

Indian student at a public elementary school and the per capita cost for an Indian student at an Indian-run school. DIAND often pays a higher per capita rate to provincial schools than to Indian-operated schools. (Special 3:17)

Indians frequently participate in negotiations, only to be overruled by unilateral federal or provincial decisions, despite assurances that action is only to be taken "with Indian approval". The Union of New Brunswick Indians told the Committee that earlier this year the federal government and the province had gone ahead and signed an education agreement that was not acceptable to the Chiefs. (Special 23:11-12)

Finally, Indian witnesses referred to the absence of adequate representation on boards and advisory committees. In Ontario, for example, Indian representation on school boards is limited to two, regardless of the number of Indian students. (Special 14:17)\*

In a paper tabled by the Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations, the Peepeekisis Indian Band documented sub-standard academic achievement and poor attendance at the local provincial school. The band attributed these difficulties to a number of factors, including the absence of Indian representation in the preparation of tuition agreements, the development of curricula and the delivery of services.

Many witnesses recognized and emphasized the need for education as a means of both recovering the cultural values and skills of aboriginal societies and acquiring the skills needed to survive and prosper in non-Indian society. Education programs operated by federal and provincial governments were seen as promoting a policy of assimilation.

The principle is simple. Only Indian people can design systems for Indians. Anything other than that is assimilation. (Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council, Special 20A:11)

Indian control over education was seen as an essential component in strengthening Indian culture and preserving Indian heritage. During a visit to the Long Plain School in Manitoba, the Committee heard first-hand from the students about the development of a language program, visits by the elders to tell stories, and the native studies program:

We would like you to know that we prefer our school here on the reserve mainly because we are among friends and relatives. We are in our own environment, among our own people. . . (Long Plain School, Special 2A:1)

Work has begun on native studies programs, but implementation varies throughout the country. Current laws and policies often prevent Indian organizations from carrying out their proposals for change:

Right now, the big problem we are having with the school boards and Department of Education is that we would like to introduce a lot of curriculum material that is related to our culture and our background within the school system. We are being blocked from doing that by the school boards, by the denominational school board. (Conne River Indian Band Council, Sub 13:70)

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\* The Ontario *Education Act* provides for the appointment of one representative of Indian pupils to a school board that has an agreement with a band council. A second representative may be appointed in cases where Indian pupils represent a certain percentage of average daily enrolment. (R.S.O. 1980, Chapter 129, Subsections 165(4)-(6) as amended.)