

Native Advisory Ctr  
3, October 99 mtg  
item 9

**THE SCHOOL OF NATIVE STUDIES**

**A PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO**

**THE NATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**JULY, 1991**

## INTRODUCTION

Lakehead University has a long history of participation in Native education. The university's first experience in programming specifically addressed to Native students began twenty years ago with the introduction of the Native Teacher Education Program. The university's ongoing commitment to Native education is stressed in its Academic Plan (1987) where a course of action to increase activities related to Native peoples is outlined as part of the regional mandate of the university. It was noted that this should be done in close co-operation and with the advice of Native groups. This commitment was reinforced further when, in response to the Academic Plan recommendation, a Native Studies Study Group was formed to analyze and coordinate present activities and to propose new ones. In its Native Studies Study Group Report (May, 1989), the Study Group noted the following:

"A strong emphasis on service to Native people and Native communities would be a notable and worthwhile contribution by Lakehead University to the welfare of Northwestern Ontario and to its own efforts to establish a distinguished and characteristic specialization. The present state of interest and activity in Native studies and matters is primarily the result of (individual) faculty and departmental initiatives. A serious intent by Lakehead University to make Native studies and serving Native interests an intrinsic part of its operations will require concrete and sustained actions by the university as an institution.

The Native Studies Study Group set four priorities ..... having to do with the identification of Native needs and interests through consultations with Native people, developing a Native Students Access Program, promoting native interests on campus, and enhancing research and programs in Native Studies at the university."

Although modest improvements have been seen in recent years in the participation rate of Natives in higher education, it is still considerably lower than the overall average for the general population. The problem is systemic and must be dealt with on a system-wide basis. Until participation rates for Native students approximate that of the general population, innovative solutions must be found to encourage Native students to see higher education as an attainable goal and to provide the necessary support for success once they are here. It is our wish to continue working in partnership with the Native community to improve programming, both academic and support, for Native students and to work toward increasing the participation rate and success of Native students in higher education.

The ideas we are presenting today come to a large extent from the efforts of the Study Group and follow from the recommendations of its first report. With the implementation of the Native Education Strategy by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the university sees an opportunity to move from a planning phase to an implementation stage and further enhance the value of the university to our Native students.

The proposal that follows would see the establishment of a School for Native Studies to house the Academic Department of Native Studies and the Department of Native Support Services. The concept is discussed in greater detail in the report.

## THE SCHOOL FOR NATIVE STUDIES

As stated earlier, the concept of a School of Native Studies was first proposed in the 1987 Academic Plan and reinforced by the Native Studies Study Group. At that time the idea was posed that such a structure would co-ordinate and promote instructional and research activities by faculty and educational services for Native students. Today, the concept of a School of Native Studies has been extended to mean a centre for Native activities, both academic and support. Special professional programs such as Native Nursing, Education and possibly Engineering would remain in those schools but with support services and community liaison services provided by the School would be available to all Native students regardless of the program of enrolment. The School of Native Studies would be comprised of two departments: an academic department to house academic and research programs and a support services department where a full range of services such as social, personal and career counselling, orientation, and Native student advocacy would be provided. The organizational structure proposed is presented in Table 1.

*Senate*  
~~Table 1~~

**NATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Faculty of Arts  
and Science**

**School of Native Studies**  
(or appropriate title)

**Dept. of Native Studies**

- B.A. (Native Community Development)
- B.A. (Native Studies Program (double major))
- Native Access Program
- Native Studies Certificate
- Native Studies Minor

**Native Support  
Services**

**Native Counselling  
& Community Liaison  
Officer**

**Housing**

**Program Specific  
Advisory Committees**

**Other Native  
Programs &  
Students  
throughout  
the University**

*Professional St  
Programs*

*amended  
by Ksh Chow  
3/10/91*

## **DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE STUDIES**

The academic Department of Native Studies would be a newly constituted department in the Faculty of Arts and Science. In this department a number of Native programs are possible.

### **Native Access**

A program already implemented on a trial basis is a general Native Access Program. The Access Program is modelled after the very successful Native Nurses Entry Program and is intended to facilitate entry into university for individuals who do not have the necessary preparation for university admission. The program is a bridging year of special courses to provide students with the skills to begin a successful academic career. The Access Program features specialized recruitment and admission procedures, program orientation and personal counselling, a curriculum that addresses deficiencies in preparation, tutoring services for academic courses, counselling in the area of financial assistance, and social and cultural support systems.

### **Native Studies Programs**

By using an interdisciplinary approach to teaching Native Studies, the expertise of several academic departments could be drawn together to build a major in Native Studies.

A certificate and a minor program could be offered as well using the same approach. Plans in this area are described further in the report by the Native Studies Study Group sub-committee on Academic Programming.

### **Community Development Program**

Another approach being investigated follows from a proposal made by the

Animkee group that suggested that the university offer a program in Native Community Development. The intent of the community development program is to provide Natives with the skills and education needed in their self-government initiatives and the development of community and resources. Such a program would be subject to the system-wide university program approvals process. It would require extensive planning and would be subject to rigorous scrutiny both internally and system-wide on curriculum, academic quality, societal need, student demand and many other points.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

A significant element in the provision of special programs to minority students is the support system that must be in place to assist students in making the transition to a successful academic life. For this reason the university operates the Native Support Services Office. Students receive academic, personal and financial counselling as well as cultural support and understanding. Assistance is provided for academic course work and study skills. Tutors are provided through interface with the Learning Assistance Centre and a Native peer tutor system is in place. The office is a centre of Native student activity on campus and has an ambitious program of social and cultural events. Cultural support would be enhanced with a Elder in Residence program to provide the support of an Elder on a regularly-scheduled basis. The Native Support Services Office is staffed year round because of summer programs such as Native Languages and the number of students participating in a variety of summer courses. Additionally, it is proposed to enhance the Native support service function with a Native Counsellor and Community Liaison Officer and a Native housing officer.

### **Native Counsellor and Community Liaison Officer**

Lakehead University recognizes that in order to be successful in our endeavours to encourage greater participation by Native students, we must reach out to the community to deliver the message that higher education is an option for Native Canadians and to communicate the range of programs available. Our belief is that if we target Native students more directly we can increase the number who will view university education as a viable alternative.

In the report Native Student Drop-Out in Ontario Schools (1990), it was noted that northern Native students are in general at greater risk of dropping out than are their

southern counterparts. "There are particular geographical, social, economic, educational, and historical factors present in northern Ontario which both singly and together mitigate against a northern Native student experiencing the same chances of academic success as his or her southern counterpart". Factors contributing to this situation include low expectations due to a number of negative factors such as poor self esteem, low expectations from the education system, from their communities and families, the lack of positive Native role models and, most important, a feeling that their communities lack many of the employment opportunities that would make the struggle and sacrifices to graduate worthwhile. The reports went on to say that "There was a high degree of agreement between Native and non-Native educators that Native dropouts lacked clear plans. Generally, these educators thought that the main reasons for this dearth of planning could be attributed to cultural factors, lack of role models, and to a lack of career counselling in both elementary and secondary schools".

For these very compelling reasons we propose to establish the position of Native Counselling and Community Liaison Officer who will be responsible for meeting directly with Native students, teachers, families and community leaders. As a Native person, the counsellor will present a positive role model who understands and is sensitive to the needs of these students. The counsellor will provide information to potential students, both mature students and high school students, guidance teachers, families and community leaders. Information on programs, facilities, career opportunities, support services at the university and information on the City of Thunder Bay would be communicated. The Liaison Officer would play the extremely valuable role of endeavouring to encourage greater participation in university programs, would coordinate efforts to present information on programs at the university that are specifically addressed to Native students as well as provide information about regular programming that is accessible to Native students. Liaison with university departments would take place as well in order to see that students are placed in programs that best suit their needs.

The geographic area targeted will be northern Ontario with particular emphasis on northwestern Ontario. Emphasis will be on visiting outlying and remote areas where direct contact is most needed. Native specific programs will be stressed as will the fact that all university programs are accessible to Native students. Counselling on the accessibility of education using Distance Education technology and off-campus on-site delivery through Continuing Education also will be provided. Promoting university programs and recruiting in the target groups will result in reaching the goal of more Native students accessing university education.

#### **Native Housing Support**

Many of our Native students come from small, remote northern communities and are attempting to live for the first time in a larger urban city. Finding suitable accommodation is a major hurdle that Native students encounter in making the transition to an urban university setting. As well, many of our Native students are mature students with families and these students have an even more difficult time finding suitable and reasonably priced accommodation. In order to assist these students in the transition, it is proposed that a part-time appointment be made to provide support to students in their search for accommodation and to act as an advocate for Native housing concerns.

## STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

Implementation of this plan would require the following staffing arrangement:

### Full time appointments:

- Senior faculty appointment for Native Studies and chair of the School.
- Faculty appointment for Native Access.
- Co-ordinator of Native Support Services.
- Native Counsellor and Community Liaison Officer.
- Secretarial Support Personnel (2)

### Part-time appointments:

- Tutors
- Native Housing Officer

For the most part, these are either new or re-defined appointments based on role and funding considerations. The university currently has a Co-ordinator of Native Support Services and secretary in the Native Support Services Offices. These positions are funded from a grant that is being phased out. The positions of Co-ordinator of Native Access and the secretary are funded as a pilot project by the university pending finding a source of funds to fully implement the program. If the program continues, the co-ordinator position will become a faculty appointments.

**SUMMARY**

Lakehead University would like to access the funds available from the Native Education Strategy and sees this as a window of opportunity to enhance and expand programming provided for our Native students. The advise of the Native Advisory Committee is sought in this initiative to ensure that the university works in partnership with Native leaders to provide an educational experience that meets the needs of the Native community.