

EDUCATION
in the
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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PRESENTED TO
MACKENZIE VALLEY
PIPELINE INQUIRY

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INTRODUCTION

The history of education in the Northwest Territories is the history of an imposed institution which is irrelevant to the majority of the people: the Dene and Inuit. From its inception, the southern-oriented education system has been characterized by administrative structures, policies and programmes which have placed native peoples today in an untenable position.

Three generations of students have experienced a type of formal education designed to eradicate their life styles and their cultural identities. Concurrently, the education system has attempted to bring about the assimilation of Dene and Inuit into the middle class, urbanized southern society.

This two-pronged attack on the lives and livelihoods of people is not unique. What has transpired in Northern Canada parallels the education - social development which is typical of colonial activities throughout the world. In the provinces of Canada, Indian and Métis peoples have experienced similar attempts to destroy their pride in their customs, traditions, attitudes and values for over two centuries.

What is unique in terms of the N.W.T. is the relatively brief history of the "white man's" education. There may still

