

to education needs of Natives

was set up, shows the drop-out rate in Northland division to be an astonishing 96.7 per cent.

The study was part of a thesis by William McCarthy entitled *Indian Drop-Outs and Graduates in Northern Alberta*.

McCarthy, unfortunately, only had

a small study group of 90 people who had attended Northland schools, so the accuracy of his study may be questioned.

According to the study, "sixty-four per cent had considered further schooling, but sixty-nine per cent did not know of one source of information or help in acquiring further training."

McCarthy concludes that without higher grade levels available in home villages and without more curriculum relevant to Natives, the drop-out level in northern Alberta schools is not likely to improve.

It was the same year as the study, 1971, that "parents of the Cold Lake, Kehewin, and Saddle Lake Reserves in northeastern Alberta withdrew their children from school" to protest, in part, inadequate schools, reported *Our Native Land*, a national Native newsletter.

It was not until 1982 that members of the communities that the 24 Northland schools serve first got to vote on local school board committees.

These local committees oversee their own schools, and Northland school board is composed of the chairman of each of the local committees.

The promising fact is that Northland has had some positive changes in the last five years; changes that are hoped will bring the drop-out rate down. The frightening aspect is that Northland could not have been

much worse.

The university, and in particular the faculty of Education, has taken 20 years to respond to this problem and its response has, to date, been "niggling" according to Dr. Urion of Native Student Services on campus.

"It's amazed me there hasn't been more of an institutional response," said Urion, "the university should provide leadership and yet we still don't know the dimensions of the problem."

The institution that provides the majority of the teachers for the area (U of A) has had, until this year, next to no courses dealing with Native culture and Native languages available to its students.

In 1965 the faculty of Education developed the intercultural education program. The program combines offerings from a number of faculties and at the current time about three courses are geared specifically towards Native education.

The university has been involved in other initiatives as well. The Morningstar project, which began in the mid 70's, was set up to train teacher aides.

According to Patterson, Morningstar was set up to put Native teachers in Native schools. "We had to have role models in the schools," said Patterson.

In 1972, Urion wrote the proposal for the School for Native Studies. Fifteen years later, 1987, the school, in its first year, is offering three courses. Four more are planned for next year. Long term funding has not yet been guaranteed.

Almost all of the projects the university has been involved in were started because of the initiative of a few professors.

The faculty of Education and the university as a whole have not responded to these problems.

"So many people have tried so hard to do something," said Urion, but the collective will of the faculty of Education is lacking. "Response has been piecemeal," he said.



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