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Education criticized in UM panel discussion

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EDUCATION CRITICIZED
IN UM PANEL DISCUSSION

MISSOULA--

A member of the Crow Indian Tribe criticized the quality of education in Montana during a panel discussion recently at the University of Montana.

Mrs. Thomas Yellowtail, Wyola, a member of the President's Council on Indian Education, said that Indian children who attend school on the Crow Reservation often start out behind because they can't speak English, a language they don't learn until they start to school.

Referring to the overall quality of education in Montana, Mrs. Yellowtail said, "The educational system in Montana is not good at all--no matter how you look at it." She indicated that she feels education of Indians is particularly poor in the state.

Mrs. Yellowtail said most teachers in "substandard" schools don't speak the children's language and therefore they can't communicate with the youngsters.

She said she wonders what white people would do if their children had to learn to read in the Crow language without knowing how to speak it.

Panelists discussed "Custer Died for Your Sins," a book written by Vine Deloria Jr., a Sioux Indian from the Standing Rock Reservation in North Central South Dakota.

Deloria's book was criticized by Dr. Carling I. Malouf, an anthropology professor at UM, who said that a chapter about anthropologists in the publication is partially inaccurate.

Dr. Malouf said some anthropologists are doing things he isn't "too proud of," but he said most people in his field have tried to help the Indian in practical ways.

Mrs. Yellowtail questioned the ability of anthropologists to understand the Indian.

"It's fine if you want to see what makes me tick," she said, "but how can an anthropologist who studies me for a few months know what makes me tick?"

(more)

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Referring to a chapter in Deloria's book dealing with black and red Americans, Ulysses S. Doss, an associate professor of humanities at UM and director of the UM Black Studies Program, said, "Deloria doesn't understand black culture." Doss said it isn't true that the black man has tried to break into the white man's world.

Said Doss, "The black man has never wanted any part of the 'materialistic values' of the white man." He said the Negro has just been "trying to find out what it means to survive as a human being."

Doss said that Negroes and Indians have been "pitted against each other" by the white community. He said that the government allocates money for minority groups and then the minority groups fight over who will get the largest amount. Doss said the respective groups should work together when the money is given out, so the funds are distributed fairly.

Victor Charlo of the Flathead Indian Reservation, Evaro, said that Deloria implies in his book that Indians are waiting for white people to change the conditions of the Indian.

Charlo said, however, that Indians do not depend on white people to change, but rather on themselves. "If a culture can stand the abuse (Indians) have stood for 150 years, we can stand alone," he said.

Others who participated in the panel discussion included Gordon M. Belcourt, a UM law student from the Blackfeet Reservation, Browning; George Harris, Indian adviser-counselor at UM who is from the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming; Rev. Jonathan Nelson, Lutheran Student Center pastor in Missoula; Tom McDonald, a Flathead Indian from Evaro, director of Missoula's Volunteers In Service to America, and Charles W. Briggs, Missoula a UM history senior.

The panel discussion was sponsored by the Friends of the Library of the University. Panel moderator was Dr. H. Duane Hampton, an associate professor of western history at UM.