

Frontier College History

Canada's oldest Adult Education Institute, Frontier College, was created by Alfred Fitzpatrick in 1899 in order to provide labourers working in Canada's frontier with education. An immigrant himself, Fitzpatrick encouraged university students to travel out to the frontier and work side by side with men working in the lumber, mining and railroad camps. After the workday ended the students would run classes that were held in tents in the labour camps. Since they would have spent many hours with the men during the workday the students would be able to understand issues concerning the worker and could then develop classes based on these issues.

Fitzpatrick introduces important points about Adult Education in his work. He states that everyone has a right to an education and that educators must go to the student. He also writes that the education must be individualized and relevant to the student's life, and that instructors should have a close personal association with their students. These ideas are still exciting and useful today.

Fitzpatrick also devotes a great deal of time to discussing how education can be used to Canadianise and assimilate immigrants. Fitzpatrick sees education as a right that all people should be able to access but he also sees it as a tool that will ensure that British values and ideas are dominant in Canada. This paternalistic attitude continues as Fitzpatrick discusses the role of the instructor as a Canadianiser. He believes education can help in what he describes as the necessary work of assimilating foreigners. While he notes that education can improve the safety of workers and inform new immigrants of their rights, he also mentions that it can be used to bring new Canadians to "our standards." In order to ensure that teachers are helping the immigrant become a 'healthy Canadian' Fitzpatrick suggests that only those who are British subjects by birth be granted permanent teachers' licenses. A teacher who is foreign born, states Fitzpatrick, has likely not entirely eliminated their "foreign traits." Fitzpatrick finds it natural and proper that Canada force the English culture and beliefs on people entering Canada.

Adapted from http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_sch/assignment1/1920fitzpatrick.html

Fitzpatrick, Alfred (1999, 1920). The University in Overalls: A Plea for Part-Time Study. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing Inc.