

COMMISSION ON POST SECONDARY EDUCATION IN N.B.

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Overview of the MMBSW Programme

In 2005, I was hired by a Regional Committee made up of University professors from St. Thomas and Dalhousie University, First Nation Education and Child and Family Directors to coordinate the Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Programme.

The MMBSW programme was a result of a study undertaken by STU to study the "recent and Future Need for First Nation Social Workers in the Maritime Provinces. The study documented "the need for professionally trained First Nations social workers and noted serious concerns about the ability find and hire qualified social workers, with New Brunswick expressing the most urgent need."

BEGIN TO FOCUS ON HOW MANY STUDENTS, WHERE THEY ARE FROM, THEIR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT, AGE, GENDER, ETC..

THE COURSE SCHEDULE

THE CURRICULUM (ABORIGINAL CONTENT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, RELEVANT CONTEXT SO THAT WHAT WAS LEARNED DURING THE COURSE OF THE WEEK CAN BE APPLIED THE FOLLOWING WEEKS WHEN BACK ON THE RESERVES)

A GREAT DEAL OF FOCUS ON GROUP WORK AS THE PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE.

STUDENTS MAY FEEL OVERWHELEMED BY HAVING TO CONDUCT ALL OF THE RESEARCH, WRITING, VISUAL AIDS, ORAL OR TECHNICAL PRESENTATION, ETC... BUT FEEL VERY SAFE AND CONFIDENT CREATING ONE ASPECT OF THE PRESENTATION.

SITE STUDENT EVALUATIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

A QUICK REVIEW OF RECENT STATISTICS, INDICATE THAT THERE ARE OVER 15,000 MI'KMAQ AND MALISEET PEOPLE IN NEW BRUNSWICK.

I DON'T HAVE ACCURATE FIGURES, BUT LET'S GUESS THAT 4000 PLUS ARE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 50 YEARS OF AGE.

CURRENTLY THESE INDIVIDUALS HAVE ACCESS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS SUBSIDIES ALONG WITH ACCESS TO MAINSTREAM STUDENT LOANS.

WHY ARE MI'KMAQ AND MALISEET STUDENTS NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THESE INCENTIVES?

WE COULD SPEND HOURS COMING UP WITH THE NUMBER OF REASONS WHY UNIVERSITIES ARE NOT ATTRACTING OUR PEOPLE, BUT LET'S FOCUS ON A FEW FOR THE TIME BEING.

IN GENERAL, MI'KMAQ AND MALISEET DO NOT SEE THE RELEVANCY BETWEEN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY MAINSTREAM COURSES SUCH AS HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES, LANGUAGE ARTS, ETC...

IT IS DIFFICULT AND FRUSTRATING FOR AN ABORIGINAL STUDENT TO LISTEN TO WHAT MAINSTREAM PORTRAYS AS BEING ACCURATE AND RELEVANT WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT OTHERWISE BY THEIR ELDERS AND FAMILIES, BUT ARE RELUCTANT TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS FOR FEAR OF BEING DISMISSED.

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THESE STUDENTS BEGIN TO WITHDRAW FROM FURTHER DISCUSSION AND EVENTUALLY BEGIN TO LITERALLY WITHDRAW AND RETURN TO THEIR COMMUNITIES WHERE THEY FEEL SAFE AND WHERE THEY HAVE MORE IN COMMON WITH OTHERS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

VISIT THE MI'KMAQ/MALISEET BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME WEBSITE AT WWW.MMBSW.CA FOR A MORE DETAILED OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME.

VISIT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE BRETON (CBU) AT WWW.CBU.CA AND VIEW THE ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS SITE FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON WHAT MI'KMAQ PROGRAMS ARE BEING OFFERED AND FUTURE PLANS FOR MORE MI'KMAQ PROGRAMS.

REVIEW MAC SAULIS' WORK ON *LEARNING NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL LEARNERS*" MAC IS A MALISEET FROM THE TOBIQUE FIRST NATIONS CURRENTLY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK, WILFRED LAURIER UNIVERSITY.

THAT THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK MOVE BEYOND THE OUTDATED POSITION THAT WE ARE THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND SEE US AS ONE OF THE MANY SOLUTIONS TO TRANSFORMING WHAT THE NB REALITY REPORT IN ITS *AT THE CROSSROADS REPORT* CITES AS “EXPERIENCING A NATURAL POPULATION DECREASE..... QUITE LITERALLY, NEW BRUNSWICK IS SLOWLY DYING AWAY..”

WELL, I HAVE NEWS FOR YOU, THE MI’KMAQ AND MALISEET POPULATION IS GOING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION WITH MORE AND MORE CHILDREN BEING BORN EVERY YEAR AND MANY MANY MORE RETURNING BACK TO THE RESERVES FROM OTHER AREAS IN CANADA, THE UNITED STATES. MANY OF OUR FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES ARE BURSTING AT THE SEAMS WITH OLD AND NEW MEMBERS.

AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE ARE NOT GOING AWAY, BECAUSE WE KNOW OF NO WHERE ELSE TO GO AS WE HAVE OCCUPIED THIS TERRITORY FOR THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

SO, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO COUNT US IN WHEN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS ON SELF SUFFICIENCY AND THE ROLE OF RELEVANT POST SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR MI’KMAQ AND MALISEET PEOPLES.

THAT THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY TO IMPLEMENT MI’KMAQ/MALISEET POST SECONDARY PROGRAMS AIMED AT INCREASING PARTICIPATION RATES AMONG MI’KMAQ AND MALISEET PEOPLES.

A FIRST STEP CAN BE FOR THE MINISTER OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, AND POST SECONDARY TRAINING, MR. ED DOHERTY TO REVISIT A PROPOSAL SENT TO THE ATTENTION OF HIS DEPUTY MINISTER ON OCTOBER 19TH, 2006 FROM PROFESSOR LAUREL LEWEY OF STU REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR THE CENTRAL COORDINATION OF THE MI’KMAQ/MALISEET BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME.

GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE AFFILIATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN STU AND UNB WHEN DISCUSSING THE POTENTIAL FOR THE DELIVERY OF MI’KMAQ/MALISEET UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCE GRADUATE DEGREES SUCH AS BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND EDUCATION DEGREES.

CONSIDER UNB’S RECOMMENDATION TO MAKE USE OF BOTH UNB AND STU FACULTY’S TO DELIVER COURSES IN A MI’KMAQ/MALISEET PROGRAMME.

CONSIDER VALIDATING MI’KMAQ/MALISEET POTENTIAL STUDENTS’ CREDENTIALS EARNED AT COLLEGES, AND INSTITUTES SUCH AS THE

NECHI INSTITUTE IN ALBERTA AND THE UNION OF NEW BRUNSWICK INDIANS TRAINING INSTITUTE AS WELL AS OTHER TRAINING CURRENTLY BEING PROVIDED ON-RESERVES.

CONSIDER VALIDATING MI'KMAQ AND MALISEET PRIOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES WHEN MAKING DECISIONS ON ADMISSIONS

REVIEW THE PROGRAMME ON A REGULAR BASIS TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVNESS.

In my opening comments, I said I would elaborate on why I made a point of going on about getting my Bachelor of Education and Masters degree and my daughter earning her Arts degree. I don't usually mention this, as I see it as boasting and I prefer not to go that route, however, I need to make a point to this Commission so that you will hopefully better understand the barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples, yes, even those of who have managed with great difficulty to earn degrees.

TALK ABOUT NOT FINDING EMPLOYMENT – BARRIERS SUCH AS NOT SPEAKING FRENCH – SUCH AS HAVING WORKED IN FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES OR FIRST NATION ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE PAST 25 YEARS – HAVING HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO WORK IN A MAINSTREAM SYSTEM AS THERE ARE LITTLE OR NO PROSPECTS FOR GETTING AN INTERVIEW, LET ALONE GETTING HIRED.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO HEAR MY VIEWS ON POST SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NB AND I AM AVAILABLE TO FURTHER DISCUSS MY PRESENTATION. WELA'LIOG