

interest has allowed aboriginal people to play a greater role in decision-making.

There was a time when the fate of aboriginal people was decided almost unilaterally by the federal government. That time is past.

Their increased participation in the area of education has resulted in improvements, not only in the quality of education but also in the number of graduates.

In order to lay to rest some of my colleagues' fears, Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly describe the current system and outline the government's efforts to meet the needs and expectations of native people with regard to education.

When my colleague, the MP for Nunatsiak, suggested that new initiatives be considered to meet the educational needs of natives, I sincerely wondered what he had in mind! The federal Government uses not one, but three, school systems to provide primary and secondary educational services for aboriginal people.

These services include federal schools, for which the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is responsible, band-operated schools on reserves, and schools run by provincial school boards.

In addition to providing a basic curriculum, many of these schools offer courses designed to meet the special needs of native people. These courses are offered from kindergarten right through to the last year of high school.

Furthermore, the federal policy of transferring control of native education to aboriginal people has led to new initiatives throughout the country. During the past ten years, a growing number of bands have taken charge of their school curriculum. Band-operated schools have been established across Canada.

In less than fifteen years, the number of schools located on reserves and run by band school boards has risen from 54 to 262.

In 1976-77, the number of students enrolled in these schools was 3,340. They now number nearly 30,000. These are indeed revealing figures.

It is particularly interesting to note that these schools have experienced an increase in enrolment at the sec-

ondary level. The number of students in secondary schools administered by bands has almost doubled in the past five years, increasing from 3,818 in 1984 to 6,839 last year.

Increased participation by parents and the community in the education process has certainly played an important role. However, we must not underestimate the impact of special training programs for native teachers, initiated by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

This initiative made it possible to increase the number of native people employed in band-operated schools.

Currently, about thirty per cent of the teachers in federal and band-operated schools are native.

In addition, thanks to the department's alternative funding arrangements program, bands have greater flexibility in developing academic programs which are better adapted to their local values and needs.

All these initiatives have improved school attendance and student perseverance. It is clear that the increase in the number of students at the secondary level was bound to have a significant impact on post-secondary programs sooner or later.

In the past few years, native enrolment in post-secondary studies has increased significantly.

From 1981 to 1988, the number of aboriginal students at the post-secondary level rose from 5,467 to 15,084.

In less than thirteen years, the budget increased from \$4.2 million to \$130 million.

In order to continue to meet the growing demands of Indian students, bands, and political organizations, the government began talks with the First Nations to find acceptable and practical solutions to post-secondary education. Bilateral agreements were signed with six political organizations and one educational organization on a procedure for discussion and negotiation of all fundamental issues. I am pleased that a consensus has already been reached on a number of matters.

• (1750)

As you know, this policy was discussed at great length in the House last April, so I will not dwell on the details of this program.