

GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE OF NATIVE STUDIES & APPLIED RESEARCH INC
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR METIS PEOPLE

June, 1991

Subject: The right of Metis students to free post-secondary education

Need:

1. access to post-secondary education for Metis people;
2. access to adequate financial support for Metis people to obtain education;
3. need for trained Metis people;
4. need to address the overwhelming indebtedness incurred by Metis students in the last decade.

Idea: Metis Post-Secondary Education Strategy

Benefits:

1. means of the government fulfilling it's obligations to the Metis people;
2. Cost effective - cheaper in the long-run than social subsidies to the people;
3. Cycle of poverty broken;
4. Alleviate long-term social problems;
5. Reduce default legal and collections costs for the government;
6. Students will immediately become self-sufficient contributors to the Canadian society;
7. Offspring will be better educated;
8. Increased disposal income will provide the Metis professionals more opportunity to invest in government and private initiatives;
9. Will provide a program which will work for Metis people --universal programs do not;
10. Pool of trained Aboriginal people produced;
11. Opportunity to clear up the backlog of default cases, etc.

12. Any increase in the educational levels of Aboriginal people leads to increased employability and increased income levels;

Concerns:

1. Cost non-refundable capital outlay becomes part of the unmet federal obligation to the Metis people;
2. Hand-out -- becomes investment in human resource development - yield dividends;
3. Abuse of the system -- non-completion, etc.
4. Duplication of existing programs;
5. Dissimilar treatment.

Data:

We have individual experiences; community experiences - Buffalo Narrows.

Facts:

Comparison -- one year on welfare = one year education

Statistics:

1989-90 statistics from Student Financial Assistance Branch -- number of declared Metis and Non-Status Indian students applying; dollars for this number of students (information pending)

- poverty of Saskatchewan Metis people;
- young population;
- education levels of Saskatchewan Metis;
- graphs -- income/expenses/indebtedness over the years.

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A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STRATEGY
FOR METIS PEOPLE

prepared by

THE GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE OF NATIVE STUDIES AND APPLIED
RESEARCH INC.,

June, 1991

The Proposal

It is proposed that a National Metis Post-Secondary Education Strategy be developed. Such a strategy must be created through a collaboration of the federal government departments, provincial government departments, the Metis National Council, the Metis Society of Saskatchewan, the Metis Nation of Alberta, the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Gabriel Dumont Institute.

The Need:

1. Access to post-secondary education by Metis People

The data are overwhelming showing that Metis people are poor, undereducated and have a low labour force participation rate (for example: Statistics Canada, 1989; Ross and Shillington, 1989; Feather, 1991).

However, the same data show that there is a positive correlation between higher educational levels, greater participation in the labour force and increased levels of income. Education is the key to the educational and economic well-being of the Metis people.

Unless there are drastic improvements in the educational levels of the Metis people in the next decade, the Metis people will become more and more dependent instead

of less and less so. The future looks like this:

- * the Metis population is young -- between 55-60% of the Metis population of the Prairie Provinces is under 25 years of age (Statistics Canada, 1989);
 - * this population will be expected to be the workers and leaders of the next generation;
- * the levels of formal schooling necessary for entry level jobs is rising -- only 1% of new jobs in Saskatchewan in the year 2000 will require less than grade 12 education (Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) and Saskatchewan, 1989)
- * if present educational levels are maintained, over 70% of the Metis population will be fighting over 1% of the new job opportunities.

2. Access to Adequate Financial Support For Metis People to obtain a Post-Secondary Education

Although one of the Aboriginal peoples identified in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, (1982), the Metis do not receive access to education equivalent to the access available to the other Aboriginal peoples: the Indian, and Inuit. To receive equal access, the Metis people must receive free post-secondary education, with a comprehensive package of supports available to alleviate the financial impediments to access.

The financial obligation presently incurred by Metis students in post-secondary education in Saskatchewan is as much as \$50,000.00. The poorer the student, the more debt

incurred as a result of provincial loans being added to the basic Canada Student Loan and then, additional loans for Metis status, single parent and other categories which make it possible to finance a year of education. More and more Metis people are deciding that the costs are too great and are opting to stay in low-paying jobs without the debt burden.

3. Need for Trained Metis People

The population of Canada is aging. The young increasing Metis population is needed to fuel the economy of the country. Metis people want to be part of the developments taking place in our land. We need trained leaders for our communities and trained professionals in all the professions serving our people.

4. Need to Address the Overwhelming Indebtedness of Metis Students in the Past Decade

The evidence shows that the Metis person who graduates as a teacher in Saskatchewan in 1991, will be less well off economically than if they had stayed on welfare. They will not be joining the middle class but will be in the ranks of the working poor.

A single student with no dependents in the B.Ed program in 1990 with no other source of income would accrue

\$13, 008.00 eligible for remission and \$21,138.00 to be repaid in full. Another student in the same class single with three children, deemed to be more in need would incur an even greater debt load. This individual would owe: 17,280.00 eligible for remission and \$56,160.00 to be repaid in full.

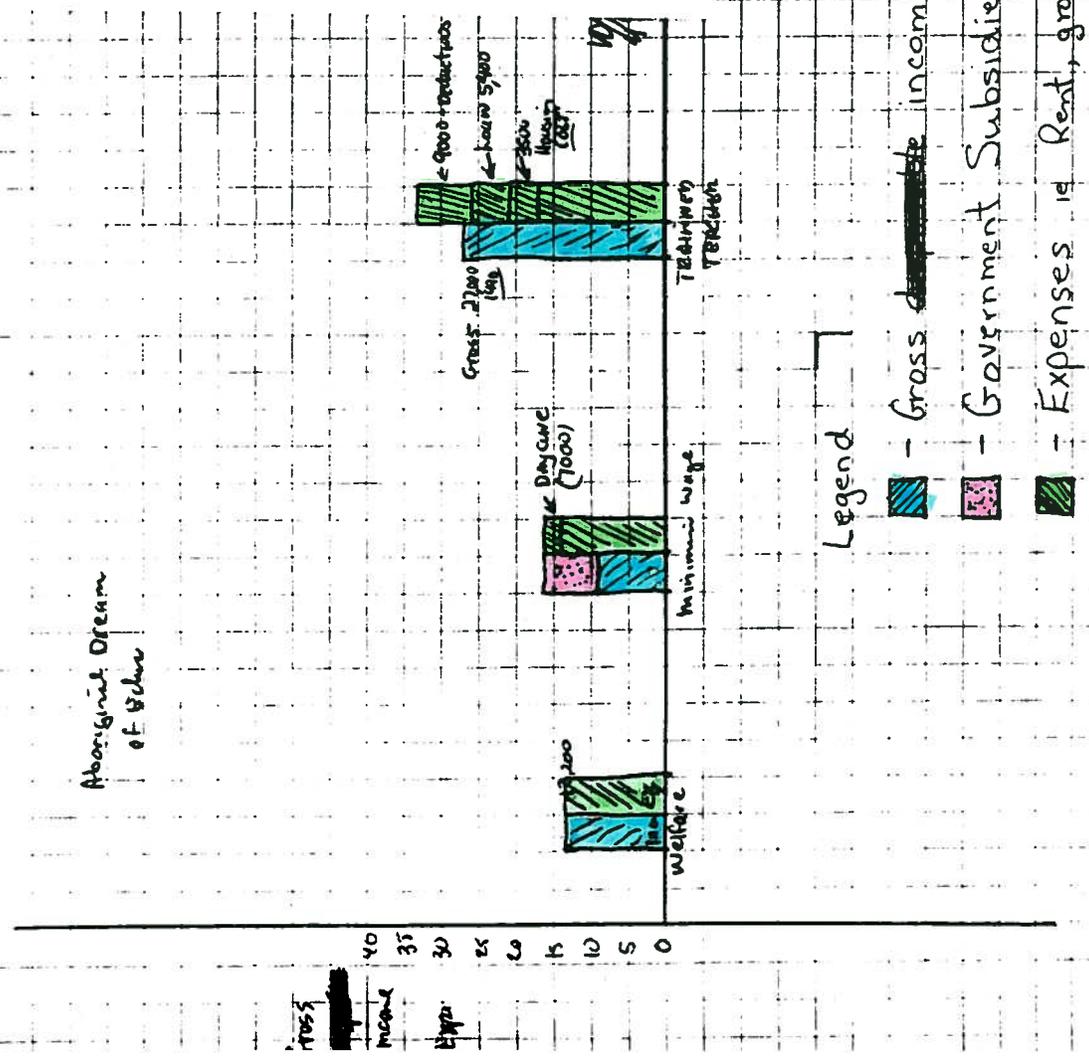
Graph 1 shows how the expenditures of the graduate teacher exceed the teacher's income while the expenses and income of the welfare recipient and the person on minimum wage equal out. Graph 2 shows how the income levels and expenditures of the graduate teacher do not equalize until about the sixth year of teaching for the Metis teacher while the Indian teacher is never in a deficit position during schooling and becomes a self-sufficient contributing professional in the first year of teaching.

Many Metis professionals are not able to pay their educational loans and survive in teaching for the first five years. Saskatchewan Metis students have two loans to repay one to the federal government and one to the province. Failure to keep up loan payments results in default which has serious consequences for the ability of the graduates to be financially viable in the future.

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Aboriginal Dream of Elders

Graph 1

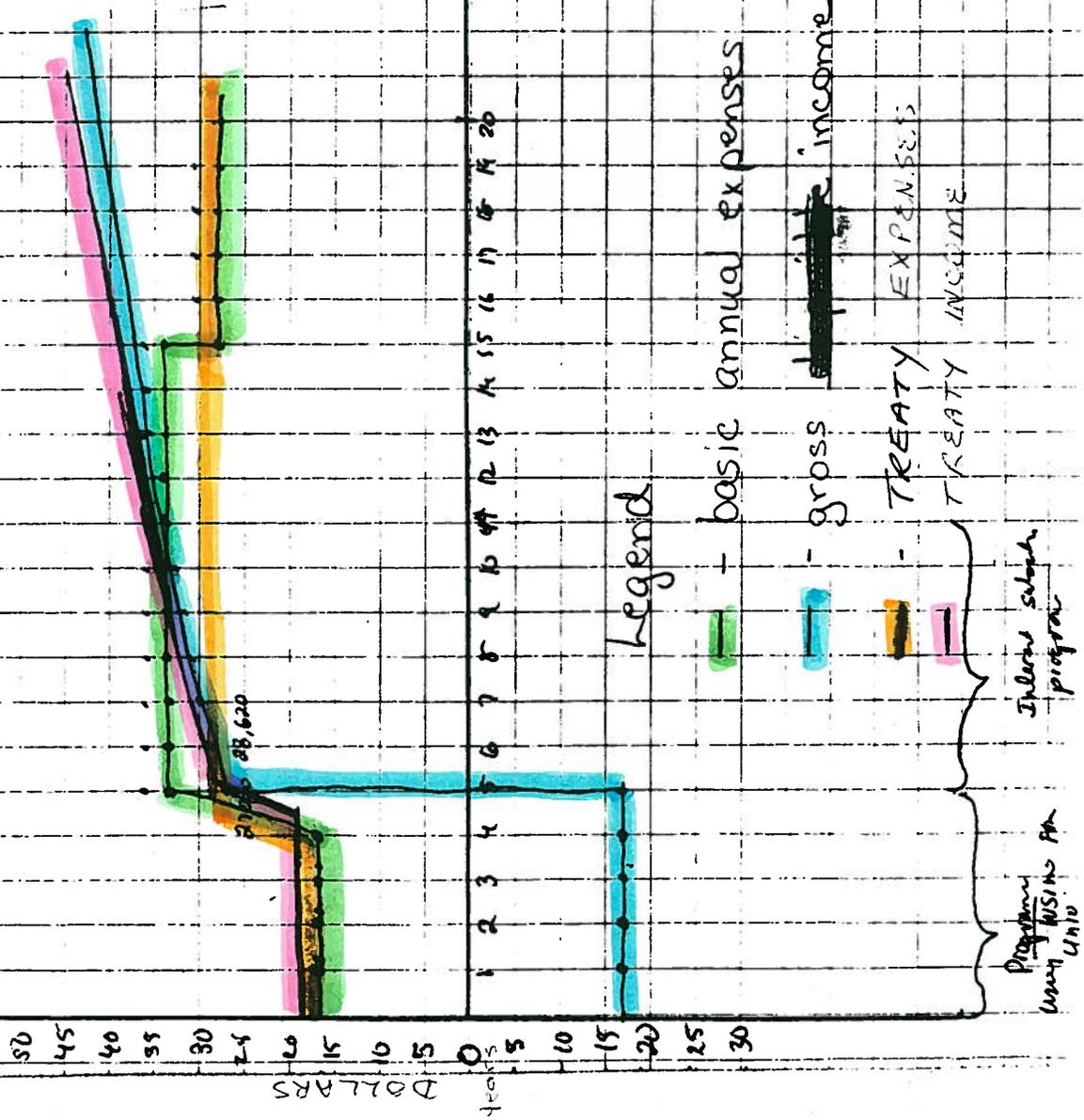


Legend

- Gross income
- Government Subsidies i.e. day care, housing, social assistance
- Expenses i.e. Rent, groceries, day care, clothing, transportation, etc.

Graph 2.

Estimated Expenses



Legend

- █ - basic annual expenses
- █ - gross income of Nktis
- █ - TREATY EXPENSES
- █ - TREATY INCOME

Program with Nktis PA
Inland school program

THE SOLUTION: A Metis Post-Secondary Education Strategy grounded in a recognition of the right of Metis people to free post-secondary education and financed at a level where the most needy have available all the financial support necessary to gain equal educational opportunity.

THE BENEFITS:

1. This Metis Post-Secondary Education Strategy could be used by the governments to fulfil their outstanding obligations to the Metis people. Since the Aboriginal rights of the Metis people have not been defined nor the claims of the Metis people addressed, this issue could be used by the governments to appear to be meeting the needs of the Metis people.
2. The present state of educational deficit in the Metis community is the result of long-standing policies of exclusion practiced in education for Metis people. A strategy for free post-secondary education would go a long way in alleviating the conditions of undereducation caused by discriminatory educational policies of both the federal and provincial governments.
3. The present system is not working for Metis people. The casualties are mounting with each new policy put in place. Metis people do not have equal access to education. Universal systems have not worked for Metis people. A strategy designed specifically to meet the needs of the Metis people is the only way for Metis people to gain equal condition and fair treatment.
4. Research shows that one year of social assistance without medical or dental costs is about \$13,000 in Saskatchewan. This is about the same amount needed for one year of post-secondary education support. In the long-run paying for the year of education is more cost effective than paying the same person to be on social assistance. Educational assistance is an investment in human resource development. Dividends can be expected.
5. Research shows that any increase in the educational

levels, even non-completion of post-secondary courses leads to increased employability and economic well-being for Metis people (Statistics Canada, 1989).

6. The long term effects of educational subsidies are the breaking of the cycle of poverty because research shows that children whose parents are better educated tend to become better educated. The initial investment in one generation pays dividends in the next generation as well.
7. The investment has many dividends in the long-term alleviation of social problems in the Metis community. Better education leads to more employability and leads to better economic and social well-being. Since many physical, mental, emotional and social illnesses are the result of poverty, a decrease in the levels of unemployment and poverty will lead to better social and community health. (Feather, 1991).
8. Metis students will immediately become self-sufficient contributors to Canadian society if they receive free post-secondary education.
9. Increased disposal income for Metis professionals will allow them to invest in government and private initiatives.
10. Presently, the loan system of educational financing is a disincentive for Metis people to upgrade their educational levels. Free post-secondary education for Metis people would encourage a flood of good candidates who are opting to stay in minimum wage employment or on welfare to make ends meet without the stigma of a heavy debt load.
11. Within the next decade, a pool of trained Metis people could be trained to fill the needs of mainstream society and the Metis community.
12. The problems associated with the default of payment of student loans and the legal and collection fees now being expended by the federal government could be saved.

Conclusion

For fair equitable education for Metis people of Canada, a National Metis Post-Secondary Education Strategy is needed. Such a strategy must have as its centre point free post-secondary education with a support system which will make it possible for any Metis person who wants an education to have equal access to one.

Free post-secondary education for Metis people would compensate for past inequities in the education of Metis people and could constitute part of the obligation to the Metis people owed by the governments of Canada. This investment in the human resource development of the Metis community would pay long-term dividends in more independent and self-sufficient individuals and communities.

References

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