

NATIVE EDUCATION IN SASKATCHEWAN: A NEW MANDATE

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NATIVE EDUCATION IN SASKATCHEWAN: A NEW MANDATE

INTRODUCTION

This paper employs the simple formulation of what's done--what's to be done--how it's to be done to organize a statement of a mandate for Native education in Saskatchewan.

The discussion under Part I, what's done, provides a historical sketch of Native education, a brief account of the development of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the work of the Institute to the present.

Part II, what's to be done, outlines the extent of the need of Native education in Saskatchewan and provides a plan for meeting this need. The plan is developed in two phases: an interim strategy, currently in progress, and a five-year plan beginning in 1989 to culminate in a new education system.

Part III, how it's to be done, is devoted to general aims and statements of policy and philosophy. It is intended to highlight issues which were raised by those who founded the Gabriel Dumont Institute and which need to be kept at the fore in order to hold future developments on course.

I. WHAT'S DONE

EDUCATION
DEVELOPMENT
IN
SASKATCHEWAN

An overview of the major historical events in Saskatchewan education shows that even prior to our becoming a province in 1905, the government of the North West Territories had pursued vigorous and enlightened programs dedicated to the purpose of making accessible a rising standard of public education for all of its citizens. Following 1905, successive governments have continued this policy with, for example, the establishment of the Outpost Correspondence School in 1925, and the expansion of the public school system to include Kindergarten and separate high schools. In post-secondary education, too, Saskatchewan has demonstrated a will to provide the broadest range of learning opportunities and to that end has established community education facilities, a network of technical training institutes and two universities.

THE FAILURE
OF
SASKATCHEWAN
EDUCATION
FOR NATIVE
PEOPLE

The education institutions in Saskatchewan failed, however, to serve Native people well. The extent of the failure is indeed grim, as we shall see in Part II of this paper. The causes of the failure can be identified with those same causes that leave Native people on the outside of other mainstream institutions and can be traced

SOME CAUSES
OF FAILURE

historically to the displacement of Native (in this paper meaning Metis and Non-Status Indian) people by the prevailing white society during a series of events beginning before the Metis Resistance of 1885 and following through to the present day.

Throughout the period after 1885 and the signing of the treaties, and the establishment of Saskatchewan as a province, neither the federal nor the provincial government would assume responsibility for Metis education. In the southern half of the province, those Metis who lived on land bordering Indian Reserves attended Day Schools on the reserves until 1910 after which they were excluded from federally funded schools. The children of those Metis who lived on road allowances and other crown lands were, understandably, not welcomed at local schools supported and directed by landowners who paid school taxes. For other reasons also, Native people felt in their interaction with schools run by white people a sense of alienation, of not belonging. Whatever the ideas of universal and democratic learning that might reside with the Department of Education, the delivery of education was in the hands of local school officials and teachers whose communities did not offer much

corrective to racial prejudice. The course of studies at school was indifferent--sometimes hostile--to the experience of the Native children's language, culture, values and understanding of history.

In the North, as late as 1944, Chet Piercy's Survey of Educational Facilities in Northern Saskatchewan shows that over half of the school-age children, 519 of them, were not attending because there were either no schools, or no teachers, or impossible distances; only thirteen children were not attending because of parental indifference. As for higher education, the subsistence poverty of the Metis and the lack of discretionary income and the lack of preparatory schooling put college out of reach for all but a very few.

METIS LEADERS

SHOW CONCERN

THE METIS

SOCIETY

Several Metis social critics and organizers drew attention to the alarming neglect of Native peoples' education --among them, Joe Ross, Malcolm Norris, J. Z. Larocque--during the half century up to 1960, while they tried to organize the Metis to better their living conditions. With the Metis a growing number of non-Status Indians found common cause, and in 1975 these joined the Metis to form a new association--the Association of Metis

FOUNDING OF AMNSIS and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS)-- which quickly identified Native education as a priority issue.

1976 CULTURAL CONFERENCE The year following, in 1976, AMNSIS organized, with the assistance of the Federal Department of the Secretary of State, a cultural conference which resolved upon three goals:

- GOALS
1. The development of healthy Metis and Non-Status Indian communities;
 2. A renewed and strengthened Native culture; and,
 3. The development of a new education system.

The conference determined that the first step in achieving goals might be taken by establishing an institute for the advancement of Native studies, culture and research. AMNSIS developed plans for such an undertaking and after two more years of planning and lobbying the President of AMNSIS and the Minister of Continuing Education reached agreement in the spring of 1979 on a project to be known as the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research.

FOUNDING OF GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE

The Institute began operations in 1980, in Regina, and, under the terms of the agreement, its initial function was limited to educational and cultural research and a library. But the new Institute was soon pressed into providing

instructional programs. The first of these was the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), developed to ensure that Native people would be adequately represented in urban teaching positions and to provide these teachers with the added skills necessary in meeting the needs of Native students. The SUNTEP program in Regina was accredited by the University of Regina; the program that developed in the centres of Saskatoon and Prince Albert was accredited by the University of Saskatchewan. The demand for other training opportunities of the kind offered in technical school and university led the Institute in 1983 to develop a number of certificate programs. These programs, collectively called STEP (for Saskatchewan Training for Employment Program), had the effect of further expanding Gabriel Dumont Institute to many Native communities in widely separated points throughout the province. Along with SUNTEP and STEP, the Institute developed a range of student services: preparatory courses to help students meet college entrance requirements, income support and scholarships, Native studies training, and personal and academic counselling.

PLANNING The rapid expansion of the Institute during these years urged the need for systematic

planning. At the 1984 Cultural Conference, the Gabriel Dumont Institute membership adopted a Mandate statement that attempted to identify the various components of an educational program that would have to be put into operation in order to bring about the "New Education System" that was proposed at the founding Cultural Conference of 1976. In 1985 and 1986, the Institute produced two more planning documents, Meeting the Need and A Preferred Plan for Transitional Programming, which called for an Interim Strategy to conclude at the end of 1989 to meet the short term needs and a Five-Year Plan beyond 1990.

INTERIM
STRATEGY

At the time of this writing, the Interim Strategy is in progress.

In instructional programming, the Interim Strategy relies on the cooperation of governments for funding and on the space and training capacity of mainstream institutions.

The Interim Strategy also includes the development by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of an education network including the human resources, institutional capacity, and support services necessary to meet the total continuum of Native education needs during the term of the Five-Year Plan.

INTERIM
STRATEGY
SPECIFICS

It is outside the scope of this paper to attempt a full account of the progress of the Interim Strategy, but a few highlights will illustrate that the timetable that has been proposed is probably a realistic one.

SCHOOLS

In K-12, the Institute is concluding its first effort in instructional delivery--an adult grade twelve re-entry program. The Institute has published several Native curriculum resource materials, and planning for Native-controlled schools for Native children is in progress.

POST-SECONDARY

In the Institute's post-secondary instructional programming, the record shows a steady year-by-year increase in enrolments and an increasing number of programs in both technical training and university education. On the technical side, the Institute recently entered into a federation agreement with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology which will have the effect of enlarging the Gabriel Dumont Institute's role in instructional delivery.

SIAST
AGREEMENT

II. WHAT'S TO BE DONE

PLANNING ISSUES

Those who are planning education for Native people in the province find that they are presented with two basic questions: How do we get from where we are now to where we want to be? or in more concrete terms, How do we proceed from the Gabriel Dumont Institute to the goal of a New Education System? We will return to this question shortly.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The second question concerns the current situation in Native education: How do we deal with the overwhelming and growing problem of need in the face of a quite inadequate capacity to meet it?

DESCRIPTION OF POPULATION

There are at least 37,000 Metis and Non-Status Indian people in Saskatchewan. It is a young population and growing--at the rate of 2.4 percent annually, which is more than twice the growth rate for the non-Native population. One-third of those Native people in the labor market are out of work.

EDUCATION

Only nineteen percent of Native people have some post-secondary education; forty-five percent of Native people have less than grade nine, which is double the percentage for the non-Native population. In the North the median educational achievement level for adults is estimated at grade six or lower.

Not only does the educational achievement level of Native people fall well below that of the non-Native population but also it must be noted that the Native population is currently underrepresented in the K-12 and in all post-secondary education institutions.

UNDERREPRE-
SENTATION OF
NATIVE PEOPLE
IN EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS

In the K-12 system, the Department of Education figures (1985) show that only sixty-one percent of Native young people in the age cohort of five to nineteen years are in school; 3,600 Native young people are not attending; ninety percent do not complete high school.

Similar statistics obtain for Native people in community colleges, technical institutions and the universities.

A NEW
EDUCATION
SYSTEM

The realization of the goal of a New Education System that was determined in 1976 requires a new mandate that includes instructional programming and a far-reaching support service for students in addition to the Gabriel Dumont Institute's current mandate for cultural programming.

The Five Year Plan

The Gabriel Dumont Institute seeks a mandate to establish during the five-year period beginning in 1989 the following education network and services:

K-12 K-12: Where numbers warrant the Gabriel Dumont Institute seeks powers similar to those of existing separate school jurisdictions to establish education delivery capacity for Native people in K-12 under a system of local boards.

TECHNICAL
INSTITUTE Technical Institute: Development will continue development of a Native-controlled technical institute under the terms of a federation agreement between the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). The Gabriel Dumont Institute will provide instructional services in preparatory and technical programs both in the urban campuses and in smaller communities.

UNIVERSITY University: The Gabriel Dumont Institute will seek federated college status with either one or both of the province's major universities.

CORE SERVICES Core Services: Currently, the Institute delivers core services comprising Native studies, library, educational resource development, the research and development unit, and publishing.

The function of these services is now primarily to support the Institute's instructional delivery. The realization of the Five-Year Plan does imply, however, that the Institute programs in K-12, technical training, and university education will become quasi independent institutions, each with core services appropriate to its needs. In this phase of development the Gabriel Dumont Institute will retain, as now, a vigorous cultural function including the preparation of Native curriculum materials, research in Native studies and in aboriginal languages, and the services of a central Native library with outreach facilities.

STUDENT
SERVICES

Student Services: The Gabriel Dumont Institute will expand student services and establish a student services bureau. Emphasis will be placed on student income support, housing, counselling, social services and recreation.

GOVERNING
STRUCTURE

Governing Structure: SUNTEP Management Committee has responsibility under the SUNTEP agreement to direct aspects of the SUNTEP program. Similarly, the SIAST agreement calls for a specially constituted council to direct the Native Services Division of SIAST under the aegis of the Gabriel Dumont Institute's Board.

The governing pattern emerging in the Gabriel Dumont Institute's expanding network is the

assignment of specially appointed management committees to oversee each of the Institute's agencies while the Institute Board of Directors retains the general and overriding directorial authority.

III HOW IT'S TO BE DONE

POLICY AND
PHILOSOPHY

The items that follow are intended to serve as broad policy direction and as philosophical guidelines that will steer the course of Native education in Saskatchewan.

The Mandate Process and Its Validity

NECESSITY
OF PROGRAMS

The Gabriel Dumont Institute claims the validity of a mandate for its programs because of their necessity. It was shown statistically at the beginning of Part II of this paper that mainstream institutions have not taken effective means of delivering education services to Native people, and the promise of these institutions, which claim an exclusive mandate, that they will be effective has remained unvalidated over a lengthy period.

THE NATURE OF
DEMOCRATIC
EDUCATION

Native people also claim the validity of their mandate to deliver education programming because the very nature of democratic education demands it. The principle, simply stated, is that education in a democratic society requires that those who receive it must participate in delivering it.

NATURAL
JUSTICE

Gabriel Dumont Institute also claims the validity of its mandate on the basis of natural justice. The natural justice finds expression in

several international, national and provincial laws and conventions requiring employment and education equity. Although this legal apparatus has been with us for some time, Native people remain severely underrepresented as students in the mainstream education institutions and even more severely underrepresented as employees in Saskatchewan's education system.

ABORIGINAL
RIGHT

And finally, Native people have a mandate over their education because they retain the aboriginal right. The definition of this right is evolving as Native people participate more fully in the process of education and as discussion continues on this subject between governments and Native leaders.

Open Door Policy

OPEN DOOR
POLICY

Gabriel Dumont Institute and the institutions contemplated in its education network subscribe to the terms of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As democratic and publicly supported institutions they shall be open to all, regardless of race and of the other conditions of birth and belief specified in the Charter. This is the ideal and the practice that is exercised currently by the Gabriel Dumont Institute for all of its employment, practices, programs, library resources, scholarships, and services.

Philosophy of Education Aims

PHILOSOPHY
OF AIMS

At its beginning, the founders of the Gabriel Dumont Institute posited three principles upon which all of its programming should be based: (i) All training must be fully accredited and recognized; (ii) All activities of the Institute, whether in research, library services or teaching, must be of the highest quality; and, (iii) All Institute activities are directed toward self-determination of Metis and Non-Status Indian people.

NO CONFLICT

Apparently, these founders saw no essential conflict in a set of principles which, in the case of (i), explicitly seeks the recognition and accreditation of non-Native Institutions and, in the case of (iii), affirms the goal of self-determination. In fact, the experience of the Gabriel Dumont Institute is that its quest for self-determination is not in conflict with recognition and accreditation by non-Native institutions.

AIMS OF
MAINSTREAM
EDUCATION

Insofar as Native education programming involves meeting the aims of mainstream education, let us examine briefly the thinking that informs those aims.

In 1916, John Dewey, an American educator, advanced the view that all children have the same

vocation, to be citizens in a democratic state; and therefore all should receive the best quality of education available that would prepare them for civic responsibility as well as for leisure and for labor.

AIMS OF
NATIVE
EDUCATION

These aims are virtually identical to the three aims or goals which Native leaders have urged and which are cited in the foregoing discussion: (i) the aim of healthy Native communities and of Native self-determination; (ii) the aim of a renewed and strengthened Native culture; and, (iii) the aim of employment, and of economic development and well-being.

Because Native people have sought to live both in their Native culture and in the larger society, it appears right that they should adopt both sets of goals for their evolving network of education institutions.

Student Philosophy

STUDENT
PHILOSOPHY

The Gabriel Dumont Institute is committed to the view that all students must be prepared by their education to govern themselves wisely, to develop themselves in both Native and mainstream cultures to live rich and fulfilling lives, and to earn a living.

Management Philosophy

WORK TEAMS
HELP FORMULATE
POLICY

Gabriel Dumont Institute is organized in a number of work teams, and each team member assists in the setting of goals, the making of decisions and the formulation of policy for the team, in addition to the other tasks appropriate to his(her) job description. The executive director exercises his directorial function by receiving these staff initiatives through his team leaders, known as department heads, and these initiatives become the basis of his advice to the Board of Directors. Each staff member is encouraged to think managerially about his role to the extent that his input is seen to resolve itself into the direction and policy of the Institute.

EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR
ADVISES
BOARD

The economy of such a cross-utilization of personnel is that each staff member is valued not only for his executive proficiency but also for his contribution to the management of the Institute.

SUPERVISORS
DELEGATE
AUTHORITY
AND
RESPONSIBILITY

Gabriel Dumont Institute has several programs in the province, and some are widely separated by distance. It is necessary in these cases and desirable in all cases to delegate authority as well as responsibility to ensure that each program is able to perform its function. Openness of communication and the building of trust

relationships between supervisory personnel and other staff are validated and enhanced by the experience of on-going mutual support.

Policy on Community Development

COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
POLICY

It was noted near the beginning of this paper that the otherwise effective education system of the province of Saskatchewan failed its aboriginal people because its institutions did not involve them in any meaningful way. There may be a tendency, too, for education leaders in the AMNSIS network to be overly concerned with the efficiencies of centralization and the economies of scale.

It will be a challenge to education planners to develop and maintain in good repair those mechanisms that will support local initiative and facilitate community development.

NOTES

- p. 5, 11. 7-16 The neglect of education of the Metis is discussed by Mary Heit in an unpublished paper of the Saskatchewan Department of Education (1985), "Historical perspectives of Indian and Metis education in northern Saskatchewan," p. 8.
- p. 6, 1. 8 C. H. Piercy, Survey of educational facilities in northern Saskatchewan, Part I. Regina: Saskatchewan Department of Education, p. 8.
- pp. 7-9 This section on the history, organization and programs of the Gabriel Dumont Institute is summarized from the Institute's publication (1986, November), An introduction to the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, pp. 1-10.
- p. 9, 11. 3-7 The Gabriel Dumont Institute (n.d.). Mandate for the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research.
- pp.11, 11. 14-25 For the demographics of Metis and non-Status Indian people and their education levels, see the Gabriel Dumont Institute's publication (1986, June), Native post-secondary education: A preferred plan for transitional programming, pp.5-6.
- p.12, 11.1-15 For a more detailed comparison of the Native and non-Native participation in the Saskatchewan education system, see the Gabriel Dumont Institute's publication (1986, March), Native education and training: Meeting the need, pp.7-8.
- p. 13, 11. 6-10 Refer to the Gabriel Dumont Institute draft paper (1988, Saskatchewan Native Education in K-12: A Concept Plan.
- p.13, 11. 21-23 A concept plan for federated college development is outlined in the Gabriel Dumont Institute's draft (1986, December), A framework for Native federated college development in Saskatchewan: A discussion paper.

- p.16, 11. 18-23 The notion of social participation as a requirement of democratic education is dealt with, among other places, in John Dewey's (1916) Democracy and education. New York: The Free Press. See Chapter 2, "Education as a social function."
- p. 18, 1. 25 -
p. 19, 1. 7 An excellent summary of the legal and conventional proclamations calling for equity in education and employment is found in the publication of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (1985, September), Education equity: A report on Indian/ Native education in Saskatchewan, pp. 3-10.
- p.17, 11. 9-15 See the publication of the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (1983), The Metis people and aboriginal rights.
- p.18, 11. 26-27 John Dewey, Democracy and education. New York: The Free Press. pp. 111-123.
- p. 19, 1. 1-5 This formulation of education aims as citizenship, leisure and labor, is based on Dewey and borrowed from Mortimer Adler (1984), The paideia program: An educational syllabus. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company. Adler notes, "All [students] have the same three elements in their futures: the demands of work, the duties of citizenship, and the obligation of the individual to make the most of himself or herself that his or her capacities allow . . ." p. 2.