

Thompson, Man. to get university?

WINNIPEG (CUP)— Manitoba may become home for a new university, to be located far north of the southern three.

Chiefs of the 25 Indian bands in the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakinak (MKO) re-affirmed, last month, a commitment to build a university in northern Manitoba. A committee of four has been struck to assess prospects for such an institution.

"MKO has wanted a university for a long time," said MKO chair Rodney Spence, chief of Nelson House. He said the university might be built in Thompson, 800 kilometres north of Winnipeg, where the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba are situated. The third university in the province is Brandon, southwest of Winnipeg.

Chief Pascal Bighetty of the Nathias Colomb band in Pukatawagan said negotiations for the northern university began in July. He said a proposed feasibility study would determine how the univer-

sity would best benefit the northern community.

"We're talking about (either) a native-controlled university or a university open to everyone in the north," he said. "We will be working on the most popular proposal."

Bighetty said a university in the north is very important to native people. "Only some of our people can make it in the southern universities because of the high cost of living, the difference in the way of living, and being separated, often for the first time, from our families."

Most people in northern Manitoba seem to be supportive of the idea, but a few are urging caution.

Bernie Simand, director of Inter-Universities North (IUN), said he is "initially skeptical" of the plan. He warns a northern university could miss out on costs presently absorbed by IUN, which administers a collection of courses taught in the three southern Manitoba universities.

things, like administration, registration, and orientation costs, funded by the southern universities," he said. "A northern university probably won't be able to pick up on those freebies."

Simand added it could be difficult to attract students to a northern university. "A university has to have a good reputation, established by the quality of their teachers and graduates, before it will attract people."

However, said Simand, "if this is a motherhood issue for the people of the north, accreditation will come about."

The MKO negotiating committee would like to approach the provincial and federal governments for project funds, and is seeking support and cooperation of the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Northern Association of Community Councils, as well as mayors of northern towns. But cash commitments are not easy to come by.

"Finding funding for the physical buildings actually scares a lot of people off," said Emma Jane Crate, student services director of the Cross Lake band. "Part of the feasibility study will be addressing IUN's mandate with hopes of incorporat-

ing their programs in our university."

While the feasibility study is hoped to take a thorough look at questions such as location, programming, funding, and structure, some proponents of a northern Manitoba university are looking even further to the future.

"We need high school level teachers as well as doctors, lawyers, and engineers," said Split Lake band councillor Larry Beardy. The overall chances for native self-government, he said, would increase with a more educated people.

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Time: 4:30 p.m. — 5:30 p.m.

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