

Women in northern
Saskatchewan



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WOMEN IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN:

A component of the Prairie
Northlands Study

prepared for the Department of
Regional Economic Expansion



Preface

I would like to thank all of the women of northern Saskatchewan who took the time and effort to attend the meetings. Particularly I would like to thank the following women without whose assistance I would have been lost:

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The opinions expressed herein are mine alone. For anyone without the time or inclination to struggle through this apologetically verbose and unabashedly opinionated report, Section 14 summarizes the recommendations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Northern Saskatchewan is an underdeveloped or, in government parlance, an economically depressed region. It clearly manifests the symptoms of economic and social colonization: few jobs, those available being in capital-intensive resource exploitive industries and held primarily by colonizers; export of raw materials; high rates of unemployment and underemployment; poor housing; inadequate transportation system; lack of amenities and services; high disease rates; high birth rates; low educational achievement levels; few tools for self-government; decisions affecting the life and growth of the region taken outside the area to benefit, primarily, the colonizer; concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the colonizer; and, finally, the sine qua non of colonies - the colonizer and colonized are of different races.¹

In an attempt to integrate the colonized north into the fabric of Canada, the Department of Northern Saskatchewan and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion are jointly preparing a comprehensive development plan, "Prairie Northlands", for northern Saskatchewan. This study, prepared under D.R.E.E. Contract No. 1797, is one small part of the overall preliminary plan.

In previous development plans, prepared by D.R.E.E. and the provinces, there has been no recognition of the needs or desires of women in the development regions. However, society's increasing awareness of women's unique problems lead the Department of Regional Economic Expansion to the decision to include, in this plan, a component devoted exclusively to women in northern Saskatchewan.

1. Data Base Northern Saskatchewan. Ottawa: Department of Regional Expansion. 1973.

This study is the result of that decision.

The terms of reference of the study are as follows:

- a) To identify and describe the women's organizations operating in northern Saskatchewan, and to determine their structure and membership.
- b) To review the employment situation as it relates to women in northern Saskatchewan and to determine the factors having a negative influence on the involvement of women in the work force.
- c) To suggest means by which women can participate as equal partners with men in the socio-economic development of northern Saskatchewan.
- d) To evaluate the findings and make recommendations for the development of practical programs aimed at helping women (native and white) of northern Saskatchewan.

2. METHODOLOGY

The author chose two general methods of data collection for this study: questionnaires and group interviews.

Two questionnaires, Appendixes 1 and 2 were mailed. The employer questionnaire was sent to 240 business establishments. Ninety-four replies were received - a response rate of about 40%. This is a surprisingly high rate for this type of questionnaire. The organization questionnaire was sent to 26 women's groups in northern Saskatchewan. Only two replies were received.

Group interviews were conducted in Uranium City, Stony Rapids, Black Lake, La Loche, Turnor Lake, Buffalo Narrows, Ile a la Crosse, Beauval, Green Lake, Cumberland House, Sandy Bay, Pelican Narrows, Creighton, and Stanley Mission for a total of 17 interviews. Wherever possible, these meetings were set up through a woman's group. In communities where no groups existed, meetings were arranged through SWIG workers or local contacts.

Arrangements for meetings with women proved, in general, to be dissatisfactory. I should have made two trips to each community - the first to organize a meeting, the second to hold it. As it was done, I had to both organize and conduct meetings at the same time, thus limiting the number of women informed about the meetings.

The meetings, held in community halls, were attended by about 150 women. I conducted the meetings in a quite unstructured fashion, attempting to stimulate discussion among the groups rather than follow a question and answer format. However, this was not always possible, several meetings were deserts of silence. Certainly language and race differences played a considerable part in the reluctance of the women to speak. The speed with

which meetings were called and held also contributed to the silence. The women simply had not enough time to consider the programs and facilities they required. In addition, these meetings, I was informed, were the first ever held for women. The novelty was both a hinderance and a drawing point. I expect most of the women who attended the meetings did so out of curiosity but once there were not overly talkative due to their unfamiliarity with such situations. On the positive side, the fact that a woman was talking to women was of considerable assistance in the meetings. I was unique, the first woman to conduct a meeting in most communities. As well, I doubt I was seen as either threatening or powerful i.e. the women were not as nervous, as they might have been with a white man.

I ensured that the following items, at least, were touched upon in all meetings: women's organizations; recreation; health; housing; employment; continuing education; child care; and infrastructure. The similarity of requests and needs mentioned in the meetings was quite remarkable, particularly given the equally remarkable differences between communities. This would seem to indicate either lack of validity in the data, or the complete lack of programs designed to meet even the most basic of women's needs. I suspect the latter to be the case.

3. OVERVIEW OF WOMEN IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN

The following is a personal, subjective look at the status of women in northern Saskatchewan. It results from both my travels this summer and my own experiences. In no way do I claim this view to represent more than my opinions.

Women of all classes face similar tasks and duties, that is the role definition woman overrides class barriers. All women are expected to bear and raise children, to nourish their families physically, psychologically, and spiritually, to maintain a stable family structure; to ensure the physical well being of hearth and home. However, similar this role definition is, the carrying out of these duties varies greatly among classes. The wealthy buy the means of producing services, the poor, as usual, produce these services themselves under conditions of terrible need.

Poverty strikes its hardest blow at women. In northern Saskatchewan poor women, colonized women, must cope with housing that is inadequate; they must provide meals and clothing on ridiculous budgets, they must maintain marriages under the incredible stress of poverty; they must ensure the well-being of their families against overwhelming odds. Yet they are held at fault when a marriage breaks down due to the stress of poverty; when a child contracts an unavoidable disease under conditions where even the most rudimentary sanitary precautions require hours of back-breaking work; when a child fails in an educational system not designed for him; when houses not built to withstand the climate begin to disintegrate; when they can not get to work because of a lack of proper child care facilities; when their families are malnourished because they cannot afford an adequate

diet. To do the miraculous is the given role of poor women. There is no reward for success, only condemnation for failure.

Coping successfully with such conditions, it is not surprising that I found the women of northern Saskatchewan to be extraordinarily strong and courageous individuals. And yet women are ignored, maligned and relegated to the home as their sole base of operation. The dominance of this prejudice is almost unchallenged. It is accepted as natural by both men and women. Thus the definitions of good and evil, the myths, the values, the directions for growth, the beliefs, in effect the dominant world view, are male. Northern Saskatchewan has not only rejected the skills and knowledge of one half its population but has rejected "female" modes of being. Consequently the region suffers.

I make this statement to impress upon governments, the intensity of the women's needs. The women of northern Saskatchewan have been neglected for far too long.

4. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

The question of women's involvement in development is subsumed under the larger issue of "people" participation. In order to elucidate the "how" of participation, certain assumptions about the "why" must be made. Surely the goal of people participation in development is to reverse the trend and bring decision-making back home. This requires a substantial transfer of power to the people of the development region, since decision-making is the behavioral manifestation of power.

The first D.R.E.E. attempts at participation were simply informing people of the development scheme. Over time the concept has developed a more active role for people, that of making suggestions concerning the orientation and content of the plan, as evidenced by this study. Participation has yet to extend to the decision-making level, but it must, to be effective.

I am not, however, suggesting that the people be asked to draw up a development scheme. This is the job of technicians. The people of the region should be presented with several general development schemes with alternative goals and methods. The choice of the scheme to be followed should be the decision of the people. This, of course, is an utopian idea, however a close approximation to this scheme should be possible.

The above suggestion does not, however, ensure that women will be active participants in the decision-making process. Since women do not appear to participate to any great extent, at present, in the life of their communities, it is unlikely that they will do so without special programs designed to encourage their active involvement. The myriad reasons for ~~women's uninvolvement seem to be reduced to their basic state~~

of powerlessness. They, generally, lack the habit and confidence of power. Thus, it is intensely important that power be transferred to women, as a group, if their participation is desired.

Therefore, I recommend that, over the life of the plan, money be allocated to women in each community to be directed towards those programs and projects of most benefit to them. If two dollars per female were allocated to women in each community, the cost would be, using S.H.S.P. 1971 data, \$11,590.00. This seems a very reasonable sum given the benefits likely to accrue from such an action. Women would need to organize a group to administer the fund; they would have to carefully consider their needs in order to allocate the fund, they would gain practical experience in the exercise of power, and the success of any program would be more probable since the program would not be imposed from outside. Additionally, this method of distributing funds would relieve the planners of the task of allocating money for specific continuing education general interest programs for each community.

5. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The organization questionnaire was mailed to 26 women's groups in northern Saskatchewan. Only two replies were received. In my travels I discovered that four groups had dissolved and there were four groups missed in the survey. Of the existing groups, 18 are in La Ronge, Creighton, and Uranium City.

The groups, most of which are affiliated with religious institutions, have two major goals: to meet recreation needs, primarily those of children, or to meet church needs. Not surprisingly, most of the groups are losing support and members; they do not attempt to meet women's needs. It is a time of transition for northern women's organizations. As the old, church affiliated groups are dying, the Native Women's Movement has begun an organizational drive in northern Saskatchewan.

Since there was considerable interest in the development of women's groups in most of the communities and since the Native Women's Movement is in the process of developing such groups, I recommend that a grant of \$5,000.00 per year be made to this organization to encourage the formation of local, northern chapters. The Native Women's Movement can not only organize women in each community but it can facilitate communication between women in the northern communities. In addition, the Native Women's Movement is directed towards precisely those women whose needs are the greatest and who now have the fewest organizations - colonized women. White women, who are concentrated in La Ronge, Uranium City, and Creighton, are fairly well-organized and their needs are not great.

The participation recommendation also requires the organization of women's groups in all communities. These organizations should

develop from a women's public meeting, rather than as part of existing groups.

6. RECREATION

"We have nothing for kids, let alone women".

Bingo and movies appear to be the major recreational outlets for women in most communities. Although women showed little interest in recreation programs for themselves, there was a general desire for recreational programs and facilities for children.

Specific requests for recreational facilities will be dealt with in Appendix 3 and should, I expect, be included in the development plan under the infrastructure proposals. However it should be noted that all communities have halls, a legacy of Canada's centennial, which could presently be used for some form of recreation were a program in place. But there is no planned recreation program in the north and none, that I have ascertained, being planned.

Since children's recreational programs are a concern of women, I am including the following recommendations:

- a) Salaries and travelling expenses for five recreation directors, one for each of the Northern Municipal Council regions, be made available to the Northern Municipal Council to organize and conduct recreation programs in each area. Southern rural municipalities are often supplied funds for such a purpose. For one year, this recommendation would cost \$60,000.00 at \$8,000.00 salary per recreation director and \$4,000.00 travelling expenses each (it is extremely costly to travel in the north).
- b) Once recreation directors have been hired and have assessed their needs, a fund of \$20,000.00 be set up to hire travelling sports instructors. These instructors

could both teach the sport to children and teach the techniques of teaching the sport to adults.

- c) Funds for summer children's recreation programs be made available to each community, perhaps through O.F.Y. grants or the S.W.I.G. program.
- d) Efforts be made to encourage recreation-oriented national groups, such as the Y.M.-Y.W.C.A. to expand their operations to northern Saskatchewan.

7. HEALTH

"In this day and age why should people die because there is no doctor?"

The rate of illness in northern Saskatchewan is appallingly high: 457 separations per 1000 persons insured compared to 247 separations in Saskatchewan. The major illness leading to hospitalization is, in the north, respiratory disease. In Saskatchewan total, the leading cause is circulatory diseases. Such differences are highlighted in the younger ages. For example, one half of all hospitalizations in the north are of children under the age of 15 and fully 37% under the age of 5. In Saskatchewan total only 29% of the hospitalizations are of children under 15 and 19% of children under 5. Additionally the infant death rate per 100 live births is, in northern Saskatchewan, an abysmal 59.5; this rate is 38.1 in the south. (All figures taken from Data Base, Northern Saskatchewan op. cit.).

Many of the health problems are linked to the disgraceful living conditions the good burghers of Canada have decided are good enough for the Indians of northern Saskatchewan. The houses are both damp and cold. Often it is possible to heat only one room, so extreme differences in temperature exist within a home - a condition often leading to respiratory ailments, particularly in young children.

Practically the only homes in northern Saskatchewan to have water and sewers are those of the white population. Conditions of sanitation must suffer when water has to be hauled and heated. Thus there are many skin ailments, commonly related to dirt and malnutrition - particularly among children. In many communities, water is drawn from the same area where sewage is dumped, precipitating many digestive diseases. I find

it surprising that typhus is not more prevalent. Finally the cost of food is so high and, in many communities, the supply of foodstuffs so limited that a nutritious diet is impossible.

As could be expected, medical services leave much room for improvement. At present, there are six doctors in northern Saskatchewan, three in La Ronge, two in Uranium City, and one in Ile a la Crosse. Typically the white population is well, if not, over-serviced. People outside these communities may see a doctor at a clinic one half day every two weeks, or, as on the east side, not at all.

I, therefore, recommend that two doctors, one to be stationed in La Loche where there is a hospital and one on the east side, be hired by the government. In Newfoundland, where this is done, doctors are paid an annual salary of \$25,000.00. The government could guarantee a yearly income of at least that amount. The high rate of illness and total medical coverage would probably provide higher incomes than this to doctors in any case. This is only an interim measure. Doctors apparently do not wish to work in northern Saskatchewan because of the isolation and lack of city amenities. To provide long-term medical care, I suggest the establishment of medical scholarships for northerners who wish to remain in the north.

There are no dentists in the north. Children's dental care is provided through the school. This leaves adults with a long and expensive journey to get dental care. Again I recommend that the government hire and equip a dentist to work in northern Saskatchewan. A salary of \$25 - 30,000.00 should attract someone. A dental scholarship to an interested northerner wishing to remain in the north plus a guaranteed job with a government dental

program is probably a wise investment for the future dental health of the north.

At present an eye specialist supposedly visits northern communities once a year. In some towns, he has not been seen for three years. This program should be expanded to ensure his appearance at least once a year in all northern communities.

The front-line medical staff in the north is the public health nurse. At present there are (I believe) 11 such nurses. They have a very demanding job, one of great significance in the lives of most northerners. But they are too few. They seldom have the opportunity to work in the area of preventative medicine, they are overwhelmed with emergencies. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has instituted a community health worker program whose function seems to be health education. An expansion of this program to all of northern Saskatchewan would probably relieve some of the public health nurse's load as well as providing some employment for northerners.

The public health nurse situation is, I am told, at a critical point. Many of the present nurses are retiring. Replacements come directly from nursing school into a situation entirely different from that of hospital nurses. Given the multiplicity of medical problems they face and the high degree of medical sophistication required, I suspect the regular nurse training program to be poor preparation for public health nursing. Therefore I suggest that the profession of public health nurse be upgraded, and that specialized training, including mid-wifery, be required of all public health nurses in, at least, those communities where the nurse is the sole medical authority. Certainly the way not to upgrade this extremely vital service is shown by

the N.H. & W., with the connivance of P.I.P.S., which has raised Saskatchewan public health nurses' salaries by the munificent amount of 1%.

Living with this lack of medical services, women expressed an interest in a home nursing program, the interest varying inversely with the supply of medical services. They want enough knowledge to be able to judge if a child's illness is serious enough to warrant an arduous, costly trip to a doctor, to properly care for their sick or injured family. Therefore I recommend that a home nursing course be offered, first in those communities with limited health services.

There are four hospitals, one without a doctor, and six outpost hospitals in northern Saskatchewan. The outpost hospitals are underutilized because of a decision, taken in the south, that all persons must be hospitalized, thus barring over night stays in them. However practical this decision was in the south, it has had serious consequences in the north. I was told several horror tales of seriously ill persons being sent home because they could not stay in the hospital and could not be flown out. What a waste of a physical plant to leave these unutilized and how much danger to those the hospitals service, all due to a decision taken to meet southern requirements.

Another consequence of the decision to limit the hospitals to outpatient service only, much deplored by women, is the necessity to go to hospitals for child birth. Many women had their children in these outpost hospitals and would like to do so again. The greatest problem hospitalization poses is child care while they are away. It is extremely difficult to find reliable babysitters and many women delay departure as long as possible

because of this, creating, I imagine, some rather tense trips.

Therefore I recommend that, in the north, the outpost hospitals again be allowed to take in-patients in emergency situations and in the case of normal births if the nurse has had special mid-wife training. If this proposal is implemented, nurses aides will be required at each facility, thus creating a few more jobs for women and necessitating a training program.

As mentioned earlier, nutrition undoubtedly plays a large role in the incidence of disease in the north. Food costs in the north are astonishing: 10 lbs. of potatoes cost \$4.00; 1 doz. eggs cost \$1.45; 1 lb, hamburger costs \$1.85; and food prices appear to be rising faster here than the consumer price index. Additionally, the variety of food stuffs is limited and becomes more so in the far north of the province. There, fresh vegetables are a rarity, fresh fruit is available in the summer if you pick it, and fresh meat if you catch it.

Unfortunately, I have not the expertise or data to make suggestions concerning the dietary adequacy of available food in the north. However to bring the price of food to a more reasonable level, the transport of essential goods should be subsidized. Transportation subsidies are certainly not unknown in Canada.

Although I have made few references to women in this section, each of the needs and suggestions has come out of the meetings I held.

8. HOUSING

Housing conditions in northern Saskatchewan are appalling. The anger, disgust, and dismay caused by the housing situation are best illustrated in the words of northern women.

"They are summer cottages. That's all they really are, summer houses."

"Why should the government build houses, and us poor Indians get them, out of cheap board and pay through the teeth?"

"Look at the DNS house they got build up there. It's different than our houses."

"They steam inside and they get wet and things mildew."

"Water drips from the lightbulbs."

"One they had to tear out the inside and fix it again because it was rotting away."

"The floor fell through."

"When you get up in the morning, 60 below zero, and the kids have to go to school. Nobody dares stick their head out of bed because its so cool. It's not a laughing matter when people have to live like that. Look at the facilities they have to live with out south: warm all night, flush the water. And us - we have to break the ice in the norning to make tea. There's no excuse for people to live like that."

"The houses that the government put up are very poor. They're cold. Cost them a fortune to keep them warm in wintertime."

"By the time we finish paying for them, they'll fall in, they'll be rotted away."

"They build them cheap and charge us a lot."

"The people get a poor deal here for the rent they have to pay for their houses because they're not adequate."

"By the time you pay over the years, you pay \$9,000.00 for those houses. They're not worth it."

"When you pay for a house, you should have the plan you want."

"Their attitude is we're too damn dumb in the north here to plan a house for ourselves. That's the attitude of all southerners."

"They never ask us how we wanted the house build or anything. Just after they started building it, had the roof and everything, then they wanted to know the colour of walls we wanted. It's too late then. Maybe we should have told them to tear it down and fix it up again. But we'll have more sense next time they come up here and try and build houses. Maybe we can ask for bigger houses then."

"Like her, she's got a family of nine and all they have is two bedrooms."

"They're not really large enough for a big family. And most of us here have big families."

"There's 13 people in two-room shacks."

"There's 10 houses and you have to pick from 60 people. What can you do? You can only feel sorry for the ones you turn away."

"Why can't the people get houses when the government is sitting on all that money?"

"We're people too. Why should we always get the tail-end of things? Does the government know that? I don't believe it does. If it does it goes through one ear and out the other."

"They come in here and ask you if you want anything done and you tell them what you want done and they just get the hell out of here and never have it done."

~~"I was told I steamed my kettle too much and washed my clothes~~

too often in my house and that's why it was steamed up."

"We're disillusioned up here. The number of times people have come up, men from Northern Housing, inspecting the houses, making a lot of false promises and we've never seen them since. And this has been going on for six or seven years. You can't blame people for being disillusioned. There's nothing can be done now. We don't believe anybody's promises now."

There were many more complaints but from the above it is glaringly apparent that northern housing is totally inadequate. It is the issue of most immediate and vital concern for northern women. It must be solved.

It is fairly obvious that the houses currently being built meet neither climatic conditions nor size requirements nor utilization patterns. Therefore I recommend that, prior to new housing starts, the design of northern houses be modified to meet existing needs and conditions. For example, the fact that the houses have no running hot and cold water and the fact that the heating fuels are predominately propane and wood, should have alerted designers to the likelihood of high humidity in northern houses. Yet this knowledge was not built into the house design, thus the walls sweat.

Furthermore I recommend that women be included in any housing design group. They have primary responsibility for the house and consequently are fonts of knowledge concerning needs, use patterns and present problems. I recommend that future houses be built to meet the needs of the family occupying the house. It is almost inconceivable that nine children must share a bedroom in a new house.

Finally, the system for fuel purchase common in the south -

that of paying a flat monthly rate, seems not to be used in northern Saskatchewan. Whenever fuel is required, it must be purchased. Often people do not have enough cash on hand to buy fuel in quantity. They tip the fuel tank, sludge gets into the furnace and it breaks down. It would be better to have an orderly system for the distribution of and payment for fuel.

TABLE 1
REPLIES BY TYPE OF ENTERPRISE

Type of Enterprise	Total No. of Replies	No. of Enterprises with no Female Employees	No. of Enterprises with Female Employees	Total No. of Employees	Total No. of Female Employees
Store	29	3	26	149	96
Restaurant-Resort	17	5	12	86	43
Hospital	10	1	9	134	120
Fisheries	6	2	4	131	76
Other	32	19	13	223	29
Total	94	30	64	724	364

TABLE 2

FEMALE EMPLOYEES BY WEEKLY SALARY AND TYPE OF ENTERPRISE

Type of Enterprise	No. of Female Employees with Weekly Salaries					
	-\$40	\$40-\$59	\$60-\$79	\$80-\$99	+\$100	N.A.
Store	1	10	34	39	12	0
Restaurant-Resort	13 ⁽¹⁾	0	7	13	7	3
Hospital	0	0	22	35	62	1
Fisheries	0	0	34	40	2	0
Other	10 ⁽²⁾	3	2	8	6	0
Total	24	13	99	135	89	4

- 1) 1 part-time employee
- 2) 10 part-time employees

TABLE 3

ENTERPRISES WITH FEMALE MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

Type of Enterprise	Enterprises * with Female Management	Enterprises without Female Management	N.A.
Store	6	18	5 ⁽¹⁾
Restaurant-Resort	3	6	8 ⁽⁴⁾
Hospital	6	2	2 ⁽¹⁾
Fisheries	0	3	3 ⁽²⁾
Other	3	12 ⁽²⁾	17 ⁽⁵⁾
Total	18	41	35

- 1) 1 enterprise with no female employees
- 2) 2 enterprises with no female employees
- 3) 3 enterprises with no female employees
- 4) 4 enterprises with no female employees
- 5) 15 enterprises with no female employees

* Enterprises having at one time employed women in a management capacity.

TABLE 4

ENTERPRISES BY JOB SKILL REQUIREMENTS FOR FEMALE EMPLOYEES

Type of Enterprise	Job Skill Requirements							N.A.
	Sales	Secretarial	Domestic Science ⁽¹⁾	Other	General Education	Appearance	Work Attitudes	
Stores	3	3	0	3	6	3	10	8 ⁽⁴⁾
Restaurant-Resort	1	0	6	0	1	1	4	8 ⁽⁵⁾
Hospital	0	2	9	5	1	0	0	2 ⁽²⁾
Fisheries	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	2 ⁽³⁾
Other	0	3	0	2	0	3	7	21 ⁽⁶⁾
Total	4	8	15	14	8	7	21	41

- 1) includes waitressing, cooking, housekeeping
- 2) 1 establishment with no female employees
- 3) 2 establishments with no female employees
- 4) 3 establishments with no female employees
- 5) 5 establishments with no female employees
- 6) 18 establishments with no female employees

TABLE 5

ENTERPRISES BY WOMEN'S TRAINING PROGRAMS REQUIRED

Type of Enterprise	Required Job Training Programs								
	None	Upgrad- ing	Sales	Secret- arial	Domestic Science	Other	Grooming	Work Attitude	N.A.
Store	5	1	3	2	3	4	0	3	11 ⁽³⁾
Restaurant -Resort	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	1 ¹	11 ⁽⁴⁾
Hospital	2	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	3 ⁽¹⁾
Fisheries	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	2 ⁽²⁾
Other	8 ¹	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	21 ⁽⁵⁾
Total	16	2	3	5	6	17	2	5	48

- 1) 1 enterprise with no female employees
- 2) 2 enterprises with no female employees
- 3) 3 enterprises with no female employees
- 4) 4 enterprises with no female employees
- 5) 17 enterprises with no female employees

TABLE 6
ENTERPRISES BY DIFFICULTIES WITH WOMEN EMPLOYEES

Type of Enterprise	Difficulties with Women Employees					
	None	Child Care	Rapid Turn-over	Work Attitude	Other	N.A.
Store	7	8	5	1	3	6 ⁽³⁾
Restaurant-Resort	4	2	2	1	1	7 ⁽⁴⁾
Hospital	3	3	2	0	1	2 ⁽¹⁾
Fisheries	1	2	1	0	1	2 ⁽²⁾
Other	12 ⁽²⁾	1	1	0	0	18 ⁽⁵⁾
Total	27	16	11	2	6	35

- 1) 1 enterprise with no female employees
- 2) 2 enterprises with no female employees
- 3) 3 enterprises with no female employees
- 4) 5 enterprises with no female employees
- 5) 17 enterprises with no female employees

9. EMPLOYMENT

240 questionnaires (Appendix 1) were mailed to northern employers. 94 were returned. There was undoubtedly a selection process at work. I assume that employers with no female employees make up a smaller percentage of the sample than warranted by the population.

There were 364 women employees in the sample (Table 1); the major employer being hospitals followed by stores. Women employees generally earned between \$4,000-5,000 per year (Table 2). Few employers have ever employed women in management positions (Table 3). Few employers required specific job skills in hiring women (Table 4) and few indicated that they felt job training programs were required (Table 5). Note should be taken of the 21 employers who require special work attitudes in their female staff. Of these 21, 9 were looking for skills in dealing with the public, the others wanted such virtues as honesty, dependability, reliability. Finally, few employers indicated that they had any special problems with their female employees (Table 6).

What emerges from this data is a picture of women's employment opportunities in northern Saskatchewan. Typically they are employed in the traditional service jobs requiring few skills at mediocre wages.

Women attending the meetings indicated few employment opportunities in their communities and limited interest in obtaining full-time employment. This is hardly surprising, given the work involved in simply surviving and their large families. However many did express a desire to sell handicrafts. For them, this is the only possibility they have of earning much needed cash.

~~Therefore I recommend the establishment of a distribution system~~

for northern Saskatchewan handicrafts. In the past, attempts to raise incomes through the sale of handicrafts have not been too successful. Production line techniques tend to lower the quality of the goods as well as not fitting the needs of the women. A system of producer co-ops in interested communities could supervise the distribution of material, the collection and quality of the handicrafts. It should also be possible to produce the handicraft raw materials in northern Saskatchewan. Beads come from the U.S.A., are of rather poor quality and variety, and are quite expensive. Hides are now tanned in Winnipeg, I believe. New product development should also be considered. Certainly northern women can produce more than medallions and mukluks.

I recommend the establishment of a small fabric wholesale operation in northern Saskatchewan. Many women complained of the lack of yard-goods and wool. Perhaps a system could be developed, as existed in rural communities, whereby travelling sales persons visit northern communities to gather orders for fabrics and wools. This would not create many jobs but it would be of service to northern women.

There is some possibility of additional employment opportunities in paraprofessional work. Presently, there are some teacher aides working in readiness and early primary classes. This program could be expanded, as was suggested, to provide teacher aides up to Grade 4. If the outpost hospitals are allowed in-patients a requirement for nurses aides would develop.

There are also job opportunities for women in areas now exclusively male, if the employer is willing to experiment. For example, two women are currently employed in the Methy post-cutting Co-op in traditionally male jobs. They are fine workers I'm told.

Particularly given the current complaints about a lack of workers, consideration should be extended to hiring women for jobs requiring more skill than physical strength.

10. CONTINUING EDUCATION

There was little interest in job training programs as a consequence of the few job opportunities. However the following courses were suggested:

1) Secretarial Training, particularly for young people who have left school without sufficient job skills.

2) Hairdresser Training. There is not a working hairdresser in the north outside of Uranium City.

3) Nurses Aide and Community Health Worker Training. The Uranium City hospital received ten applications for its four nurses aide positions, none of which were vacant, last year. However no training program exists there.

4) Teacher Aide Training. The present teacher aide training program is apparently not successful. In one community, the three women who started the course, quit. It was boring. Thus it seems necessary to revamp the curriculum and teaching techniques before expanding this course.

The above four courses could not be offered in all communities. They require a central training facility. The women trainees would have to relocate for the duration of these courses. Thus such courses would appeal primarily to young, unmarried women.

5) Homemaker Training. Several communities requested this program. It is a course that should be offered in each requesting community rather than at a central facility. Several women suggested that academic upgrading be combined with this program. They felt, given the limited job opportunities, upgrading alone was not particularly worthwhile.

If a homemaking program is offered the curriculum must be tailored to northern conditions. The best way of ensuring this

is the participation of the trainees in curriculum design.

Presently many women are unable to take any training program due to their child-care responsibilities. If women are to participate in the learning experience it is absolutely necessary to provide a babysitting service as an integral part of each training program open to women. This requirement then would necessitate a program to train persons for this service - that is a visiting homemaker program.

Women in all communities expressed the desire for general interest courses in sewing, knitting, cooking, etc. As suggested in Section 4, these programs would best be supplied through a grant to a women's group in each community. Many communities have qualified instructors for sewing and knitting courses, the legacy of what appears to have been an excellent program of instructor training, conducted by the Extension Division of the University of Saskatchewan. Since this program has been abandoned, I recommend the reinstatement of such training, carried out, perhaps, through the Community College.

In past courses, materials have been supplied gratis. This practice should continue, the cost being additional to the grant. Were a wholesale fabric distributor established, materials could be supplied through this route. In some extension sewing classes, treadle machines were given to persons completing the course. This practice should be continued. It not only builds an incentive into the course but also overcomes the absurdity of teaching sewing to women without machines.

11. CHILD CARE

In every community I visited, women mentioned lack of adequate child care options. To date there has been no child care program in northern Saskatchewan.

Child care needs are divided into two categories. In communities where there is a fairly large female work force, day care centres are required. Lack of such centres creates difficulties both for working women and their employers and is a definite hinderance to women's entrance into the labour force. In communities where job opportunities are few, the lack of reliable babysitters restricts the possibilities for women to participate in education programs, deters people from working their trap-lines, and causes major difficulties if women must or desire to leave their homes overnight. The luxury (and necessity) of escaping the family periodically is denied northern women.

Therefore I recommend that day care centres be established in communities with sufficiently large female work forces. The operating grant for day care centres of \$5.00 per place per month is totally inadequate. It should be revised upwards if day care centres are to succeed in northern Saskatchewan. I do not recommend day care centres for non-working women for I was told: "What do you want a day-care centre for? You want to leave your kids, then where are you going to go, what are you going to do?"

In Sandy Bay the lack of adequate babysitting services has been solved by a Child Care Committee, in operation for seven years. A child care centre is being built there - a place where children will be cared for while their parents are away. I recommend the gradual introduction of a system of child care centres into northern communities where need and interest warrent.

To staff the day care and child care centres and to provide in communities without such centres a reliable babysitting service, I recommend a visiting homemakers training program be established. However such training will be useless if the current rates paid by social services are not raised to a minimum of \$20.00 per day. Professional childcare deserves professional wages.

12. LAUNDROMAT

Laundromats were considered to be the highest priority item by all northern women. A laundromat is a necessity not a luxury. Typically to wash clothes in the north, women must, in winter, break the ice, haul water, usually uphill from the lake, heat the water on the stove, contributing therefore to the humidity problems in the houses, wash often using a tub and board, then dispose of the water. This is long, backbreaking work. As I was told, "We're in 1973, not 1930. We don't have to wash by hand".

It was suggested that laundromats be supplied with tubs and showers as well as washers and dryers - that is a laundromat as a total clean centre. Finally it should be taken into account, when designing a laundromat, that it takes at least two hours to do a wash. A comfortable waiting room should be part of the design.

Therefore I recommend that in each community not already so serviced, a coin laundromat be built with heavy-duty washers and dryers, showers, tubs, and a waiting room, and be operated by the local government authority.

The enthusiasm and demand for a laundromat is so great that, should only one recommendation from this report be acted upon, it must be this recommendation.

13. TRANSPLANTED WOMEN

In previous sections, the report has dealt exclusively with colonized women. The needs of white women in northern Saskatchewan differ greatly from those of native women since the physical necessities of life are well met for the colonizer groups. Thus white women's needs tend to be psychological.

A common statement made by white northern males is "my wife didn't want to come here". Practically all white women in northern Saskatchewan are those wives, transplanted to the north, initially at least against their wills and better judgments. Once here, the difficulties begin. Although the limited role definition for women seems equally strong in both the colonized and colonizer populations, I did not find, in the colonized group, that essential attribute of chauvanism so pervasive in the colonizer - the denegation of the assigned women's role. Thus white women tend to find themselves tied more closely to the home, more undervalued because of that tie than in the south and lacking their customary outlets and escapes. It is not surprising that white women often turn to alcohol and pills and that depression is as severe as it is common - particularly in late winter.

I believe that the root of white women's problems lies in the chauvanist nature of the colonizer (whereas the root of native women's problems lies in the racist nature of the colonizer). The government cannot deal with this root, it can only be weeded out by the collective effort of both women and men to free themselves.

However, the complete lack of cultural and intellectual events, decried by the transplanted women, both undoubtably considered

effeminate in this "jock" world, can be rectified through government intervention. Therefore I recommend that entertainment groups be subsidized to travel throughout the north - to all northern communities. Bare stage theatre, mime and puppetry could easily be transported to all northern communities.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

Participation

1) A grant of two dollars per woman per year be given to women in each northern community to be spent on projects/programs they judge as most beneficial.

Women's Organizations

2) A grant of \$5,000.00 per year be given, through appropriate channels, to the Native Women's Movement to assist its operations in northern Saskatchewan.

Recreation

3) Creation of five recreational director positions, one for each region in the new municipality, attached to the Northern Municipal Council .

4) A yearly recreational grant of \$20,000.00 to hire traveling instructors, to fund sports clinics, to buy equipment, etc.

5) Encouragement of summer recreational programs, particularly for school children, through such programs as O.F.Y. and S.W.I.G.

6) Encouragement of national recreation groups to develop programs in northern Saskatchewan.

Health

7) Appointment of two doctors in northern Saskatchewan, with a guaranteed salary of \$25,000.00 per year.

8) Establishment of medical and dental scholarships for northerners.

9) Development of a comprehensive dental program including the permanent appointment of a dentist in northern Saskatchewan.

10) Expansion of the current ophthalmology program.

11) Development of a community health worker program.

12) ~~The profession of public health nurses be upgraded and~~

specialized training including mid-wifery be required of all northern public health nurses.

13) Provision of a course in home nursing.

14) Outpost hospitals be allowed to take in-patients in emergency situations and for normal births.

15) Subsidization of the transport of vital goods especially food.

Housing

16) Modification of northern housing design to meet existing needs and conditions.

17) Inclusion of northern women on the housing design study group.

18) Houses be built to meet the needs of the families purchasing them.

Employment

19) Establishment of a distribution network for northern handicrafts.

20) Production of handicraft materials in northern Saskatchewan.

21) Expansion of the types of handicraft goods marketed.

22) Establishment of a fabric-wool wholesale operation.

23) Consideration of the employment of women in traditionally male jobs wherever strength requirements allow.

Continuing Education

24) Development of secretarial-bookkeeping courses, a hair-dressing course, nurse's aide training, a course for community health workers, teacher aide training, homemaker training, and a visiting homemaker training program.

25) Reinstitution of instructor training courses in general interest areas such as cooking, sewing, knitting.

26) Supply gratis of materials required for general interest courses.

Child Care

27) Encouragement of day care and child care centres in northern Saskatchewan.

28) Increase in the operating grant currently available for day care centres.

29) Establishment of a system of professional well-paid babysitters in each community.

Laundromat

30) Laundromats be built in each northern community not already so serviced.

Transplanted Women

31) Subsidization of live entertainment in northern Saskatchewan.

APPENDIX 3

SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM EACH COMMUNITY VISITED

ILE a la CROSSE

1. Formation of a women's group.
2. Courses in beadwork, sewing, homemaking, ceramics.
3. Sex education in schools.
4. Courses in nutrition, home nursing, first aid.
5. Establishment of a laundromat, hairdresser, cafe, and tourist cabins.
6. Distribution of handicrafts through a proposed local industry Co-op.
7. Courses in hairdressing, secretarial science, and for visiting homemakers.
8. Water and sewer.
9. Cellars in houses.
10. Larger houses.
11. Day care centre.

BUFFALO NARROWS

1. Sewing, knitting, crochet classes.
2. First aid course.
3. A doctor.
4. Nurse's aide course.
5. Secretarial training course.
6. Laundromat.
7. Water and sewer.
8. Hobby, fabric shop.
9. T.V.
10. Better housing.

LA LOCHE

1. Classes in knitting, sewing, cooking, woodworking.
2. Marketing system for handicrafts.
3. Laundromat.
4. Electricity.
5. Water and sewer.
6. Child care centre.
7. A doctor.
8. A course in home nursing.
9. Typing as part of school curriculum.
10. More housing.
11. A sawmill.
12. Election of community development worker by residents.

TURNOR LAKE

1. Grocery, dry goods store.
2. A nurse.
3. Classes in sewing.
4. A post office.
5. System for marketing handicrafts.
6. Child care provided with upgrading classes.

BEAUVAL

1. Classes in sewing.
2. Typing classes.
3. More houses.
4. Laundromat.
5. A method of marketing handicrafts, particularly to tourists passing through in summer.
6. A women's group.
7. Regular dental clinics for adults as well as children.
8. A full-time homemaker course with training allowances.
9. Construction of a cement recreation area, for which they have plans.
10. A paddling pool.
11. Summer transportation to Lac La Plonge.
12. Stretch and sew course.
13. Expanded S.W.I.G. course.
14. T.V. and telephone.

GREEN LAKE

1. Continued operation of nursing station.
2. Homemaker training course.
3. Upgrading beyond Grade 10.
4. A laundromat.
5. New Hall.
6. Secretarial-bookkeeping course.
7. In-patient treatment at nursing station.
8. Improved housing.
9. Year round home repair program.
10. Larger houses.
11. Removal of post office from the Hudson Bay store.
12. Locker plant.
13. A gym in the school.
14. Indoor skating rink.
15. Sports instructors.

CUMBERLAND HOUSE

1. Classes in sewing, knitting, crocheting, cooking.
2. A first aid course.
3. More housing.
4. Monthly statements of amount paid and owing on homes.
5. Laundromat.
6. Swimming pool.
7. Locker plant.
8. Improved supply of fabrics and wools.
9. Secretarial training course.
10. Twice yearly dental clinics.
11. Once yearly visits by ophthalmologist.
12. Mid-wife training for taxi drivers.

BLACK LAKE

1. Classes in sewing, knitting.
2. Child care centre.
3. Laundromat.
4. New boarding house in Uranium City for people needing hospitalization.

PELICAN NARROWS

1. Women's group.
2. Classes in cooking, sewing.
3. Increased number of operating wells.
4. Opportunity to have babies at nursing station.
5. Children taught in Cree in early grades.
6. Better housing.
7. More recreational activities.

STONY RAPIDS

1. Classes in sewing, knitting, cooking.
2. Child care services as a part of upgrading program.
3. Larger, better constructed houses.
4. A laundromat.
5. Recreation program for children.

URANIUM CITY

1. More public health nurses in north.
2. More non-sports activities for teenagers.
3. More evening courses.
4. More cultural activities.
5. A road.
6. Day care centre.
7. Nurses aide course.
8. More opportunities for volunteer work.
9. A driver training course.

SANDY BAY

1. A gym.
2. A curling rink.
3. Recreation program for children.
4. Classes in sewing, cooking, knitting.
5. Homemaker training course for women with new homes.
6. Driving course and regular visits by drivers' license examiners.
7. A typing course.
8. Opportunity to have babies at outpost hospital.
9. Prenatal course.
10. Laundromat.
11. Better materials in house construction.
12. Teachers aides up to Grade 4.
13. In-patient service at outpost hospital.
14. Children taught in Cree in early grades.

CREIGHTON

1. More recreational activities, particularly in non-sports areas, for teenagers.
2. Post secondary educational facility.
3. Pave the Hanson Lake road.
4. More live entertainment. "More elegance."
5. More shops.
6. Day care facility.
7. More courses for women, some crafts, some more intellectually stimulating.
8. Opportunities to escape house and perform worthwhile acts particularly in late winter.
9. Rigorous enforcement of human bill of rights.

STANLEY MISSION

1. Classes in knitting, cooking, nutrition.
2. Opportunity to have babies in community.
3. First aid-home nursing course.
4. Child care centre.
5. Cree speaking teachers.
6. Improved housing.
7. Laundromat.

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S3

W4
Author/Auteur

Title/Titre

Woman in Northern Saskatchewan : a
component of the Prairie Northlands
study : ... [1973]

Date

Borrower
Emprunteur

Room
Pièce

Telephone
Téléphone

July 27/86

C Dargall

EPOL

994 5101
ext 253

0133-34.3 (10/70) 7830-21-029-4581

HQ Women in northern Saskatchewan
1459 A component of the Prairie
S3 Northland study
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INDUSTRY CANADA/INDUSTRIE CANADA



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