education did not know what was needed, we could have told them.

There is no mystery about it. We need a good vocational training school to meet the problems of unemployment and a good senior high school at the Santa Fe Indian School that will provide adequate preparation for college. We do NOT need the Institute of American Indian Art, and we do not like to see in positions of importance the kind of people who think this unrealistic program is in any sense an answer to any need in Indian education.

We earnestly hope you will do all you can to help. It is already very late.

Yours sincerely,


Martin Vigil, Chairman
All-Pueblo Council

From:

All-Pueblo Council
Martin Vigil, Chairman
Route 1, Box 59
Tesuque Pueblo
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Press Release

IMMEDIATE

Protests by the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico were heard at a recent meeting in Santa Fe that was called to discuss the Institute of American Indian Art, which the Bureau of Indian Affairs had announced would replace the Santa Fe Indian School, in existence since 1899.

The meeting was called by Commissioner Philleo Nash in response to complaints by teachers at the Santa Fe Indian School and by the All-Pueblo Council, representing the 19 Pueblo groups in New Mexico. At a meeting on June 6, the All-Pueblo Council voted to condemn the program to set up what was called an "arts elite" for a special few, instead of operating a school where Indian children could learn to read and write.

Following complaints from Pueblo leaders to the New Mexico Commission on Indian Affairs, the Chairman requested its Executive Director, Charles E. Minton, to look into complaints and to make a report. The report, published as a supplement to the June issue of the Commission's newsletter and approved by the All-Pueblo Council and by the Commission at its meeting on June 18, was given publicity in the Santa Fe New Mexican. More protests followed.

The Chairman and Executive Secretary of the All-Pueblo Council, Martin Vigil and Joe H. Herrera, were present at the Nash meeting, which was attended also by Area Director Wade Head, Assistant Commissioner Robert Vaughn, Mrs. Hildegard Thompson, George A. Boyce, Director of the Institute, Alvin Warren, its publicity director, and others.

Pueblo leaders have pointed out that with several thousand Indian children out of school (1,600 of them in the Gallup area), the Santa Fe Indian School should not be closed, but expanded and improved, with a good college preparatory high school and a good vocational training school so that Indians could acquire skills that would enable them to get jobs and earn a living.

"There is a large surplus labor pool on all the reservations," Chairman Vigil said. "Indians are out of work because they lack training.

--more--

They are born knowing how to do arts and crafts. What they need is a job they can make a living at. Very few can support their families on arts and crafts, but they can make extra money working at home on jewelry and other things. They need regular work and real wages."

For years the Pueblos have been trying to have a vocational training school in Santa Fe, Vigil said, adding that they also want to see a first-rate senior high school with a college preparatory department.

"Some of our young people want to go to college and some want to learn a trade. We need both. Professionally trained college graduates will be needed more and more. Those who have had vocational training and have learned a skill that there is a demand for, will have a job; the others won't have a job and won't be able to get one. The average of Indian education is the fifth grade, while the average for non-Indians is the tenth. Who thinks a fifth grade education is good enough for the Space Age? Why shouldn't the Indian have an equal chance? This is their country, too. Why should money be spent on teaching Indians the fancy dancing and music they can get in hundreds of schools in America? Why have a program for the 'arts elite' when thousands of Indian children have no school to go to? It doesn't make sense."

After two days of meetings in Santa Fe, Commissioner Nash decided to go ahead with the Institute of Indian Art anyway, but to accept approximately 180 children from the Gallup area for the school "under the Bureau of Indian Affairs regular school program at the Institute of American Indian Arts. This number will be in addition to 150 students planned for the first year's operation of the new Institute..." He announced that the Institute "will accept an additional 150 students in its second year of operation and an additional 200 in its third year of operation." At the end of the 1962-63 academic year, the 180 will be transferred elsewhere to make room for students at the Institute.

Nash said that one hundred applications for enrollment in the Institute had been received from individuals representing more than 40 tribes. Only eight from this area have applied.

"The Pueblos don't want it," Chairman Vigil said. "We don't need it. Our greatest need is education. Indian children should be learning to read, write and speak English. Indian men and women should be learning skills so they can get jobs. This is the real need. If Indians want to learn music and ballet and those things, there are hundreds of schools that teach them."

Vigil said continued efforts would be made to have a vocational training program and a good senior high school at the Santa Fe Indian School.

"If the Bureau had consulted the Indians, we could have told them that what we need and want is vocational training in the skills that there is a demand for, also better preparation for higher education," the Chairman said.

"We want education for all the Indian people, not for just a few so-called 'arts elite'. Unemployment is demoralizing us. Many of our young people don't care any more. They feel that the situation is hopeless, so they take to drinking and loafing. And now the Institute of American Indian Arts will let a few special ones loaf at government expense. It is a shame that we have to have this."

--30--

*this page can be
deleted, if it seems
better to do so.*