

File

Briefing Item: Adult Basic Education for Saskatchewan Native People

Background

- 1960's The prime purpose of federal funding for adult education was to improve employability. It had an academic focus.
- 1970's Expansion of focus to include other educational objectives as shown by the inclusion of life skills.
- 1980's Federal Government reduction of ABE funding and shift in focus back to purely employment related objectives.
- Net Results: 1) Persons completing adult education have increased their academic standings and in some cases their employability but have NOT used the ABE certification to proceed on to further education.
- 2) The delivery has been the exclusive domain of the Saskatchewan Government, allowing minimal input from the Native community and has thereby remained non-Native.

Issues

- . Lack of involvement of the Saskatchewan Native community and its organizations (GDI).
- . Failure to provide for input from the learners themselves.
- . The ABE programming has not led to increased enrollments in SIAST or at the universities.
- . The federal funding available (CJS) is geared toward the labour market.
- . Native underrepresentation in post-secondary educational institutions has not been properly addressed.
- . Saskatchewan Education is focussing upon rationale and philosophy instead of upon delivery.

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Target Group¹

The target group for this program is the Metis and Non-Status Indian community of Saskatchewan.

Population Size

The Metis and Non-Status Indian population of Saskatchewan is between 40,000-50,000 persons, based upon projections from Statistics Canada Census information for 1981.

Socio-Economic Description

-	less than Grade 9	45.0%
-	High School Certificate	4.0%
-	Certified Trades	8.0%
-	University Degree	1.5%

Average Income

The average income for Natives in Saskatchewan is 30% less than the average income for the non-Native population in Saskatchewan.

Labour Force Participation Rates

There is a 49% labour force participation rate among Saskatchewan Natives. This compares to a non-Native labour force participation rate of 64%.

Unemployment Rates

The current employment rate for Saskatchewan Natives is 32%. This is approximately four times the rate for non-Natives in Saskatchewan.

Family Size

The average Native family size in Saskatchewan is 33% larger than the average size for non-Native families.

Population Analysis by Age Group

Forty-five percent of Saskatchewan Metis and Non-Status Indians are under 15 years of age. The 15-49 year old age group represents another 45% of the MNSI population. The vast majority of Saskatchewan's MNSI population is or will soon be of labor market age.

¹Statistics quoted are taken from the **Report of the Technical Work Group on Statistics, Part II**, prepared for the purposes of the Constitutional Tripartite Committee Meetings.

Present Employment Barriers

The unemployment which results in the high rates of welfare dependency is a direct result of the educational and cultural barriers facing many Natives.

Educational Barriers

The mainstream institutions delivering education in Saskatchewan do not provide a format conducive to success for Natives. A lack of recognition of the differences between Native and non-Native students and the resultant failure to provide any accommodating measures for Native students has led to a high drop-out rate and very low success rate. This, in turn, leaves many Native students functionally illiterate with no possible means toward furthering their education and training. "(Forty-five percent of Saskatchewan Native people have less than a grade nine education. This is functional illiteracy in 1986.)"²

Cultural Barriers

These include the racism, prejudice and discrimination reported on a frequent basis by local, provincial and federal media. Societal prejudice and its concomitant destructive effect are well understood in the Native community.

- "Racism, both overt and institutionalized, is major obstacle to the participation in Canadian life of visible minority groups."³
- "There has been an increase in incidents of racial discrimination . . . particularly in large urban centres."⁴
- "Study after study has consistently demonstrated that the visible minority groups do not have equality of access to Canadian institutions."⁵

²Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Manpower unofficially defines functional illiteracy as grade eight or less of formal schooling.

³RACE RELATIONS AND THE LAW Report of a symposium held in Vancouver, British Columbia, April, 1982 p.1.

⁴ibid p.1.

⁵ibid p.7.

Action Required

- . Politically, there needs to be pressure brought to bear to allow Native input AND Native control/delivery.
- . Educationally, the learners must be consulted to allow for participant direction setting.
- . Regarding content, it must be such to allow learners to pursue further educational opportunities.
- . Regarding funding, a provincial funding arrangement that allows for a strategic and comprehensive Native adult education program that will involve Native organizations and Native communities.