

TYP limited

Acting Director interview

by Elaina Bhatlacharyya

Why is the burden of the Transition Year Program on the university's shoulders?

Of course it would be ideal if the blacks' and natives' education conditions could be improved at an earlier level. However, that isn't the case and something needs to be done. We'd like to see the TYP become redundant.

Define the goals of the TYP.

Education is power. Making it accessible is not the TYP's responsibility alone. The program has made enormous contributions to some individuals, whether or not they obtained degrees. They've become more literate, numerate, with new self-esteem and leadership qualities. As a result, they can get jobs in services for their communities where they can contribute. They are now in a position to give something back and that creates a role model effect. Others in the community see that success is tangible, they are shown that it's possible.

What is your definition of a "disadvantaged youth" (term used in Report)? How are the targeted youths reached/informed of the TYP and what is the selection process?

I would not deem them as "disadvantaged," they are more "discriminated against" either consciously or subconsciously

We have many outlets to the targeted communities — formal/informal contact, through schools, organizations, government agencies, and we used to send TYP workers into the areas but, regrettably, the budget doesn't allow it now. After receiving 100 applications for the 20 available spots,

all previous education/training transcripts, two academic and two personal references and a general impression of the student from the interview. Any of the

weaker students may take make-up courses and ask to reapply. This shows commitment and determination on their part, so their chances of acceptance will be quite good. (TYP currently has 24 students.)

What are the key arguments against the need/desirability of such programs?

The TYP lets high schools "off the hook" and passes the buck to Dal. The TYP cannot possibly meet all of the needs, so some are neglected and that causes more harm in the long run. What's the point of only doing a job half-way? We're doing what we can with the resources given. I'd love to do a first-class job, but we're limited.

In the document released by the task force, there is the statement that "Dalhousie is an elitist institution exclusively for the cream of the crop." Would you comment on that?

If you came from a community where no one ever goes to Dal, where there are no role model profs with your background and with next to no black or native representation, you could view that as an accurate statement. Our society does not treat individuals equally, blacks and natives continually have their ability and esteem undermined by it, purposely or subconsciously. As a

rule, the only times natives are referred to in history class are when they were on the warpath. Similarly, references to blacks are either as slaves or as drug pushers and delinquents. From early on,

these people are faced with prejudice and the realization that society as a whole does not offer them or their ancestors any respect.

Does having an isolated TYP defeat the overall purpose of integration and acceptance into the general Dal community?

We do find the TYP House too confining for our purposes and would like to be joined with col-

leagues of parallel fields. Some of the TYP classes are mixed in with regular classes, but our students have special needs and Dal can be a completely new world for them. They come here with the assumption that because the student body is more highly educated, they don't think they'll meet with racism and discrimination. But there always is, they're minorities and they're poor, acceptance is hard to come by.



photo credit: Ratika Seth: Dal photo

Peter Rans is the acting director of Transition Year Program.

Can Dal afford substantial monetary backing for the TYP?

The money is always there, it's only a matter of relocating and financing it. Dalhousie claims to be committed to the program, but has yet to come through with the necessary funding. Shifting of funds is elementary. It's having the political will to actually do it that counts.



photo credit: Rochelle Owen: Dal photo

TYP Time for change

by Sandy MacKay

Action is the name of the game now, according to Wayne MacKay. He was the chair of a task force given the job of reporting on the Transition Year Program and general access for indigenous Blacks and Micmacs to Dalhousie. The task force formally completed their responsibility on September 21, when the document called "Breaking the Barriers" was presented to the President of Dalhousie, Dr. Howard Clark.

The Transition Year Program is a one-year course of study designed to prepare Nova Scotian Blacks and Micmacs for post-secondary education. It was set up

twenty years ago as a mature students' program for blacks and natives. Today, the TYP is perceived as a marginal program by the very people it is meant to assist, according to interviews conducted by the task force.

The TYP's existence was guaranteed for one more year in the spring of '89. The Task Force began the process of interviewing concerned groups and individuals in February of '89 and was scheduled to be completed by the end of June. The submission date was rescheduled to September 21 due to various difficulties in compiling all the research necessary to make the study credible.

The report was released 15 days ago, and the 150-page document

gives not only an account of the TYP, but also of the education system in Nova Scotia as perceived by Blacks and Micmacs. The TYP was described by some as "an excuse for the provincial education system". The program "works as a 'safety valve' for the province's school system, and in doing so, reduces the pressure for the reform of that system". The TYP was said to perpetuate systemic discrimination within the secondary school system. It became an excuse for secondary schools to have graduates who were unprepared to enter into first-year university programs.

This was not the first study done on the TYP. Others have recommended its closure, but the '89 Task Force has positive suggestions. It proposes that the TYP return to its original status as a program for mature students at Henson College and that Dalhousie get involved in affirmative action to make fair access for Blacks and Micmacs a reality. Among other propositions, the Task Force suggests that a native or black director be found for the TYP and that cross-appointments from other departments be made to help integrate the program into the mainstream. As well, it suggests more active recruiting in Black and Micmac communities.

Education for Blacks and Micmacs has been a vicious circle of institutional negligence. Students poorly trained in high schools never made it to university. Therefore, there were never any role models or teachers in the

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