

THE NATIVE ACCESS PROGRAM
OFFICE OF NATIVE PROGRAMMING
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY
1990-1991

Prepared for: Native Advisory Committee,
Lakehead University,
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INTRODUCTION

The Native Access Program was recommended by the Native Studies Study Group in a report on their activities in 1989. In the past, Lakehead University had been approached by Native staff to sponsor transition programs, orientation programs and other services in order to assist Native students to make the transition to an academic environment and its demands.

The Native Studies Study Group had been asked to serve as a study group by the Vice-President (Academic)'s Office in 1987. The Native Studies Study Group arrived at a two year plan of objectives and activities to be undertaken in order to examine and develop programming of interest and benefit to Native people. One of those objectives was to organize an office for Native Programming activities, which would serve as a co-ordinating body for the Native Studies Study Group and would consult with Native community groups, First Nations and organizations. This was partly achieved through the efforts of Mr. Phillip Gardner in 1989-90. Further work on the organization of community outreach and the development of Native Programming took place when the present Co-ordinator, Marie Pitawanakwat, was hired in April, 1990.

One of the other objectives of the Native Studies Study Group was to implement a Native Access Program, such as what was offered at the University of Manitoba, Dalhousie University, and others.

DESCRIPTION

The Native Access Program is offered by Lakehead University to Native people who, for reasons which prevented their successful completion of a secondary school diploma, require preparation and orientation in order to become eligible for admission to a first year program of studies at Lakehead University.

The Program offers a program of studies, which, when combined with tutoring, academic counselling, and assistance in developing a support network at the university, provides an atmosphere and conditions conducive to successful program completion.

Admission is gained by completing an application form, submitting a resume and an attached questionnaire. Candidates are interviewed by an admissions committee, who determine eligibility for admission. An offer of admission is made to successful candidates, who then may seek financial support for their entry into the Access Program from their sponsors, i. e. First Nations education authorities.

The program consists of core courses which include Mathematics 0140, English (ESL) 1000, and Education 0221. The Mathematics course is designed to serve as a bridging course which prepares a student to enter a program of studies which recommends Mathematics but which is designed for non-Math majors.

English (ESL) 1000 is a course which is focussed on the communication skills necessary for Access students to

enter a first year program of studies. Essay writing, report preparation, developing vocabulary for use in academic settings, refining grammar capabilities and presentation skills are included.

Education 0221 is focussed on study skills and orientation to the academic environment. Effective use of texts, note taking, developing memory skills, reading for retention and comprehension, dictionary usage, developing basic research skills and time management are areas of concentration in this course. Orientation to the university and the expectations of the academic environment are also a focal point of the course.

The core courses are accompanied by electives which the student chooses in consultation with his/her academic advisor. So as to become familiar with the academic community and the university environment, courses are chosen usually from a first year selection of offerings. For example, Sociology 1100, Psychology 1100, General Science 0310 and 0330, and Visual Arts 2060 are possible options.

A student in the Access Program carries $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 courses, instead of the normal 5 courses. This allows the student to develop the social support as well as the academic support needed to complete a program of studies.

DIRECTIONS

The fields or occupations that these choices lead to are:

- teaching, administration and/or counselling in Education
- social work
- administration in First Nations government settings
- individual entrepreneurial development
- economic development for Aboriginal societies
- research in social policy areas, i. e. environmental assessment from a Native perspective, land claims research, constitutional issues, and First Nations government development
- law.

PROGNOSIS

It becomes increasingly clear that First Nations governments will not develop without educated and trained First Nations/Aboriginal people who are cognizant of the demands made by the dominant society of its members, as well as carrying an awareness of, and pride in one's ancestral heritage, First Nations world view and appreciation of Native lifeways.

The Native Access Program is one of the mechanisms which will facilitate this happening in the evolution and rebuilding of indigenous societies in North America.