

Women and Post-Secondary Education

Brief presented by the

**New Brunswick Advisory Council
on the Status of Women**

to the

**Commission on Post-Secondary Education
in New Brunswick**

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The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women is a body created by provincial legislation to study and advise on issues of concern to women and to bring these before the public and the government. The Council is composed of 13 women appointed by government who meet at least four times per year to determine priorities for action on women's issues.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
1. Gender differences in post-secondary educational participation and attainment....	6
1.1. Increasing educational attainment and expansion of post-secondary clientele ...	6
1.2. Part-time and graduate level enrolments	7
1.3. Gender segregation by field of study and training.....	8
2. Barriers to women's higher education and training	10
2.1. Financial obstacles.....	10
2.2. Family responsibilities	15
2.3. Chilly learning environments.....	17
2.4. Unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women.....	19
3. Conclusion and Recommendations	23
4. Selected Bibliography	25

Executive Summary

The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women welcomes this opportunity to present its views to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick. Our brief focuses on women's needs and concerns with regards to accessibility of post-secondary education.

As we noted in our submission to the provincial government's Self-Sufficiency Task Force, the level of equality between groups in society should be one measure of the success of any public policy initiative. Gender equality is internationally recognized as an indicator of sustainable, people-centre development and a matter of human rights.

Unfortunately, the Commission discussion paper barely mentions gender and diversity concerns and virtually no sex-disaggregated data is provided in its online research section. Sex-disaggregated data are essential for policy and program development that takes into account the significant differences in the status, situation and life experiences of women and men. Systematic inclusion of gender in analysis is a tool for revealing possible outcomes for women and for men in all their diversity and for ensuring that these groups benefit equally from initiatives.

Despite some significant gains made over the past decades, women still earn less than men, shoulder a heavier burden of family responsibilities, are more likely to live in poverty and to experience sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Women also remain seriously under-represented in decision-making positions and face discrimination in many aspects of their daily lives. The inequalities are especially severe and multi-layered for groups such as Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.

Women have pursued higher education and training in ever growing numbers over the past thirty years and now outnumber men in the total university student population. Women also account for over half of the community college clientele in Canada, but only about 40% of community college students in New Brunswick.

However, women are not on an equal footing with men in the post-secondary system. Systemic barriers within educational institutions and in the larger society continue to shape gender-specific education and training patterns. Women are more likely than men to study part-time and are chronically under-represented in certain trades, science and technology programs that offer better employment prospects.

The gender gap in post-secondary education carries heavy costs for individuals and for the entire society. It contributes to lower average earnings and pension incomes for women, an inefficient use of human resources, an escalating skills shortage and reduced overall productivity.

The Advisory Council recommends improved gender and diversity-specific data collection on student aid, enrolments and completion rates, along with a comprehensive needs study. We also call upon provincial education, labour and social program authorities to develop and implement a multi-faceted and coordinated strategy to achieve the full and equitable participation of women in post-secondary education.

Introduction

The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women welcomes this opportunity to present its views to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick.

The Commission's mandate is vast and important: examination of structural, financial, accessibility and quality issues for the entire post-secondary education and training sector in our province.¹ The inquiry covers public universities, private universities (denominational and for-profit), the NBCC/CCNB network, apprenticeships, private trainers and other aspects of literacy and lifelong learning. Special attention is to be paid to the effects of the increasing financial burden carried by students and to the pertinence of the traditional structural groupings of education, training and apprenticeship. The terms of reference emphasize the need for improved access to the widest range possible of relevant, high quality and competitive education and training options while promoting collaborative and cost-sharing institutional initiatives.

The inquiry is proceeding on a tight timeline. Commissioners Dr. Rick Miner and Dr. Jacques L'Écuyer released their discussion paper in March 2007, consulted with educational stakeholders and the public in April and early May and are expected to report to the provincial government in the summer of 2007. Three women sit on the eight member advisory panel that will provide input into the report on the future direction of the higher education and training sector.²

The level of equality between groups in society should be one measure of the success of any public policy initiative, including the New Brunswick government's self-sufficiency project.³ There is increasing acceptance internationally that gender equality should concern and fully engage men as well as women, since it is "a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development" as well as a human rights matter.⁴

We note our dismay that the Commission discussion paper barely mentions gender and diversity concerns.⁵ An allusion to the under-representation of Aboriginal peoples in the province's post-secondary institutions and the suggestion that the virtual absence of women among apprentices is a "missed opportunity" are the only hints of the challenges faced by these groups.⁶

Moreover, only one of the more than thirty graphs available in the Research Data section of the Commission's site presents data that differentiates between women and men.⁷ Sex-disaggregated data are essential for policy and program development that takes into account the significant differences in the status, situation and life experiences of women and men. Systematic inclusion of gender in analysis is a tool for revealing possible outcomes for women

¹ The Commission was launched in late January 2007. "Premier announces N.B. Commission on Post-Secondary Education", January 19, 2007 press release available www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2007e0075pe.htm; Government of New Brunswick, « Terms of Reference – Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick », p. 2-3 Available at www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/context.html

² Ibid., p. 4. Available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/context.html>

³ See *Self-Sufficiency and Equality*, Notes for a presentation to the Self-Sufficiency Task Force by the NB Advisory Council on the Status of Women, March 2007, Available at www.acswcccf.nb.ca/english/acsw1.asp

⁴ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2006* (2006), Geneva: World Economic Forum, p. 4. Available at www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Gender%20Gap/index.htm

⁵ Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick, *Discussion Paper*, March 2007. Available at www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/context.html

⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷ The graph entitled "First Nations enrolments in 2005-2006", presents data on female and male students receiving federal government funding support. Available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/research.php>, consulted April 30, 2007.

and for men in all their diversity and for ensuring that these groups benefit equally from initiatives.⁸

Despite some significant gains made over the past decades, women still earn less than men, shoulder a heavier burden of family responsibilities, are more likely to live in poverty and to experience sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Women also remain seriously under-represented in decision-making positions and face discrimination in many aspects of their daily lives. The inequalities are especially severe and multi-layered for groups such as Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.⁹

In their search for economic security and personal development and pushed by rising labour market requirements, women have pursued higher education and training in ever growing numbers over the past thirty years. In New Brunswick as in Canadian universities, women now outnumber men in the total student population.¹⁰ Women also account for over half of the community college clientele in Canada, but only about 40% of community college students in New Brunswick.¹¹

Yet women are not on an equal footing with men in the post-secondary system. Systemic barriers within educational institutions and in the larger society continue to shape gender-specific education and training patterns. Women are more likely than men to study part-time and are chronically under-represented in certain trades, science and technology programs that offer better employment prospects.¹²

The gender gap in post-secondary education carries heavy costs for individuals and for the entire society. It contributes to lower average earnings and pension incomes for women, an inefficient use of human resources, an escalating skills shortage and reduced overall productivity. Elimination of the gender wage gap would result in significant increases in tax revenues and decreases in health and social program expenditures, according to a study by St. Mary's University economist Dr. Ather Akbari.¹³ As the World Economic Forum has shown in a recent report, societies with the most equality between the sexes are also the world's most competitive.¹⁴

This submission focuses on women's needs and concerns with regards to accessibility of post-secondary education. It is divided into three parts. The first examines gender differences in post-secondary participation. The second explores the barriers to women's higher education and training. Finally, we present a series of recommendations to address the problems identified.

⁸ There is an extensive practice-based literature on Gender-based Analysis, also called Equity Analysis, Gender Equity Analysis, Gender Equality Analysis, Gender Mainstreaming and Diversity Analysis. See for example, House of Commons Canada, *Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success*, Report of the Standing Committee on Status of Women, April 2005; United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, "Gender Mainstreaming", Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>

⁹ See for example, NB ACSW, *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women*; NB ACSW, Reminder List: For Those Who Think Women Have Reached Equality, Available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>

¹⁰ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database; Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5th edition, March 2006, available at www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89-503-X, p. 91-92.

¹¹ NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 94.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Gender Wage Gap in New Brunswick* (2004), prepared for GPI Atlantic, Halifax, N.S., available at www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/documents/GENDER_WAGE_GAP_NB_FINAL_REPORT_EN.pdf

¹⁴ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi (2006), *The Global Gender Gap Report 2006*, Geneva: World Economic Forum, p. 17-18, available at www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Gender%20Gap/index.htm

1. Gender differences in post-secondary educational participation and attainment

Women's educational attainment has risen dramatically over the past thirty years as growing numbers of women have set their sights on post-secondary education. From the young high school graduate to the middle-aged woman with adult children, women of all ages have been making the connection between education and better employment prospects while seeking opportunities for personal development and citizen engagement.

But the growing female presence in the post-secondary sector is only part of the story. Closer examination of women's and men's participation patterns over the past three decades reveal disturbing trends that mirror and perpetuate gender inequality.

It should also be noted that many adult New Brunswickers did not finish high school and have literacy levels below the level considered necessary to live and work in today's society. International literacy survey statistics from 2003 revealed that 54% of New Brunswick women and 59% of men aged 16 and over had serious difficulties in reading basic texts, while 67% of women and 63% of men had low levels of numeracy skills, worse than the Canadian averages.¹⁵ Literacy programs are severely underfunded and less educated adult learners who are unemployed or underemployed experience great difficulties accessing and successfully completing fragmented employment and academic upgrading initiatives.

1.1. Increasing educational attainment and expansion of post-secondary clientele

Education levels have improved significantly for both women and men in New Brunswick in the past thirty years. As of 2001, nearly half (48%) of New Brunswick women and men (47%) aged 15 and over had some form of education or training past high school, up from just 20% and 18% respectively in 1971.¹⁶

The once substantial gender gap in university degrees has been all but eliminated in New Brunswick as in the rest of Canada. The 2001 census revealed that 12% of New Brunswick women and 11% of men aged 15 and over had a university degree, up from 8% and 9% respectively in 1991 and 2% and 5% in 1971.¹⁷ At the national level, slightly more men than women now have university degrees: 15% of Canadian women and 16% of men.¹⁸

While New Brunswick Francophone women have almost caught up to Anglophones in university degree-holding - as of 2001, 11% of francophone women compared to 12% of Anglophone women and 9% of francophone men had university degrees - other groups continue to lag behind.¹⁹ Aboriginal women in New Brunswick have attained a higher level of schooling than Aboriginal men, but are less likely than non-Aboriginal women and men to hold a university degree. As of 2001, 7% of N.B.'s Aboriginal identity²⁰ women aged 15 and over and 3% of their male counterparts had a university degree, compared to 12% and 11% of non-Aboriginal females and males in the province.²¹ Women with disabilities have lower educational levels than women

¹⁵ NB ACSW (2006), *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick*, p. 10-11, Fredericton, NB ACSW, available at <http://www.acswcccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>

¹⁶ Ginette Lafleur (1990), *Les femmes à l'heure des comptes. Dossier statistique, 1971-1986*, Publication d'Action Éducation Femmes N.-B., p. 57; Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, catalogue 97F0017XCB01002.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1991 & 2001, catalogue 97F00017XCB1001 & 97F0017XCB01002.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Irène Savoie for the Fédération des dames d'Acadie inc., *Socioeconomic Profile of Francophone Women in New Brunswick*, April 2004. Available at <http://www.acswcccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>

²⁰ Persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group and those who report themselves as a Registered or Treaty Indian, and/or Band or First Nation membership.

²¹ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, catalogue 97F0011XCB01043.

and men without disabilities. As of 2001, 9% of New Brunswick women with disabilities²² aged 15 to 64 and 6% of their male counterparts had a university certificate or degree, compared to 16% of women and 13% of men without disabilities.²³

New Brunswick universities have seen a dramatic growth in female clientele over the past thirty years. Women's full-time enrolments in New Brunswick universities more than doubled between 1975/76 and 2005/06, rising from 4,803 to 11,722, while male enrolments increased by only one-third.²⁴ By the late 1980s, females outnumbered males in our province's universities. Women have held on to their lead, accounting for 58% of full-time enrolments in 2005/06, up from 43% thirty years earlier, closely paralleling Canadian trends.²⁵

Female enrolments in the New Brunswick community colleges have not followed the same upward trend. Women continue to be under-represented in institutions hit by declining enrolments overall as well as a proportional decline in female enrolments since the 1990s. New Brunswick total college enrolment has decreased by almost a third since 1990/91, compared to the national increase of 3.5%.²⁶ Only 38% of full-time students in regular college programs were female in 2005/06, down from a high of 46% in 1988/89.²⁷ Some 3,000 women were enrolled in these programs in 2005/06, less than half the peak clientele of ten years earlier.²⁸ New Brunswick falls short of the Canadian average, where women have accounted for slightly more than half of the full-time community college clientele since the mid 1970s.²⁹

1.2. Part-time and graduate level enrolments

A closer look at enrolment patterns reminds us that gender inequalities persist in our province's universities and colleges.

Many more women than men are attending colleges and universities on a part-time basis. Women were 65% of all part-time students in New Brunswick universities in 2005/06, up from 60% in the mid 1970s, while they represented 58% of all full-time students.³⁰ In the New Brunswick Community Colleges, women were 55% of all part-time students and 40% of all full-time students in 2005/06.³¹ While about the same proportion of female and male university students were studying part-time – 20% of women and 19% of men – a much higher proportion of

²² Persons with disabilities are those who reported difficulties with daily living activities, or who indicated that a physical or mental condition or a health problem reduced the kind or amount of activities they could do; types of disabilities include: hearing, seeing, speech, mobility, agility, dexterity, pain, learning, memory, developmental, delay and psychological.

²³ Statistics Canada (September 2003), *2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey*, catalogue 89-587-XIE, Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-587-XIE>

²⁴ Lafleur, p. 76, 79; Maritime Provinces Higher Education database.

²⁵ Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 91-92.

²⁶ Sean Junor & Alex Usher (2004), "The Price of Knowledge 2004: New Brunswick", Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/poknb.asp>

²⁷ This figure for "regular" enrolments includes the following: Apprenticeship, Distance Education, Continuing Education, Correspondance Education, General Studies and Connections. Data provided by NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Joan McFarland (1999), *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*. Available at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Canadian average based on community college enrolments for 1999/2000. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 94.

³⁰ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database; Lafleur, p. 79. The Canadian average, based on enrolment statistics for 2001/02, was 60%. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 93.

³¹ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database; NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. Figures cited for total community college enrolments include regular, contract and distance programs.

women than men were enrolled part-time at the N.B. Community College, 27% versus 17% in 2005/06.³²

The impact of part-time status on completion time and attrition rates merits systematic study. Women presumably take longer on average to complete their programs since more women than men are part-time students.³³ Educational authorities do not systematically collect time-series data on time to completion for degrees, diplomas and certificates nor dropout rates of women and other under-represented groups, so we are unable to track some of these important trends.³⁴

Gender differences are also evident when we consider women's participation in graduate programs. Women have made significant inroads in graduate studies over the past thirty years, but they remain less likely than men to pursue the more advanced degrees, particularly the doctorate. The female share of enrolments in bachelor's and first professional degree programs in New Brunswick rose from 50% in 1980/81 to 60% in 2005/06. During the same period, women also increased their presence in master's programs, from 36% to 55%. As for doctoral studies, women's share of enrolments has more than tripled, climbing from 13% in 1980/81 to 46% in 2005/06.³⁵

1.3. Gender segregation by field of study and training

Gender segregation is still entrenched in higher education and training, replicating occupational segregation in the labour force. Today as two decades ago, New Brunswick and Canadian women are concentrated in a limited range of occupations compared to men. Women still account for less than 10% of workers in the trades, transport and equipment sector, while barely one in five jobs in the natural and applied sciences sector is held by a woman.³⁶

In New Brunswick as in Canadian universities, women continue to predominate in traditional faculties like nursing and are over-represented in the humanities and social sciences. Almost nine out of ten full-time students in health-related programs (86%) were female in our province in 2005/06, while women accounted for about 70% of the clientele in education, the humanities and the social sciences.³⁷

³² Ibid.

³³ Some studies from the late 1980s and early 1990s suggest that women take longer than men to complete their Master's or Ph.D degrees, at least in certain disciplines. See the literature review in Sandra W. Pyke (1997). Education and the "Woman question". [Education and the "Woman Question"] [Electronic version]. *Canadian Psychology*, 38(3), 154-163. Retrieved April 12, 2007, from <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>

³⁴ Canadian Council on Learning (2006), *Canadian Post-Secondary Education. A Positive Record – An Uncertain Future*, Ottawa, CCL. Available at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca>, p. 70-78.

³⁵ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. Includes part-time and full-time enrolments; undergraduate includes Bachelor's degrees, 1st professional degrees, undergraduate diplomas, certificates and other undergraduate.

³⁶ N.B. Advisory Council on the Status of Women (2006), *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick*, Fredericton, NB ACSW, p. 57. Available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>; Statistics Canada (2007). *Women in Canada: Work Chapter Updates 2006*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. Catalogue no. 89F0133XIE, p. 9-10, 20. Available at www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89F0133X

³⁷ Based on enrolments at undergraduate and graduate levels. Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. Canadian patterns are similar, though lower in health-related programs at 75% in 2001/02. Note that N.B. university enrolments do not include out-of-province medical school enrolments. See Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*: p. 92.

Women have made significant inroads in some university programs long dominated by men, such as law. Female enrolments in New Brunswick's two law faculties climbed steadily from a 37% share in 1980/81 to 56% in 2005/06.³⁸

By contrast, female enrolment in the traditionally male fields of engineering, applied and physical sciences and mathematics continues to lag well behind that of men. Women's share of full-time enrolments in engineering and the applied sciences rose slowly but steadily from 9% in 1980/81 to a high of 21% in the mid-1990s.³⁹ But the trend has reversed in recent years. In 2005/06, less than one in five students (17%) studying in this field in New Brunswick universities is female, slightly below the Canadian average.⁴⁰ Women in mathematics and the physical sciences boasted a 30% share of full-time enrolments in 1980/81 but lost ground from the end of the decade through the 1990s. Now women represent barely one in four students in those disciplines in New Brunswick universities, slightly below the latest Canadian average.⁴¹

There has been little change in the gender distribution of community college program enrolments over the past thirty years. In the 1970s and 1980s, women in New Brunswick's community colleges were far more likely to be training to become nurses' aids, legal secretaries, or hairdressers than carpenters or mechanics.⁴² Female training ghettos and low female enrolments in non-traditional courses persisted into the 1990s. In 1992/93, three-quarters of full-time female enrolments were clustered in academic, secretarial-clerical, business, and health-community services training programs, while male enrolments were concentrated in technical and trades programs including construction, mechanical-motorized equipment, electronics, mechanical-industrial, and metal training. Indeed, a study released by the Advisory Council in 1994 concluded that training patterns of the 1990s would only help perpetuate long-standing gender inequities in the workplace.⁴³

Even today, most women attending the New Brunswick Community Colleges are training for traditionally female employment or taking some kind of academic upgrading course. Nearly one in five full-time female regular students was enrolled in Office administration programs in 2005/06, while about one in ten was training as a Practical nurse, where they made up 90% and 96% of the clientele respectively.⁴⁴ By contrast, that year women made up just 3% of full-time enrolments in carpentry and 5% in automotive and heavy equipment mechanic programs. Women remain a tiny minority in most of the traditionally male-dominated trades and technology programs.

Women are severely under-represented throughout Canada in the apprenticeship programs that combine classroom instruction with on-the-job training and experience. Women accounted for only 2% of all the apprentices taking community college courses in our province in 2005/06 – less than fifty women of a total of nearly 2,000 apprentices – a proportion that has hardly budged in twenty years.⁴⁵ As of March 2007, only 64 or 2% of New Brunswick's more than 3,000 registered

³⁸ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. Includes part-time and full-time enrolments at all levels.

³⁹ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database.

⁴⁰ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. The Canadian figure for 2001/02 was 24%. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 92.

⁴¹ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. The Canadian figure was 30% in 2001/02. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 92.

⁴² Lafleur, p. 73; NB ACSW (1984), *Plan of Action on the Status of Women in Community Colleges*, submitted to the Department of Community Colleges.

⁴³ NB ACSW (1994), *Training for Results: A Study of Women and Employment Training in New Brunswick*.

⁴⁴ Calculated from campus-level data provided by NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

⁴⁵ The 2005/06 total includes full-time and part-time enrolments in regular and contract apprenticeship programs. Data provided by NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. For the evolution since 1986, see McFarland, p. 198-199.

apprentices are female and fully one-half of these women are apprenticing as cooks.⁴⁶ Women make up 2% or less of those apprenticing as carpenters, mechanics or electricians.⁴⁷

These gender imbalances in our university and college programs have important consequences for women's earning potential and career status, as some of the better-paying jobs are in the trades, scientific and technology sectors. We also pay a high economic and social price for this under-development of human resources, particularly in light of Canada-wide worker shortages in some of the skilled trades and professions.⁴⁸

As for training programs offered in private institutions, we know little about gender participation patterns because the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour does not collect this data by gender or program.

2. Barriers to women's higher education and training

We have seen that full and equal participation of women in the post-secondary system remains elusive. In this section, we will review some of the barriers faced by women in accessing and completing higher education and training.

Gender-specific obstacles are rooted in the labour market and the larger society. Women may also experience discrimination and adaptation problems within the learning environments.

2.1. Financial obstacles

Financial constraints are widely acknowledged as formidable barriers to post-secondary education participation for women and men.⁴⁹ The heavy share of costs borne by students and their families and the spectre of indebtedness loom large in decisions to undertake or complete higher education and training. Socio-economic status, ethnicity, and place of residence still shape inequitable access. Students from low-income families and from Aboriginal communities in particular continue to be underrepresented in post-secondary classrooms.

Women have fewer financial resources to invest in higher education since on average they live on lower incomes than men. The last census revealed that women's average total income was 62%

⁴⁶ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Apprenticeship and Certification Branch, Provincial Summary Totals of Apprentices as of 2007/03/23.

⁴⁷ Canadian patterns are similar. See Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 95.

⁴⁸ See for example, Canadian Council on Learning, *Canadian Post-Secondary Education. A Positive Record – An Uncertain Future*, p. 17-18; also Ross Finnie, Marie Lavoie and Maud-Catherine Rivard (2001), "Women in engineering: The missing link in the Canadian knowledge economy," *Education Quarterly Review*, vol. 7, no 3. Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/studies/81-003/feature/eqab2001007003s1a01.htm>

⁴⁹ See for example, Joseph Berger, Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin (2007), *The Price of Knowledge 2006-07*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/Price.asp> Marc Frenette (2007), *Why are Youth from Lower-income Families Less Likely to Attend University? Evidence from Academic Abilities, Parental Influences and Financial Constraints*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2007295.htm>; K. Myers & P. de Broucker (2006), *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System*, Canadian Policy Research Network, Executive summary available at <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1479&l=en>; M. Corak, G. Lipps & J. Zhao (2003), *Family Income and Participation in Post-Secondary Education*, Statistics Canada, available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=11F0019M2003210>

of men's in New Brunswick and 61% of women versus 40% of men in our province had an annual income of less than \$20,000.⁵⁰

Women are more likely to live in poverty than men because of lower wages, savings and pension benefits, their involvement in unpaid work and the impact of family responsibilities. Lone parent women and their children are the group hardest hit in New Brunswick as in the rest of Canada. Although the rate has generally been falling in recent years, more than one out of three (37%) female lone-parent families was still living below the poverty line in 2005.⁵¹ By contrast, one in twenty-five children in two-parent families were living in poverty. Overall, about 15,000 New Brunswick children, or one in ten children under the age of 18 lived in poverty in 2005.

Women are far more likely than men to work part-time - one in four New Brunswick women compared to barely one in ten men⁵² – and they still earn less on average than men. According to the latest hourly pay gap data from Statistics Canada, women earn 12% less on average than men in New Brunswick in 2006, while the average gap for Canadian women was 16% that year.⁵³

Even women with a university or college education experience pay disparity. Women who graduated from a New Brunswick university in 1999 and who were working full time five years later earned 18% less on average than men with whom they graduated.⁵⁴ Women who graduated from New Brunswick Community College in 2005 and who were working full time one year later earned on average 14% less than men with whom they had graduated.⁵⁵

Women with disabilities and Aboriginal women have lower incomes and earn less than other women and men in New Brunswick.

The average total annual income for women with disabilities aged 15 to 64 years in New Brunswick was just \$14,856 in 2000, nearly \$8,000 less than men with disabilities, about \$5,000 less than women without disabilities and \$15,000 less than men without disabilities. More than one in three disabled women aged 15 and over in the province (35%) had total incomes of less than \$10,000 in 2000, compared to one in four of their male counterparts (25%).⁵⁶

The average total income of Aboriginal women aged 15 years and over in New Brunswick in 2000 was \$13,898, or 78% of Aboriginal men's average income (\$17,901), compared to \$18,676 and \$30,020 respectively for non-Aboriginal females and males.⁵⁷ Almost half (47%) of New

⁵⁰ Based on 2001 Census of Canada, before-tax annual incomes from all sources for females aged 15 years and over. See N.B. Advisory Council on the Status of Women (2006), *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick*, Fredericton, NB ACSW, p. 30, available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>.

⁵¹ Poverty rates based on after-tax income, using Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Offs which take into account the relative proportion of income spent on basic necessities such as rent, food and clothing. Statistics Canada, *Income in Canada, 2005*, cat. No 75-202-XWE; Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 202-0804, available at <http://www.statcan.ca>

⁵² See NBACSW, *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women*, p. 46.

⁵³ Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 282-0072. Includes part-time and full-time workers.

⁵⁴ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.

⁵⁵ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (2006), *Survey of 2005 New Brunswick Community College Graduates*.

⁵⁶ Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2001*, Table 5 available at www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-587-XIE/tables.htm

⁵⁷ Statistics cited include on reserve and off reserve population. Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Total Income Groups, Sex and Aboriginal Groups for Population 15 Years and Over, for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1995 and 2000 – 20% Sample Data, <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=60107&APATH=3&GID=355313&METH=1&PTYPE=55496&THEME=54&FOCUS=0&AID=0&P_LACENAME=0&PROVINCE=0&SEARCH=0&GC=0&GK=0&VID=0&FL=0&RL=0&FREE=0>, accessed May 31, 2007.

Brunswick Aboriginal women with income reported total incomes of less than \$10,000 in 2000, compared to 42% of Aboriginal men, 33% of non-Aboriginal women and 20% of non-Aboriginal men. Aboriginal women who were employed in 2000 also earned less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, on average \$14,313 versus \$19,110 in 2000.⁵⁸

The persistence of these income and earnings inequities means that the skyrocketing cost of pursuing post-secondary studies has a differential impact on women and particular groups of women. Over the past two decades, university students and aspiring students have witnessed a dramatic rise in tuition fees as post-secondary institutions have passed along federal funding cuts. Since 1990, the average annual undergraduate tuition fees at New Brunswick universities have risen by 177%, from \$1,925 in 1990/91 to \$3,863 in 2001/02 and reaching \$5,328 in 2006/07.⁵⁹ New Brunswick currently has the second highest average university fees after Nova Scotia. Canadian undergraduates paid an average of \$4,347 in tuition fees for the 2006/07 academic year.⁶⁰

Community college fees have remained lower and programs take less time to complete than university studies. Annual fees for private training programs tend however to be far more expensive than either university or community college. In 2005/06, students attending the New Brunswick Community College paid an average annual fee of \$3,050, compared to \$7,520 for private career colleges or training institutions and \$5,038 in the universities.⁶¹

Beyond tuition fees, students must also find the resources to cover compulsory student services fees, textbooks, accommodation, food, transportation and lost earnings potential. For students with children, child care is another major expense. And since substantially more women than men study part-time, living and even tuition costs would on average be higher for female students overall.

Existing non-repayable financial aid, in the form of government-provided scholarships or grants, is mainly focused on occupational training offered in the community colleges.⁶²

Over the past decade, limited financial support for training has been provided through New Brunswick's Training and Skills Development program.⁶³ Aimed at getting the unemployed and maternity and parental leave-takers back into the labour force, the program offers up to two years of aid to cover tuition fees and help with living costs. But Employment Insurance based eligibility criteria are restrictive and program choice must be approved by a provincial employment counsellor who assesses the likelihood of obtaining stable employment.⁶⁴ Most grant recipients are in community college or other training programs, but a small number have used the funding to complete their university studies. In 2005/06, women made up 53% of the almost 6,500 clients

⁵⁸ Statistics cited include on reserve and off reserve population. Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Employment Income Groups in Constant Collars, Sex and Aboriginal Groups for Population 15 Years and Over, for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1995 and 2000 – 20% Sample Data, <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=57103&GID=355317&METH=1&APATH=3&PTYPE=55496&THEME=53&AID=0&FREE=0&FOCUS=0&VID=0&GC=0&GK=0&SC=1&SR=1&RL=0&CPP=99&RPP=9999&D1=0&D2=0&D3=0&D4=0&D5=0&D6=0&d1=2&d2=4>, accessed May 31, 2007.

⁵⁹ Amounts cited are in current dollars. Statistics Canada, "University tuition fees 2006/2007", *The Daily*, September 1, 2006, Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/060901/d060901a.htm>

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Student Financial Services Branch (2007), *New Brunswick Student Financial Assistance Program, Statistical Profile 2005-2006*, p. 15.

⁶² In 2006/07, the N.B. government introduced a one-time benefit of \$2,000 for first year, full-time university students who are N.B. residents. See http://www.gnb.ca/0162/grants/grant_for_students-e.asp

⁶³ Formerly known as the Skills, Loans and Grants program. See Joan McFarland (1999), *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*. Available at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>, p. 10-11.

⁶⁴ See N.B. government web site at <http://www.gnb.ca/0311/2be.htm>

receiving funding for training under the program. The average grant for female students in 2005/06 was higher than for males (\$6,484.07 for women versus \$5,284.59 for men).⁶⁵

Before the transfer of responsibility for labour market training from the federal government to the provinces in 1996 and changes to the Unemployment Insurance program, more public funding was available for sponsored training programs and women were targeted as an equity group facing labour market disadvantage.⁶⁶ According to economist Joan McFarland, federal spending cuts on training programs and seat purchases largely account for the declining female clientele in the New Brunswick Community College over the past decade. From the 1970s through to the mid-1990s, most female trainees in New Brunswick's community colleges benefited from some form of aid to cover tuition and living costs for occupational training and academic upgrading. Almost 80% of female community college students in 1985/86 and 57% in 1996/97 were receiving financial support from government or industry, a proportion that fell to less than 30% by the end of the 1990s.⁶⁷

Too few employers in Canada provide workplace-based training or sponsor trainees in public or private institutions. Training support is concentrated on the higher skilled workforce, younger employees and those working for large firms.⁶⁸ A Statistics Canada survey showed that only 26% of all adult workers aged 25 and over in New Brunswick participated in employer-supported training in 2002.⁶⁹ Some research also suggests that men are more likely than women to receive employer-supported training.⁷⁰ A growing body of national and international research links Canada's lagging economic growth to employer underinvestment in training and skills development.⁷¹

Several small-scale government initiatives in our province have been recently introduced to encourage women's participation in non-traditional training programs. New scholarships covering the first year's tuition for students in non-traditional programs at the Community College were awarded for 2006/07 under New Brunswick's Wage Gap Action Plan.⁷² Launched in November 2006, Partners Building Futures is a federal-provincial pilot project that will provide two years

⁶⁵ Data provided by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. In 2005/06, 3,403 women and 3,065 men were receiving funding; of this number 170 women and 102 men were in university programs.

⁶⁶ Ursule Critoph (2003), "Who Wins, Who Loses: The Real Story of the Transfer of Training to the Provinces and its Impact on Women," in Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed. *Training the Excluded for Work: Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, p. 14-33; see also Karen Lior and Susan Wismer, "Still Shopping for Training: Women, Training and Livelihoods," in *Ibid.*, p. 214-229.

⁶⁷ Joan McFarland (1999), *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*. Available at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>, p. 14-15, Table A6, Annex.

⁶⁸ Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker (June 2006), *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System*, Canadian Policy Research Network, Executive summary available at <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1479&l=en>; Mark Goldenberg (September 2006), *Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada*, Canadian Policy Research Network for the Canadian Congress on Learning, available at <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1529&l=en>

⁶⁹ Valerie Peters (April 2004), *Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=81-595-M2004015>

⁷⁰ Canadian Council on Learning (April 2007), *Connecting the Dots...Linking Training Investment to Business Outcomes and the Economy*, p. 20, Available at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Home/index.htm?Language=EN>

⁷¹ See CCL, *Connecting the Dots*; See also Joseph Berger, Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin (2007), *The Price of Knowledge 2006-07*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/Price.asp>

⁷² See Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour web site at http://www.ceibathurst.com/icdm/BasicPage_E.aspx?CPagId=266

support to some sixty women on social assistance who prepare for non-traditional skilled trades, part of the effort to move people from welfare to work.⁷³

But for many potential students, including lone parent women on social assistance, undertaking post-secondary studies would require taking on a repayable loan provided under the financial aid program administered by the provincial Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

Student indebtedness has reached crisis proportions in our province and across Canada. In 2006, 66% of Atlantic Canadian university undergraduates owed an average of \$29,747, the highest average debt in the country.⁷⁴ New Brunswick students are more likely than other Canadian students to borrow to finance their post-secondary studies, they borrow higher amounts and take longer to repay their debt. Some 52% of New Brunswick university graduates had student loan debt in 2000, the second-highest rate in the country and well above the national average of 42%. Fully 25% of New Brunswick university graduates had student loan debt in excess of \$25,000, compared to 13% at the national level.⁷⁵ As for New Brunswick college graduates, 51% had student loan debt in 2000, above the national average of 38%, and about 5% had student loan debt in excess of \$25,000, about the same as at the national level.⁷⁶ Two years after graduation in 2000, both college and university graduates at the national level had paid off 27% of their student loan debt, compared to 20% and 16% respectively for New Brunswick graduates.⁷⁷

Women made up 63% of all student aid applicants in New Brunswick in 2005/06, but we know little about their specific borrowing and debt situation because most student loan data is not available by gender.⁷⁸ Some 7% of all post-secondary students in New Brunswick who received student loans in 2005/06 were single parents – mostly women with dependent children.⁷⁹

Statistics from the New Brunswick Student Financial Assistance Program highlight troubling trends for the student population as a whole. The average student loan debt at graduation for our province's university, community college and private institution students in full-time studies has more than doubled since the early 1990s, rising from \$9,947 in 1993/94 to \$21,240 in 2005/06.⁸⁰ University students finishing Bachelor's degrees owed on average \$32,132 in 2005/06, compared to \$12,675 for students completing the shorter duration Community College programs.⁸¹

Gender-specific evidence on student borrowing and debt provided by some regional and national surveys points to disadvantages experienced by women. Women generally had more difficulty

⁷³ For more on the Partners Building Futures Projects, see <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2007e0449pe.htm>. A new pilot program in Nova Scotia called Career Seek allows income assistance recipients to attend a university or other postsecondary program of more than two years and still receive benefits. See Income Assistance for Post-Secondary Education at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/whatsnew.html>

⁷⁴ Sean Junor and Alex Usher (2004), *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*, Montreal, p. 3, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/Price.asp>.

⁷⁵ Sean Junor and Alex Usher (2004), "The Price of Knowledge 2004: New Brunswick", Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/poknb.asp>

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (2007), Student Financial Services Branch, N.B. Student Financial Assistance program, *Statistical Profile, 2005/06*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Student Financial Services Branch, N.B. Student Financial Assistance program, *Statistical Profile, 2005/06*, p. 9, 14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

repaying student loans than their male counterparts, because they borrowed more than men and earned less.⁸²

Many of the briefs submitted to this Commission and to other inquiries across Canada address the problem of student debt and the ever-increasing costs of pursuing post-secondary studies. Not surprisingly, student associations offer some of the most detailed reform proposals. These include introduction of an annual debt ceiling, reduction of student loan interest rates and introduction of loan remission for high need students post-graduation, more accurate assessment of student living costs for financial assistance purposes, expansion of needs-based bursaries for low-income students, and lowering of tuition fees to below the current national average.⁸³

We agree with that the focus should be on reducing the upfront and out-of-pocket cost for students, rather than on increasing the student's borrowing capacity and extending the debt repayment period. The Canadian Association of University Teachers calls for a "new architecture of student financial assistance that focuses on reducing costs and debt and encouraging under-represented groups, like aboriginals, to pursue post-secondary education."⁸⁴ A tuition fee freeze and reduction, along with higher upfront, needs-based grants for low-income students feature prominently in the CAUT submission which like many others insists on the importance of increased public investment in post-secondary education and alleviating the burden on the individual student.

2.2. Family responsibilities

Just as family responsibilities continue to shape the labour force participation of women, so too do they affect women's pursuit of higher education and training.

Women still shoulder the lion's share of caring responsibilities and unpaid household tasks - bearing and caring for children, elder care, care for the chronically ill or disabled and housework - without adequate access to essential support services.⁸⁵

Without a family policy, New Brunswick is not doing enough to help families reconcile the demands of education, paid work, and family life. Back in 1970, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women called for postsecondary educational institutions to develop

⁸² Warren Clark analyzes the results of a survey of 1995 Canadian graduates of bachelor's programs conducted by Statistics Canada in 1997 in the article "Paying Off Student Loans", *Canadian Social Trends*, (Winter 1998), Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=11-008-X19980034002>. Analysis of data from the National Graduates Survey of the class of 1990 supported similar conclusions. See Saul Schwartz and Ross Finnie (October 2002), "Student Loans in Canada: an analysis of borrowing and repayment," *Economics of Education Review*, vol. 21, issue 5, p. 497-512. See also the recent survey by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (June 2007), *Two Years On: A Survey of Class of 2003 Maritime University Graduates*. Fredericton, MPHEC. Available at http://www.mphec.ca/english/pol_b.html

⁸³ See for example, Fédération des étudiants et étudiantes du Centre universitaire de Moncton (April 2007), *Pour une accessibilité réelle: Recommandations auprès de la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick*; The New Brunswick Student Alliance (April 2007), *Moving Education Forward: Making Post-Secondary Education a New Brunswick Priority*, both available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>.

⁸⁴ CAUT also affirms that New Brunswick government's Tuition Tax Back Credit Program, aimed at encouraging the educated to remain in the province, will do little to encourage access to post-secondary education. Canadian Association of University Teachers (April 2007), *Submission to the New Brunswick Commission on Post-Secondary Education*, p. 4, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>. See also Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations, *What would the ideal post-secondary system for New Brunswick look like?* available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

⁸⁵ See for example the results of a 2005 Statistics Canada time-use survey, summarized in *The Daily*, July 19, 2006 at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/060719/d060719b.htm>

programs to meet the special needs for continuing education of women with family responsibilities.⁸⁶ But educational authorities and institutions have been slow to recognize the distinct needs of students with dependents.⁸⁷

The mature female student has become increasingly common on university campuses and in community colleges in the province over the past three decades. Because she must often juggle the multiple roles and responsibilities of breadwinner, mother, and partner, she is more likely to be a part-time student. Some 7% of all post-secondary students in New Brunswick who received student loans in 2005/06 were single parents – mostly women with dependent children.⁸⁸

Students with dependents, particularly women, face particular challenges in pursuing post-secondary education, related to finding time for family and study, and accessing support services.⁸⁹

For lone mothers, the balancing act is particularly challenging. Interviewed for a New Brunswick study in 2000, eighteen lone parent mothers aged 18 to 35 from the Acadian peninsula pointed to many obstacles they faced in undertaking and completing their community college or university programs: in addition to adequate financial aid, these women noted the lack of access to quality, reliable, flexible childcare, lack of affordable, appropriate housing, transportation problems, need for on-campus support groups, and lack of information about available programs and resources.⁹⁰

The scarcity of affordable, quality child care services is indeed a critical problem for most women who are in the paid labour force or pursuing studies, since there are presently licensed regulated spaces for less than 15% of children aged 12 and under in New Brunswick. For women whose course and study requirements spill over into the evenings and weekends, finding flexible child care may be next to impossible.⁹¹

A child's illness or the care needs of an aging parent often present particular challenges to female students and may lead to program interruptions or even dropping out, especially in the longer duration programs.⁹²

As for maternity and parental leave benefits, only employees who pay into Employment Insurance and can live on 55% of their earnings can take advantage of the federal program. Self-employed

⁸⁶ Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (1970), *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, Ottawa, Information Canada, p. 406.

⁸⁷ Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (April 2005), *Students with Dependents: Common Practices in Post-Secondary Education Institutions in Canada and the United States*, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

⁸⁸ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (2007), Student Financial Services Branch, N.B. Student Financial Assistance program, *Statistical Profile, 2005/06*, p. 10.

⁸⁹ See Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (February 2005), *Embracing Differences: Post-Secondary Education among Aboriginal Students, Students with Children and Students with Disabilities* <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

⁹⁰ Irène Savoie for the Réseau des femmes francophones du N.-B. (October 2000), *Les obstacles rencontrés chez les étudiantes monoparentales de la péninsule Acadienne, âgées entre 18 et 35 ans, lors d'un retour aux études postsecondaires*.

⁹¹ Ibid; see also on this problem that is particularly severe for lone parents, Conseil des directeurs et directrices du Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (May 2007), *Mémoire présenté à la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick*, p. 6, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

⁹² Some research on female students in Ph.D. programs shows that women are more likely than men to see their graduate training plans or amount of time devoted to graduate work curtailed by family-related issues such as the death of a parent or the birth of a child or child rearing responsibilities in general, thereby resulting in expansion of overall time needed for degree completion or in some cases, withdrawal from the program. See Sandra W. Pyke (1997), Education and the "Woman question". [Education and the "Woman Question"] [Electronic version]. *Canadian Psychology*, 38(3), 154-163, retrieved April 12, 2007, from <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>.

women are not eligible for the program and the accumulated hours requirements exclude many low-income women and vulnerable workers.⁹³

2.3. Chilly learning environments

Female students in post-secondary educational institutions also face problems arising from systemic discrimination within the learning environments and inadequate support mechanisms.

Navigating community college classrooms and on-site training may be difficult for the female trainee. New Brunswick women who participated in focus groups for an Advisory Council study on women and training in the early 1990s reported a host of problems before, during, and after their training. These included difficulties accessing information about course offerings, lack of support, inadequate employment counselling, and gender and sexual harassment during training and work placements.⁹⁴ More recent studies on women and training suggest that these problems persist.⁹⁵

University campuses also present challenges to the female learner. Surveys conducted among male and female university students in Canada and the U.S. reveal significant gender differences in reported experiences of academic life, with women reporting disadvantage on a range of aspects linked to the structures and operation of educational institutions.⁹⁶

The so-called “chilly climate” for women in academia is displayed in expressions of sexist humour and stereotypical views of women, the use of sexist language, more attention given to male students by professors and graduate supervisors, from calling on them more frequently in class to inviting their participation on papers or articles, the paucity of women faculty as role models and mentors and the problem of sexual harassment by fellow students and faculty.⁹⁷

Sexual harassment remains a persistent and painful reality of campus life. A survey conducted at the Moncton campus of the Université de Moncton in 1999 found that 70% of female students and 55% of female employees reported experiencing at least one incident of sexist behaviour, sexual harassment, or sexual aggression.⁹⁸ The first official policies to address the problem only date back to the mid-1980s, and in most New Brunswick universities are little more than a decade old. Indeed, the term sexual harassment, so common today, did not even exist until the mid-1970s, when it was coined to describe the unwanted imposition of sexual demands in the context of a relationship of unequal power.

For women who are members of disadvantaged communities, getting a post-secondary education means grappling with additional obstacles and exacerbated challenges.

⁹³ Women's Network PEI (Fall 2003), *Looking Beyond the Surface: An In-Depth Review of Parental Benefits*, Final Report; also Provincial Focus Groups, New Brunswick Report, Fall 2003, available at <http://www.wnpei.org/parentalbenefits/research.html>

⁹⁴ NB ACSW (December 1994), *Training for Results: A Study of Women and Employment Training in New Brunswick*, p. 23-26, Moncton, NB ACSW.

⁹⁵ Joan McFarland (2003), «Public Policy and Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick» in Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed. *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 195-196.

⁹⁶ Sandra W. Pyke (1997), Education and the “Woman question”. [Education and the “Woman Question”] [Electronic version]. *Canadian Psychology*, 38(3), 154-163, retrieved April 12, 2007, from <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Monique Gauvin, Katherine Marcoccio and Alice Guérette-Breau, *Le harcèlement sexiste, le harcèlement sexuel et l'agression sexuelle à l'Université de Moncton : rapport de sondage mené auprès des étudiantes et des employées au Centre universitaire de Moncton*, Moncton : Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sur le harcèlement sexuel et sexiste en milieu d'enseignement francophone, February 1999.

Students or potential students with disabilities encounter physical access problems but also face problems as a result of discrimination and negative stereotypes, as the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons reminds us in its brief to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education. As a result "current enrolments do not adequately reflect the potential numbers from individuals with disabilities" who could benefit from post-secondary education.⁹⁹

The challenges faced by Aboriginal students or potential students are "complex and multi-faceted" – from lack of role models to racism in campus environments - rooted in the specific historical, cultural, demographic, geographic and social situation of these individuals.¹⁰⁰ For Aboriginal women, such problems are interlinked with other issues from violence to health and employment concerns.¹⁰¹

Policy and programs to address the barriers faced by these groups must be developed in partnership with community-based and advocacy organizations.

Women in non-traditional university programs such as engineering and those training for non-traditional trades in community colleges may experience particular difficulties since they are still largely outnumbered by male students and have few female role models among faculty. Female professors, like female students, tend to be concentrated mostly in education, the humanities, and social sciences. In 2004/05, only 8% of full-time professors in Engineering and Applied Sciences and 10% of full-time professors in Mathematics and Physical Sciences in New Brunswick universities were female.¹⁰² Similarly, women make up less than 10% of instructors in the trades, technology and natural resource development courses at the New Brunswick Community College.¹⁰³

If the gender imbalance in the non-traditional fields of higher education and training is to be corrected, it is essential to provide support to female students. Efforts have been made to recruit female students in the non-traditional programs through special scholarships, guidance programs in secondary schools, and the creation of women's chairs in fields such as engineering. However, these initiatives may be undermined by an atmosphere that is often hostile to women in male dominated programs and faculties.

Ensuring that women have mentors and access to other forms of ongoing support while learning and training is a key part of improving the post-secondary picture for women. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. The later 1970s and 1980s saw some women-centered initiatives including supportive pre-training "bridging" programs established in some provinces.¹⁰⁴ These women-centered programs recognized the particular training needs of women at a time when government-funding initiatives attempted to mitigate women's labour market disadvantage.¹⁰⁵

Women need support to deal with the discrimination and life issues they face during post-secondary studies, but they also need extra supports in preparing for, gaining access to and

⁹⁹ Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (March 2007), *Improving Access to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities*, p. 8, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

¹⁰⁰ Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007), *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

¹⁰¹ See NB ACSW (April 2006), *Equality for First Nations Women*, Fredericton: NB ACSW.

¹⁰² Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database.

¹⁰³ Women as a percentage of all term and regular instructors, as of fall 2005. Based on data provided by N.B. Department of Training and Employment Development, Human Resources Services.

¹⁰⁴ NB ACSW (December 1994), *Training for Results: A Study of Women and Employment Training in New Brunswick*, p.28-33, Moncton, NB ACSW; See also McFarland (2003), p. 195-196.

¹⁰⁵ Ursule Cristoph (2003), "Who Wins, Who Loses: The Real Story of the Transfer of Training to the Provinces and its Impact on Women," in Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed, *Training the Excluded for Work: Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 16.

staying in non-traditional workplaces. As the author of a recent study on women's training evolution in Canada affirmed, "programs that ignore the interrelationship of these needs may bring about short-term results but do little to address the systemic disadvantages of women in the labour market."¹⁰⁶

Women seeking to enter or stay in non-traditional occupations still face prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, experiencing sexual and general harassment, and lack of support from co-workers, management and employers.

As a recent report by Canada's Construction Sector Council noted, one of the problems that has impeded the success of training programs aimed at women are "workplaces that are not as welcoming, receptive and accommodating as they need to be."¹⁰⁷ Significant change will only come when industries and employers are sensitized to the importance of a workplace culture that supports women.¹⁰⁸ There exist some valuable how-to guides for employers on recruitment, integration and retention of women in non-traditional workplaces, some produced by the now defunct national association Women in Trades and Technology (WITT).¹⁰⁹

2.4. Unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women

The post-secondary experience of Aboriginal women is shaped by realities that are often vastly different than for other women. While they are better represented in higher education than their male counterparts, Aboriginal women like Aboriginal men remain less likely than non-Aboriginal individuals to enter university or college and have a much higher drop-out rate. Aboriginal students who do finish high school are almost twice as likely as other Canadian students to either drop out of college or university studies or skip post-secondary education altogether, according to a recent survey of high school graduates in New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, two years after graduation.¹¹⁰

While 44% of Aboriginal identity women aged 15 years and over had some post-secondary education according to the 2001 census – university, trades or other training, only 27% had completed a degree or certificate, and another 17% were without a diploma.

By contrast, the 54% of non-Aboriginal women who had some post-secondary studies included 38% who had a degree or certificate and 16% without.

The dropout problem is particularly severe at the university level. Of the Aboriginal women in Canada who had studied at university, the percentage without a degree (9%) is greater than the

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Future Labour Supplies for Canada's Construction Industry*, p. 25-26. Available on the CSCC website at http://www.csc-ca.org/english/whatwedo_1.html#profile.

¹⁰⁸ See Denise McLean (2003), *Workplaces that Work: Creating a Workplace Culture that Attracts, Retains and Promotes Women*, prepared for the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, available at <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/about/fpt.htm>

¹⁰⁹ See for example WITT National Network (1995), *Welcoming Women into Trades, Technology, Operations and Blue-Collar Work: A Checklist of Strategies*, London, Ontario. A driving force in advocacy and promotion of women's training in the 1980s and 1990s, WITT had by 2003 lost its federal funding and closed its doors. Provincial WITT chapters are still active in a few provinces including Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

¹¹⁰ See R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (June 2007), *The Class of 2003 : High School Follow-Up Survey*. Montreal: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 34-35, available at www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/070614_class_of_03_en.pdf ; Census data on highest level of schooling attained also points to very high non-completion rates. See Jeremy Hull (June 2005), *Post-Secondary Education and Labour Market Outcomes, 2001*, Ottawa, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada., available at http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/ra/pse/01/index_e.html

percentage with a degree (5%). Of non-Aboriginal women who had studied at university, 10% were without a degree versus 15% who had a degree.¹¹¹

For Aboriginal women, the struggle for equality “cannot be separated from the twin legacies of colonialism and racism, which continue to marginalize Aboriginal peoples and devalue their cultures and traditions.”¹¹² Aboriginal women are also confronted with discrimination on the basis of sex in their own communities.

This profound systemic discrimination compounds a multitude of severe and inextricably linked socio-economic disadvantages. These include grinding poverty and related health problems, lack of access to adequate housing, high incidence of violence and abuse, low education and employment levels, and limited access to political power and resources in their households, communities and beyond.¹¹³

Studies have shown that Aboriginal women increasingly see education as a way for them and their daughters to escape poverty on the one hand, and the risk or reality of partner abuse on the other.¹¹⁴ The Native Women’s Association of Canada recently observed that “Aboriginal women sometimes engage in educational activities because women are not tolerating violence in our communities and are leaving for the city. One of the few ways they can access band support to leave violent circumstances is through accessing educational funding.”¹¹⁵

While more Aboriginal women want to pursue a post-secondary education to improve their lives, they must overcome a formidable array of hurdles to entry and completion of studies.

Financial hardship remains a significant obstacle for many students and aspiring students, despite the federal government funding allocated to aid Status Indian students attending post-secondary institutions throughout Canada. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program has long been capped. The limited resources mean that not all would-be students can access the grants administered on a discretionary basis by First Nations band or tribal councils, and that the grants do not adequately cover rapidly rising tuition, living and travel costs.¹¹⁶ The off-reserve population is particularly disadvantaged.¹¹⁷ Aboriginal students are less likely than other students to have financial support from their families, so some must rely on student loans and employment income.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ See Jeremy Hull (February 2006), *Aboriginal Women A Profile from the 2001 Census*, Prepared for Women’s Issues and Gender Equality Directorate Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Table 4-1, based on INAC’s custom 2001 Census tabulations, available at http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/abw/t4-1_e.html

¹¹² Aboriginal Women’s Roundtable on Gender Equality, “Equality for Aboriginal Women,” held March 30 – April 1, 2000 (report last updated July 29, 2003), Ottawa, Status of Women Canada, available at www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/abwomenroundtable/section3_e.html

¹¹³ Native Women’s Association of Canada (2005), *Companion Document First Ministers’ Meeting, Kelowna, B.C., November 24-25, 2005*, p. 8 at <http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/reports.html>; New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women (April 2006), *Equality for First Nations Women*, Fredericton, NB ACSW.

¹¹⁴ Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory D. Kipling (March 1998), *Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic Research Directions for Policy Development*, Ottawa, Status of Women Canada, p. 23 at http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/pubspr/0662634314/index_e.html

¹¹⁵ NWAC (2005), p. 7.

¹¹⁶ First Nation band or tribal councils set the funding priorities, maintain student files and screen applications for eligibility. Guidelines may vary in each organization. Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007), *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>; see also R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 19-22, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹¹⁷ The N.B. Aboriginal People’s Council, serving the off-reserve population, does not receive PSSSP funding, but offers limited financial assistance for post-secondary education through provincially funded scholarships and through training initiatives funded under the federal Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy. See Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007),

The Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations have called for increased public investment in post-secondary education and removal of funding caps to match rapid population growth and escalating costs.¹¹⁹

The research also insists on the importance of addressing the particular historical, social, educational and geographic barriers that limit Aboriginal peoples' post-secondary participation.

High secondary school dropout rates and inadequate preparation during the kindergarten to Grade 12 years drastically reduce the potential pool of post-secondary students in Aboriginal communities.¹²⁰ The situation is all the more dramatic in light of the rapidly increasing Aboriginal youth population. Nearly one-third (29%) of New Brunswick's Aboriginal identity population is under the age of 14, compared to 18% for the non-Aboriginal population.¹²¹ The Aboriginal youth population is growing much faster than the youth share of the general population, thanks to a birth rate that is about 1.5 times the overall Canadian rate.¹²²

A 2001 survey of the off-reserve Aboriginal population in Canada showed that Aboriginal women have different reasons than Aboriginal men for dropping out of high school. The number one factor prompting female off-reserve youth to leave school was pregnancy or to look after children (25%), while 15% said they were bored. By contrast, nearly one in four (24%) off-reserve Aboriginal male youth aged 15 to 19 said they left high school because they were bored, while 19% wanted to work.¹²³

Aboriginal individuals who go on to university or community college are more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have to leave their home community, incurring expenses and distancing themselves from family and social supports.¹²⁴

The legacy of the residential school system and assimilationist policies also means that many Aboriginal students have a deep mistrust of education systems. Moreover, they often shoulder a heavy burden of community and family expectations, are unable to turn to role models with post-secondary education experience and lack self-confidence and motivation.¹²⁵

Aboriginal students on university and college campuses struggle to make their way in an environment where they are socially isolated and dealing with systems, programs and services that are not culturally sensitive. Many do not feel welcome in institutions where they find few

Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>, and the web site of the NBAPC at <http://education.nbapc.org/pages.asp?pid=149&deptid=4&lid=0>

¹¹⁸ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (June 2007), *The Class of 2003 : High School Follow-Up Survey*.

Montreal: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 35-36, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/newsevents/newsfull.asp?newsid=125>

¹¹⁹ NWAC (2005), p. 7; Assembly of First Nations (May 2005), *First Nations Education Action Plan*, p. 6, available at <http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=109><http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=109>

¹²⁰ Michael Mendelson (July 2006), *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Ottawa, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, p. 30- 35, available at <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications>

¹²¹ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Catalogue number 97F0011XCB01001

¹²² Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, June 28, 2005 at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050628/d050628d.htm>

¹²³ Statistics Canada, *2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey – Initial Findings. Well-Being of the non-reserve Aboriginal Population*, at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-589-XIE/school.htm>

¹²⁴ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 14, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹²⁵ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 11-17, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

Aboriginal people among faculty and support staff.¹²⁶ Aboriginal women commonly experience racism and sexism in educational settings.¹²⁷

Family responsibilities also loom large for many Aboriginal women pursuing higher education. Aboriginal university and college students tend to be older than the typical student and are more likely to have children. Many of them are lone parent mothers.¹²⁸ Supporting and caring for dependants is a significant barrier to access and completion of post-secondary studies.¹²⁹

According to a 2001 survey of off-reserve Aboriginal peoples in Canada, 34% of Aboriginal women aged 25 to 44 who had started but not completed a post-secondary program reported family responsibilities as their reason for dropping out, while 21% cited financial reasons, 12% lost interest/motivation and 8% got a job or had to work. About one in four (24%) of their male counterparts cited financial reasons as the number one factor, while only 11% reported family responsibilities as their reason for not finishing post-secondary studies.¹³⁰

It is widely acknowledged that more than increased funding is required to promote Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education. A recent study that drew on interviews with educators and on-site visits to educational institutions, affirms, "institutions must develop a greater understanding of Aboriginal people, and the historic and social barriers they face, before a real difference will be seen in the number of Aboriginal people who succeed in pursuing higher education."¹³¹

Much research emphasizes the importance of increasing Aboriginal control and participation in the development of curriculum, programs and services and the crucial role of community-based delivery. We may learn from some initiatives in the Western provinces. Favoured initiatives include targeted access programs to ease the transition and provide guidance to Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal-specific personal and academic support services.¹³² Mentors and role models, individual counselling and academic advising, housing, childcare and transportation assistance and culturally appropriate post-secondary information are identified as essential supports. Many studies also emphasize the importance of improving data collection and tracking of enrolment and completion rates, currently woefully inadequate for policy-making.¹³³

¹²⁶ Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (September 2005), *Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, Millennium Research Note #2, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/OthePublications.asp>

¹²⁷ Stout and Kipling, p. 23.

¹²⁸ David Holmes (February 2005), *Embracing Differences: Post-Secondary Education among Aboriginal Students, Students with Children and Students with Disabilities*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹²⁹ See for example, Malatest & Associates Ltd. (June 2007), p. 50-51.

¹³⁰ Statistics Canada, *2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey – Initial Findings. Well-Being of the non-reserve Aboriginal Population*, at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-589-XIE/school.htm>

¹³¹ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 41, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹³² For more than 20 years now, the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute has offered various programs and services to First Nations students at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, in an effort to ease the transition to university study as well as to encourage research and publication in Aboriginal languages, culture, education and history. Institute web site at <http://www.unbf.ca/education/mmi/>

¹³³ See for example *Ibid.*, p. 41-42; Malatest, R.A. & Associates Ltd. (May 2002), *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*. Report Prepared for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Available at <http://www.cmec.ca/postsec/publications.en.stm>; see also Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007), *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Persistent gender inequality in income and employment, family responsibilities, experience of violence and harassment and under-representation in positions of power influences women's post-secondary educational participation in New Brunswick. Students or potential students who are otherwise disadvantaged, including low-income lone mothers, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities, are particularly affected. Downplaying or ignoring these realities is not an option in reform of post-secondary education. Improving the level of equality among groups is a social and economic necessity and should be one measure of the success of any public policy initiative.

It is therefore disappointing to note the failure to address gender equality concerns in the current inquiry's terms of reference and discussion paper. The lack of sex-disaggregated data in the Commission's online research section obscures the gender-specific participation patterns and sidesteps the issue of gender-specific measures. Women appear to have largely fallen off the government radar in higher education and training policy in recent years. We hope that recent initiatives such as the Wage Gap Action Plan Scholarships may be the first steps in the rediscovery of a more proactive and women-centered approach.¹³⁴

Women are not on an equal footing with men in the post-secondary system. Systemic barriers within educational institutions and in the larger society continue to shape education and training patterns. The gender gap in post-secondary education carries heavy costs for individuals and for society. It contributes to lower earnings and pension incomes for women, an inefficient use of human resources, an escalating skills shortage and reduced overall productivity.

Women are chronically under-represented in certain trades, science and technology programs that offer better employment prospects, are more likely than men to study part-time and are the ones to feel the impact of the absence of family-friendly policies. The mature student has become more common on university campuses and in community colleges in the province over the past decades. For parents, especially lone parents, the balancing act is challenging. The scarcity of affordable, flexible child care services is a critical problem for student parents. Canada's maternity and parental leave benefits program is only for employees who pay into Employment Insurance and can live on 55% of their earnings. Without a family policy, New Brunswick is not doing enough to help families reconcile the demands of education, paid work, and family life.

It is time to implement a comprehensive post-secondary education strategy that would include women-centered initiatives for training, integration and retention in male-dominated occupations. Women-specific initiatives are essential, because women must overcome specific barriers, such as harassment and discrimination in the classroom and on the job site – let alone the standard barriers most women face, such as a heavier share of family responsibilities and limited access to affordable, quality care services.

For years, women's organizations in Canada have called for "a seamless system of training and adjustment services (with numerous access points and with services not tied to any income support program) as the kind of system that will best meet women's diverse training and adjustment requirements."¹³⁵ An integrated approach is also needed for university education and the entire post-secondary sector.

¹³⁴ Note that the 2005 Newfoundland and Labrador White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education was one of the rare recent government inquiries that called on institutions to improve women's situation in colleges and universities.

¹³⁵ Karen Lior and Susan Wismer (2003), "Still Shopping for Training: Women, Training and Livelihoods." In Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed. *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 219. See also Susan Wismer (1988), *Women's Education and Training: A Policy Analysis*, Toronto, CLOW.

The Advisory Council therefore recommends:

□ That the provincial education, labour and social program authorities, in collaboration with their federal counterparts and in consultation and partnership with Aboriginal women's organizations and community groups, undertake a needs assessment and develop an action plan that includes the appropriate policies and programs to promote the full and equitable participation of Aboriginal women in post-secondary education. A system of sex-disaggregated data collection must also be developed and implemented for the purposes of tracking enrolment and completion rates and monitoring program results for Aboriginal learners.

□ That the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour ensure that comparable statistical information on student aid, enrolments, attrition and completion rates of women and men, and diverse groups of women and men (Aboriginal, other-abled, lone parents) in New Brunswick's community colleges and universities is collected, made available to the public and used in policy-making.

□ That the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour in collaboration with educational institutions and community groups, identify the needs and concerns of women and diverse groups of women with regards to post-secondary education access and participation.

□ That the provincial education, labour and social program authorities develop and implement a coordinated strategy to achieve the full and equitable participation of women in post-secondary education. The framework would include, but not be limited to, the following:

□ Effective recruitment initiatives to encourage and support the participation of women in engineering and applied sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, technology and skilled trades. Special outreach efforts must focus on chronically under-represented groups, such as Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.

□ Increased public investment in higher education and training, including literacy programs for adult learners, with funding tied to equity goals.

□ A revamped student financial aid system, with higher proportion of upfront, need-based non-repayable grants and scholarships based on actual education and living costs, along with tuition fee control measures.

□ Changes to the Employment Insurance program to extend eligibility for maternity and parental benefits to student mothers and parents, with leave provisions guaranteed by post-secondary institutions.

□ Creation of affordable licensed child care spaces in on-campus and off-campus centres that offer flexible scheduling to student parents.

□ Enhanced support services, including mentoring programs and peer support groups, for female students in colleges, universities and apprenticeship settings, particularly those in non-traditional fields of study and training. Services provided to Aboriginal students and students with disabilities developed and based on a collaborative service and support model which partners post-secondary institutions with other agencies and groups.

□ Preparation and dissemination of user-friendly information resources about learning options, existing programs and services.

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Women and Post-Secondary Education

Brief presented by the

**New Brunswick Advisory Council
on the Status of Women**

to the

**Commission on Post-Secondary Education
in New Brunswick**

July 2007

This is a publication of the:

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The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women is a body created by provincial legislation to study and advise on issues of concern to women and to bring these before the public and the government. The Council is composed of 13 women appointed by government who meet at least four times per year to determine priorities for action on women's issues.

June 2007

Ce document est disponible en français. Demandez *Les femmes et l'éducation postsecondaire*.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
1. Gender differences in post-secondary educational participation and attainment....	6
1.1. Increasing educational attainment and expansion of post-secondary clientele ...	6
1.2. Part-time and graduate level enrolments	7
1.3. Gender segregation by field of study and training.....	8
2. Barriers to women's higher education and training	10
2.1. Financial obstacles.....	10
2.2. Family responsibilities	15
2.3. Chilly learning environments.....	17
2.4. Unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women.....	19
3. Conclusion and Recommendations	23
4. Selected Bibliography	25

Executive Summary

The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women welcomes this opportunity to present its views to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick. Our brief focuses on women's needs and concerns with regards to accessibility of post-secondary education.

As we noted in our submission to the provincial government's Self-Sufficiency Task Force, the level of equality between groups in society should be one measure of the success of any public policy initiative. Gender equality is internationally recognized as an indicator of sustainable, people-centre development and a matter of human rights.

Unfortunately, the Commission discussion paper barely mentions gender and diversity concerns and virtually no sex-disaggregated data is provided in its online research section. Sex-disaggregated data are essential for policy and program development that takes into account the significant differences in the status, situation and life experiences of women and men. Systematic inclusion of gender in analysis is a tool for revealing possible outcomes for women and for men in all their diversity and for ensuring that these groups benefit equally from initiatives.

Despite some significant gains made over the past decades, women still earn less than men, shoulder a heavier burden of family responsibilities, are more likely to live in poverty and to experience sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Women also remain seriously under-represented in decision-making positions and face discrimination in many aspects of their daily lives. The inequalities are especially severe and multi-layered for groups such as Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.

Women have pursued higher education and training in ever growing numbers over the past thirty years and now outnumber men in the total university student population. Women also account for over half of the community college clientele in Canada, but only about 40% of community college students in New Brunswick.

However, women are not on an equal footing with men in the post-secondary system. Systemic barriers within educational institutions and in the larger society continue to shape gender-specific education and training patterns. Women are more likely than men to study part-time and are chronically under-represented in certain trades, science and technology programs that offer better employment prospects.

The gender gap in post-secondary education carries heavy costs for individuals and for the entire society. It contributes to lower average earnings and pension incomes for women, an inefficient use of human resources, an escalating skills shortage and reduced overall productivity.

The Advisory Council recommends improved gender and diversity-specific data collection on student aid, enrolments and completion rates, along with a comprehensive needs study. We also call upon provincial education, labour and social program authorities to develop and implement a multi-faceted and coordinated strategy to achieve the full and equitable participation of women in post-secondary education.

Introduction

The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women welcomes this opportunity to present its views to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick.

The Commission's mandate is vast and important: examination of structural, financial, accessibility and quality issues for the entire post-secondary education and training sector in our province.¹ The inquiry covers public universities, private universities (denominational and for-profit), the NBCC/CCNB network, apprenticeships, private trainers and other aspects of literacy and lifelong learning. Special attention is to be paid to the effects of the increasing financial burden carried by students and to the pertinence of the traditional structural groupings of education, training and apprenticeship. The terms of reference emphasize the need for improved access to the widest range possible of relevant, high quality and competitive education and training options while promoting collaborative and cost-sharing institutional initiatives.

The inquiry is proceeding on a tight timeline. Commissioners Dr. Rick Miner and Dr. Jacques L'Écuyer released their discussion paper in March 2007, consulted with educational stakeholders and the public in April and early May and are expected to report to the provincial government in the summer of 2007. Three women sit on the eight member advisory panel that will provide input into the report on the future direction of the higher education and training sector.²

The level of equality between groups in society should be one measure of the success of any public policy initiative, including the New Brunswick government's self-sufficiency project.³ There is increasing acceptance internationally that gender equality should concern and fully engage men as well as women, since it is "a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development" as well as a human rights matter.⁴

We note our dismay that the Commission discussion paper barely mentions gender and diversity concerns.⁵ An allusion to the under-representation of Aboriginal peoples in the province's post-secondary institutions and the suggestion that the virtual absence of women among apprentices is a "missed opportunity" are the only hints of the challenges faced by these groups.⁶

Moreover, only one of the more than thirty graphs available in the Research Data section of the Commission's site presents data that differentiates between women and men.⁷ Sex-disaggregated data are essential for policy and program development that takes into account the significant differences in the status, situation and life experiences of women and men. Systematic inclusion of gender in analysis is a tool for revealing possible outcomes for women

¹ The Commission was launched in late January 2007. "Premier announces N.B. Commission on Post-Secondary Education", January 19, 2007 press release available www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2007e0075pe.htm; Government of New Brunswick, « Terms of Reference – Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick », p. 2-3 Available at www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/context.html

² Ibid., p. 4. Available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/context.html>

³ See *Self-Sufficiency and Equality*, Notes for a presentation to the Self-Sufficiency Task Force by the NB Advisory Council on the Status of Women, March 2007, Available at www.acswcccf.nb.ca/english/acsw1.asp

⁴ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2006* (2006), Geneva: World Economic Forum, p. 4. Available at www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Gender%20Gap/index.htm

⁵ Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick, *Discussion Paper*, March 2007. Available at www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/context.html

⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷ The graph entitled "First Nations enrolments in 2005-2006", presents data on female and male students receiving federal government funding support. Available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/research.php>, consulted April 30, 2007.

and for men in all their diversity and for ensuring that these groups benefit equally from initiatives.⁸

Despite some significant gains made over the past decades, women still earn less than men, shoulder a heavier burden of family responsibilities, are more likely to live in poverty and to experience sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Women also remain seriously under-represented in decision-making positions and face discrimination in many aspects of their daily lives. The inequalities are especially severe and multi-layered for groups such as Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.⁹

In their search for economic security and personal development and pushed by rising labour market requirements, women have pursued higher education and training in ever growing numbers over the past thirty years. In New Brunswick as in Canadian universities, women now outnumber men in the total student population.¹⁰ Women also account for over half of the community college clientele in Canada, but only about 40% of community college students in New Brunswick.¹¹

Yet women are not on an equal footing with men in the post-secondary system. Systemic barriers within educational institutions and in the larger society continue to shape gender-specific education and training patterns. Women are more likely than men to study part-time and are chronically under-represented in certain trades, science and technology programs that offer better employment prospects.¹²

The gender gap in post-secondary education carries heavy costs for individuals and for the entire society. It contributes to lower average earnings and pension incomes for women, an inefficient use of human resources, an escalating skills shortage and reduced overall productivity. Elimination of the gender wage gap would result in significant increases in tax revenues and decreases in health and social program expenditures, according to a study by St. Mary's University economist Dr. Ather Akbari.¹³ As the World Economic Forum has shown in a recent report, societies with the most equality between the sexes are also the world's most competitive.¹⁴

This submission focuses on women's needs and concerns with regards to accessibility of post-secondary education. It is divided into three parts. The first examines gender differences in post-secondary participation. The second explores the barriers to women's higher education and training. Finally, we present a series of recommendations to address the problems identified.

⁸ There is an extensive practice-based literature on Gender-based Analysis, also called Equity Analysis, Gender Equity Analysis, Gender Equality Analysis, Gender Mainstreaming and Diversity Analysis. See for example, House of Commons Canada, *Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success*, Report of the Standing Committee on Status of Women, April 2005; United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, "Gender Mainstreaming", Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>

⁹ See for example, NB ACSW, *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women*; NB ACSW, Reminder List: For Those Who Think Women Have Reached Equality, Available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>

¹⁰ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database; Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5th edition, March 2006, available at www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89-503-X, p. 91-92.

¹¹ NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 94.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Gender Wage Gap in New Brunswick* (2004), prepared for GPI Atlantic, Halifax, N.S., available at www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/documents/GENDER_WAGE_GAP_NB_FINAL_REPORT_EN.pdf

¹⁴ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi (2006), *The Global Gender Gap Report 2006*, Geneva: World Economic Forum, p. 17-18, available at www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Gender%20Gap/index.htm

1. Gender differences in post-secondary educational participation and attainment

Women's educational attainment has risen dramatically over the past thirty years as growing numbers of women have set their sights on post-secondary education. From the young high school graduate to the middle-aged woman with adult children, women of all ages have been making the connection between education and better employment prospects while seeking opportunities for personal development and citizen engagement.

But the growing female presence in the post-secondary sector is only part of the story. Closer examination of women's and men's participation patterns over the past three decades reveal disturbing trends that mirror and perpetuate gender inequality.

It should also be noted that many adult New Brunswickers did not finish high school and have literacy levels below the level considered necessary to live and work in today's society. International literacy survey statistics from 2003 revealed that 54% of New Brunswick women and 59% of men aged 16 and over had serious difficulties in reading basic texts, while 67% of women and 63% of men had low levels of numeracy skills, worse than the Canadian averages.¹⁵ Literacy programs are severely underfunded and less educated adult learners who are unemployed or underemployed experience great difficulties accessing and successfully completing fragmented employment and academic upgrading initiatives.

1.1. Increasing educational attainment and expansion of post-secondary clientele

Education levels have improved significantly for both women and men in New Brunswick in the past thirty years. As of 2001, nearly half (48%) of New Brunswick women and men (47%) aged 15 and over had some form of education or training past high school, up from just 20% and 18% respectively in 1971.¹⁶

The once substantial gender gap in university degrees has been all but eliminated in New Brunswick as in the rest of Canada. The 2001 census revealed that 12% of New Brunswick women and 11% of men aged 15 and over had a university degree, up from 8% and 9% respectively in 1991 and 2% and 5% in 1971.¹⁷ At the national level, slightly more men than women now have university degrees: 15% of Canadian women and 16% of men.¹⁸

While New Brunswick Francophone women have almost caught up to Anglophones in university degree-holding - as of 2001, 11% of francophone women compared to 12% of Anglophone women and 9% of francophone men had university degrees - other groups continue to lag behind.¹⁹ Aboriginal women in New Brunswick have attained a higher level of schooling than Aboriginal men, but are less likely than non-Aboriginal women and men to hold a university degree. As of 2001, 7% of N.B.'s Aboriginal identity²⁰ women aged 15 and over and 3% of their male counterparts had a university degree, compared to 12% and 11% of non-Aboriginal females and males in the province.²¹ Women with disabilities have lower educational levels than women

¹⁵ NB ACSW (2006), *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick*, p. 10-11, Fredericton, NB ACSW, available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>

¹⁶ Ginette Lafleur (1990), *Les femmes à l'heure des comptes. Dossier statistique, 1971-1986*, Publication d'Action Éducation Femmes N.-B., p. 57; Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, catalogue 97F0017XCB01002.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1991 & 2001, catalogue 97F00017XCB1001 & 97F0017XCB01002.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Irène Savoie for the Fédération des dames d'Acadie inc., *Socioeconomic Profile of Francophone Women in New Brunswick*, April 2004. Available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>

²⁰ Persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group and those who report themselves as a Registered or Treaty Indian, and/or Band or First Nation membership.

²¹ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, catalogue 97F0011XCB01043.

and men without disabilities. As of 2001, 9% of New Brunswick women with disabilities²² aged 15 to 64 and 6% of their male counterparts had a university certificate or degree, compared to 16% of women and 13% of men without disabilities.²³

New Brunswick universities have seen a dramatic growth in female clientele over the past thirty years. Women's full-time enrolments in New Brunswick universities more than doubled between 1975/76 and 2005/06, rising from 4,803 to 11,722, while male enrolments increased by only one-third.²⁴ By the late 1980s, females outnumbered males in our province's universities. Women have held on to their lead, accounting for 58% of full-time enrolments in 2005/06, up from 43% thirty years earlier, closely paralleling Canadian trends.²⁵

Female enrolments in the New Brunswick community colleges have not followed the same upward trend. Women continue to be under-represented in institutions hit by declining enrolments overall as well as a proportional decline in female enrolments since the 1990s. New Brunswick total college enrolment has decreased by almost a third since 1990/91, compared to the national increase of 3.5%.²⁶ Only 38% of full-time students in regular college programs were female in 2005/06, down from a high of 46% in 1988/89.²⁷ Some 3,000 women were enrolled in these programs in 2005/06, less than half the peak clientele of ten years earlier.²⁸ New Brunswick falls short of the Canadian average, where women have accounted for slightly more than half of the full-time community college clientele since the mid 1970s.²⁹

1.2. Part-time and graduate level enrolments

A closer look at enrolment patterns reminds us that gender inequalities persist in our province's universities and colleges.

Many more women than men are attending colleges and universities on a part-time basis. Women were 65% of all part-time students in New Brunswick universities in 2005/06, up from 60% in the mid 1970s, while they represented 58% of all full-time students.³⁰ In the New Brunswick Community Colleges, women were 55% of all part-time students and 40% of all full-time students in 2005/06.³¹ While about the same proportion of female and male university students were studying part-time – 20% of women and 19% of men – a much higher proportion of

²² Persons with disabilities are those who reported difficulties with daily living activities, or who indicated that a physical or mental condition or a health problem reduced the kind or amount of activities they could do; types of disabilities include: hearing, seeing, speech, mobility, agility, dexterity, pain, learning, memory, developmental, delay and psychological.

²³ Statistics Canada (September 2003), *2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey*, catalogue 89-587-XIE, Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-587-XIE>

²⁴ Lafleur, p. 76, 79; Maritime Provinces Higher Education database.

²⁵ Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 91-92.

²⁶ Sean Junor & Alex Usher (2004), "The Price of Knowledge 2004: New Brunswick", Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/poknb.asp>

²⁷ This figure for "regular" enrolments includes the following: Apprenticeship, Distance Education, Continuing Education, Correspondance Education, General Studies and Connections. Data provided by NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Joan McFarland (1999), *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*. Available at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Canadian average based on community college enrolments for 1999/2000. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 94.

³⁰ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database; Lafleur, p. 79. The Canadian average, based on enrolment statistics for 2001/02, was 60%. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 93.

³¹ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database; NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. Figures cited for total community college enrolments include regular, contract and distance programs.

women than men were enrolled part-time at the N.B. Community College, 27% versus 17% in 2005/06.³²

The impact of part-time status on completion time and attrition rates merits systematic study. Women presumably take longer on average to complete their programs since more women than men are part-time students.³³ Educational authorities do not systematically collect time-series data on time to completion for degrees, diplomas and certificates nor dropout rates of women and other under-represented groups, so we are unable to track some of these important trends.³⁴

Gender differences are also evident when we consider women's participation in graduate programs. Women have made significant inroads in graduate studies over the past thirty years, but they remain less likely than men to pursue the more advanced degrees, particularly the doctorate. The female share of enrolments in bachelor's and first professional degree programs in New Brunswick rose from 50% in 1980/81 to 60% in 2005/06. During the same period, women also increased their presence in master's programs, from 36% to 55%. As for doctoral studies, women's share of enrolments has more than tripled, climbing from 13% in 1980/81 to 46% in 2005/06.³⁵

1.3. Gender segregation by field of study and training

Gender segregation is still entrenched in higher education and training, replicating occupational segregation in the labour force. Today as two decades ago, New Brunswick and Canadian women are concentrated in a limited range of occupations compared to men. Women still account for less than 10% of workers in the trades, transport and equipment sector, while barely one in five jobs in the natural and applied sciences sector is held by a woman.³⁶

In New Brunswick as in Canadian universities, women continue to predominate in traditional faculties like nursing and are over-represented in the humanities and social sciences. Almost nine out of ten full-time students in health-related programs (86%) were female in our province in 2005/06, while women accounted for about 70% of the clientele in education, the humanities and the social sciences.³⁷

³² Ibid.

³³ Some studies from the late 1980s and early 1990s suggest that women take longer than men to complete their Master's or Ph.D degrees, at least in certain disciplines. See the literature review in Sandra W. Pyke (1997). Education and the "Woman question". [Education and the "Woman Question"] [Electronic version]. *Canadian Psychology*, 38(3), 154-163. Retrieved April 12, 2007, from <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>

³⁴ Canadian Council on Learning (2006), *Canadian Post-Secondary Education. A Positive Record – An Uncertain Future*, Ottawa, CCL. Available at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca>, p. 70-78.

³⁵ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. Includes part-time and full-time enrolments; undergraduate includes Bachelor's degrees, 1st professional degrees, undergraduate diplomas, certificates and other undergraduate.

³⁶ N.B. Advisory Council on the Status of Women (2006), *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick*, Fredericton, NB ACSW, p. 57. Available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>; Statistics Canada (2007). *Women in Canada: Work Chapter Updates 2006*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. Catalogue no. 89F0133XIE, p. 9-10, 20. Available at www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89F0133X

³⁷ Based on enrolments at undergraduate and graduate levels. Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. Canadian patterns are similar, though lower in health-related programs at 75% in 2001/02. Note that N.B. university enrolments do not include out-of-province medical school enrolments. See Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*: p. 92.

Women have made significant inroads in some university programs long dominated by men, such as law. Female enrolments in New Brunswick's two law faculties climbed steadily from a 37% share in 1980/81 to 56% in 2005/06.³⁸

By contrast, female enrolment in the traditionally male fields of engineering, applied and physical sciences and mathematics continues to lag well behind that of men. Women's share of full-time enrolments in engineering and the applied sciences rose slowly but steadily from 9% in 1980/81 to a high of 21% in the mid-1990s.³⁹ But the trend has reversed in recent years. In 2005/06, less than one in five students (17%) studying in this field in New Brunswick universities is female, slightly below the Canadian average.⁴⁰ Women in mathematics and the physical sciences boasted a 30% share of full-time enrolments in 1980/81 but lost ground from the end of the decade through the 1990s. Now women represent barely one in four students in those disciplines in New Brunswick universities, slightly below the latest Canadian average.⁴¹

There has been little change in the gender distribution of community college program enrolments over the past thirty years. In the 1970s and 1980s, women in New Brunswick's community colleges were far more likely to be training to become nurses' aids, legal secretaries, or hairdressers than carpenters or mechanics.⁴² Female training ghettos and low female enrolments in non-traditional courses persisted into the 1990s. In 1992/93, three-quarters of full-time female enrolments were clustered in academic, secretarial-clerical, business, and health-community services training programs, while male enrolments were concentrated in technical and trades programs including construction, mechanical-motorized equipment, electronics, mechanical-industrial, and metal training. Indeed, a study released by the Advisory Council in 1994 concluded that training patterns of the 1990s would only help perpetuate long-standing gender inequities in the workplace.⁴³

Even today, most women attending the New Brunswick Community Colleges are training for traditionally female employment or taking some kind of academic upgrading course. Nearly one in five full-time female regular students was enrolled in Office administration programs in 2005/06, while about one in ten was training as a Practical nurse, where they made up 90% and 96% of the clientele respectively.⁴⁴ By contrast, that year women made up just 3% of full-time enrolments in carpentry and 5% in automotive and heavy equipment mechanic programs. Women remain a tiny minority in most of the traditionally male-dominated trades and technology programs.

Women are severely under-represented throughout Canada in the apprenticeship programs that combine classroom instruction with on-the-job training and experience. Women accounted for only 2% of all the apprentices taking community college courses in our province in 2005/06 – less than fifty women of a total of nearly 2,000 apprentices – a proportion that has hardly budged in twenty years.⁴⁵ As of March 2007, only 64 or 2% of New Brunswick's more than 3,000 registered

³⁸ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. Includes part-time and full-time enrolments at all levels.

³⁹ Maritime Provinces Higher Education database.

⁴⁰ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. The Canadian figure for 2001/02 was 24%. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 92.

⁴¹ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database. The Canadian figure was 30% in 2001/02. Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 92.

⁴² Lafleur, p. 73; NB ACSW (1984), *Plan of Action on the Status of Women in Community Colleges*, submitted to the Department of Community Colleges.

⁴³ NB ACSW (1994), *Training for Results: A Study of Women and Employment Training in New Brunswick*.

⁴⁴ Calculated from campus-level data provided by NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

⁴⁵ The 2005/06 total includes full-time and part-time enrolments in regular and contract apprenticeship programs. Data provided by NBCC-CCNB Quality and Shared Services Branch, N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. For the evolution since 1986, see McFarland, p. 198-199.

apprentices are female and fully one-half of these women are apprenticing as cooks.⁴⁶ Women make up 2% or less of those apprenticing as carpenters, mechanics or electricians.⁴⁷

These gender imbalances in our university and college programs have important consequences for women's earning potential and career status, as some of the better-paying jobs are in the trades, scientific and technology sectors. We also pay a high economic and social price for this under-development of human resources, particularly in light of Canada-wide worker shortages in some of the skilled trades and professions.⁴⁸

As for training programs offered in private institutions, we know little about gender participation patterns because the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour does not collect this data by gender or program.

2. Barriers to women's higher education and training

We have seen that full and equal participation of women in the post-secondary system remains elusive. In this section, we will review some of the barriers faced by women in accessing and completing higher education and training.

Gender-specific obstacles are rooted in the labour market and the larger society. Women may also experience discrimination and adaptation problems within the learning environments.

2.1. Financial obstacles

Financial constraints are widely acknowledged as formidable barriers to post-secondary education participation for women and men.⁴⁹ The heavy share of costs borne by students and their families and the spectre of indebtedness loom large in decisions to undertake or complete higher education and training. Socio-economic status, ethnicity, and place of residence still shape inequitable access. Students from low-income families and from Aboriginal communities in particular continue to be underrepresented in post-secondary classrooms.

Women have fewer financial resources to invest in higher education since on average they live on lower incomes than men. The last census revealed that women's average total income was 62%

⁴⁶ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Apprenticeship and Certification Branch, Provincial Summary Totals of Apprentices as of 2007/03/23.

⁴⁷ Canadian patterns are similar. See Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada*, p. 95.

⁴⁸ See for example, Canadian Council on Learning, *Canadian Post-Secondary Education. A Positive Record – An Uncertain Future*, p. 17-18; also Ross Finnie, Marie Lavoie and Maud-Catherine Rivard (2001), "Women in engineering: The missing link in the Canadian knowledge economy," *Education Quarterly Review*, vol. 7, no 3. Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/studies/81-003/feature/eqab2001007003s1a01.htm>

⁴⁹ See for example, Joseph Berger, Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin (2007), *The Price of Knowledge 2006-07*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/Price.asp> Marc Frenette (2007), *Why are Youth from Lower-income Families Less Likely to Attend University? Evidence from Academic Abilities, Parental Influences and Financial Constraints*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2007295.htm>; K. Myers & P. de Broucker (2006), *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System*, Canadian Policy Research Network, Executive summary available at <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1479&l=en>; M. Corak, G. Lipps & J. Zhao (2003), *Family Income and Participation in Post-Secondary Education*, Statistics Canada, available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=11F0019M2003210>

of men's in New Brunswick and 61% of women versus 40% of men in our province had an annual income of less than \$20,000.⁵⁰

Women are more likely to live in poverty than men because of lower wages, savings and pension benefits, their involvement in unpaid work and the impact of family responsibilities. Lone parent women and their children are the group hardest hit in New Brunswick as in the rest of Canada. Although the rate has generally been falling in recent years, more than one out of three (37%) female lone-parent families was still living below the poverty line in 2005.⁵¹ By contrast, one in twenty-five children in two-parent families were living in poverty. Overall, about 15,000 New Brunswick children, or one in ten children under the age of 18 lived in poverty in 2005.

Women are far more likely than men to work part-time - one in four New Brunswick women compared to barely one in ten men⁵² – and they still earn less on average than men. According to the latest hourly pay gap data from Statistics Canada, women earn 12% less on average than men in New Brunswick in 2006, while the average gap for Canadian women was 16% that year.⁵³

Even women with a university or college education experience pay disparity. Women who graduated from a New Brunswick university in 1999 and who were working full time five years later earned 18% less on average than men with whom they graduated.⁵⁴ Women who graduated from New Brunswick Community College in 2005 and who were working full time one year later earned on average 14% less than men with whom they had graduated.⁵⁵

Women with disabilities and Aboriginal women have lower incomes and earn less than other women and men in New Brunswick.

The average total annual income for women with disabilities aged 15 to 64 years in New Brunswick was just \$14,856 in 2000, nearly \$8,000 less than men with disabilities, about \$5,000 less than women without disabilities and \$15,000 less than men without disabilities. More than one in three disabled women aged 15 and over in the province (35%) had total incomes of less than \$10,000 in 2000, compared to one in four of their male counterparts (25%).⁵⁶

The average total income of Aboriginal women aged 15 years and over in New Brunswick in 2000 was \$13,898, or 78% of Aboriginal men's average income (\$17,901), compared to \$18,676 and \$30,020 respectively for non-Aboriginal females and males.⁵⁷ Almost half (47%) of New

⁵⁰ Based on 2001 Census of Canada, before-tax annual incomes from all sources for females aged 15 years and over. See N.B. Advisory Council on the Status of Women (2006), *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick*, Fredericton, NB ACSW, p. 30, available at <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/english/acsw3.asp>.

⁵¹ Poverty rates based on after-tax income, using Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Offs which take into account the relative proportion of income spent on basic necessities such as rent, food and clothing. Statistics Canada, *Income in Canada, 2005*, cat. No 75-202-XWE; Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 202-0804, available at <http://www.statcan.ca>

⁵² See NBACSW, *2006 Report Card on the Status of Women*, p. 46.

⁵³ Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 282-0072. Includes part-time and full-time workers.

⁵⁴ Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.

⁵⁵ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (2006), *Survey of 2005 New Brunswick Community College Graduates*.

⁵⁶ Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2001*, Table 5 available at www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-587-XIE/tables.htm

⁵⁷ Statistics cited include on reserve and off reserve population. Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Total Income Groups, Sex and Aboriginal Groups for Population 15 Years and Over, for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1995 and 2000 – 20% Sample Data, <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=60107&APATH=3&GID=355313&METH=1&PTYPE=55496&THEME=54&FOCUS=0&AID=0&P_LACENAME=0&PROVINCE=0&SEARCH=0&GC=0&GK=0&VID=0&FL=0&RL=0&FREE=0>, accessed May 31, 2007.

Brunswick Aboriginal women with income reported total incomes of less than \$10,000 in 2000, compared to 42% of Aboriginal men, 33% of non-Aboriginal women and 20% of non-Aboriginal men. Aboriginal women who were employed in 2000 also earned less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, on average \$14,313 versus \$19,110 in 2000.⁵⁸

The persistence of these income and earnings inequities means that the skyrocketing cost of pursuing post-secondary studies has a differential impact on women and particular groups of women. Over the past two decades, university students and aspiring students have witnessed a dramatic rise in tuition fees as post-secondary institutions have passed along federal funding cuts. Since 1990, the average annual undergraduate tuition fees at New Brunswick universities have risen by 177%, from \$1,925 in 1990/91 to \$3,863 in 2001/02 and reaching \$5,328 in 2006/07.⁵⁹ New Brunswick currently has the second highest average university fees after Nova Scotia. Canadian undergraduates paid an average of \$4,347 in tuition fees for the 2006/07 academic year.⁶⁰

Community college fees have remained lower and programs take less time to complete than university studies. Annual fees for private training programs tend however to be far more expensive than either university or community college. In 2005/06, students attending the New Brunswick Community College paid an average annual fee of \$3,050, compared to \$7,520 for private career colleges or training institutions and \$5,038 in the universities.⁶¹

Beyond tuition fees, students must also find the resources to cover compulsory student services fees, textbooks, accommodation, food, transportation and lost earnings potential. For students with children, child care is another major expense. And since substantially more women than men study part-time, living and even tuition costs would on average be higher for female students overall.

Existing non-repayable financial aid, in the form of government-provided scholarships or grants, is mainly focused on occupational training offered in the community colleges.⁶²

Over the past decade, limited financial support for training has been provided through New Brunswick's Training and Skills Development program.⁶³ Aimed at getting the unemployed and maternity and parental leave-takers back into the labour force, the program offers up to two years of aid to cover tuition fees and help with living costs. But Employment Insurance based eligibility criteria are restrictive and program choice must be approved by a provincial employment counsellor who assesses the likelihood of obtaining stable employment.⁶⁴ Most grant recipients are in community college or other training programs, but a small number have used the funding to complete their university studies. In 2005/06, women made up 53% of the almost 6,500 clients

⁵⁸ Statistics cited include on reserve and off reserve population. Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Employment Income Groups in Constant Collars, Sex and Aboriginal Groups for Population 15 Years and Over, for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1995 and 2000 – 20% Sample Data, <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=57103&GID=355317&METH=1&APATH=3&PTYPE=55496&THEME=53&AID=0&FREE=0&FOCUS=0&VID=0&GC=0&GK=0&SC=1&SR=1&RL=0&CPP=99&RPP=9999&D1=0&D2=0&D3=0&D4=0&D5=0&D6=0&d1=2&d2=4>, accessed May 31, 2007.

⁵⁹ Amounts cited are in current dollars. Statistics Canada, "University tuition fees 2006/2007", *The Daily*, September 1, 2006, Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/060901/d060901a.htm>

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Student Financial Services Branch (2007), *New Brunswick Student Financial Assistance Program, Statistical Profile 2005-2006*, p. 15.

⁶² In 2006/07, the N.B. government introduced a one-time benefit of \$2,000 for first year, full-time university students who are N.B. residents. See http://www.gnb.ca/0162/grants/grant_for_students-e.asp

⁶³ Formerly known as the Skills, Loans and Grants program. See Joan McFarland (1999), *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*. Available at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>, p. 10-11.

⁶⁴ See N.B. government web site at <http://www.gnb.ca/0311/2be.htm>

receiving funding for training under the program. The average grant for female students in 2005/06 was higher than for males (\$6,484.07 for women versus \$5,284.59 for men).⁶⁵

Before the transfer of responsibility for labour market training from the federal government to the provinces in 1996 and changes to the Unemployment Insurance program, more public funding was available for sponsored training programs and women were targeted as an equity group facing labour market disadvantage.⁶⁶ According to economist Joan McFarland, federal spending cuts on training programs and seat purchases largely account for the declining female clientele in the New Brunswick Community College over the past decade. From the 1970s through to the mid-1990s, most female trainees in New Brunswick's community colleges benefited from some form of aid to cover tuition and living costs for occupational training and academic upgrading. Almost 80% of female community college students in 1985/86 and 57% in 1996/97 were receiving financial support from government or industry, a proportion that fell to less than 30% by the end of the 1990s.⁶⁷

Too few employers in Canada provide workplace-based training or sponsor trainees in public or private institutions. Training support is concentrated on the higher skilled workforce, younger employees and those working for large firms.⁶⁸ A Statistics Canada survey showed that only 26% of all adult workers aged 25 and over in New Brunswick participated in employer-supported training in 2002.⁶⁹ Some research also suggests that men are more likely than women to receive employer-supported training.⁷⁰ A growing body of national and international research links Canada's lagging economic growth to employer underinvestment in training and skills development.⁷¹

Several small-scale government initiatives in our province have been recently introduced to encourage women's participation in non-traditional training programs. New scholarships covering the first year's tuition for students in non-traditional programs at the Community College were awarded for 2006/07 under New Brunswick's Wage Gap Action Plan.⁷² Launched in November 2006, Partners Building Futures is a federal-provincial pilot project that will provide two years

⁶⁵ Data provided by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. In 2005/06, 3,403 women and 3,065 men were receiving funding; of this number 170 women and 102 men were in university programs.

⁶⁶ Ursule Critoph (2003), "Who Wins, Who Loses: The Real Story of the Transfer of Training to the Provinces and its Impact on Women," in Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed. *Training the Excluded for Work: Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, p. 14-33; see also Karen Lior and Susan Wismer, "Still Shopping for Training: Women, Training and Livelihoods," in *Ibid.*, p. 214-229.

⁶⁷ Joan McFarland (1999), *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*. Available at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>, p. 14-15, Table A6, Annex.

⁶⁸ Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker (June 2006), *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System*, Canadian Policy Research Network, Executive summary available at <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1479&l=en>; Mark Goldenberg (September 2006), *Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada*, Canadian Policy Research Network for the Canadian Congress on Learning, available at <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1529&l=en>

⁶⁹ Valerie Peters (April 2004), *Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=81-595-M2004015>

⁷⁰ Canadian Council on Learning (April 2007), *Connecting the Dots...Linking Training Investment to Business Outcomes and the Economy*, p. 20, Available at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Home/index.htm?Language=EN>

⁷¹ See CCL, *Connecting the Dots*; See also Joseph Berger, Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin (2007), *The Price of Knowledge 2006-07*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/Price.asp>

⁷² See Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour web site at http://www.ceibathurst.com/icdm/BasicPage_E.aspx?CPagId=266

support to some sixty women on social assistance who prepare for non-traditional skilled trades, part of the effort to move people from welfare to work.⁷³

But for many potential students, including lone parent women on social assistance, undertaking post-secondary studies would require taking on a repayable loan provided under the financial aid program administered by the provincial Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

Student indebtedness has reached crisis proportions in our province and across Canada. In 2006, 66% of Atlantic Canadian university undergraduates owed an average of \$29,747, the highest average debt in the country.⁷⁴ New Brunswick students are more likely than other Canadian students to borrow to finance their post-secondary studies, they borrow higher amounts and take longer to repay their debt. Some 52% of New Brunswick university graduates had student loan debt in 2000, the second-highest rate in the country and well above the national average of 42%. Fully 25% of New Brunswick university graduates had student loan debt in excess of \$25,000, compared to 13% at the national level.⁷⁵ As for New Brunswick college graduates, 51% had student loan debt in 2000, above the national average of 38%, and about 5% had student loan debt in excess of \$25,000, about the same as at the national level.⁷⁶ Two years after graduation in 2000, both college and university graduates at the national level had paid off 27% of their student loan debt, compared to 20% and 16% respectively for New Brunswick graduates.⁷⁷

Women made up 63% of all student aid applicants in New Brunswick in 2005/06, but we know little about their specific borrowing and debt situation because most student loan data is not available by gender.⁷⁸ Some 7% of all post-secondary students in New Brunswick who received student loans in 2005/06 were single parents – mostly women with dependent children.⁷⁹

Statistics from the New Brunswick Student Financial Assistance Program highlight troubling trends for the student population as a whole. The average student loan debt at graduation for our province's university, community college and private institution students in full-time studies has more than doubled since the early 1990s, rising from \$9,947 in 1993/94 to \$21,240 in 2005/06.⁸⁰ University students finishing Bachelor's degrees owed on average \$32,132 in 2005/06, compared to \$12,675 for students completing the shorter duration Community College programs.⁸¹

Gender-specific evidence on student borrowing and debt provided by some regional and national surveys points to disadvantages experienced by women. Women generally had more difficulty

⁷³ For more on the Partners Building Futures Projects, see <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2007e0449pe.htm>. A new pilot program in Nova Scotia called Career Seek allows income assistance recipients to attend a university or other postsecondary program of more than two years and still receive benefits. See Income Assistance for Post-Secondary Education at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/whatsnew.html>

⁷⁴ Sean Junor and Alex Usher (2004), *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*, Montreal, p. 3, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/Price.asp>.

⁷⁵ Sean Junor and Alex Usher (2004), "The Price of Knowledge 2004: New Brunswick", Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/poknb.asp>

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (2007), Student Financial Services Branch, N.B. Student Financial Assistance program, *Statistical Profile, 2005/06*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Student Financial Services Branch, N.B. Student Financial Assistance program, *Statistical Profile, 2005/06*, p. 9, 14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

repaying student loans than their male counterparts, because they borrowed more than men and earned less.⁸²

Many of the briefs submitted to this Commission and to other inquiries across Canada address the problem of student debt and the ever-increasing costs of pursuing post-secondary studies. Not surprisingly, student associations offer some of the most detailed reform proposals. These include introduction of an annual debt ceiling, reduction of student loan interest rates and introduction of loan remission for high need students post-graduation, more accurate assessment of student living costs for financial assistance purposes, expansion of needs-based bursaries for low-income students, and lowering of tuition fees to below the current national average.⁸³

We agree with that the focus should be on reducing the upfront and out-of-pocket cost for students, rather than on increasing the student's borrowing capacity and extending the debt repayment period. The Canadian Association of University Teachers calls for a "new architecture of student financial assistance that focuses on reducing costs and debt and encouraging under-represented groups, like aboriginals, to pursue post-secondary education."⁸⁴ A tuition fee freeze and reduction, along with higher upfront, needs-based grants for low-income students feature prominently in the CAUT submission which like many others insists on the importance of increased public investment in post-secondary education and alleviating the burden on the individual student.

2.2. Family responsibilities

Just as family responsibilities continue to shape the labour force participation of women, so too do they affect women's pursuit of higher education and training.

Women still shoulder the lion's share of caring responsibilities and unpaid household tasks - bearing and caring for children, elder care, care for the chronically ill or disabled and housework - without adequate access to essential support services.⁸⁵

Without a family policy, New Brunswick is not doing enough to help families reconcile the demands of education, paid work, and family life. Back in 1970, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women called for postsecondary educational institutions to develop

⁸² Warren Clark analyzes the results of a survey of 1995 Canadian graduates of bachelor's programs conducted by Statistics Canada in 1997 in the article "Paying Off Student Loans", *Canadian Social Trends*, (Winter 1998), Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=11-008-X19980034002>. Analysis of data from the National Graduates Survey of the class of 1990 supported similar conclusions. See Saul Schwartz and Ross Finnie (October 2002), "Student Loans in Canada: an analysis of borrowing and repayment," *Economics of Education Review*, vol. 21, issue 5, p. 497-512. See also the recent survey by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (June 2007), *Two Years On: A Survey of Class of 2003 Maritime University Graduates*. Fredericton, MPHEC. Available at http://www.mphec.ca/english/pol_b.html

⁸³ See for example, Fédération des étudiants et étudiantes du Centre universitaire de Moncton (April 2007), *Pour une accessibilité réelle: Recommandations auprès de la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick*; The New Brunswick Student Alliance (April 2007), *Moving Education Forward: Making Post-Secondary Education a New Brunswick Priority*, both available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>.

⁸⁴ CAUT also affirms that New Brunswick government's Tuition Tax Back Credit Program, aimed at encouraging the educated to remain in the province, will do little to encourage access to post-secondary education. Canadian Association of University Teachers (April 2007), *Submission to the New Brunswick Commission on Post-Secondary Education*, p. 4, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>. See also Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations, *What would the ideal post-secondary system for New Brunswick look like?* available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

⁸⁵ See for example the results of a 2005 Statistics Canada time-use survey, summarized in *The Daily*, July 19, 2006 at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/060719/d060719b.htm>

programs to meet the special needs for continuing education of women with family responsibilities.⁸⁶ But educational authorities and institutions have been slow to recognize the distinct needs of students with dependents.⁸⁷

The mature female student has become increasingly common on university campuses and in community colleges in the province over the past three decades. Because she must often juggle the multiple roles and responsibilities of breadwinner, mother, and partner, she is more likely to be a part-time student. Some 7% of all post-secondary students in New Brunswick who received student loans in 2005/06 were single parents – mostly women with dependent children.⁸⁸

Students with dependents, particularly women, face particular challenges in pursuing post-secondary education, related to finding time for family and study, and accessing support services.⁸⁹

For lone mothers, the balancing act is particularly challenging. Interviewed for a New Brunswick study in 2000, eighteen lone parent mothers aged 18 to 35 from the Acadian peninsula pointed to many obstacles they faced in undertaking and completing their community college or university programs: in addition to adequate financial aid, these women noted the lack of access to quality, reliable, flexible childcare, lack of affordable, appropriate housing, transportation problems, need for on-campus support groups, and lack of information about available programs and resources.⁹⁰

The scarcity of affordable, quality child care services is indeed a critical problem for most women who are in the paid labour force or pursuing studies, since there are presently licensed regulated spaces for less than 15% of children aged 12 and under in New Brunswick. For women whose course and study requirements spill over into the evenings and weekends, finding flexible child care may be next to impossible.⁹¹

A child's illness or the care needs of an aging parent often present particular challenges to female students and may lead to program interruptions or even dropping out, especially in the longer duration programs.⁹²

As for maternity and parental leave benefits, only employees who pay into Employment Insurance and can live on 55% of their earnings can take advantage of the federal program. Self-employed

⁸⁶ Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (1970), *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, Ottawa, Information Canada, p. 406.

⁸⁷ Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (April 2005), *Students with Dependents: Common Practices in Post-Secondary Education Institutions in Canada and the United States*, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

⁸⁸ N.B. Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (2007), Student Financial Services Branch, N.B. Student Financial Assistance program, *Statistical Profile, 2005/06*, p. 10.

⁸⁹ See Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (February 2005), *Embracing Differences: Post-Secondary Education among Aboriginal Students, Students with Children and Students with Disabilities* <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

⁹⁰ Irène Savoie for the Réseau des femmes francophones du N.-B. (October 2000), *Les obstacles rencontrés chez les étudiantes monoparentales de la péninsule Acadienne, âgées entre 18 et 35 ans, lors d'un retour aux études postsecondaires*.

⁹¹ Ibid; see also on this problem that is particularly severe for lone parents, Conseil des directeurs et directrices du Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (May 2007), *Mémoire présenté à la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick*, p. 6, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

⁹² Some research on female students in Ph.D. programs shows that women are more likely than men to see their graduate training plans or amount of time devoted to graduate work curtailed by family-related issues such as the death of a parent or the birth of a child or child rearing responsibilities in general, thereby resulting in expansion of overall time needed for degree completion or in some cases, withdrawal from the program. See Sandra W. Pyke (1997), Education and the "Woman question". [Education and the "Woman Question"] [Electronic version]. *Canadian Psychology*, 38(3), 154-163, retrieved April 12, 2007, from <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>.

women are not eligible for the program and the accumulated hours requirements exclude many low-income women and vulnerable workers.⁹³

2.3. Chilly learning environments

Female students in post-secondary educational institutions also face problems arising from systemic discrimination within the learning environments and inadequate support mechanisms.

Navigating community college classrooms and on-site training may be difficult for the female trainee. New Brunswick women who participated in focus groups for an Advisory Council study on women and training in the early 1990s reported a host of problems before, during, and after their training. These included difficulties accessing information about course offerings, lack of support, inadequate employment counselling, and gender and sexual harassment during training and work placements.⁹⁴ More recent studies on women and training suggest that these problems persist.⁹⁵

University campuses also present challenges to the female learner. Surveys conducted among male and female university students in Canada and the U.S. reveal significant gender differences in reported experiences of academic life, with women reporting disadvantage on a range of aspects linked to the structures and operation of educational institutions.⁹⁶

The so-called “chilly climate” for women in academia is displayed in expressions of sexist humour and stereotypical views of women, the use of sexist language, more attention given to male students by professors and graduate supervisors, from calling on them more frequently in class to inviting their participation on papers or articles, the paucity of women faculty as role models and mentors and the problem of sexual harassment by fellow students and faculty.⁹⁷

Sexual harassment remains a persistent and painful reality of campus life. A survey conducted at the Moncton campus of the Université de Moncton in 1999 found that 70% of female students and 55% of female employees reported experiencing at least one incident of sexist behaviour, sexual harassment, or sexual aggression.⁹⁸ The first official policies to address the problem only date back to the mid-1980s, and in most New Brunswick universities are little more than a decade old. Indeed, the term sexual harassment, so common today, did not even exist until the mid-1970s, when it was coined to describe the unwanted imposition of sexual demands in the context of a relationship of unequal power.

For women who are members of disadvantaged communities, getting a post-secondary education means grappling with additional obstacles and exacerbated challenges.

⁹³ Women's Network PEI (Fall 2003), *Looking Beyond the Surface: An In-Depth Review of Parental Benefits*, Final Report; also Provincial Focus Groups, New Brunswick Report, Fall 2003, available at <http://www.wnpei.org/parentalbenefits/research.html>

⁹⁴ NB ACSW (December 1994), *Training for Results: A Study of Women and Employment Training in New Brunswick*, p. 23-26, Moncton, NB ACSW.

⁹⁵ Joan McFarland (2003), «Public Policy and Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick» in Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed. *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 195-196.

⁹⁶ Sandra W. Pyke (1997), Education and the “Woman question”. [Education and the “Woman Question”] [Electronic version]. *Canadian Psychology*, 38(3), 154-163, retrieved April 12, 2007, from <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Monique Gauvin, Katherine Marcoccio and Alice Guérette-Breau, *Le harcèlement sexiste, le harcèlement sexuel et l'agression sexuelle à l'Université de Moncton : rapport de sondage mené auprès des étudiantes et des employées au Centre universitaire de Moncton*, Moncton : Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sur le harcèlement sexuel et sexiste en milieu d'enseignement francophone, February 1999.

Students or potential students with disabilities encounter physical access problems but also face problems as a result of discrimination and negative stereotypes, as the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons reminds us in its brief to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education. As a result "current enrolments do not adequately reflect the potential numbers from individuals with disabilities" who could benefit from post-secondary education.⁹⁹

The challenges faced by Aboriginal students or potential students are "complex and multi-faceted" – from lack of role models to racism in campus environments - rooted in the specific historical, cultural, demographic, geographic and social situation of these individuals.¹⁰⁰ For Aboriginal women, such problems are interlinked with other issues from violence to health and employment concerns.¹⁰¹

Policy and programs to address the barriers faced by these groups must be developed in partnership with community-based and advocacy organizations.

Women in non-traditional university programs such as engineering and those training for non-traditional trades in community colleges may experience particular difficulties since they are still largely outnumbered by male students and have few female role models among faculty. Female professors, like female students, tend to be concentrated mostly in education, the humanities, and social sciences. In 2004/05, only 8% of full-time professors in Engineering and Applied Sciences and 10% of full-time professors in Mathematics and Physical Sciences in New Brunswick universities were female.¹⁰² Similarly, women make up less than 10% of instructors in the trades, technology and natural resource development courses at the New Brunswick Community College.¹⁰³

If the gender imbalance in the non-traditional fields of higher education and training is to be corrected, it is essential to provide support to female students. Efforts have been made to recruit female students in the non-traditional programs through special scholarships, guidance programs in secondary schools, and the creation of women's chairs in fields such as engineering. However, these initiatives may be undermined by an atmosphere that is often hostile to women in male dominated programs and faculties.

Ensuring that women have mentors and access to other forms of ongoing support while learning and training is a key part of improving the post-secondary picture for women. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. The later 1970s and 1980s saw some women-centered initiatives including supportive pre-training "bridging" programs established in some provinces.¹⁰⁴ These women-centered programs recognized the particular training needs of women at a time when government-funding initiatives attempted to mitigate women's labour market disadvantage.¹⁰⁵

Women need support to deal with the discrimination and life issues they face during post-secondary studies, but they also need extra supports in preparing for, gaining access to and

⁹⁹ Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (March 2007), *Improving Access to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities*, p. 8, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

¹⁰⁰ Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007), *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

¹⁰¹ See NB ACSW (April 2006), *Equality for First Nations Women*, Fredericton: NB ACSW.

¹⁰² Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission database.

¹⁰³ Women as a percentage of all term and regular instructors, as of fall 2005. Based on data provided by N.B. Department of Training and Employment Development, Human Resources Services.

¹⁰⁴ NB ACSW (December 1994), *Training for Results: A Study of Women and Employment Training in New Brunswick*, p.28-33, Moncton, NB ACSW; See also McFarland (2003), p. 195-196.

¹⁰⁵ Ursule Cristoph (2003), "Who Wins, Who Loses: The Real Story of the Transfer of Training to the Provinces and its Impact on Women," in Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed, *Training the Excluded for Work: Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 16.

staying in non-traditional workplaces. As the author of a recent study on women's training evolution in Canada affirmed, "programs that ignore the interrelationship of these needs may bring about short-term results but do little to address the systemic disadvantages of women in the labour market."¹⁰⁶

Women seeking to enter or stay in non-traditional occupations still face prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, experiencing sexual and general harassment, and lack of support from co-workers, management and employers.

As a recent report by Canada's Construction Sector Council noted, one of the problems that has impeded the success of training programs aimed at women are "workplaces that are not as welcoming, receptive and accommodating as they need to be."¹⁰⁷ Significant change will only come when industries and employers are sensitized to the importance of a workplace culture that supports women.¹⁰⁸ There exist some valuable how-to guides for employers on recruitment, integration and retention of women in non-traditional workplaces, some produced by the now defunct national association Women in Trades and Technology (WITT).¹⁰⁹

2.4. Unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women

The post-secondary experience of Aboriginal women is shaped by realities that are often vastly different than for other women. While they are better represented in higher education than their male counterparts, Aboriginal women like Aboriginal men remain less likely than non-Aboriginal individuals to enter university or college and have a much higher drop-out rate. Aboriginal students who do finish high school are almost twice as likely as other Canadian students to either drop out of college or university studies or skip post-secondary education altogether, according to a recent survey of high school graduates in New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, two years after graduation.¹¹⁰

While 44% of Aboriginal identity women aged 15 years and over had some post-secondary education according to the 2001 census – university, trades or other training, only 27% had completed a degree or certificate, and another 17% were without a diploma.

By contrast, the 54% of non-Aboriginal women who had some post-secondary studies included 38% who had a degree or certificate and 16% without.

The dropout problem is particularly severe at the university level. Of the Aboriginal women in Canada who had studied at university, the percentage without a degree (9%) is greater than the

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Future Labour Supplies for Canada's Construction Industry*, p. 25-26. Available on the CSCC website at http://www.csc-ca.org/english/whatwedo_1.html#profile.

¹⁰⁸ See Denise McLean (2003), *Workplaces that Work: Creating a Workplace Culture that Attracts, Retains and Promotes Women*, prepared for the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, available at <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/about/fpt.htm>

¹⁰⁹ See for example WITT National Network (1995), *Welcoming Women into Trades, Technology, Operations and Blue-Collar Work: A Checklist of Strategies*, London, Ontario. A driving force in advocacy and promotion of women's training in the 1980s and 1990s, WITT had by 2003 lost its federal funding and closed its doors. Provincial WITT chapters are still active in a few provinces including Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

¹¹⁰ See R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (June 2007), *The Class of 2003 : High School Follow-Up Survey*. Montreal: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 34-35, available at www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/070614_class_of_03_en.pdf ; Census data on highest level of schooling attained also points to very high non-completion rates. See Jeremy Hull (June 2005), *Post-Secondary Education and Labour Market Outcomes, 2001*, Ottawa, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada., available at http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/ra/pse/01/index_e.html

percentage with a degree (5%). Of non-Aboriginal women who had studied at university, 10% were without a degree versus 15% who had a degree.¹¹¹

For Aboriginal women, the struggle for equality “cannot be separated from the twin legacies of colonialism and racism, which continue to marginalize Aboriginal peoples and devalue their cultures and traditions.”¹¹² Aboriginal women are also confronted with discrimination on the basis of sex in their own communities.

This profound systemic discrimination compounds a multitude of severe and inextricably linked socio-economic disadvantages. These include grinding poverty and related health problems, lack of access to adequate housing, high incidence of violence and abuse, low education and employment levels, and limited access to political power and resources in their households, communities and beyond.¹¹³

Studies have shown that Aboriginal women increasingly see education as a way for them and their daughters to escape poverty on the one hand, and the risk or reality of partner abuse on the other.¹¹⁴ The Native Women’s Association of Canada recently observed that “Aboriginal women sometimes engage in educational activities because women are not tolerating violence in our communities and are leaving for the city. One of the few ways they can access band support to leave violent circumstances is through accessing educational funding.”¹¹⁵

While more Aboriginal women want to pursue a post-secondary education to improve their lives, they must overcome a formidable array of hurdles to entry and completion of studies.

Financial hardship remains a significant obstacle for many students and aspiring students, despite the federal government funding allocated to aid Status Indian students attending post-secondary institutions throughout Canada. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program has long been capped. The limited resources mean that not all would-be students can access the grants administered on a discretionary basis by First Nations band or tribal councils, and that the grants do not adequately cover rapidly rising tuition, living and travel costs.¹¹⁶ The off-reserve population is particularly disadvantaged.¹¹⁷ Aboriginal students are less likely than other students to have financial support from their families, so some must rely on student loans and employment income.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ See Jeremy Hull (February 2006), *Aboriginal Women A Profile from the 2001 Census*, Prepared for Women’s Issues and Gender Equality Directorate Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Table 4-1, based on INAC’s custom 2001 Census tabulations, available at http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/abw/t4-1_e.html

¹¹² Aboriginal Women’s Roundtable on Gender Equality, “Equality for Aboriginal Women,” held March 30 – April 1, 2000 (report last updated July 29, 2003), Ottawa, Status of Women Canada, available at www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/abwomenroundtable/section3_e.html

¹¹³ Native Women’s Association of Canada (2005), *Companion Document First Ministers’ Meeting, Kelowna, B.C., November 24-25, 2005*, p. 8 at <http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/reports.html>; New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women (April 2006), *Equality for First Nations Women*, Fredericton, NB ACSW.

¹¹⁴ Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory D. Kipling (March 1998), *Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic Research Directions for Policy Development*, Ottawa, Status of Women Canada, p. 23 at http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/pubspr/0662634314/index_e.html

¹¹⁵ NWAC (2005), p. 7.

¹¹⁶ First Nation band or tribal councils set the funding priorities, maintain student files and screen applications for eligibility. Guidelines may vary in each organization. Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007), *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>; see also R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 19-22, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹¹⁷ The N.B. Aboriginal People’s Council, serving the off-reserve population, does not receive PSSSP funding, but offers limited financial assistance for post-secondary education through provincially funded scholarships and through training initiatives funded under the federal Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy. See Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007),

The Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations have called for increased public investment in post-secondary education and removal of funding caps to match rapid population growth and escalating costs.¹¹⁹

The research also insists on the importance of addressing the particular historical, social, educational and geographic barriers that limit Aboriginal peoples' post-secondary participation.

High secondary school dropout rates and inadequate preparation during the kindergarten to Grade 12 years drastically reduce the potential pool of post-secondary students in Aboriginal communities.¹²⁰ The situation is all the more dramatic in light of the rapidly increasing Aboriginal youth population. Nearly one-third (29%) of New Brunswick's Aboriginal identity population is under the age of 14, compared to 18% for the non-Aboriginal population.¹²¹ The Aboriginal youth population is growing much faster than the youth share of the general population, thanks to a birth rate that is about 1.5 times the overall Canadian rate.¹²²

A 2001 survey of the off-reserve Aboriginal population in Canada showed that Aboriginal women have different reasons than Aboriginal men for dropping out of high school. The number one factor prompting female off-reserve youth to leave school was pregnancy or to look after children (25%), while 15% said they were bored. By contrast, nearly one in four (24%) off-reserve Aboriginal male youth aged 15 to 19 said they left high school because they were bored, while 19% wanted to work.¹²³

Aboriginal individuals who go on to university or community college are more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have to leave their home community, incurring expenses and distancing themselves from family and social supports.¹²⁴

The legacy of the residential school system and assimilationist policies also means that many Aboriginal students have a deep mistrust of education systems. Moreover, they often shoulder a heavy burden of community and family expectations, are unable to turn to role models with post-secondary education experience and lack self-confidence and motivation.¹²⁵

Aboriginal students on university and college campuses struggle to make their way in an environment where they are socially isolated and dealing with systems, programs and services that are not culturally sensitive. Many do not feel welcome in institutions where they find few

Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>, and the web site of the NBAPC at <http://education.nbapc.org/pages.asp?pid=149&deptid=4&lid=0>

¹¹⁸ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (June 2007), *The Class of 2003 : High School Follow-Up Survey*.

Montreal: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 35-36, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/newsevents/newsfull.asp?newsid=125>

¹¹⁹ NWAC (2005), p. 7; Assembly of First Nations (May 2005), *First Nations Education Action Plan*, p. 6, available at <http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=109><http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=109>

¹²⁰ Michael Mendelson (July 2006), *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Ottawa, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, p. 30- 35, available at <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications>

¹²¹ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Catalogue number 97F0011XCB01001

¹²² Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, June 28, 2005 at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050628/d050628d.htm>

¹²³ Statistics Canada, *2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey – Initial Findings. Well-Being of the non-reserve Aboriginal Population*, at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-589-XIE/school.htm>

¹²⁴ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 14, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹²⁵ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 11-17, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

Aboriginal people among faculty and support staff.¹²⁶ Aboriginal women commonly experience racism and sexism in educational settings.¹²⁷

Family responsibilities also loom large for many Aboriginal women pursuing higher education. Aboriginal university and college students tend to be older than the typical student and are more likely to have children. Many of them are lone parent mothers.¹²⁸ Supporting and caring for dependants is a significant barrier to access and completion of post-secondary studies.¹²⁹

According to a 2001 survey of off-reserve Aboriginal peoples in Canada, 34% of Aboriginal women aged 25 to 44 who had started but not completed a post-secondary program reported family responsibilities as their reason for dropping out, while 21% cited financial reasons, 12% lost interest/motivation and 8% got a job or had to work. About one in four (24%) of their male counterparts cited financial reasons as the number one factor, while only 11% reported family responsibilities as their reason for not finishing post-secondary studies.¹³⁰

It is widely acknowledged that more than increased funding is required to promote Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education. A recent study that drew on interviews with educators and on-site visits to educational institutions, affirms, "institutions must develop a greater understanding of Aboriginal people, and the historic and social barriers they face, before a real difference will be seen in the number of Aboriginal people who succeed in pursuing higher education."¹³¹

Much research emphasizes the importance of increasing Aboriginal control and participation in the development of curriculum, programs and services and the crucial role of community-based delivery. We may learn from some initiatives in the Western provinces. Favoured initiatives include targeted access programs to ease the transition and provide guidance to Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal-specific personal and academic support services.¹³² Mentors and role models, individual counselling and academic advising, housing, childcare and transportation assistance and culturally appropriate post-secondary information are identified as essential supports. Many studies also emphasize the importance of improving data collection and tracking of enrolment and completion rates, currently woefully inadequate for policy-making.¹³³

¹²⁶ Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (September 2005), *Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, Millennium Research Note #2, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/OthePublications.asp>

¹²⁷ Stout and Kipling, p. 23.

¹²⁸ David Holmes (February 2005), *Embracing Differences: Post-Secondary Education among Aboriginal Students, Students with Children and Students with Disabilities*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹²⁹ See for example, Malatest & Associates Ltd. (June 2007), p. 50-51.

¹³⁰ Statistics Canada, *2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey – Initial Findings. Well-Being of the non-reserve Aboriginal Population*, at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-589-XIE/school.htm>

¹³¹ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (January 2004), *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education, What Educators Have Learned*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, p. 41, available at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹³² For more than 20 years now, the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute has offered various programs and services to First Nations students at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, in an effort to ease the transition to university study as well as to encourage research and publication in Aboriginal languages, culture, education and history. Institute web site at <http://www.unbf.ca/education/mmi/>

¹³³ See for example *Ibid.*, p. 41-42; Malatest, R.A. & Associates Ltd. (May 2002), *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*. Report Prepared for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Available at <http://www.cmec.ca/postsec/publications.en.stm>; see also Government of New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (April 2007), *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, available at <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Persistent gender inequality in income and employment, family responsibilities, experience of violence and harassment and under-representation in positions of power influences women's post-secondary educational participation in New Brunswick. Students or potential students who are otherwise disadvantaged, including low-income lone mothers, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities, are particularly affected. Downplaying or ignoring these realities is not an option in reform of post-secondary education. Improving the level of equality among groups is a social and economic necessity and should be one measure of the success of any public policy initiative.

It is therefore disappointing to note the failure to address gender equality concerns in the current inquiry's terms of reference and discussion paper. The lack of sex-disaggregated data in the Commission's online research section obscures the gender-specific participation patterns and sidesteps the issue of gender-specific measures. Women appear to have largely fallen off the government radar in higher education and training policy in recent years. We hope that recent initiatives such as the Wage Gap Action Plan Scholarships may be the first steps in the rediscovery of a more proactive and women-centered approach.¹³⁴

Women are not on an equal footing with men in the post-secondary system. Systemic barriers within educational institutions and in the larger society continue to shape education and training patterns. The gender gap in post-secondary education carries heavy costs for individuals and for society. It contributes to lower earnings and pension incomes for women, an inefficient use of human resources, an escalating skills shortage and reduced overall productivity.

Women are chronically under-represented in certain trades, science and technology programs that offer better employment prospects, are more likely than men to study part-time and are the ones to feel the impact of the absence of family-friendly policies. The mature student has become more common on university campuses and in community colleges in the province over the past decades. For parents, especially lone parents, the balancing act is challenging. The scarcity of affordable, flexible child care services is a critical problem for student parents. Canada's maternity and parental leave benefits program is only for employees who pay into Employment Insurance and can live on 55% of their earnings. Without a family policy, New Brunswick is not doing enough to help families reconcile the demands of education, paid work, and family life.

It is time to implement a comprehensive post-secondary education strategy that would include women-centered initiatives for training, integration and retention in male-dominated occupations. Women-specific initiatives are essential, because women must overcome specific barriers, such as harassment and discrimination in the classroom and on the job site – let alone the standard barriers most women face, such as a heavier share of family responsibilities and limited access to affordable, quality care services.

For years, women's organizations in Canada have called for "a seamless system of training and adjustment services (with numerous access points and with services not tied to any income support program) as the kind of system that will best meet women's diverse training and adjustment requirements."¹³⁵ An integrated approach is also needed for university education and the entire post-secondary sector.

¹³⁴ Note that the 2005 Newfoundland and Labrador White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education was one of the rare recent government inquiries that called on institutions to improve women's situation in colleges and universities.

¹³⁵ Karen Lior and Susan Wismer (2003), "Still Shopping for Training: Women, Training and Livelihoods." In Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Ed. *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 219. See also Susan Wismer (1988), *Women's Education and Training: A Policy Analysis*, Toronto, CLOW.

The Advisory Council therefore recommends:

□ That the provincial education, labour and social program authorities, in collaboration with their federal counterparts and in consultation and partnership with Aboriginal women's organizations and community groups, undertake a needs assessment and develop an action plan that includes the appropriate policies and programs to promote the full and equitable participation of Aboriginal women in post-secondary education. A system of sex-disaggregated data collection must also be developed and implemented for the purposes of tracking enrolment and completion rates and monitoring program results for Aboriginal learners.

□ That the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour ensure that comparable statistical information on student aid, enrolments, attrition and completion rates of women and men, and diverse groups of women and men (Aboriginal, other-abled, lone parents) in New Brunswick's community colleges and universities is collected, made available to the public and used in policy-making.

□ That the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour in collaboration with educational institutions and community groups, identify the needs and concerns of women and diverse groups of women with regards to post-secondary education access and participation.

□ That the provincial education, labour and social program authorities develop and implement a coordinated strategy to achieve the full and equitable participation of women in post-secondary education. The framework would include, but not be limited to, the following:

□ Effective recruitment initiatives to encourage and support the participation of women in engineering and applied sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, technology and skilled trades. Special outreach efforts must focus on chronically under-represented groups, such as Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.

□ Increased public investment in higher education and training, including literacy programs for adult learners, with funding tied to equity goals.

□ A revamped student financial aid system, with higher proportion of upfront, need-based non-repayable grants and scholarships based on actual education and living costs, along with tuition fee control measures.

□ Changes to the Employment Insurance program to extend eligibility for maternity and parental benefits to student mothers and parents, with leave provisions guaranteed by post-secondary institutions.

□ Creation of affordable licensed child care spaces in on-campus and off-campus centres that offer flexible scheduling to student parents.

□ Enhanced support services, including mentoring programs and peer support groups, for female students in colleges, universities and apprenticeship settings, particularly those in non-traditional fields of study and training. Services provided to Aboriginal students and students with disabilities developed and based on a collaborative service and support model which partners post-secondary institutions with other agencies and groups.

□ Preparation and dissemination of user-friendly information resources about learning options, existing programs and services.

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Les femmes et l'éducation postsecondaire

Mémoire présenté par le

**Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme
au Nouveau-Brunswick**

à la

**Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire
au Nouveau-Brunswick**

Juillet 2007

Publication du

Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick

Le Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme du Nouveau-Brunswick, créé par une loi provinciale, a été mandaté pour étudier les dossiers relatifs à la condition féminine, conseiller le gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick et porter à l'attention du public et du gouvernement les questions relatives aux femmes. Les 13 membres du Conseil consultatif, nommés par le gouvernement, se réunissent au moins quatre fois par an pour décider des mesures prioritaires concernant les questions féminines.

Juin 2007

This document is available in English. Ask for *Women and Post-Secondary Education*.

Table des matières

Sommaire.....	1
Introduction	3
1. Différences entre les sexes en matière de participation aux études postsecondaires	6
1.1. Augmenter le niveau de scolarité et élargir la clientèle postsecondaire	6
1.2. Inscriptions à temps partiel ainsi qu'aux programmes de 2e et 3e cycle	8
1.3. Ségrégation entre les hommes et les femmes selon le domaine d'études et la formation.....	9
2. Obstacles à l'éducation postsecondaire et à la formation des femmes	11
2.1. Obstacles financiers	11
2.2. Responsabilités familiales	17
2.3. Milieux d'apprentissage peu accueillants.....	19
2.4. Défis uniques posés aux femmes autochtones.....	21
3. Conclusion et recommandations.....	26
4. Bibliographie sommaire	29

Sommaire

Le Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick apprécie cette occasion de présenter son point de vue à la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick. Notre mémoire porte principalement sur les besoins et les préoccupations des femmes en rapport avec l'accessibilité de l'éducation postsecondaire.

Comme nous l'avons noté dans notre présentation au Groupe de travail du gouvernement provincial sur l'autosuffisance, le degré d'égalité entre les groupes au sein de la société doit être une mesure de la réussite de toute initiative d'intérêt public. On convient à l'échelle internationale que l'égalité entre les genres constitue un indicateur d'un développement viable axé sur les gens et une question de droits de la personne.

Malheureusement, les préoccupations concernant la diversité et l'égalité des sexes sont à peine mentionnées dans le document de réflexion de la Commission et très peu de données distinctes pour les femmes et les hommes sont présentées dans la section consacrée aux données de recherche sur son site Internet. Des données ventilées selon le sexe sont essentielles pour l'élaboration de politiques et de programmes tenant compte des différences importantes entre la situation et les expériences de la vie des femmes et des hommes. Une analyse systématique selon les sexes est un outil permettant de découvrir les résultats possibles pour les femmes et les hommes dans toute leur diversité et pour veiller à ce que ces groupes bénéficient également des mesures mises en place.

Les femmes ont réalisé des gains importants au cours des dernières décennies, mais elles sont toujours moins bien rémunérées que les hommes, elles portent un fardeau plus lourd de responsabilités familiales et elles sont plus susceptibles de vivre dans la pauvreté, d'être victimes d'agression sexuelle et de subir de la violence de la part de leurs partenaires. Elles demeurent aussi gravement sous représentées au sein des postes décisionnels et sont victimes de discrimination dans maints aspects de leur vie quotidienne. Les inégalités sont particulièrement graves dans le cas de groupes tels que les femmes autochtones ou handicapées, qui sont touchés sur divers plans.

Les femmes ont été toujours plus nombreuses à poursuivre des études postsecondaires et une formation au cours des trente dernières années et elles représentent maintenant la majorité de la population étudiante dans les universités. Elles forment aussi plus de la moitié de la clientèle des collèges communautaires au Canada, mais seulement 40 % de l'effectif étudiant du réseau des collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Pourtant, les femmes ne sont pas sur un pied d'égalité avec les hommes dans le système postsecondaire. Les obstacles systémiques dans les établissements d'enseignement et dans la société en général continuent de façonner des tendances fondées sur le sexe en matière d'éducation et de formation. Les femmes sont plus susceptibles que les hommes d'étudier à temps partiel et elles sont fortement sous représentées dans certains programmes de formation dans les métiers et les secteurs des sciences et de la technologie, qui offrent de meilleures perspectives d'emploi.

Le fossé entre les genres observé dans le secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire entraîne des coûts élevés sur le plan individuel et pour l'ensemble de la société. Il contribue à une rémunération et à des revenus de pension moins élevés pour les femmes, à une utilisation inefficace des ressources humaines, à l'intensification de la pénurie de main-d'œuvre qualifiée et à la réduction de la productivité en général.

Le Conseil consultatif recommande l'adoption d'un système amélioré de collecte des données ventilées selon le sexe et la diversité, portant sur l'aide financière, les inscriptions et les taux d'achèvement des études, ainsi que la réalisation d'une enquête sur les besoins et les

préoccupations des femmes et de divers groupes de femmes en ce qui a trait à l'accès et à la participation aux études postsecondaires. Nous demandons également aux autorités provinciales chargées de l'éducation, du travail et des programmes sociaux d'élaborer et de mettre en oeuvre une stratégie coordonnée en vue d'assurer la participation entière et égale des femmes à l'éducation postsecondaire.

Introduction

Le Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick apprécie cette occasion de présenter son point de vue à la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick.

Le mandat de la Commission est vaste et important : examen des questions de nature structurelle et financière, d'accessibilité et de qualité en rapport avec l'ensemble du secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire et de la formation dans notre province.¹ Cette étude porte sur les universités publiques, les universités privées (confessionnelles et à but lucratif), le réseau des CCNB/NBCC, la formation d'apprenti, les formateurs privés et les autres aspects de l'alphabetisation et de l'apprentissage continu. Une attention spéciale est accordée aux répercussions du fardeau financier accru que doivent porter les étudiants et à la pertinence des regroupements traditionnels en matière d'éducation, de formation et d'apprentissage. Le cadre de référence souligne la nécessité d'améliorer l'accès à l'éventail le plus étendu possible de programmes d'éducation et de formation pertinents, de grande qualité et concurrentiels, tout en favorisant les initiatives des établissements axées sur la collaboration et le partage des coûts.

Cette étude est réalisée selon un échéancier serré. Les commissaires Rick Miner et Jacques L'Écuyer ont publié un document de réflexion en mars 2007, ils ont consulté les intervenants du secteur de l'éducation et le public en avril et au début mai, et ils devraient faire rapport au gouvernement provincial au cours de l'été 2007. Trois femmes siègent à ce comité consultatif, qui compte huit membres. Ces derniers formuleront des commentaires dont on tiendra compte au moment de la rédaction du rapport sur l'orientation future du secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire et de la formation.²

Le degré d'égalité entre les groupes au sein de la société doit être une mesure de la réussite de toute initiative d'intérêt public, y compris le projet d'autosuffisance du gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick.³ On convient de plus en plus à l'échelle internationale que l'égalité entre les genres devrait préoccuper et mobiliser les hommes autant que les femmes, étant donné que c'est [traduction] « une condition préalable à un développement viable axé sur les gens et un indicateur d'un tel développement » et une question de droits de la personne.⁴

Nous soulignons notre consternation, vu que les préoccupations concernant la diversité et l'égalité des sexes sont à peine mentionnées dans le document de réflexion de la Commission.⁵ Une allusion à la sous représentation des Autochtones dans les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire de la province et la mention que l'absence des femmes parmi les apprentis représente une possibilité ratée sont les seuls indices des difficultés avec lesquelles doivent composer ces groupes.⁶

¹ La Commission a été mise en place à la fin de janvier 2007. « Commission du Nouveau-Brunswick sur l'éducation postsecondaire », le 19 janvier 2007. Communiqué sur Internet :

<http://www.qnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2007f0075pe.htm>; gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick, Cadre de référence, Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick, p. 2 et 3. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/contexte.html>.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/contexte.html>.

³ Consulter *L'autosuffisance et l'égalité*. Notes pour une présentation au Groupe de travail sur l'autosuffisance par le Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, mars 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.acswcccf.nb.ca/french/acsw1.asp>.

⁴ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson et Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2006*, Genève, Forum économique mondial, 2006, p. 4. Sur Internet : www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Gender%20Gap/index.htm.

⁵ Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick, *Document de réflexion*, mars 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/contexte.html>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

En outre, parmi la trentaine de diagrammes présentés sur le site de la Commission, dans la section consacrée aux données de recherche, un seul comporte des données distinctes pour les femmes et les hommes.⁷ Des données ventilées selon le sexe sont essentielles pour l'élaboration de politiques et de programmes tenant compte des différences importantes entre la situation et les expériences de la vie des femmes et des hommes. Une analyse systématique selon les sexes est un outil permettant de découvrir les résultats possibles pour les femmes et les hommes dans toute leur diversité et pour veiller à ce que ces groupes bénéficient également des mesures mises en place.⁸

Les femmes ont réalisé des gains importants au cours des dernières décennies, mais elles sont toujours moins bien rémunérées que les hommes, elles portent un fardeau plus lourd de responsabilités familiales et elles sont plus susceptibles de vivre dans la pauvreté, d'être victimes d'agression sexuelle et de subir de la violence de la part de leurs partenaires. Elles demeurent aussi gravement sous représentées au sein des postes décisionnels et sont victimes de discrimination dans maints aspects de leur vie quotidienne. Les inégalités sont particulièrement graves dans le cas de groupes tels que les femmes autochtones ou handicapées, qui sont touchés sur divers plans.⁹

En quête de sécurité économique et d'épanouissement personnel et poussées par les exigences croissantes du marché du travail, les femmes ont été toujours plus nombreuses à poursuivre des études postsecondaires et une formation au cours des trente dernières années. Tant au Nouveau-Brunswick qu'au Canada, elles représentent maintenant une part plus grande de l'effectif étudiant total des universités.¹⁰ Elles forment aussi plus de la moitié de la clientèle des collèges communautaires au Canada, mais seulement 40 % de l'effectif étudiant du réseau des collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick.¹¹

Pourtant, les femmes ne sont pas sur un pied d'égalité avec les hommes dans le système postsecondaire. Les obstacles systémiques dans les établissements d'enseignement et dans la société en général continuent de façonner des tendances fondées sur le sexe en matière d'éducation et de formation. Les femmes sont plus susceptibles que les hommes d'étudier à temps partiel et elles sont fortement sous représentées dans certains programmes de formation dans les métiers et les secteurs des sciences et de la technologie, qui offrent de meilleures perspectives d'emploi.¹²

Le fossé entre les genres observé dans le secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire entraîne des coûts élevés sur le plan individuel et pour l'ensemble de la société, contribuant à une rémunération et à des revenus de pension moins élevés pour les femmes, à une utilisation inefficace des ressources humaines, à l'intensification de la pénurie de main-d'œuvre qualifiée et

⁷ Le diagramme intitulé « Inscriptions des Premières nations en 2005-2006 » présente des données sur les étudiantes et les étudiants qui reçoivent une aide financière du gouvernement fédéral (consulté le 30 avril 2007). Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/donnees.php>.

⁸ Il existe une abondante littérature fondée sur la pratique dans le domaine de l'analyse comparative entre les sexes, aussi appelée « analyse de l'équité », « analyse de l'équité entre les sexes », « analyse de l'égalité entre les sexes », « approche intégrée de l'égalité » et « analyse de la diversité ». Consulter par exemple : Chambre des communes du Canada, *L'analyse comparative entre les sexes : les fondements de la réussite : rapport du Comité permanent de la condition féminine*, avril 2005; Nations Unies, Bureau de la Conseillère spéciale pour la parité et la promotion de la femme, *Gender Mainstreaming*. Sur Internet : <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>.

⁹ Consulter par exemple : Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, *Bulletin 2006 de la situation des femmes au Nouveau-Brunswick et Aide-mémoire destiné aux personnes qui pensent que les femmes ont atteint l'égalité*. Sur Internet : <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/french/acsw3.asp>.

¹⁰ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes; Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada : rapport statistique fondé sur le sexe*, 5^e édition, mars 2006, p. 94-95. Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/francais/bsolc?catno=89-503-X>.

¹¹ Direction de la qualité et des services partagés du CCNB-NBCC, ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick; Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 96.

¹² *Ibid.*

à la réduction de la productivité en général. Selon une étude réalisée par Ather Akbari, économiste à l'Université St. Mary's, l'élimination de l'écart salarial entre les hommes et les femmes entraînerait d'importantes hausses des recettes fiscales, tout en réduisant les dépenses en matière de santé et de programmes sociaux.¹³ Comme le Forum économique mondial l'a montré dans un récent rapport, les sociétés où l'on observe la plus grande égalité entre les sexes sont aussi les plus concurrentielles au monde.¹⁴

Le présent document porte principalement sur les besoins et les préoccupations des femmes en rapport avec l'accessibilité de l'éducation postsecondaire. Il comporte trois sections. La première examine les différences entre les hommes et les femmes sur le plan de la participation aux études postsecondaires. La deuxième examine les obstacles à l'enseignement postsecondaire et à la formation des femmes. Dans la troisième section, nous présentons une série de recommandations en vue de résoudre les problèmes relevés.

¹³ *L'écart salarial entre les hommes et les femmes au Nouveau-Brunswick*, rédigé pour le compte de GPI Atlantic, Halifax, N.-É., 2004. Sur Internet :

www.acswcccf.nb.ca/french/documents/GENDER_WAGE_GAP_NB_FINAL_REPORT_FR.pdf.

¹⁴ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson et Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2006*, Genève, Forum économique mondial, 2006, p. 17-18. Sur Internet :

www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Gender%20Gap/index.htm.

1. Différences entre les sexes en matière de participation aux études postsecondaires

Le niveau de scolarité des femmes s'est considérablement amélioré au cours des trente dernières années, celles-ci ayant été de plus en plus nombreuses à poursuivre des études postsecondaires. Des jeunes diplômées de l'école secondaire aux femmes d'âge mûr ayant des enfants adultes, les femmes de tous âges ont établi un lien entre l'éducation et de meilleures perspectives d'emploi tandis qu'elles recherchaient des occasions d'épanouissement personnel et d'engagement civique.

Toutefois, la présence accrue des femmes au sein du secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire ne révèle qu'un aspect de la question. Un examen plus attentif de la participation des femmes et des hommes aux études au cours des trois dernières décennies permet de constater des tendances inquiétantes qui reflètent et maintiennent l'inégalité entre les sexes.

Il faut également noter que beaucoup d'adultes néo-brunswickois n'ont pas complété les études secondaires et se classent aux niveaux faibles de compétences en matière de littératie et de numératie, en dessous du seuil minimal souhaité pour faire face aux exigences du travail et de la vie dans la société actuelle. Les résultats d'une enquête internationale sur l'alphabétisation de 2003 révèlent que 54 % des néo-brunswickoises et 59 % des néo-brunswickois âgés de 16 ans et plus éprouvent de sérieuses difficultés en compréhension de textes suivis, tandis que 67 % des femmes et 63 % des hommes se classent aux niveaux faibles de la numératie, des résultats inférieurs à la moyenne canadienne.¹⁵ Des programmes d'alphabétisation manquent de fonds et les initiatives d'emploi et de rattrapage scolaire ne sont pas toujours accessibles ou bien adaptées aux apprenants adultes sans emploi ou sous-employés.

1.1. Augmenter le niveau de scolarité et élargir la clientèle postsecondaire

Les niveaux de scolarité ont fortement augmenté au cours des trente dernières années au Nouveau-Brunswick, tant chez les femmes que chez les hommes. En 2001, près de la moitié des Néo-Brunswickoises (48 %) et des Néo-Brunswickois (47 %) âgés de 15 ans et plus avaient participé à un programme quelconque d'éducation ou de formation postsecondaires, en hausse par rapport aux taux de 20 % et 18 % enregistrés respectivement en 1971.¹⁶

Comme dans le reste du Canada, l'écart considérable entre les sexes au chapitre de l'obtention d'un diplôme universitaire a pratiquement été éliminé au Nouveau-Brunswick. Selon le Recensement de 2001, 12 % des Néo-Brunswickoises et 11 % des Néo-Brunswickois âgés de 15 ans et plus détenaient un diplôme universitaire, en hausse par rapport aux taux de 8 % et 9 % observés respectivement en 1991, et de 2 % et 5 % en 1971.¹⁷ À l'échelle nationale, les hommes sont un peu plus nombreux que les femmes à obtenir un diplôme universitaire. Ainsi, c'est le cas de 15 % des Canadiennes et de 16 % des Canadiens.¹⁸

Les Néo-Brunswickoises francophones possédant un diplôme universitaire ont presque comblé l'écart qui les séparait des anglophones – en 2001, 11 % des femmes francophones détenaient un diplôme universitaire, comparativement à 12 % des femmes anglophones et à 9 % des

¹⁵ Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, *Bulletin 2006 de la situation des femmes au Nouveau-Brunswick*, p. 10-11. Sur Internet : <http://www.acswcccf.nb.ca/french/acsw3.asp>.

¹⁶ Ginette Lafleur, *Les femmes à l'heure des comptes. Dossier statistique, 1971-1986*, publication d'Action Éducation Femmes N.-B., 1990, p. 57; Statistique Canada, Recensement du Canada de 2001.

N° 97F0017XCB01002 au catalogue.

¹⁷ Statistique Canada, recensements du Canada de 1991 et de 2001. N°s 97F00017XCB1001 et 97F0017XCB01002 au catalogue.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

hommes francophones – mais d'autres groupes continuent d'accuser un retard.¹⁹ Chez les Autochtones du Nouveau-Brunswick, le niveau de scolarité des femmes est plus élevé que celui des hommes, mais les femmes autochtones sont moins susceptibles que les femmes et les hommes non autochtones de détenir un diplôme universitaire. En 2001, 7 % des Néo-Brunswickoises âgées de 15 ans et plus ayant déclaré une identité autochtone²⁰ et 3 % de leurs homologues masculins possédaient un diplôme universitaire, comparativement à 12 % et 11 % des femmes et des hommes non autochtones de la province.²¹ Par ailleurs, les femmes handicapées sont moins scolarisées que les femmes et les hommes non handicapés. En 2001, au Nouveau-Brunswick, 9 % des femmes handicapées²² et 6 % des hommes handicapés âgés de 15 à 64 ans avaient obtenu un certificat ou un diplôme universitaire, comparativement à 16 % des femmes et 13 % des hommes non handicapés.²³

On a observé une hausse remarquable de la clientèle féminine des universités du Nouveau-Brunswick au cours des trente dernières années. Le nombre de femmes inscrites à temps plein dans les universités de la province a plus que doublé entre 1975-1976 et 2005-2006, passant de 4 803 à 11 722, alors qu'il n'a augmenté que du tiers chez les hommes.²⁴ À la fin des années 1980, les femmes étaient plus nombreuses que les hommes dans les universités néo-brunswickoises. Les femmes ont conservé leur avance, représentant 58 % des inscriptions à temps plein en 2005-2006, en hausse par rapport à 43 % trente ans plus tôt, cette tendance suivant une trajectoire semblable à celle observée dans l'ensemble du pays.²⁵

Par contre, le nombre de femmes inscrites dans les collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick n'a pas suivi la même tendance à la hausse. En effet, celles-ci sont toujours sous représentées dans les établissements où l'on constate une baisse générale des inscriptions et une réduction proportionnelle des inscriptions féminines depuis les années 1990. Au Nouveau-Brunswick, le nombre total d'inscriptions dans les collèges a diminué de près du tiers depuis 1990-1991, alors qu'une hausse de 3,5 % a été enregistrée à l'échelle nationale.²⁶ En 2005-2006, seulement 38 % de l'effectif étudiant à temps plein des programmes collégiaux réguliers étaient des femmes, en baisse par rapport au sommet de 46 % atteint en 1988-1989.²⁷ Quelque 3 000 femmes étaient inscrites à ces programmes en 2005-2006, soit moins de la moitié du sommet atteint dix ans plus tôt.²⁸ Au Nouveau-Brunswick, les chiffres sont inférieurs à la

¹⁹ Irène Savoie pour la Fédération des dames d'Acadie inc., *Mieux se connaître pour mieux avancer : Les femmes francophones au Nouveau-Brunswick*, avril 2004. Sur Internet : <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/french/acsw3.asp>.

²⁰ Personnes ayant déclaré appartenir à au moins un groupe autochtone et celles ayant déclaré être un Indien des traités ou un Indien inscrit ou un membre d'une bande indienne ou d'une première nation.

²¹ Statistique Canada, Recensement du Canada de 2001. N° 97F0011XCB01043 au catalogue.

²² Les personnes handicapées sont celles qui ont déclaré avoir de la difficulté à accomplir les activités de la vie quotidienne ou qui ont signalé qu'un trouble physique ou psychique ou un problème de santé réduit la quantité ou le genre d'activités qu'elles peuvent effectuer. Les types d'incapacités comprennent l'incapacité liée à l'ouïe, à la vision, à la parole, à la mobilité, à l'agilité, à la dextérité, à la douleur, à l'apprentissage, à la mémoire, à la déficience intellectuelle et aux troubles psychologiques.

²³ Statistique Canada, *Enquête sur la participation et les limitations d'activités, 2001*, septembre 2003. N° 89-587-XIF au catalogue. Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/francais/freepub/89-587-XIF/>.

²⁴ Lafleur, p. 76, 79; base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes.

²⁵ Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 94-95.

²⁶ Sean Junor et Alex Usher, *Le prix du savoir : l'accès à l'éducation et la situation financière des étudiants au Canada*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, 2004. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/Price.asp>.

²⁷ Ce chiffre relatif aux inscriptions aux programmes « réguliers » englobe les programmes d'apprentissage, l'éducation à distance, l'éducation permanente, l'éducation par correspondance, les programmes d'études générales et le programme Étudiants bien branchés. Données fournies par la Direction de la qualité et des services partagés du CCNB-NBCC, ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick; Joan McFarland, *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*, 1999. Sur Internet : <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

moyenne enregistrée au Canada, où les femmes ont représenté un peu plus de la moitié de la clientèle à temps plein des collèges communautaires depuis le milieu des années 1970.²⁹

1.2. Inscriptions à temps partiel ainsi qu'aux programmes de 2e et 3e cycle

Un examen plus approfondi des tendances en matière d'inscriptions nous rappelle que les inégalités persistent entre les hommes et les femmes dans les universités et les collèges de la province.

Les femmes sont beaucoup plus nombreuses que les hommes à fréquenter les collèges et les universités à temps partiel. En 2005-2006, elles représentaient 65 % de la totalité des étudiants à temps partiel des universités de la province, en hausse par rapport au taux de 60 % enregistré au milieu des années 1970, tandis qu'elles constituaient 58 % de l'effectif étudiant à temps plein.³⁰ Dans les collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick, les femmes représentaient 55 % de la totalité des étudiants à temps partiel et 40 % de l'effectif étudiant à temps plein en 2005-2006.³¹ Alors qu'environ la même proportion de femmes et d'hommes poursuivaient des études universitaires à temps partiel, soit 20 % et 19 % respectivement, une proportion beaucoup plus grande de femmes fréquentaient les collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick à temps partiel en 2005-2006, soit 27 % comparativement à 17 %.³²

Les répercussions des études à temps partiel sur la durée des études et les taux d'abandon méritent une analyse systématique. On peut supposer que les femmes mettent plus de temps à terminer leurs programmes d'études, vu qu'elles sont plus nombreuses que les hommes à étudier à temps partiel.³³ Les autorités éducatives ne recueillent pas de façon systématique des données chronologiques sur le temps d'obtention des grades, des diplômes et des certificats ni sur les taux d'abandon des femmes et d'autres groupes sous représentés. Par conséquent, nous sommes incapables de suivre de près certaines tendances importantes.³⁴

Les différences entre les sexes sont évidentes aussi lorsqu'on examine la participation des femmes aux programmes de deuxième et troisième cycle. Les femmes ont fait une incursion considérable dans les études supérieures au cours des trente dernières années, mais elles sont toujours moins susceptibles que les hommes d'obtenir un diplôme d'études supérieures, particulièrement le doctorat. Au Nouveau-Brunswick, les inscriptions féminines aux programmes de baccalauréat et de premier grade professionnel sont passées de 50 % en 1980-1981 à 60 % en 2005-2006. Au cours de la même période, les femmes ont aussi accru leur participation aux programmes de maîtrise, qui est passée de 36 % à 55 %. En ce qui a trait aux études doctorales,

²⁹ Moyenne canadienne fondée sur les inscriptions dans les collèges communautaires pour l'année 1999-2000. Statistiques Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 97.

³⁰ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes; Lafleur, p. 79. Selon les statistiques sur les inscriptions, la moyenne canadienne était de 60 % en 2001-2002. Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 95.

³¹ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes; Direction de la qualité et des services partagés du CCNB-NBCC, ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick. Les chiffres correspondant aux inscriptions totales dans les collèges communautaires englobent les programmes réguliers, contractuels et à distance.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Selon certaines études réalisées à la fin des années 1980 et au début des années 1990, les femmes mettent plus de temps que les hommes à obtenir leur maîtrise ou leur doctorat, au moins dans certaines disciplines. Consulter l'analyse documentaire dans Sandra W. Pyke, « Education and the "Woman question" », (« Education and the "Woman Question" », en ligne). *Canadian Psychology*, vol. 38, n^o 3 (1997), p. 154-163 (consulté le 12 avril 2007). Sur Internet : <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>.

³⁴ Conseil canadien sur l'apprentissage (CCA), *L'enseignement postsecondaire au Canada : Un bilan positif – Un avenir incertain*, Ottawa, CCA, 2006, p. 70-78. Sur Internet : <http://www.ccl-cca.ca>.

la part des inscriptions féminines a plus que triplé, passant de 13 % en 1980-1981 à 46 % en 2005-2006.³⁵

1.3. Ségrégation entre les hommes et les femmes selon le domaine d'études et la formation

La ségrégation entre les hommes et les femmes est toujours ancrée dans l'éducation postsecondaire et la formation, à l'image de la ségrégation professionnelle. Comme deux décennies plus tôt, les Néo-Brunswickoises et les Canadiennes d'aujourd'hui sont concentrées dans une gamme limitée d'emplois comparativement aux hommes. En effet, les femmes représentent encore de nos jours moins de 10 % de la main-d'œuvre dans les secteurs des métiers, du transport et de la machinerie, tandis que tout juste un emploi sur cinq dans le domaine des sciences naturelles et appliquées est occupé par une femme.³⁶

Dans les universités néo-brunswickoises et canadiennes, les femmes occupent toujours une place prédominante dans les facultés des secteurs traditionnels, par exemple les sciences infirmières, et elles sont sur représentées en lettres et en sciences humaines ainsi qu'en sciences sociales. En 2005-2006, parmi les étudiants à temps plein des programmes liés à la santé offerts au Nouveau-Brunswick, près de neuf sur dix (86 %) étaient des femmes, et celles-ci représentaient environ 70 % de la clientèle en éducation, en lettres et en sciences humaines, et en sciences sociales.³⁷

Les femmes ont fait une avancée importante dans certains programmes universitaires longtemps dominés par les hommes, par exemple en droit. Les inscriptions féminines dans les deux facultés de droit du Nouveau-Brunswick ont augmenté de façon constante, passant de 37 % en 1980-1981 à 56 % en 2005-2006.³⁸

Par contre, le nombre de femmes inscrites dans les domaines du génie, des sciences appliquées et physiques et des mathématiques, traditionnellement réservés aux hommes, est toujours très inférieur comparativement à ces derniers. Parmi les inscriptions à temps plein dans les secteurs du génie et des sciences appliquées, la part des femmes a augmenté lentement mais régulièrement, passant de 9 % en 1980-1981 au sommet atteint au milieu des années 1990, soit 21 %.³⁹ Toutefois, cette tendance s'est renversée au cours des dernières années. En 2005-2006, moins de un étudiant sur cinq (17 %) inscrit dans cette discipline dans une université de la province était une femme, ce qui est légèrement inférieur à la moyenne canadienne.⁴⁰ Dans les domaines des mathématiques et des sciences physiques, les femmes représentaient 30 % des

³⁵ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes. Comprend les inscriptions à temps partiel et à temps plein; les études de premier cycle incluent celles menant à un baccalauréat, un premier grade professionnel, un diplôme de premier cycle, un certificat ou un autre grade de premier cycle.

³⁶ Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, *Bulletin 2006 de la situation des femmes au Nouveau-Brunswick*, Fredericton, le Conseil, 2006, p. 57. Sur Internet : <http://www.acswccf.nb.ca/french/acsw3.asp>; Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada : une mise à jour du chapitre sur le travail 2006*, Ottawa, ministre de l'Industrie, 2007, p. 9, 10 et 22. N° 89F0133XIF au catalogue. Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/francais/bsolc?catno=89F0133X>.

³⁷ Selon les inscriptions au premier, deuxième et troisième cycle. Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes. Les tendances sont semblables au Canada, bien que la proportion soit moins élevée dans les programmes liés à la santé, celle-ci étant de 75 % en 2001-2002. Prière de noter que les inscriptions dans les universités néo-brunswickoises n'incluent pas les inscriptions dans les écoles de médecine situées à l'extérieur de la province. Consulter : Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 94.

³⁸ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes. Inclut les inscriptions à temps partiel et à temps plein à tous les niveaux.

³⁹ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes.

⁴⁰ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes. Au Canada, ce pourcentage s'élevait à 24 % en 2001-2002. Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 94.

inscriptions à temps plein en 1980-1981, mais elles ont perdu du terrain à compter de la fin de cette décennie et au cours des années 1990. Elles représentent maintenant à peine un étudiant sur quatre dans ces disciplines au Nouveau-Brunswick, ce qui est légèrement inférieur à la moyenne canadienne la plus récente.⁴¹

La répartition selon le sexe des inscriptions aux programmes des collèges communautaires a peu changé. Au cours des années 1970 et 1980, les femmes fréquentant les collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick étaient beaucoup plus susceptibles de devenir aides-infirmières, secrétaires juridiques ou coiffeuses que charpentières ou mécaniciennes.⁴² Les ghettos féminins en matière de formation et le nombre peu élevé des femmes inscrites dans les secteurs non traditionnels ont persisté jusque dans les années 1990. En 1992-1993, les trois quarts des inscriptions féminines à temps plein étaient regroupés dans les secteurs de la formation générale, du secrétariat et du travail de bureau, des affaires et des services communautaires de santé, alors que les hommes étaient concentrés dans les programmes techniques et de métiers, notamment dans les domaines de la construction, du matériel motorisé mécanique, de l'électronique, de la mécanique industrielle et de la métallurgie. De fait, selon les conclusions d'une étude publiée en 1994 par le Conseil consultatif, les tendances des années 1990 en matière de formation n'allaient que contribuer à perpétuer les inégalités que l'on observait depuis longtemps sur le marché du travail entre les hommes et les femmes.⁴³

Même aujourd'hui, la plupart des femmes qui fréquentent les collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick se dirigent vers des emplois traditionnellement féminins ou suivent des cours de rattrapage scolaire. Près de une étudiante régulière à temps plein sur cinq était inscrite dans un programme de gestion de bureau en 2005-2006, tandis qu'environ une sur dix suivait une formation en soins infirmiers auxiliaires, où elles représentaient respectivement 90 % et 96 % de la clientèle.⁴⁴ Par contre, au cours de cette même année, les femmes ne constituaient que 3 % de l'effectif étudiant à temps plein en charpenterie et 5 % dans les programmes de mécanique de véhicules automobiles et de matériel lourd. Les femmes représentent toujours une faible minorité dans la plupart des programmes de métiers et de technologie traditionnellement dominés par les hommes.

En outre, les femmes sont fortement sous représentées d'un bout à l'autre du pays dans les programmes d'apprentissage combinant un enseignement en classe et une formation et de l'expérience en milieu de travail. Ainsi, en 2005-2006, elles ne représentaient que 2 % de tous les apprentis suivant des cours offerts par les collèges communautaires de la province, soit moins de 50 femmes pour un total de près de 2 000 apprentis, une proportion ayant à peine changée en 20 ans.⁴⁵ En mars 2007, parmi les apprentis inscrits au Nouveau-Brunswick, qui étaient plus de 3 000, seulement 64, soit 2 %, étaient des femmes, dont au moins la moitié à titre d'apprenties

⁴¹ Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes. Au Canada, ce pourcentage s'élevait à 30 % en 2001-2002. Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 94.

⁴² Lafleur, p. 73; Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, *Plan d'action sur la situation de la femme dans les collèges communautaires, une présentation au ministère des Collèges communautaires*, 1984.

⁴³ Conseil sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, *Une formation qui porte fruit : une étude sur les femmes et la formation à l'emploi au Nouveau-Brunswick*, 1994.

⁴⁴ Information fondée sur les données des collèges fournies par la Direction de la qualité et des services partagés du CCNB-NBCC, ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick.

⁴⁵ Le chiffre total pour 2005-2006 inclut les inscriptions à temps plein et à temps partiel dans les programmes d'apprentissage réguliers et contractuels. Données fournies par la Direction de la qualité et des services partagés du CCNB-NBCC, ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick. Pour constater l'évolution depuis 1986, consulter : McFarland, p. 198-199.

cuisinières.⁴⁶ De plus, elles représentent 2 % ou moins des apprentis charpentiers, mécaniciens et électriciens.⁴⁷

Ce déséquilibre dans nos programmes universitaires et collégiaux a des répercussions importantes sur le potentiel de gains et la situation professionnelle des femmes, étant donné que certains des emplois les mieux rémunérés ont trait aux secteurs scientifiques et technologiques et aux métiers. Cette lacune en matière de perfectionnement des ressources humaines entraîne aussi un prix économique et social élevé, spécialement en raison de la pénurie de main-d'œuvre constatée à l'échelle du Canada dans certains métiers spécialisés et certaines professions.⁴⁸

En ce qui a trait aux programmes de formation offerts par les établissements privés, nous en savons très peu au sujet des tendances en matière de participation des hommes et des femmes, car le ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail ne recueille pas ces données selon le sexe ou le programme.

2. Obstacles à l'éducation postsecondaire et à la formation des femmes

Nous avons vu qu'une participation entière et égale des femmes aux études postsecondaires demeure difficile à réaliser. Dans la présente section, nous passerons en revue certains obstacles auxquels font face les femmes dans la poursuite de leurs études postsecondaires et de leur formation.

Les obstacles liés au sexe sont enracinés dans le marché du travail et la société en général. Les femmes risquent aussi d'être victimes de discrimination et d'éprouver des problèmes d'adaptation dans les milieux d'apprentissage.

2.1. Obstacles financiers

Les contraintes financières sont largement reconnues comme étant des obstacles considérables à la participation des femmes et des hommes aux études postsecondaires.⁴⁹ La part importante des coûts que doivent assumer les étudiants et leurs familles et le spectre de l'endettement sont des facteurs importants au moment de décider d'entreprendre ou de terminer des études postsecondaires ou une formation. La situation socioéconomique, l'origine ethnique et le lieu de résidence entraînent encore un accès inégal. Les étudiants issus de familles à faible revenu et

⁴⁶ Ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick, Direction de l'apprentissage et de la certification, sommaire provincial des apprentis totaux au 23 mars 2007.

⁴⁷ Les tendances sont semblables à l'échelle nationale. Consulter : Statistique Canada, *Femmes au Canada*, p. 98.

⁴⁸ Consulter par exemple : Conseil canadien sur l'apprentissage, *L'enseignement postsecondaire au Canada : Un bilan positif – Un avenir incertain*, p. 17-18; Voir aussi Ross Finnie, Marie Lavoie et Maud-Catherine Rivard, « Les femmes en génie: Le chaînon manquant de l'économie du savoir du Canada, » *Revue trimestrielle de l'éducation*, printemps 2001, vol. 7, n^o 3. Sur Internet : http://www.statcan.ca/francais/studies/81-003/feature/eqab2001007003s1a01_f.htm

⁴⁹ Consulter par exemple : Joseph Berger, Anne Motte et Andrew Parkin, *Le prix du savoir 2006-07*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, 2007. Sur Internet <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/Price.asp>; Marc Frenette, *Pourquoi les jeunes provenant de familles à plus faible revenu sont-ils moins susceptibles de fréquenter l'université? Analyse fondée sur les aptitudes aux études, l'influence des parents et les contraintes financières*, Ottawa, Statistique Canada, 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/francais/research/11F0019MIF/11F0019MIF2007295.htm>; K. Myers et P. de Broucker, *Les trop nombreux laissés-pour-compte du système d'éducation et de formation des adultes au Canada*, Réseaux canadiens de recherche en politiques publiques, 2006. Sommaire sur Internet : <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1479&l=fr>; M. Corak, G. Lipps et J. Zhao, *Revenu familial et participation aux études postsecondaires*, Statistique Canada, 2003. Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/francais/bsolc?catno=11F0019M2003210>.

ceux provenant de collectivités autochtones en particulier continuent d'être sous représentés dans les classes de niveau postsecondaire.

Les femmes ont moins de ressources financières à investir dans les études postsecondaires que les hommes. Le dernier recensement révèle que le revenu total moyen des Néo-brunswickoises ne représentaient que 62 % du revenu total des Néo-brunswickois et que 61 % des femmes avaient un revenu annuel de moins de 20 000 \$, comparativement à 40 % des hommes.⁵⁰

Les femmes sont plus susceptibles que les hommes de vivre dans la pauvreté en raison du niveau moins élevé de leurs salaires, de leurs économies et de leurs prestations de retraite, de leur participation au travail non rémunéré et des répercussions des obligations familiales. Les femmes chefs de famille monoparentale et leurs enfants constituent le groupe le plus touché par la pauvreté, tant au Nouveau-Brunswick que dans l'ensemble du Canada. Bien que ce taux ait diminué en général au cours des dernières années, plus de une famille monoparentale dirigée par une femme sur trois (37%) vivait toujours sous le seuil de pauvreté en 2005.⁵¹ Par comparaison, dans les familles biparentales, 1 enfant sur 25 vivait dans la pauvreté. Dans l'ensemble de la province, environ 15 000 enfants vivaient dans la pauvreté en 2005, soit un sur dix enfants de moins de 18 ans.

Les femmes sont beaucoup plus susceptibles de travailler à temps partiel que les hommes – une travailleuse sur quatre comparativement à un peu moins de un travailleur sur dix⁵² – et elles gagnent toujours moins en moyenne que les hommes. Selon les dernières données de Statistique Canada concernant l'écart au chapitre de la rémunération horaire, les femmes gagnaient en moyenne 12 % de moins que les hommes au Nouveau-Brunswick en 2006, tandis que l'écart moyen dans l'ensemble du Canada se situait à 16 %.⁵³

La disparité salariale touche même les femmes ayant une scolarité de niveau universitaire ou collégial. Les femmes diplômées d'une université néo-brunswickoise en 1999 qui travaillaient à temps plein cinq ans plus tard gagnaient en moyenne 18 % de moins que leurs collègues masculins ayant obtenu un diplôme en même temps qu'elles.⁵⁴ En ce qui a trait aux femmes diplômées d'un collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick en 2005 qui travaillaient à temps plein un an plus tard, leur rémunération moyenne était inférieure de 14 % à celle versée à leurs collègues masculins ayant obtenu un diplôme en même temps qu'elles.⁵⁵

Les femmes handicapées et les femmes autochtones ont de plus bas revenus et gagnent moins que les autres personnes au Nouveau-Brunswick.

Le revenu total moyen des femmes handicapées âgées entre 15 ans et 64 ans au N.-B. en 2000 était de 14 856 \$, presque 8 000\$ de moins que les hommes handicapés, environ 5 000\$ de moins que les femmes sans handicaps et 15 000\$ de moins que les hommes sans handicaps. Par ailleurs, plus du tiers des femmes âgées de 15 ans et plus ayant un handicap au N.-B. (35%)

⁵⁰ 2001 Recensement du Canada, revenu annuel avant impôt provenant de toutes les sources pour personnes âgées de 15 ans et plus. Consulter : CCCF-N.-B., *Bulletin 2006 de la situation des femmes du N.-B.*, p. 30.

⁵¹ Taux de pauvreté fondés sur le revenu après impôt, en utilisant les seuls de faible revenu de Statistique Canada, qui tiennent compte de la proportion relative du revenu utilisée pour les nécessités de subsistance, par exemple le loyer, la nourriture et les vêtements. Statistique Canada, *Le revenu au Canada, 2005*. N° 75-202-XWF au catalogue; Statistique Canada, tableau de CANSIM 202-0804. Sur Internet :

<http://www.statcan.ca>.

⁵² CCCF-N.-B., *Bulletin 2006 de la situation des femmes du N.-B.*, p. 46.

⁵³ Statistique Canada, tableau de CANSIM 282-0072. Inclut les travailleurs à temps partiel et à temps plein.

⁵⁴ Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes.

⁵⁵ Ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick, *Sondage sur le placement des diplômés de 2005 des Collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick*, 2006.

qui ont rapporté un revenu en 2000 avait moins de 10 000\$ comparativement à 25% des hommes avec handicap.⁵⁶

Le revenu total moyen des femmes autochtones âgées de 15 ans ou plus au N.-B. était de 13 898\$ en 2000, soit 78% du revenu moyen des hommes autochtones (17 901\$), comparativement à 18 676\$ et 30 020\$ pour les femmes et les hommes non autochtones respectivement. Presque la moitié des femmes autochtones ayant un revenu au N.-B. (47%) avaient un revenu de moins de 10 000\$ en 2000, comparativement à 42% des hommes autochtones, 33% des femmes non autochtones et 20% des hommes non autochtones.⁵⁷ Les femmes autochtones ayant un emploi en 2000 ont également gagné moins que les femmes non autochtones, en moyenne 14 313\$ comparativement à 19 110\$.⁵⁸

À la lumière de ces inégalités sur le plan du revenu et des salaires, la hausse alarmante des coûts de l'éducation postsecondaire aurait des répercussions différentes sur les femmes et certains groupes de femmes.

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, les droits de scolarité ont considérablement augmenté dans les universités de toutes les provinces, les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire faisant supporter par les étudiants les conséquences des importantes réductions du financement gouvernemental. Depuis 1990, les droits de scolarité moyens exigés par les universités néo-brunswickoises pour le premier cycle ont augmenté de 177 %, passant de 1 925\$ en 1990-1991 à 3 863\$ en 2001-2002, pour atteindre une moyenne annuelle de 5 328\$ en 2006-2007.⁵⁹ Après la Nouvelle-Écosse, c'est le Nouveau-Brunswick qui affiche les droits de scolarité universitaires les plus élevés au Canada. Les étudiants canadiens du premier cycle déboursaient en moyenne 4 347\$ en droits de scolarité en 2006-2007.⁶⁰

Les droits de scolarité dans les collèges communautaires demeurent plus bas et les programmes collégiaux sont de moindre durée que les études universitaires. Quant aux frais de scolarité pour la formation offerte dans les établissements privés, ils sont bien plus élevés que dans les institutions publiques. En 2005-2006, les étudiants qui fréquentent les collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick acquittent des droits annuels moyens de 3 050 \$, comparativement à 7 520 \$ pour les établissements privés de la province, et 5 038 \$ dans les universités.⁶¹

De plus, ces chiffres ne tiennent pas compte des frais relatifs aux manuels, à l'hébergement, à la nourriture et au transport ni de la perte de gains éventuelle. Dans le cas des étudiants ayant des enfants, les frais de garde doivent être ajoutés au total. En outre, comme beaucoup plus de femmes que d'hommes étudient à temps partiel, leurs frais de subsistance et même leurs droits de scolarité sont, en moyenne, plus élevés.

⁵⁶ Statistique Canada, *Enquête sur la participation et les limitations d'activités*, 2001, Tableau 5 à http://www.statcan.ca/francais/freepub/89-587-XIF/tables/html/table5/table5_f.htm

⁵⁷ Les données comprennent la population vivant dans une réserve et hors réserve. Statistique Canada, 2001 Recensement du Canada, <http://www12.statcan.ca/francais/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=60107&APATH=3&GID=355313&METH=1&PTYPE=55496&THEME=54&FOCUS=0&AID=0&PLACENAME=0&PROVINCE=0&SEARCH=0&GC=0&GK=0&VID=0&FL=0&RL=0&FREE=0> (31 mai 2007)

⁵⁸ Les données comprennent la population vivant dans une réserve et hors réserve. Statistique Canada, 2001 Recensement du Canada, <http://www12.statcan.ca/francais/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=57103&GID=355317&METH=1&APATH=3&PTYPE=55496&THEME=53&AID=0&FREE=0&FOCUS=0&VID=0&GC=0&GK=0&SC=1&SR=1&RL=0&CPP=99&RPP=9999&D1=0&D2=0&D3=0&D4=0&D5=0&D6=0&d1=2&d2=4> (31 mai 2007)

⁵⁹ Montants cités en dollars constants. Statistique Canada, « Frais de scolarité universitaires, 2006/07 », *Le Quotidien*, 1 septembre 2006. Sur Internet <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/Francais/060901/tq060901.htm>

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick, Direction des services financiers pour étudiants, *Profil statistique 2005-2006 du programme d'aide financière aux étudiants du N.-B.*, 2007, p. 15.

L'aide financière sous forme de bourses ou de subventions non remboursables du gouvernement est surtout consacrée à la formation offerte au Collège communautaire de notre province.⁶²

Au cours des dernières années, le gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick a offert un soutien financier limité pour la formation par l'entremise de son programme Formation et perfectionnement professionnel.⁶³ Ce programme, qui vise à favoriser la réinsertion sur le marché du travail des personnes en chômage ou de celles qui sont de retour d'un congé de maternité ou d'un congé parental, offre une aide pendant une période pouvant atteindre deux ans relativement aux droits de scolarité et aux frais de subsistance. Toutefois, il comporte des critères d'admissibilité stricts, et le programme choisi doit être approuvé par un conseiller provincial en emploi, qui évalue les chances d'obtenir un emploi stable.⁶⁴ Un petit nombre de personnes ont utilisé les fonds reçus pour terminer leurs études universitaires, mais la plupart poursuivent un programme au Collège communautaire ou dans un autre établissement de formation. En 2005--2006, les femmes représentaient 53 % des quelque 6 500 personnes recevant une aide financière en vertu de ce programme pour suivre une formation et elles recevaient en moyenne une somme plus élevée que les hommes (6 484,07 \$ comparativement à 5 284,59 \$ respectivement).⁶⁵

Avant le transfert de la responsabilité de l'administration des programmes de formation par le gouvernement fédéral aux gouvernements provinciaux en 1996 et la réforme du programme de l'assurance-chômage qui y était associée, il y avait plus de financement public consacré aux programmes de formation et les femmes étaient ciblées comme groupe désavantagé sur le marché du travail par des programmes d'équité.⁶⁶

Selon l'économiste Joan McFarland, la baisse du soutien financier accordé à la formation est largement responsable de la diminution de la clientèle féminine dans les collèges communautaires du Nouveau-Brunswick depuis les années 1990. Entre les années 1970 et le milieu des années 1990, la plupart des femmes suivant une formation pour les métiers ou le rattrapage scolaire dans les collèges communautaires de la province bénéficiaient d'une forme quelconque d'aide financière pour les droits de scolarité et les frais de subsistance. Près de 80 % des étudiantes des collèges communautaires en 1985-1986 et 57 % en 1996-1997 recevaient une aide financière de la part du gouvernement ou de l'industrie, cette proportion ayant diminué à moins de 30 % à la fin des années 1990.⁶⁷

Trop rares sont les employeurs canadiens qui offrent de la formation en milieu du travail ou qui parrainent des employés dans les programmes publics ou privés. L'investissement dans la formation est surtout réservé à la main-d'œuvre plus qualifiée, les employés plus jeunes et les

⁶² En 2006-2007, le gouvernement du N.-B. a créé une prestation unique de 2 000\$ pour les étudiants, résidents du N.-B., qui s'inscrivent à leur première année d'université à temps plein. Voir http://www.gnb.ca/0162/grants/Grant_for_students-f.asp

⁶³ Voir aussi Joan McFarland, *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*, sur Internet : <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>, p. 10-11.

⁶⁴ Pour obtenir plus de renseignements sur ce programme, consulter la rubrique « Formation et perfectionnement professionnel » sur le site Web du gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick. Sur Internet : <http://www.gnb.ca/0311/2bf.htm>.

⁶⁵ Données fournies par le ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail. En 2005-2006, 3 403 femmes et 3 065 hommes recevaient une aide financière. De ce nombre, 170 femmes et 102 hommes étaient inscrits à des programmes universitaires.

⁶⁶ Ursule Critoph, "Who Wins, Who Loses: The Real Story of the Transfer of Training to the Provinces and its Impact on Women," dans Marjorie Griffin Cohen, éd. *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2003, p. 14-33; voir aussi Karen Lior et Susan Wismer, "Still Shopping for Training: Women, Training and Livelihoods," dans *Ibid.*, p. 214-229.

⁶⁷ Joan McFarland, *Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick*, 1999, p. 14-15, tableau A6, annexe. Sur Internet : <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/Womens/cover.htm>.

travailleurs dans les grandes entreprises.⁶⁸ Une enquête réalisée par Statistique Canada révèle que seulement 26 % des travailleurs adultes âgés de 25 ans et plus au Nouveau-Brunswick ont participé à une formation parrainée par l'employeur en 2002.⁶⁹ Certaines études suggèrent aussi que les hommes sont plus susceptibles que les femmes de recevoir la formation parrainée par l'employeur.⁷⁰ Un nombre croissant de recherches menées à l'échelle nationale et internationale attribue les problèmes économiques du Canada au sous investissement des employeurs dans la formation et l'acquisition de compétences.⁷¹

Le gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick a récemment introduit quelques initiatives à petite échelle afin d'encourager la participation des femmes dans les programmes de formation pour les emplois non traditionnels. Dans le cadre d'efforts déployés récemment pour s'attaquer aux causes de l'écart salarial entre les hommes et les femmes, le gouvernement a créé des bourses d'études pour payer les droits de scolarité d'une année dans des programmes non traditionnels offerts par le Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick.⁷² Lancé en novembre 2006, *Partenaires pour bâtir l'avenir* est un projet pilote fédéral-provincial qui fournira du soutien pendant deux ans à une soixantaine de femmes bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale qui se préparent pour une carrière dans un métier spécialisé non traditionnel. On cherche ainsi à encourager la transition de l'aide sociale vers le marché du travail.⁷³

Néanmoins, pour la plupart des étudiants, y compris les mères seuls bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale, faire des études postsecondaires exige qu'on assume un prêt remboursable sous le programme d'assistance financière géré par le ministère provincial de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail.

L'endettement des étudiants a atteint des proportions alarmantes dans notre province et l'ensemble du pays. En 2006, 66 % des étudiants du premier cycle du Canada Atlantique avait une dette moyenne de 29 747\$, le montant le plus élevé au pays.⁷⁴

Les étudiants du Nouveau-Brunswick sont plus susceptibles de contracter des prêts que les étudiants canadiens en général. De plus, ils empruntent des sommes plus élevées et ils mettent plus de temps à rembourser leurs dettes. Une proportion de 52 % des diplômés universitaires du Nouveau-Brunswick avaient une dette étudiante en 2000, soit le deuxième pourcentage en importance au pays et beaucoup plus que la moyenne nationale de 42 %. 25% des diplômés universitaires néo-brunswickois accusaient une dette étudiante dépassant 25 000 \$,

⁶⁸ Karen Myers et Patrice de Broucker, *Les trop nombreux laissés-pour-compte du système d'éducation et de formation des adultes au Canada*, Ottawa, Réseaux canadiens de recherche en politiques publiques, 2006. Sur Internet : <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1479&l=fr>; Mark Goldenberg, *Investissements des employeurs dans l'apprentissage en milieu de travail au Canada*, Ottawa, Réseaux canadiens de recherche en politiques publiques, septembre 2006. Sur Internet : <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1529&l=fr>

⁶⁹ Valerie Peters, *Travail et formation : premiers résultats de l'Enquête sur l'éducation et la formation des adultes de 2003*, Ottawa, Statistique Canada, avril 2004. Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/francais/bsolc?catno=81-595-M2004015>

⁷⁰ Consulter l'analyse documentaire dans Conseil canadien sur l'apprentissage, *Un investissement rentable : Mettre l'investissement en formation en rapport avec les résultats d'entreprise et l'économie*, avril 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Home/Index.htm?Language=FR>

⁷¹ *Ibid.*; Voir aussi Joseph Berger, Anne Motte et Andrew Parkin, *Le prix du savoir 2006-07*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, 2007. Sur Internet <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/Price.asp>

⁷² Pour obtenir des renseignements additionnels sur les bourses d'études du Plan d'action sur l'écart salarial, consulter le site Web du ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail, à l'adresse suivante : http://www.ceibathurst.com/icdm/BasicPage_F.aspx?CPageld=294

⁷³ Voir <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/newsf/pet/2006f1454pe.htm> En Nouvelle-Écosse, un nouveau programme pilote intitulé *Career Seek* ouvre la possibilité pour les bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale de fréquenter l'université ou un autre programme postsecondaire de plus de 2 ans, tout en recevant leurs prestations. Voir *Income Assistance for Post-Secondary Education* à <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/whatsnew.html>

⁷⁴ Sean Junor et Alex Usher, *Le prix du savoir : l'accès à l'éducation et la situation financière des étudiants au Canada*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, 2004. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/Price.asp>.

comparativement à 13 % pour l'ensemble des étudiants canadiens.⁷⁵ Chez les diplômés néo-brunswickois du niveau collégial, 51% avaient une dette étudiante comparativement à 38 % à l'échelle nationale mais environ 5% seulement avait une dette étudiante dépassant 25 000 \$, à l'image de l'ensemble du pays.⁷⁶ La proportion de la dette étudiante remboursée par les diplômés collégiales et universitaires canadiens de 2000 dans les deux ans suivant la fin de leurs études était de 27 %, comparativement à 20 % et 16% pour les diplômés néo-brunswickois.⁷⁷

En 2005-2006, 63 % des demandes d'aide financière aux études présentées au Nouveau-Brunswick l'ont été par des femmes, mais nous en savons très peu sur leur situation spécifique en matière d'emprunt et d'endettement, car la plupart des données concernant les prêts aux étudiants ne sont pas ventilées selon le sexe.⁷⁸ Les parents seuls, majoritairement des femmes, formaient 7 % de tous les étudiants postsecondaires néo-brunswickois qui ont reçu des prêts étudiants en 2005-2006.⁷⁹

Les données statistiques du Programme d'aide financière aux étudiants du Nouveau-Brunswick font ressortir des tendances troublantes concernant l'ensemble de la population étudiante. Ainsi, la dette moyenne des diplômés des programmes à temps plein des universités, des collèges communautaires et des établissements privés de la province a plus que doublé depuis le début des années 1990, passant de 9 947 \$ en 1993-1994 à 21 240 \$ en 2005-2006.⁸⁰ À la fin de leurs études, les personnes titulaires d'un baccalauréat devaient en moyenne 32 132 \$ en 2005-2006, comparativement à 12 675 \$ dans le cas des diplômés des collèges communautaires, où les programmes sont plus courts.⁸¹

Les résultats des quelques enquêtes régionales et nationales qui tiennent compte des différences entre les sexes dans le domaine des emprunts et de l'endettement des étudiants font état des désavantages que subissent les femmes. On constate que les femmes ont plus de difficulté à rembourser leurs prêts d'études que leurs homologues masculins, vu qu'elles ont tendance à emprunter davantage et qu'elles gagnent moins qu'eux.⁸²

Nombre de mémoires présentés à la Commission examinent le problème d'endettement étudiant et les coûts sans cesse croissants des études postsecondaires. Il n'est guère surprenant que les associations étudiantes offrent des propositions assez détaillées. Parmi les solutions préconisées : la mise en place d'un plafond annuel d'endettement, la réduction des taux d'intérêt pour les prêts étudiants et les mesures d'aide au remboursement, évaluation plus réaliste des coûts de subsistance pour les fins d'aide financière, une part plus généreuse de sommes non

⁷⁵ Ibid., *Le prix du savoir 2004 : Nouveau-Brunswick*, <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/poknb.asp>

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick, Direction des services financiers pour étudiants, *Profil statistique 2005-2006 du programme d'aide financière aux étudiants du N.-B.*, p. 9.

⁷⁹ Ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick, Direction des services financiers pour étudiants, *Profil statistique 2005-2006 du programme d'aide financière aux étudiants du N.-B.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ Ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick, Direction des services financiers pour étudiants, *Profil statistique 2005-2006 du programme d'aide financière aux étudiants du N.-B.*, p. 6 et 13.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 6.

⁸² Warren Clark analyse les résultats de l'enquête menée en 1997 par Statistique Canada auprès des personnes diplômées en 1995 dans l'article « Le remboursement des prêts étudiants », *Tendances sociales canadiennes* (hiver 1998). Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/francais/bsolc?catno=11-008-X19980034002>. L'analyse des données de l'enquête nationale portant sur les diplômés de 1990 appuyait des conclusions semblables. Voir Saul Schwartz et Ross Finnie, « Student Loans in Canada : An Analysis of Borrowing and Repayment, » *Economics of Education Review*, octobre 2002, vol. 21, issue 5. Voir aussi le sondage récent de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des provinces Maritimes, *Deux ans plus tard : Un sondage auprès des diplômés universitaires des Maritimes de 2003*, Fredericton, la Commission, juin 2007. Sur Internet : http://www.mphed.ca/francais/pol_b.html

remboursables en fonction des besoins des étudiants et la réduction des frais de scolarité en dessous de la moyenne nationale.⁸³

Nous convenons qu'il est important de réduire les coûts directs assumés par les étudiants, plutôt que d'accroître leur capacité d'emprunt et de prolonger la période de remboursement de la dette. L'Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université revendique une nouvelle « architecture » de l'aide financière aux étudiants qui viserait à réduire les coûts et l'endettement des étudiants tout en encourageant les groupes sous-représentés, dont les Autochtones, à poursuivre les études postsecondaires.⁸⁴ Le mémoire de l'Association préconise une réduction et gel des frais de scolarité, ainsi que des subventions non remboursables et plus généreuses, basées sur le besoin, et insiste sur l'importance d'accroître l'investissement public dans l'éducation postsecondaire.

2.2. Responsabilités familiales

Les responsabilités familiales ont des répercussions sur la participation des femmes aux études postsecondaires, à l'image de leur participation au marché du travail.

Les femmes assument encore la plus grande part de la responsabilité des soins et des tâches ménagères non rémunérées, soit avoir des enfants et en prendre soin, s'occuper d'une personne âgée, handicapée ou ayant une maladie chronique, et faire les travaux ménagers, sans un accès adéquat à des services de soutien essentiels.⁸⁵

Dépourvu de politique familiale, le Nouveau-Brunswick n'aide pas suffisamment les familles à concilier les exigences des études, du travail rémunéré et de la vie familiale. En 1970, le rapport de la Commission royale d'enquête sur la situation de la femme au Canada avait recommandé que les établissements postsecondaires développent des programmes pour accommoder les besoins uniques des étudiantes ayant des responsabilités familiales.⁸⁶ Pourtant, les institutions et les responsables de l'enseignement postsecondaire ont tardé à reconnaître les besoins distincts des étudiants avec des personnes à charge.⁸⁷

Au cours des trois dernières décennies, il est devenu plus courant de rencontrer des étudiantes d'âge mûr dans les universités et les collèges communautaires de la province. Comme une femme doit composer avec ses multiples rôles et responsabilités à titre de soutien de famille, de mère et de conjointe, elle est plus susceptible de poursuivre des études à temps partiel. Les

⁸³ Fédération des étudiants et étudiantes du Centre universitaire de Moncton, *Pour une accessibilité réelle: Recommandations auprès de la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick*, avril 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/listememoire.php>; Alliance étudiante du N.-B., *Pour aller de l'avant : Prioriser l'éducation postsecondaire au N.-B.* Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/listememoire.php>

⁸⁴ Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université, *Submission to the New Brunswick Commission on Post-Secondary Education*, avril 2007. Sur Internet: <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/listememoire.php>

⁸⁵ Consulter, par exemple, les conclusions d'une étude sur l'emploi du temps réalisée en 2005 par Statistique Canada résumées dans *Le Quotidien* du 19 juillet 2006. Sur Internet : <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/Francais/060719/q060719b.htm>.

⁸⁶ *Rapport de la Commission royale d'enquête sur la situation de la femme au Canada*, 1970, chapitre 3, recommandation 83.

⁸⁷ Georgian College Institute of Applied Research, Innovation, *Étudiants avec personnes à charge : Pratiques courantes dans les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire du Canada et des États-Unis*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, avril 2005, Sur Internet: <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

parents seuls – des femmes, surtout - formaient 7 % de tous les étudiants postsecondaires néo-brunswickois qui ont reçu des prêts étudiants en 2005-2006.⁸⁸

Les étudiants avec des personnes à charge, et les femmes plus particulièrement, font face à des défis particuliers dans la poursuite de l'éducation postsecondaire, reliés à la conciliation des obligations familiales et des études, et l'accès aux services de soutien.⁸⁹

Dans le cas d'une mère seule, l'équilibre est encore plus difficile à atteindre. Les dix-huit mères seules âgées entre 18 à 35 ans de la Péninsule acadienne qui ont participé à une étude en 2000 ont signalé d'innombrables obstacles auxquels elles font face en entamant et en complétant leur programmes universitaires ou collégiales. Outre le manque d'aide financière adéquate, elles insistaient sur les lacunes en matière des services de garde d'enfants adaptés et de qualité, de logement abordable, de transport, de groupes de soutien et de renseignements concernant les ressources existantes.⁹⁰

Le manque de services de garde d'enfants de qualité et abordables représente, en effet, un problème de taille pour un grand nombre de femmes qui occupent un emploi rémunéré ou qui sont aux études. Actuellement, l'offre de places agréées répond aux besoins de moins de 15 % des enfants néo-brunswickois âgés de 12 ans ou moins. En outre, il est presque impossible pour les femmes qui doivent suivre des cours et étudier en soirée et durant les fins de semaine de trouver des services de garde souples.⁹¹

Un enfant malade ou un parent vieillissant nécessitant des soins représentent souvent une difficulté particulière pour les étudiantes et peuvent les obliger à interrompre ou même à abandonner leurs études, particulièrement si elles suivent un programme de longue durée.⁹²

De plus, les prestations versées à l'occasion d'un congé de maternité ou d'un congé parental ne s'adressent qu'aux personnes qui cotisent à l'assurance emploi et qui peuvent s'en sortir avec 55 % de leurs gains. Les travailleuses autonomes ne sont pas admissibles à ce programme, et les exigences concernant l'accumulation des heures excluent un grand nombre de femmes à faible revenu et de travailleuses vulnérables.⁹³

⁸⁸ Ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail du Nouveau-Brunswick, Direction des services financiers pour étudiants, *Profil statistique 2005-2006 du programme d'aide financière aux étudiants du N.-B.*, p. 10.

⁸⁹ Georgian College Institute of Applied Research and Innovation, *Étudiants avec personnes à charge*.

⁹⁰ Irène Savoie, *Les obstacles rencontrés chez les étudiantes monoparentales de la péninsule Acadienne, âgées entre 18 et 35 ans lors d'un retour aux études postsecondaires*, Réseau des femmes francophones du N.-B., octobre 2000.

⁹¹ Ibid. Voir aussi Conseil des directeurs et directrices du collège communautaire du N.-B., *Mémoire présenté à la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire au Nouveau-Brunswick*, mai 2007, p. 6. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/listememoire.php>

⁹² Des recherches portant sur les étudiantes au doctorat montrent qu'il est plus probable, comparativement aux hommes, que leurs plans de formation soient compromis ou que la quantité de temps consacrée à leurs études soit limitée en raison de problèmes familiaux tels que le décès d'un parent, la naissance d'un enfant ou les responsabilités parentales en général, qui entraînent une augmentation du temps nécessaire pour obtenir leur diplôme ou, dans certains cas, l'abandon de leurs études. Consulter : Sandra W. Pyke « Education and the "Woman question" ». (« Education and the "Woman Question" », en ligne), *Canadian Psychology*, vol. 38, n° 3 (1997), p. 154-163 (consulté le 12 avril 2007). Sur Internet : <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdf?vid=5&hid=103&sid=29aabd16-96b7-43f8-8e17-31cf8f88cb3a%40sessionmgr104>.

⁹³ Women's Network PEI, *Looking Beyond the Surface: An In-Depth Review of Parental Benefits. Final Report; Provincial Focus Groups, New Brunswick Report*, automne 2003. Sur Internet : <http://www.wnpei.org/parentalbenefits/research.html>

2.3. Milieux d'apprentissage peu accueillants

Les femmes qui fréquentent les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire doivent aussi composer avec les difficultés découlant d'une discrimination systématique au sein des milieux d'apprentissage et des lacunes sur le plan des programmes de soutien.

Pour les femmes en quête de formation, les salles de classe dans les collèges communautaires et l'apprentissage en milieu du travail comportent les défis. Des Néo-Brunswickoises ayant participé à des groupes de discussion à l'occasion d'une étude sur les femmes et la formation réalisée par le Conseil consultatif au début des années 1990 ont mentionné avoir éprouvé une série de problèmes avant, pendant et après leur formation, notamment un manque d'information au sujet des cours offerts, un soutien financier et moral inadéquat, un counseling d'emploi déficient et le harcèlement sexiste et sexuel pendant la formation et lors des stages en milieu du travail.⁹⁴ Des études plus récentes sur les femmes et la formation révèlent que ces problèmes persistent.⁹⁵

Des campus universitaires posent également des défis aux apprenantes. Des sondages menés auprès de femmes et d'hommes fréquentant des universités au Canada et aux États-Unis ont permis de découvrir des différences importantes entre les deux groupes en rapport avec leur expérience de la vie universitaire, les femmes se disant désavantagées sur divers aspects liés à la structure et au fonctionnement des établissements d'enseignement.⁹⁶

Le soi-disant « climat peu accueillant » réservé aux femmes dans le monde universitaire se manifeste par un humour sexiste et une vision stéréotypée des femmes, l'emploi d'un langage sexiste, une attention plus grande accordée aux étudiants masculins, à qui l'on s'adresse plus souvent en classe et que l'on invite à participer à la rédaction d'articles, le manque de femmes au sein du corps professoral à titre de modèles et de mentors, et le problème du harcèlement sexuel de la part de collègues masculins et de professeurs.⁹⁷

Le problème du harcèlement sexuel demeure une réalité douloureuse qui persiste sur les campus universitaires. Lors d'un sondage réalisé en 1999 par l'Université de Moncton, Campus de Moncton, 70 % des étudiantes et 55 % des employées ont mentionné avoir été victimes d'au moins un incident lié à un comportement sexiste, au harcèlement sexuel ou à une agression sexuelle.⁹⁸ Les premières politiques officielles concernant ce problème n'ont été mises en place qu'au milieu des années 1980 et, dans la plupart des universités néo-brunswickoises, elles ne remontent pas à plus de dix ans. De fait, l'expression « harcèlement sexuel », si courante de nos jours, n'existait même pas avant le milieu des années 1970, lorsqu'on a commencé à l'utiliser pour décrire l'imposition d'exigences de nature sexuelle dans une relation de pouvoir inégal.

Les femmes membres de groupes désavantagés qui poursuivent leurs études postsecondaires doivent composer avec des barrières supplémentaires ainsi que des défis encore plus grands que d'autres femmes.

⁹⁴ *Une formation qui porte fruit : une étude sur les femmes et la formation à l'emploi au Nouveau-Brunswick*, Moncton, le Conseil, 1994.

⁹⁵ Joan McFarland, « Public Policy and Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick », dans Marjorie Griffin Cohen, éd., *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2003, p. 195-196.

⁹⁶ Pyke, « Education and the "Woman question" ».

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Monique Gauvin, Katherine Marcoccio et Alice Guérette-Breau, Le harcèlement sexiste, le harcèlement sexuel et l'agression sexuelle à l'Université de Moncton : rapport de sondage mené auprès des étudiantes et des employées au Centre universitaire de Moncton, Moncton, Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sur le harcèlement sexuel et sexiste en milieu d'enseignement et d'intervention, février 1999.

Les personnes handicapées font face à des obstacles en raison des contraintes réelles qu'entraînent leurs handicaps, mais aussi en raison de la discrimination et des stéréotypes négatifs dont on fait preuve à leur égard, comme nous le rappelle le Conseil du Premier ministre sur la condition des personnes handicapées dans son mémoire présenté à la Commission sur l'éducation postsecondaire. Ainsi «le nombre d'inscriptions actuelles ne traduit pas fidèlement le nombre de personnes ayant des handicaps qui pourraient profiter» de l'enseignement postsecondaire.⁹⁹

Les défis auxquels font face des personnes autochtones sont complexes et comportent de multiples aspects – du manque de modèles au racisme dans les milieux éducatifs – enracinés dans la situation spécifique des ces individus sur le plan historique, culturel, démographique, géographique et social.¹⁰⁰ Pour les femmes autochtones, de tels problèmes sont reliés à d'autres enjeux, y compris la violence, la santé et l'emploi.¹⁰¹ Il faut s'appuyer sur les partenariats avec des associations communautaires et de défense des droits lorsqu'on développe des politiques et des programmes pour s'adresser à ces multiples sources de désavantage.

Les femmes inscrites à des programmes universitaires non traditionnels, par exemple en génie, et celles qui suivent une formation collégiale dans un métier non traditionnel risquent d'éprouver des difficultés particulières, vu qu'elles sont beaucoup moins nombreuses que les étudiants masculins et que le corps professoral compte peu de modèles féminins. Les professeures, comme les étudiantes, tendent à être concentrées principalement dans les secteurs de l'éducation, des lettres et des sciences humaines, et des sciences sociales. En 2004-2005, dans les universités du Nouveau-Brunswick, seulement 8 % du corps professoral à temps plein en génie et en sciences appliquées et 10 % en mathématiques et en sciences physiques, étaient des femmes.¹⁰² Dans le collège communautaire de notre province, les femmes forment moins de 10 % des instructeurs dans les programmes de métiers, de la technologie et de l'exploitation des ressources naturelles.¹⁰³

Pour corriger le déséquilibre dans les domaines non traditionnels de l'enseignement postsecondaire et de la formation, il est essentiel d'offrir un soutien aux étudiantes. Des efforts ont été déployés pour recruter des étudiantes dans les programmes non traditionnels grâce à des bourses d'études spéciales, à des programmes d'orientation dans les écoles secondaires et à la création de chaires pour les femmes dans des domaines tels que le génie. Toutefois, ces mesures peuvent être minées par un climat souvent hostile aux femmes dans des départements et des facultés dominés par les hommes.

Un élément clé de l'amélioration de la situation des femmes en général dans le milieu postsecondaire consiste à veiller à ce qu'elles puissent consulter des mentors et obtenir d'autres formes de soutien continu pendant leurs études et leur formation. Au cours des années 1970 et 1980 dans certaines provinces, les programmes réservés aux femmes et les programmes de transition permettaient de préparer avec succès les femmes à leur entrée dans des secteurs

⁹⁹ *Améliorer l'accès à l'enseignement postsecondaire pour les personnes ayant des handicaps*, mars 2007, p. 3, 11. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/FR/listememoire.php>

¹⁰⁰ Nouveau-Brunswick, Secrétariat des affaires autochtones, *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, Submission to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick, avril 2007. Sur Internet: <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

¹⁰¹ Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, *L'Égalité et les femmes autochtones*. Un document destiné à guider le Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick dans son travail d'appui des revendications des femmes autochtones. Fredericton, le Conseil, avril 2006.

¹⁰² Base de données de la Commission de l'enseignement supérieur des Provinces maritimes.

¹⁰³ Femmes en tant que pourcentage de tous les instructeurs occupant des postes permanents ou de durée déterminée, automne 2005. Calculés à partir de données fournies par le Service des ressources humaines, ministère de la Formation et du Développement de l'emploi.

jusque là réservés aux hommes.¹⁰⁴ Ces programmes tenaient compte des besoins uniques des femmes à une époque où les initiatives du gouvernement comportaient une attention particulière à la question d'équité sur le marché du travail.¹⁰⁵

Les femmes ont besoin de soutien pour surmonter les difficultés multiples pendant leurs études, mais elles ont davantage besoin de soutien lorsqu'elles se préparent pour, intègrent et cherchent à rester dans les milieux de travail traditionnellement dominés par les hommes. Comme le note l'auteur d'une étude récente sur l'évolution de la formation des femmes au Canada, les programmes qui ne s'adressent pas à ces besoins interreliés ne réussiront pas à contrer les désavantages systémiques que subissent les femmes sur le marché du travail.¹⁰⁶

Les femmes qui désirent occuper un emploi non traditionnel ou conserver un tel emploi doivent encore composer avec les préjugés et la discrimination dans le milieu de travail, étant victimes de harcèlement sexuel ou autre et recevant peu de soutien de la part de leurs collègues, de la direction et de l'employeur.

Selon un récent rapport de recherche du Conseil sectoriel de la construction du Canada portant sur le marché du travail, « les lieux de travail qui ne sont pas aussi accueillants, réceptifs et souples qu'ils ne le devraient » représentent l'un des problèmes ayant entravé la réussite des programmes de formation destinés aux femmes.¹⁰⁷ Des changements importants ne seront constatés que lorsque les industries et les employeurs seront sensibilisés à l'importance d'une culture du travail qui encourage l'intégration des femmes.¹⁰⁸ À cette fin, des employeurs peuvent consulter des guides qui offrent des conseils en matière de recrutement, d'intégration et de maintien des femmes dans les milieux de travail traditionnellement dominés par les hommes, dont des publications de l'association nationale qui n'est plus en activité, Women in Trades and Technology.¹⁰⁹

2.4. Défis uniques posés aux femmes autochtones

L'expérience des femmes autochtones en matière d'études postsecondaires est façonnée par une réalité souvent très différente de celle des autres femmes. Un plus grand nombre de femmes que d'hommes autochtones font des études postsecondaires, mais ces deux groupes continuent à avoir moins de chances de s'inscrire à des études collégiales ou universitaires que les non-Autochtones et leur taux d'abandon est beaucoup plus élevé. Selon une enquête effectuée récemment auprès des diplômés du secondaire, les étudiants autochtones qui détiennent un

¹⁰⁴ Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au N.-B., *Une formation qui porte fruit : une étude sur les femmes et la formation à l'emploi au Nouveau-Brunswick*, Moncton, le Conseil, 1994 ; Voir aussi McFarland, 2003, p. 195-196.

¹⁰⁵ Ursule Critoph, "Who Wins, Who Loses: The Real Story of the Transfer of Training to the Provinces and its Impact on Women," dans Marjorie Griffin Cohen, ed. *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*. Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2003.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *L'offre de main-d'œuvre à venir dans l'industrie canadienne de la construction*, p. 25 et 26. Disponible sur le site Web du Conseil sectoriel de la construction du Canada, http://www.csc-ca.org/fr/whatwedo_1_f.html. Fondé en 2001, cet organisme financé par le gouvernement et l'industrie se consacre au perfectionnement de la main-d'œuvre.

¹⁰⁸ Denise McLean, *Des milieux de travail conviviaux*, préparé pour les ministres fédéral/provinciaux/territoriaux responsables de la condition féminine, 2003. Sur Internet : <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/french/about/fpt.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Voir, par exemple, WITT National Network, *Welcoming Women into Trades, Technology, Operations and Blue-Collar Work : A Checklist of Strategies*, London, Ontario, 2005. Cet organisme de sensibilisation et de défense dédié à la promotion et au soutien du recrutement, de la formation et de l'emploi des femmes s'est employé activement dans les années 1990, mais avait perdu ses subventions fédérales et fermé ses portes dès 2003. Des groupes sont toujours actifs dans certaines provinces, comme la Nouvelle-Écosse et la Saskatchewan.

diplôme d'études secondaires risquent presque deux fois plus que les autres étudiants canadiens de ne pas s'inscrire à des études collégiales ou universitaires ou d'abandonner ces études deux ans après l'obtention de leur diplôme, au Nouveau-Brunswick, au Manitoba, en Saskatchewan et en Alberta.¹¹⁰

D'après le recensement de 2001, 44 % des femmes de 15 ans et plus ayant déclaré une identité autochtone avaient entrepris des études postsecondaires, université, métiers ou autre formation, mais seulement 27 % avaient obtenu un diplôme ou un certificat et 17 % étaient sans diplôme.

Par comparaison, chez les 54 % de femmes non autochtones ayant entrepris des études postsecondaires, 38 % avaient obtenu un diplôme ou un certificat et 16 % étaient sans diplôme.

L'abandon des études est un problème particulièrement grave au niveau universitaire. Au Canada, parmi les femmes ayant fait des études universitaires, le pourcentage des Autochtones sans diplôme (9 %) est supérieur au pourcentage des Autochtones diplômées (5 %), alors que le pourcentage des non-Autochtones sans diplôme (10 %) est inférieur au pourcentage des non-Autochtones diplômées (15 %).¹¹¹

Pour les femmes autochtones, la lutte pour l'égalité « ne peut être dissociée de l'héritage du colonialisme et du racisme, qui continue de marginaliser les Autochtones et de dévaloriser leurs cultures et leurs traditions. »¹¹² Les femmes autochtones doivent également faire face à la discrimination sexuelle dans leurs propres collectivités.

Cette profonde discrimination systémique aggrave davantage une multitude de désavantages socioéconomiques importants, inextricablement liés entre eux, notamment une grande misère et les problèmes de santé qu'elle entraîne, le manque d'accès à un logement adéquat, une fréquence élevée de cas de violence et de mauvais traitements, de faibles niveaux d'éducation et d'emploi et un accès limité au pouvoir politique et aux ressources dans leurs ménages, leurs collectivités et à l'extérieur.¹¹³

Des études montrent que les femmes autochtones perçoivent de plus en plus l'éducation comme un moyen pour elles et pour leurs filles d'échapper, d'une part, à la pauvreté, et d'autre part, aux risques ou à la réalité de la violence entre conjoints.¹¹⁴ L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada (AFAC) a fait observer récemment que « Les femmes autochtones entreprennent parfois des études parce qu'elles ne tolèrent pas la violence dans nos collectivités qu'elles quittent pour

¹¹⁰ Consulter R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd., *Promotion 2003 : Enquête de suivi auprès des élèves du secondaire*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, juin 2007, pages 34 et 35. Sur Internet : www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/070614_class_of_03_fr.pdf ; les données du recensement sur le plus haut niveau de scolarité atteint montrent également des taux de départ élevés. Consulter Jeremy Hull, *Résultats de la population autochtone dans l'enseignement postsecondaire et sur le marché du travail, Canada 2001*, Ottawa, Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, juin 2005. Sur Internet : http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/ra/pse/01/index_f.html.

¹¹¹ Consulter Jeremy Hull, *Les femmes autochtones : Profil d'après le recensement de 2001*, étude préparée pour la Direction des questions féminines et de l'égalité entre les sexes, Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, tableau 4-1, d'après les tableaux de totalisations personnalisées du recensement de 2001 de l'AINC, février 2006. Sur Internet : http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/abw/t4-1_f.html.

¹¹² Table ronde des femmes autochtones sur l'égalité entre les sexes, « Égalité pour les femmes autochtones », convoquée du 30 mars au 1^{er} avril 2000 (dernière mise à jour du rapport le 29 juillet 2003), Ottawa, Condition féminine Canada. Sur Internet : www.cfc-swc.gc.ca/pubs/abwomenroundtable/section3_f.html.

¹¹³ Association des femmes autochtones du Canada, *Companion Document First Ministers' Meeting*, Kelowna (C.-B.), les 24 et 25 novembre 2005, p. 8. Sur Internet : <http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/reports.html>; Conseil consultatif sur la condition de la femme au Nouveau-Brunswick, *L'égalité et les femmes autochtones*, Fredericton (N.-B.), CCCF, avril 2006.

¹¹⁴ Madeleine Dion Stout et Gregory D. Kipling, *Les femmes autochtones au Canada : Orientations de la recherche stratégique en vue de l'élaboration de politiques*, Ottawa, Condition féminine Canada, mars 1998, p. 23. Sur Internet : http://www.cfc-swc.gc.ca/pubs/pubspr/0662634314/index_f.html.

la ville. L'un des rares moyens leur permettant d'avoir accès au soutien de la bande pour se sortir d'une situation violente est l'accès au financement des études. »¹¹⁵ [Traduction]

Un nombre croissant de femmes autochtones désirent poursuivre des études postsecondaires pour améliorer leur vie, mais elles doivent surmonter une formidable série d'obstacles pour s'inscrire à des études et les terminer.

Les difficultés financières restent un obstacle important pour un grand nombre d'étudiants et d'étudiants potentiels malgré les fonds attribués par le gouvernement fédéral pour l'aide aux Indiens de plein droit inscrits dans un établissement d'enseignement postsecondaire au Canada. Le financement par le ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord canadien du Programme d'aide aux étudiants de niveau postsecondaire (PAENP) s'est vu imposer un plafond depuis longtemps. À cause des ressources limitées, il n'est pas possible pour tous les étudiants éventuels d'obtenir les subventions administrées en vertu d'un pouvoir discrétionnaire par les conseils tribaux et les conseils de bandes des Premières Nations et ces subventions sont insuffisantes pour couvrir les frais de scolarité, de subsistance et de déplacement qui augmentent rapidement.¹¹⁶ La population qui vit hors des réserves est particulièrement désavantagée.¹¹⁷ Les étudiants autochtones ont moins de possibilités que les autres de recevoir un soutien financier de leur famille et certains doivent donc se fier aux prêts étudiants et aux revenus d'emploi.¹¹⁸

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada (AFAC) et l'Assemblée des Premières Nations ont demandé une hausse des investissements publics en enseignement postsecondaire et l'élimination des plafonds de financement pour tenir compte de la croissance rapide de la population et de la hausse des coûts.¹¹⁹

La recherche insiste également sur l'importance d'éliminer les obstacles historiques, sociaux, pédagogiques et géographiques qui limitent particulièrement la participation des peuples autochtones aux études postsecondaires.

Des taux élevés d'abandon des études secondaires et une préparation inadéquate au cours de la période de la maternelle à la 12^e année réduisent considérablement le nombre éventuel d'étudiants postsecondaires dans les collectivités autochtones.¹²⁰ La situation est d'autant plus dramatique que la population de jeunes autochtones connaît une croissance rapide. Près du tiers

¹¹⁵ Association des femmes autochtones du Canada, 2005, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Les conseils tribaux ou de bande des Premières Nations établissent les priorités de financement, tiennent les dossiers des étudiants et déterminent l'admissibilité des demandes. Les lignes directrices peuvent varier d'un organisme à l'autre. Gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick, Secrétariat des affaires autochtones, *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, avril 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>; R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd., *La population autochtone et l'éducation postsecondaire : ce que les enseignants ont appris*. Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, janvier 2004, pp. 19-23. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/ResearchSeries.asp>.

¹¹⁷ Le Conseil des peuples autochtones du Nouveau-Brunswick, qui s'occupe de la population vivant hors des réserves, ne reçoit pas de fonds du PAENP, mais il offre une aide financière limitée pour les études postsecondaires par l'entremise de bourses financées par la province et de projets de formation financés en vertu de la Stratégie de développement des ressources humaines autochtones du gouvernement fédéral. Consulter le gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick, Secrétariat des affaires autochtones, *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, avril 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>, et site Web du Conseil des peuples autochtones du Nouveau-Brunswick à <http://education.nbapc.org/pages.asp?pid=149&deptid=4&lid=0>.

¹¹⁸ R.A. Malatest and Associates, *Promotion 2003 : Enquête de suivi auprès des élèves du secondaire*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, juin 2007, pp. 35-36. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/newsevents/newsfull.asp?newsid=125>.

¹¹⁹ AFAC, 2005, p. 7; Assemblée des Premières Nations, *Plan d'action des Premières Nations sur l'éducation*, mai 2005, p. 6. Sur Internet : <http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=110>.

¹²⁰ Michael Mendelson, *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Ottawa, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, juillet 2006, pp. 30-35. Sur Internet : <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications>.

(29 %) de la population du Nouveau-Brunswick ayant déclaré une identité autochtone a moins de 14 ans par comparaison à 18 % pour la population non autochtone.¹²¹ La population des jeunes autochtones croît beaucoup plus rapidement que la proportion des jeunes dans l'ensemble de la population grâce à un taux de natalité d'environ une fois et demie le taux pour l'ensemble du Canada.¹²²

Une enquête effectuée au Canada en 2001 auprès de la population autochtone hors des réserves a montré que les femmes et les hommes abandonnent leurs études secondaires pour des raisons différentes. Le facteur le plus important incitant les jeunes femmes autochtones vivant hors des réserves à abandonner leurs études secondaires était la grossesse ou le soin des enfants (25 %), et l'ennui (15 %). Par opposition, chez les jeunes hommes autochtones de 15 à 19 ans vivant hors des réserves, près de un sur quatre (24 %) déclarait avoir abandonné ses études secondaires parce qu'il s'y ennuyait et 19 % parce qu'ils voulaient travailler.¹²³

Parmi les étudiants qui poursuivent des études au collège communautaire ou à l'université, les Autochtones risquent plus que les non-Autochtones de devoir quitter leurs collectivités, d'avoir des dépenses et de devoir s'éloigner de leurs soutiens familial et social.¹²⁴

De plus, l'héritage laissé par le système de pensionnats et les politiques d'assimilation signifie qu'un grand nombre d'étudiants autochtones ont une profonde méfiance envers les systèmes d'éducation. En outre, ils doivent souvent porter le lourd fardeau des attentes communautaires et familiales, ils n'ont pas d'exemples de modèles de rôles ayant une expérience de l'enseignement postsecondaire et ils manquent de confiance en eux et de motivation.¹²⁵

Sur les campus collégiaux et universitaires, les étudiants autochtones s'efforcent de faire leur chemin dans un milieu où ils sont isolés socialement et où ils font face à des systèmes, des programmes et des services non adaptés à leur culture. Un grand nombre d'entre eux ne se sentent pas bienvenus dans des établissements où ils rencontrent peu d'Autochtones parmi les membres du corps professoral et du personnel de soutien.¹²⁶ Les femmes autochtones sont régulièrement victimes de racisme et de sexisme dans les établissements d'enseignement.¹²⁷

Les responsabilités familiales apparaissent aussi fort importantes pour un grand nombre de femmes autochtones qui poursuivent des études supérieures. Au niveau universitaire et collégial, les étudiantes autochtones ont tendance à être plus âgées que l'étudiant typique et elles risquent plus d'avoir des enfants. Un grand nombre d'entre elles sont des mères de familles monoparentales.¹²⁸ Le soutien et le soin de personnes à charge constituent un obstacle important à l'accès aux études postsecondaires et à l'obtention d'un diplôme.¹²⁹

¹²¹ Statistique Canada, *Recensement de 2001*. N° au catalogue : 97F0011XCB2001001.

¹²² Statistique Canada, *Le Quotidien*, le 28 juin 2005. Sur Internet :

<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/Francais/050628/q050628d.htm>.

¹²³ Statistique Canada, *Enquête auprès des peuples autochtones de 2001 – Premiers résultats : Bien-être de la population autochtone vivant hors réserve*. Sur Internet : http://www.statcan.ca/francais/freepub/89-589-XIF/school_f.htm.

¹²⁴ R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd., *La population autochtone et l'éducation postsecondaire : ce que les enseignants ont appris*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, janvier 2004, p. 14. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹²⁵ R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd., *La population autochtone et l'éducation postsecondaire : ce que les enseignants ont appris*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, janvier 2004, pp. 11-17. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/ResearchSeries.asp>

¹²⁶ Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, *Pour changer le cours des choses : l'amélioration de l'accès aux études postsecondaires des peuples autochtones au Canada*, notes de recherche du millénaire, n° 2, septembre 2005. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/OthePublications.asp>.

¹²⁷ Stout et Kipling, p. 23.

¹²⁸ David Holmes, *Faire place aux différences : l'éducation postsecondaire parmi les autochtones, les personnes handicapées et les personnes ayant des enfants*, Montréal, La Fondation canadienne des

Lors d'une enquête effectuée au Canada en 2001 auprès des peuples autochtones hors des réserves, chez les femmes autochtones de 25 à 44 ans qui avaient entrepris des études postsecondaires sans les terminer, 34 % ont indiqué comme raison de l'abandon des études des obligations familiales, 21 % des raisons financières, 12 % la perte d'intérêt ou de motivation et 8 % l'obtention d'un emploi ou la nécessité de travailler. Quant aux hommes autochtones du même groupe d'âge, environ 1 sur 4 (24 %) a indiqué comme facteur principal de l'abandon des études postsecondaires des raisons financières et seulement 11 % des obligations familiales.¹³⁰

Il est généralement reconnu qu'une hausse du financement ne suffira pas à promouvoir la participation des Autochtones aux études postsecondaires. Une étude récente fondée sur des entrevues avec des éducateurs et sur des visites sur place des établissements d'enseignement conclut que « les établissements devront mieux comprendre les étudiants autochtones et leur réalité avant qu'on assiste à une hausse importante du taux de réussite aux études postsecondaires des membres de ce groupe. »¹³¹

Une grande partie de la recherche met en lumière l'importance d'augmenter le contrôle des Autochtones et leur participation à l'élaboration des programmes d'études, des services et des programmes et le rôle essentiel de la prestation des services dans la communauté. Nous pouvons nous inspirer des initiatives entreprises dans les provinces de l'Ouest, dont les meilleures comprennent des programmes d'accès ciblés pour faciliter la transition et donner une orientation aux apprenants autochtones, de même que des services de soutien pédagogique et personnel visant précisément les Autochtones.¹³² Des mentors et des modèles de rôles, des services de counseling individuel et d'aide scolaire, de l'aide pour le logement, la garde des enfants et le transport, et des renseignements sur l'enseignement postsecondaire adaptés à la culture sont reconnus comme des soutiens essentiels. De nombreuses études insistent également sur l'importance d'améliorer la collecte des données et le suivi des taux d'inscription et de réussite qui, pour l'instant, sont malheureusement très peu appropriés à l'élaboration de politiques.¹³³

bourses d'études du millénaire, février 2005. Sur Internet :

http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/embracing_fr.pdf.

¹²⁹ Consulter, par exemple, Malatest & Associates Ltd., juin 2007, p. 50-51.

¹³⁰ Statistique Canada, *Enquête auprès des peuples autochtones de 2001 – Premiers résultats : Bien-être de la population autochtone vivant hors réserve*. Sur Internet : http://www.statcan.ca/francais/freepub/89-589-XIF/school_f.htm.

¹³¹ R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd., *La population autochtone et l'éducation postsecondaire : ce que les enseignants ont appris*, Montréal, Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, janvier 2004, p. 45. Sur Internet : <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/fr/research/ResearchSeries.asp>.

¹³² Depuis plus de 20 ans, le Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute offre divers programmes et services aux étudiants des Premières Nations à l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick à Fredericton, afin d'essayer de faciliter la transition aux études universitaires et d'encourager la recherche et les publications sur les langues, la culture, l'éducation et l'histoire autochtones. Le site Web de l'institut se trouve à <http://www.unbf.ca/education/mmi/>.

¹³³ Consulter par exemple *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42; R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd., *Pratiques exemplaires permettant d'accroître les taux de scolarisation postsecondaire des autochtones*, rapport préparé pour le Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada), mai 2002. Sur Internet :

<http://www.cmec.ca/postsec/publications.fr.stm>; gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick, Secrétariat des affaires autochtones, *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick*, avril 2007. Sur Internet : <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/listbriefs.php>

3. Conclusion et recommandations

Une inégalité persistante entre les hommes et les femmes sur les plans des revenus et de l'emploi, les responsabilités familiales, la violence, le harcèlement et la sous représentation dans les postes de pouvoir ont des répercussions sur la participation des femmes aux études postsecondaires au Nouveau-Brunswick. Les étudiantes ou étudiantes potentielles autrement désavantagées, notamment les mères seules à faible revenu et les femmes autochtones ou handicapées, sont particulièrement touchées. Il n'est pas concevable, dans le cadre de la réforme de l'éducation postsecondaire, de minimiser l'importance de ces réalités ou de ne pas en tenir compte. L'amélioration de l'égalité entre les groupes est une nécessité sociale et économique et elle devrait être une mesure de la réussite de toute initiative d'intérêt public.

Par conséquent, il est décevant de noter que ni le cadre de référence de cette étude ni le document de discussion ne traitent des préoccupations concernant l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes. Le manque de données ventilées selon le sexe dans la section du site Web de la Commission portant sur les données de recherche dissimule les tendances en matière de participation selon les sexes et esquive la question des mesures tenant compte de ces différences. Depuis les dernières années, les femmes ne semblent plus être sur l'écran radar du gouvernement dans le domaine des politiques en matière d'éducation postsecondaire et de formation. Nous espérons que les mesures prises récemment, par exemple les bourses d'études du Plan d'action sur l'écart salarial, sont les premières étapes de la redécouverte d'une approche plus proactive et centrée sur les femmes.¹³⁴

Dans le système postsecondaire, les femmes ne sont pas sur un pied d'égalité avec les hommes. Les obstacles systémiques dans les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire et la société en général continuent d'esquisser les tendances en matière d'éducation et de formation. Le fossé entre les genres observé dans le secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire entraîne des coûts élevés sur le plan individuel et pour la société, contribuant à une rémunération et des revenus de pension moins élevés pour les femmes, à une utilisation inefficace des ressources humaines, à l'intensification de la pénurie de main-d'œuvre qualifiée et à la réduction de la productivité en général.

Les femmes sont gravement sous représentées dans certains programmes de formation dans les métiers et les secteurs des sciences et de la technologie, qui offrent de meilleures perspectives d'emploi, elles sont plus susceptibles que les hommes d'étudier à temps partiel et ce sont elles qui ressentent les effets de l'absence de politiques favorables à la famille. Au cours des dernières décennies, il est devenu plus courant de rencontrer des étudiants adultes dans les universités et les collèges communautaires de la province. Dans le cas des parents, particulièrement les chefs de famille monoparentale, l'équilibre est difficile à atteindre. Le manque de services de garde souples et abordables représente un problème de taille pour les parents qui poursuivent des études. De plus, les prestations versées à l'occasion d'un congé de maternité ou d'un congé parental ne s'adressent qu'aux personnes qui cotisent à l'assurance emploi et qui peuvent s'en sortir avec 55 % de leurs gains. Dépourvu de politique familiale, le Nouveau-Brunswick n'aide pas suffisamment les familles à concilier les exigences des études, du travail rémunéré et de la vie familiale.

Il est temps de mettre en œuvre une stratégie globale en matière d'éducation postsecondaire incluant des mesures axées sur les femmes en vue de favoriser leur formation, leur intégration et leur maintien en poste dans des secteurs dominés par les hommes. Des mesures tenant compte des besoins des femmes sont essentielles, car ces dernières doivent surmonter des obstacles spécifiques, notamment le harcèlement et la discrimination dans la classe et au travail, sans parler des obstacles auxquelles la plupart d'entre elles font face, par exemple une part plus

¹³⁴ Noter que le livre blanc sur l'éducation postsecondaire publique produit en 2005 à Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador est l'une des rares études gouvernementales récentes demandant aux établissements d'améliorer la situation des femmes dans les collèges et les universités.

grande des responsabilités familiales et un accès limité à des services de garde de qualité et abordables.

Pendant des années, les organisations féminines au Canada ont préconisé [traduction] « un système uniforme de formation et de services d'adaptation (comportant de nombreux points d'accès et des services non liés aux programmes de soutien du revenu) comme le type de système répondant le mieux aux divers besoins des femmes en matière de formation et d'adaptation. »¹³⁵ Une approche intégrée est aussi nécessaire dans le domaine de l'éducation universitaire et dans l'ensemble du secteur postsecondaire.

Par conséquent, le Conseil consultatif recommande :

- Que les autorités provinciales responsables des programmes d'éducation, de travail et de services sociaux, en collaboration avec leurs homologues fédéraux et en consultation et en partenariat avec les groupes communautaires et les organismes de femmes autochtones, entreprennent une évaluation des besoins et élaborent un plan d'action incluant des politiques et des programmes appropriés pour faire la promotion de la participation entière et équitable des femmes autochtones à l'enseignement postsecondaire. Un système de collecte de données ventilées selon le sexe doit également être élaboré et mis en place aux fins du suivi des taux d'inscription et de réussite et de la surveillance des résultats des programmes destinés aux apprenants autochtones.
- Que le ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail veille à ce que des données statistiques comparables sur l'aide financière aux étudiants, les inscriptions et les taux d'abandon et d'achèvement des études soient recueillies dans les collèges communautaires et les universités du Nouveau-Brunswick, et ce, pour les femmes et les hommes ainsi que divers groupes de femmes et d'hommes (Autochtones, handicapés, chefs de famille monoparentale), à ce que cette information soit mise à la disposition du public et à ce qu'on en tienne compte au moment de l'élaboration des politiques.
- Que le ministère de l'Éducation postsecondaire, de la Formation et du Travail relève les besoins et les préoccupations des femmes et de divers groupes de femmes en ce qui a trait à l'accès et à la participation aux études postsecondaires, en collaboration avec les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire et les groupes communautaires.
- Que les autorités provinciales chargées de l'éducation, du travail et des programmes sociaux élaborent et mettent en oeuvre une stratégie coordonnée en vue d'assurer la participation entière et égale des femmes à l'éducation postsecondaire. Ce cadre inclurait les éléments suivants, sans toutefois s'y limiter :
 - Des mesures de recrutement efficaces afin de favoriser et de soutenir la participation des femmes dans les domaines des sciences appliquées et physiques, des mathématiques, de la technologie et des métiers spécialisés. Des mesures de liaison spécifiques devraient être axées sur les groupes grandement sous représentés, par exemple les femmes autochtones et les femmes handicapées.
 - Un investissement public accru dans le domaine de l'éducation postsecondaire et de la formation, y compris dans des programmes d'alphabétisation pour les adultes, le financement étant lié à des objectifs en matière d'équité.

¹³⁵ Karen Lior et Susan Wismer, « Still Shopping for Training: Women, Training and Livelihoods » dans Marjorie Griffin Cohen, éd., *Training the Excluded for Work : Access and Equity for Women, Immigrants, First Nations, Youth and People with Low Income*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2003, p. 219. Consulter aussi : Susan Wismer, *Women's Education and Training: A Policy Analysis*, Toronto, CLOW, 1988.

- Le remaniement du système d'aide financière aux étudiants de sorte à offrir une plus grande proportion de subventions immédiates fondées sur les besoins et non remboursables et de bourses d'études déterminées en fonction des droits de scolarité et des frais de subsistance réels, ainsi que des mesures de contrôle des droits de scolarité.
- Des modifications au programme d'assurance emploi afin d'étendre l'admissibilité aux prestations de maternité et parentales aux mères et aux parents qui poursuivent des études, les dispositions sur les congés étant garanties par les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire.
- La création de places agréées à prix abordable dans des garderies situées sur les campus et à l'extérieur de ceux-ci et offrant un horaire souple pour les parents qui étudient.
- La prestation de services de soutien améliorés, notamment des programmes de mentorat et des groupes de soutien par les pairs, à l'intention des femmes dans les collèges, les universités et les milieux d'apprentissage, particulièrement dans les domaines d'études et de formation non traditionnels. Des services seraient élaborés à l'intention des étudiantes autochtones et des étudiantes handicapées, lesquels seraient fondés sur un modèle de services et de soutien axé sur la collaboration et établissant un partenariat avec les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire et d'autres organismes et groupes.
- La préparation et la diffusion de ressources faciles à consulter au sujet des possibilités d'apprentissage et des programmes et services existants.

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