

University has failed to respond

The U of A, and in particular the faculty of Education, has failed to meet the needs of Native students in northern Alberta.

"We sit virtually in the middle of one of the worst education systems in all Canada," said Dr. Carl Urion, acting director of Native Student Services on the U of A campus.

While the university should be expected to take a leadership role in dealing with the problem of high drop-out rates among Natives, Urion said, "the response has always been on the part of the individual (members of the faculty of Education.)"

Even Dean Robert Patterson of the faculty of Education admits the university has not accomplished much in the area. "There certainly hasn't been an overwhelming effort," said Patterson.

And the problem is a monstrous one. Ninety five percent of Native students in the province do not graduate from high school.

The problems Natives have with the school system is reflected at the university level as well.

There are currently less than 100 Native students attending the U of A, about ten per cent of the population that could be expected if Natives attended university in the same ratio non-Natives do.

And although the problems are not limited to the educational system alone, it is certainly one of the major obstacles to Native education in Alberta.

Northern Alberta is divided into a number of large school divisions. The federal government run schools on some reserves and Indian bands run them on others. The provincial government operates a number of divisions around some of the larger towns, and it also operates Northland School Division #61.

Northland encompasses a huge area of northern Alberta and administers most of the smaller schools in the district.

Northland has had, from its first year of operation, a racist policy.

The man who helped put Northland together in 1961 was J.W. Chalmers. He ran division 61 and was its Official Trustee for its first two years of existence.

In every other school division in the province school boards are elected by the community they serve. Northland had a single appointed trustee: citizens of this division had no control over the decision-making process.

As the sole trustee, Chalmers was responsible for directing the development and changes that took place within Northland. This was a situation Chalmers felt was positive because it allowed Northland to avoid the inevitable delays of bureaucracy.

"A year's delay in making and implementing a decision, eg. to open a new school, may mean the loss of a year's education for a whole roomful of children, since they will leave school when they reach the maximum compulsory attendance age anyway," wrote Chalmers in his review of Native education in Canada, *Education Behind the Buckskin Curtain*.

Chalmers held the opinion that Natives only attended school because provincial law compelled them to, and at the first opportunity they would drop out.

Chalmers' intent was to segregate Native and non-Native students in the north. "The objective," he wrote, "was the inclusion (in division #61) of all schools predominantly Native in

enrolment that could not be better served by other systems. With the exception of two or three areas, where politics became an over-riding consideration, all changes were governed by this objective."

A study conducted in 1971, ten years after Northland school division



Story by John Watson

WRITING COMPETENCE PETITIONS: NOTICE TO STUDENTS

This notice is intended for students who have not met the University's writing competence requirement and whose deadline for meeting that requirement occurs on or before September 1, 1987. Students who do not pass the writing competence test by their deadline will have their registrations cancelled prior to the start of classes unless granted an extension by the GFC Writing Competence Petitions Committee (WCPC).

If your deadline is May 1 or July 1 and you plan to register in the Spring term or in a subsequent session, you may petition or re-petition the WCPC for permission to continue your registration, provided that you are currently registered and have written the writing competence test at least once.

If your deadline is September 1 and you plan to register in the Fall term or in a subsequent session, you have the option of petitioning the WCPC either in March or in July provided that you are currently registered and have written the writing competence test at least once. Students with a September 1 deadline who will be out of the city July 28-31 may wish to consider submitting a petition in March. Students in this category should first consult the student advisers or student ombudsmen.

Students are urged to seek advice on preparing their writing competence petitions. Such advice can be sought from the Student Ombudsmen, Room 272 Students' Union Building, or the Student Advisers in the Office of the Dean of Student Services, Room 300, Athabasca Hall. The regulations and procedures used by the GFC Writing Competence Petitions Committee are available in either of these offices.

Petitions must be received in the University Secretariat, 2-5 University Hall, by Thursday, March 19, 1987, 4:30 p.m.

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