

REMINDER

Re: Meeting on Education of East Indian Children.

Date: Tuesday, February 23, 1971 at 7:30 p.m.

Place: Sikh Temple, Ross and Marine Drive, Vancouver.

Agenda: Reports from our two sub-committies (see enclosed notes) and further discussion.

Following this meeting there will be a brief get-together of the resource leaders participating in the March program "Understanding East Indian Cultures", to clear up last minute details.

Meeting on Education of East Indian Children

Tuesday January 19, 1971, in the Sikh Temple

7:30 - 10:15 p.m.

<u>Present were:</u>	M.S. Gill (Chairman)	Janet Moody
	Mary Ashworth	G. Nath
	Bill Damen	Mrs. G. Nath
	Lloyd Geddes	G.S. Neel
	Marjorie Haluschak	K. Sekhon
	I.S. Kohaly	D. Sihota
	Stuart Martin	P. Siripawa
	Art Messinger	Marjorie Smith
		Vi Smith
		David Vale
		Carrie Vollands

Mr. Gill explained that this meeting was one of a series having two purposes:

- (a) To plan a program on East Indian culture for professionals and others interested.
- (b) To help East Indian children who are having difficulty in school, especially with respect to the English language.

He asked Mr. Gyan Nath to present his proposal, prepared since the last meeting.

(The proposal had been circulated to members before the meeting. In brief, it recommends the establishment of integrated learning centres by the School Board to which immigrant children might go for assessment and a special program which would assist them to acquire language concepts necessary for successful achievement in regular school classes.)

Mr. Nath invited comments and criticism of his proposal. He mentioned that it would be possible and desirable to start with a small project for East Indian youngsters as a pilot group.

Mrs. Vollands commented that the New Canadian classrooms were already working on the principle proposed by Mr. Nath. She noted that of the total of 337 new registrants in elementary and secondary schools this year, about 20% are East Indian in origin. There are now 24 New Canadian elementary and secondary classrooms in which youngsters 9 years and over stay for varying lengths of time according to their need before entering the regular system. There are also 7 primary New Canadian classes for children under 9 years.

The discussion that followed centred around the following points:

1. The concepts of the Centre as presented by Mr. Nath. Particularly emphasized was the need for youngsters of age 5-8 inclusive to have this kind of learning experience as well as those who come in at later stages.
2. The need for follow-up to assist youngsters when they move from New Canadian classes into regular classes was stressed, both with respect to their school work and their social development in mixing with children other than their ethnic group.
3. The importance of involving parents of the children concerned was underlined. Dr. Martin reported that in the United States it has been found that when the school has worked with young parents in the community and helped them to become integrated, more success has been achieved with the children. Mrs. Nath and others pointed out that it is part of Indian culture for parents to leave school matters to the teachers, which explains their lack of attendance at P.T.A. meetings etc. Other problems of course are that frequently both parents are working, most of the men are on shift work, and transportation is also a difficulty.

There was consideration of having pre-school classes with a teacher specially trained in language instruction who also understands the culture. It was suggested that School Canadiana might be able to assist. This organization works in cooperation with the Vancouver School Board with groups not normally served by the Board.

There was further discussion about the value of having teachers who could speak the children's language, particularly in the early grades.

Mr. Damen expressed support for Mr. Nath's proposal if it could be developed to involve parents and a pre-school program.

Dr. Martin said it would be interesting to try out a bi-lingual East Indian teacher with a sample group. It would require a work group at the school and community level to set up an application of Mr. Nath's proposal along this line. It would be necessary to have a teacher who speaks English well. She might also act as coordinator to make contact with the parents and draw on the resources of the community.

Miss Moody described a head-start program in which groups of children were taken on trips during the Summer months to acquire experiences and understanding of concepts they would need in school in the Fall. Such a program has been

carried on in Vancouver in the Strathcona Area for two Summers already. Mr. Damen wondered if it would be possible to plan such a program here and if it would be supported by the parents.

4. Consideration of next steps.

There was discussion of the need for action on two levels:

- (a) Further development of Mr. Nath's proposal, its presentation to the Sikh community through the Executive of the Khalsa Diwan Society, followed by its presentation to the Vancouver School Board (by means of a letter addressed to Dr. R.F. Sharp, the Superintendent of Schools, who would hopefully then arrange for a meeting with the relevant committee* of the Board of School Trustees).
- (b) Exploration of the possibility of involving some parents from the community with the school in considering the problem at the local level.

The matter of funds for any project was considered. It was pointed out that last Summer the Manpower Department had suddenly made funds available to employ university youth for programs for children. This, or some similar resource, might be discovered again. Also, the Commission on Bi-lingualism and Bi-culturalism had made a recommendation regarding assistance to communities for the purpose of setting up special programs to teach English to immigrant children. It would be worth finding out if the Federal Government intended to implement this recommendation in any way.

Mr. Kohaly suggested that the Khalsa Diwan Society should set up a special committee to work with Mr. Damen and the school.

Mr. Neel suggested that in any case the Secretary of the Khalsa Diwan Society should attend these meetings so that he could report back to the Executive.

There appeared to be general acceptance of Mr. Nath's report, together with the need for involvement of parents especially in some kind of program for pre-school children and the parents themselves.

On Mr. Damen's suggestion the following committees were set up:

- (a) A committee to review and develop Mr. Nath's report, taking into account what is already being done in the Vancouver school system, to get

* Education and Student Services Committee.

approval from the Khalsa Diwan Society, and then to send a letter to Dr. Sharp re presentation of the report to the school board committee. Members of the committee: Mr. Gyan Nath, Dr. Martin, Mrs. Volland, Mr. Messenger, Miss Moody and Miss Ashworth. Mr. Damen agreed to serve as "critic".

- (b) A committee to work toward programs for younger children, in cooperation with their parents, possibly including a Summer program of activities, trips, etc. It was recognized that a good deal of ground work will be necessary before this committee could undertake planning for a Summer program. Funds and considerable organization will be required. Dr. Martin suggested that to be effective such a program should be related to the regular school program for the Fall.

Members of the committee: Mr. Damen, Mr. Sihota, Mr. Neel, Mrs. Siripawa, Mrs. Vi Smith, Mrs. Nath, Mrs. Haluschak, Miss Sandhu and Mr. Sandhu (if available), Miss Moody, Mr. Sekhon and Marjorie Smith.

Both committees will come together for a joint meeting on Tuesday, February 23, 1971, at 7:30 p.m. at the Temple.