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EDUCATION FOR THE METIS OF MANITOBA

EDUCATION BRANCH  
RESEARCH DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

BACKGROUND:

Through a series of historical accidents, the people of Indian ancestry in Manitoba are legally divided into two categories, those who are registered with the federal government as Indians under the Indian Act, and those who are not. These latter can further be divided: many have entered the cultural mainstreams of Manitoba life, and are indistinguishable from their fellow citizens as a whole, while those who have not generally occupied the lowest socio-economic class of our society, are racially stereotyped, and are the subjects of much prejudice and discrimination. These are the Metis.

The University of Manitoba has decided to adopt special measures to recruit and sustain Indian and Metis students at the university. This is part of a general, intensive program of furthering education and broadening educational opportunities in the province, and is aimed in part at those individuals who live in grave poverty with only limited facilities to prepare them for life in a complex society such as ours.

THE PROBLEM:

At the moment there are somewhat more readily-identifiable Metis in Manitoba than there are registered Indians, by conservative estimate, about 35,000 people. Registered Indians have certain benefits in law, notably through the economic support of the Indian Affairs Branch. This applies to Indian students as well: their financial costs for attending university are all normally met by the Indian Affairs Branch. The Metis, however, are not quite so fortunate. They do not enjoy any special benefits of law, and do not receive any financial assistance of any kind from any agency as Metis. In general the economic plight of the identifiable Metis of this province is even worse than that of registered Indians. Unlike Indian students, though, Metis students do not receive any special counselling or financing to enable them to attend university. Further, the average cost of attending university, ranging from \$1200 to as much as \$3100 annually, is well beyond the means of the vast majority of these people. The result is reflected in the enrollment statistics of the University of Manitoba: the Indian Affairs Branch lists 7 Indian students here, while the Manitoba Metis Federation is aware of only six Metis people engaged in university studies at this university.

A PROPOSAL:

I propose that we establish a comprehensive recruitment, support and counselling program for Metis students for this university. This would involve three factors:

- 1) The active recruitment of prospective students throughout the province, through normal recruitment channels such as school guidance counsellors; through special publicity measures such as a brochure designed specifically for prospective Metis students; and through the local organizations, field officers, and headquarters of the Manitoba Metis Federation,

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Such a program would actively seek adults as prospective students under the mature admissions policy, as well as current high school students throughout the province.

Although it is difficult to impose too many social limitations upon selection procedures, we would hope to recruit Metis students who would be most likely to make positive contributions through their university educations to their residential communities, as well as to the larger community of Manitoba as a whole.

Hopefully the admission requirements for prospective Metis students would be interpreted flexibly and in an especially liberal manner. This could best be done by a Special Admissions Committee which could also administer a bursary program for Metis students in consultation with the admissions officers of the various faculties and schools of the university.

2) We would have to provide full financial support for all students recruited under this program. I suggest that this could best be done in two ways:

- a) For single students, we could provide bursaries ranging from \$1200 to \$3000 varying with the particular academic program, the area where the student normally resides, and the special needs of individual students.
- b) For married students, or those with dependents, we could provide bursaries ranging up to \$6000 per year, again based upon individual need, thus enabling these students either to support their families in Winnipeg or elsewhere, or allowing them to move their families to Winnipeg, supporting them here.

These bursary programs should be adjustable to the particular economic circumstances of the students. That is, no student should ever be forced to withdraw from university during an academic program for purely financial reasons. This is particularly important in any special or experimental program. Similarly adequate support must be ensured for summer periods, either through employment or through additional bursaries to support summer session study when possible.

At the same time, all students, particularly those without family financial responsibilities, should be encouraged to apply for assistance under the Canada Student Loan Plan, although student counsellors might wish to consider individual and family dept loads in advising individuals on this. Existing scholarships and loan funds should be utilized as well, where applicable.

It is critical to note that we can only ensure proper moral support for the students, and hence a successful educational program, if we are absolutely able to prevent these students from suffering financially. Although the concept of student hardship is still widely held to be spiritually nourishing, it is nonetheless demonstratably an impediment to sound and successful education.

And, we must bear in mind that in a program for Metis students, thus concerned with people who must overcome very great socio-cultural obstacles if they are to attain positions of respect in the wider community, we must be particularly certain that financial hardship does not occur.

- 3) We must establish a specific counselling service for these students, remembering that we will be especially recruiting and financing them because they are Metis and thus constitute a special category of student. It would therefore be proper for the university to appoint special counsellors for these students, to work under the aegis of the Student Counselling Service and in co-operation with the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Indian-Metis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg. Proper support ideally would include guarantees of residence accommodation for single students (or married students alone in the city), and assistance in obtaining suitable accommodation for families from outside the city. Indeed, in many circumstances it might be best to provide residential accommodation for students whose homes are actually in Winnipeg, if the homes were for some reason unsuitable for students in programs of this nature.

A TEST PROGRAM:

Ideally, a five year test program should be undertaken on this. However, the limitations of time suggest that is not a realistic possibility at the moment if the university is to begin such a program for the 1970-1971 academic year. Accordingly, I propose an immediate one year program as follows:

I suggest that we apply to the University Grants Commission for a supplementary grant of \$110,000 for the academic year 1970-71. This would be utilized as follows:

1) Brochure for prospective Metis students.....	\$	1,000
2) Bursaries for 20 single Metis students, allowing \$2500 per student.....		50,000
3) Bursaries for 10 married Metis students, allowing \$5000 per student.....		50,000
4) Travel allowances and contingency funds, on loan basis, allowing \$300 per student.....		9,000
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	TOTAL	\$110,000

Of this sum, the university could expect to receive approximately \$28,000 in fees and residence assessments from students. Thus the non-recoverable total would be somewhere in the region of \$73,000. Naturally, if we were able to reduce the average amounts of the bursaries on the basis of individual needs, as would probably be likely to a limited extent, then both the number of students assisted and the amount of recoverable funds would increase.

The average minimum number of years required in our programs, including pre-professional studies, is 3.8. We would have to plan on supporting these students for that period of time at least.

A five year program, including the above but with an increasing number of students, based upon a four year study period and steady costs, would involve considerable sums. These are indicated in Table I and Table II. Both Tables are based upon figures indicating accommodation fees of \$670 and tuition fees of \$450, and include an annual \$10,000 contingency loan fund. Column 6 of Table I indicates the amounts of grants required annually over a five year period for a program of this magnitude. Column 5 of Table II indicates the estimated amounts of grants required if all fees payable to the university by students were placed in a separate fund. This latter is probably not feasible. Column 8 of Table I indicates the total costs involved after deduction of monies payable to the university in fees. It would seem to me that the initial figure of \$73,000 to support 20 single persons and 10 families who are particularly deserving is extremely modest in terms of the educational rewards achievable by such a program.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

There is currently an active Counselling Service in the university. We have residence accommodation for over 1000 students, and it would appear that University College might be willing to assist in providing residence space for deserving Metis students under this program.

The Counselling Service of the university is willing to undertake normal counselling duties for these students, taking note of the fact that they are Metis and may face special problems arising from a combination of poverty and their socio-cultural position in the province. Reverend Adam Cuthand, President of the Manitoba Metis Federation, has agreed to assist in recruiting the students, and will act as a counsellor for them.

RESOURCES NEEDED:

The only actual obstacle in the way of such a program is the current lack of funds. Virtually all persons fully aware of the deplorable socio-economic situation of the Metis of Manitoba would agree that special measures of this sort are necessary. I therefore propose that the University Grants Commission be asked for a grant of \$110,000 for the first year of the program. Further grants on a longer term basis should be considered in a later proposal either to the University Grants Commission or to the provincial Department of Education.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
YEAR OF STUDY	NEW STUDENTS SINGLE MARRIED		STUDENTS GRADUATING	STUDENTS ENROLLED	TOTAL FUNDS REQUIRED	TOTAL FUNDS RECOVERABLE	TOTAL COSTS
1970-71	20	10	---	30	\$ 110,000	\$ 37,000	\$ 73,000
1971-72	25	10	---	65	222,500	69,625	152,875
1972-73	30	10	---	105	347,500	107,875	239,175
1973-74	30	15	30	150	497,500	148,350	349,150
174-75	35	15	35	170	560,000	167,500	392,500

TABLE I: FIVE YEAR PROJECTION OF SPECIAL BURSARIES AND LOAN FUNDS FOR METIS STUDENTS.

1	2	3	4	5
YEAR OF STUDY	STUDENTS ENROLLED	TOTAL FUNDS REQUIRED	RECOVERABLE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	NEW GRANT REQUIRED
1970-71	30	\$ 110,000	\$ -----	\$ 110,000
1971-72	65	222,500	37,000	185,500
1972-73	105	347,500	69,625	277,875
1973-74	150	497,500	107,875	389,500
1974-75	170	560,000	148,350	411,650

TABLE II: GRANTS REQUIRED IF ALL RECOVERABLE FUNDS PAID TO CENTRAL FUND. NO INTEREST CALCULATED.