

this report some recent statistics showing the continuing disparity in socio-economic conditions between aboriginal people and other Canadians.

Some witnesses referred to the statement of the Canadian Human Rights Commission in its 1988 annual report, that there is a greater probability of an Indian youngster being sent to prison than completing university.

Witnesses such as the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Prairie Treaty Nations Alliance, the Cree-Chipewyan Nations Council and the Ontario Native Women's Association, maintained that a factor contributing to the disadvantaged position of aboriginal people in regard to education was the long history of misguided attempts to use the educational system at the elementary and secondary levels to force the assimilation of aboriginal people.

Aboriginal witness groups perceived the goals of self-government, economic self-sufficiency and higher educational achievements among aboriginal people as inter-dependent. Self-government—specifically, increased control by aboriginal people over the education of their children and adults—was seen as a necessary means to improve educational standards and achievements. In turn, a substantial increase in the numbers of university educated Inuit and Indians was regarded as a necessary component for the successful implementation of self-government.

There was universal agreement on the significant potential of post-secondary education to benefit aboriginal people in the individual and collective sense. The post-secondary education assistance program of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, as it has existed over the 1970's and 1980's, was generally credited with significantly increasing the access of aboriginal students to post-secondary education. Information and statistics from the Department support this view as well.

For example, a report prepared for the Department in January 1985 by The DPA Group Inc. (entitled "Post-Secondary Education Assistance Evaluation Study") concluded that the program as it operated under the E-12 Guidelines was, overall, a success in meeting its objectives. With respect to employment, the report states (at pages 117-118):

Without post-secondary education, native Indians have a much lower [employment] participation rate than other Canadians; those in the labour force have higher unemployment; and those who are employed earn less money. With post-secondary education, the native Indian participation rate, employment rate, and income levels approach those of other Canadians, particularly in the 20-24 age group. A post-secondary education greatly reduces the economic disparity between Indians and other Canadians.