

Community worker optimistic

planned to settle in Toronto and make the city their home, 65 per cent of the people said 'yes'. Another 25 per cent said 'no', and 10 per cent were not sure whether they wanted to stay or not.

Family stability might appear to be a problem but the Centre received names for the interviewees from agencies, so it is not a scientific survey. But of the 181 families, 111 had a single parent.

When asked 'where does your family income come from?', 82 families said social assistance (welfare or mother's allowance), 75 families said both social assistance and employment, 6 families said employment insurance and 2 families said student allowance and employment. So there seems to be an equal reliance on income from employment and social assistance and other forms of support.

One major finding of the survey is the families' concerns in ensuring that their children receive all the educational, health and support programs needed to make sure they are not handicapped later in life.

Native leaders have tried to ensure that their children growing up in the city will be able to possess the skills needed to survive in the white man's world, but also not to forget they are a distinct people—Native Canadians. Many natives send their children to a public school called Wandering Spirit Survival School, part of the

Toronto Board of Education. The children are taught the same curriculum as any other public school, but they also learn about their culture, their language and what it means being Indian.

Trying to teach children what it means to be a Native in the city could be most difficult. When I asked Natives what it meant to be a Native in Toronto, they could not

Separation, assimilation, or integration?

really answer the question. What they did say is that the urban Native is in the process of defining himself as he becomes a part of the urban scene.

Ashkewe said the Native in Toronto is not sure of himself in this environment that attracts him from his reserve, whether for jobs or simply to see the bright lights.

"The Native has three choices before him," said Ashkewe. "Separation, assimilation or integration." Natives can completely separate from the white man, they can totally assimilate and become a white man with red skin or they can learn to integrate themselves, taking the best from the white man in

learning to survive in an urban environment while still keeping the best of being Indian.

Holota said he is optimistic about the Native's future in the city. Already he sees the community developing and strengthening it economic and political power and pushing for the Native's fair shake in the city. Once Natives learn self-sufficiency, they will kick the drinking habit and the sad, tragic stories of death that periodically come from Kenora will disappear.

"Sure, I'm optimistic. There's no point in what I'm doing if I'm a pessimist," said Holota.

Ashkewe also sees a lot of reasons for being optimistic about the Native's future in the city. While interviewing Ashkewe in his office, he received continuous telephone calls from other Native employment counsellors. They established a new program for Natives where they would be taken right into the workplace and learn the requirements of the job and then receive pre-training in that occupation.

He had lined up a number of unemployed Natives to take the program to help them find employment. Unfortunately for the program, these unemployed Natives found other jobs for nine, seven and six dollars an hour while they were waiting to take the program.

As I left Mr. Ashkewe, he was running around with a smile on his face, trying to find other Natives to fill the program.

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