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Duluth--- "Society should not try to make the Indians 'just like us' but rather recognize that the Indian is different and is acceptable and respected because of it and not just in spite of it."

Dr. Dean A. Crawford, professor of education at the University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD) who recently spent nine months living on nearby Indian reservations observing the teaching of Chippewa children, today called for a strengthening of "the Indian pupil's sense of cultural identity at the same time he is learning to abide by the school's practices in order to succeed.

Many Indians wish to retain something of their unique culture. The school can play a part in encouraging knowledge and pride concerning the specific tribal heritage."

At a news conference at UMD, Dr. Crawford pointed to the findings documented in a 160 page booklet released today 'Minnesota Chippewa Children: A Handbook for Teachers" which describes the Indian pupil, his culture and his special educational needs. Co-authors of the handbook with Dr. Crawford are Virgil Wurr, principal at the Nett Lake Elementary School, and David L. Peterson, principal at the Grand Portage Elementary School. The booklets are being distributed this week to teachers of Indian children throughout Minnesota.

The study headed by Dr. Crawford was supported by a grant from the Upper Midwest Regional Education Laboratory in St. Paul. Joining in sponsorship were the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Department of Education.

Crawford resigned his post as head of secondary education at UMD in October, 1966 to spend almost a year living in a trailer on the Nett Lake and Grand Portage reservations. He also spent considerable time on the Fond du Lac reservation.

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The book describes how many teachers in schools with Indian students are as "disadvantaged" in their knowledge of Indian problems and history as are the children who are said to be "disadvantaged" in a social or economic sense.

The authors make a number of specific recommendations for strengthening the education of Indian children. They urge appropriate officials to:

* Establish a system of "school representatives" who would act as liaison people between Minnesota public schools which serve reservation children and the Indian village or reservation.

* Name a statewide Committee on Indian Education made up primarily of Indians to advise the Minnesota Commissioner of Education.

* Expand the staff of the Indian Education Unit at Bemidji since the two persons there cannot properly service all the schools now serving Indian pupils in the area.

* Arrange for more numberous visits by teachers to Indian homes and by Indian parents to the schools.

* Expand school library collections on Chippewa culture in order to broaden the understanding of both non-Indians and Indians.

* Carefully plan lunches or breakfasts in schools to provide the special nutritional needs of Indian children.

The booklet authors emphasize that teaching Indian children should be as much as possible an individualized process. Teachers are urged, among other things, to consider certain actions which will benefit both the students and their professional work:

* Examine their own attitudes toward the dignity and worth of pupils.

* Reward the careful and accurate student as much as the speedy ones.

* Foster group competition and cooperation in school since many Indian students shy away from individual actions.

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* Use repeated demonstrations through novel or dramatic forms rather than just verbal corrections of error.

* Call attention to the inspiration of model Indian students or adults in the school or community who are considered successes by other Indians.

* Become familiar with the differing backgrounds of all pupils and use the information to enrich classroom fare.

* In senior high school, discuss the problems of minority groups and how the dominant society and members of such groups may differ in their thinking.

Dr. Crawford noted that while the Indian drop-out rate is around 50 per cent, there has been marked improvement in the education of Indians.

"There (remains) an educational need which is not adequately being met," declared Prof. Crawford. "Our experience suggests that there are a great many teachers and an even larger number of Indian parents who are sincerely trying to improve the situation, thereby implying their own awareness of the need."

Although many children of Indian families are not living in poverty, those who do often display the same characteristics thought to be common among low income white and Negro pupils.

"Whether a given poverty-stricken person truly lacks ability or not; whether he is actually doomed to failure or not, doesn't matter here. He often believes it. He <u>really</u> believes it," say the authors.

Dr. Crawford told newsmen that there is as great a need for trying to change attitudes as there is for teaching Indian pupils specific skills.

He listed a series of attitudes common to children who grow up in poverty, whether Indian or not.

* They often do not trust middle-class people.

* They do not always respond quickly to teacher approval because of their own prejudices.

* Much of what they encounter in school, in books or on television is a kind of fairy tale compared with the life they actually lead.

* Because of language problems, such children often are slow learners, have poor work habits and a short attention span.

* They lack many social experiences such as middle-class politeness, taking turns, asking permission etc.

* They often have a low level of aspiration, tire easily, dress poorly and appear ungroomed.

* They often view education almost entirely in terms of its job market value.

* But Dr. Crawford noted, also, that Indian reservation children often have traits which can be viewed as "advantages" or at least as characteristics which a wise teacher might exploit.

* Such children often are not inhibited in expressing joy, anger and other emotions.

* They are capable of deep, loyal personal relationships.

* They can be very resourceful in a practical way.

* They may be accustomed to performing very responsibly many family chores.

* They often have superior physical coordination and skills because they have to rely on doing, not talking.

* They often develop a good sense of humor because of teasing and bantering in the family or village.

* They are less fooled by status and prestige. "You've got to prove yourself as a human being to (them) and can't rely on ready-made respect because of your position or title."

Dr. Crawford, who has returned to full-time teaching at UMD, has prepared a slide-lecture program "Chippewa Children" for presentation to area organizations. He can be contacted at the UMD Department of Secondary Education.