

Native students back to the books and back to our Heritage

by Beverly Scow

As September draws near Native Students prepare for their classes. Whether they are students at high schools, colleges, vocational institutes or universities the Native Students and their communities share some common anxieties. Will I make it? Am I in the right area of study for me? Will I find employment after education? Do I have enough money to support my children while I attend classes? Will there be funds for me to complete my schooling? Will my friends and family alienate me? Will I fall in love? Will that Native Student return to the community and contribute to the development as Nations and as a People?

The past years activities of the Inter-Campus Native Student Network have clearly indicated the need and potential for Native Student Communications amongst themselves and their communities. All it took was an idea combined with some initiative and commitment. Because the interest is there the idea is transforming into action and the momentum is increasing. During this past year the Inter-Campus Native Students Network has established communication with Native Students Associations in the lower mainland area. (UBC, SFU, Langara College, Capilano College and the Native Education Centre) as well as establishing contact with Native students from a total of 14 campuses in the lower mainland of B.C.

This communication has led to coordinated activities such as Inter-Campus Potluck Socials, Student Dances, Aboriginal Rights Workshop, Student participation in B.C. Aboriginal Right Week Nov. 1-7, 1988, Campus Native Awareness Days, Post-Secondary Education Policy Cutbacks Strategy Meetings and Student Rally Jan. 12, 1988, B.C. Native Student delegation participation in National Indian Education Symposium II at Kahnawake Survival School, Quebec, August 8, 9 and 10, 1988.

The roles and potentials of a Native Student Network is unlimited. Firstly the general mandate is to increase the success of Native students

in their studies and in career opportunities. Through communication we can identify needs and goals of students and their communities. Through communications we can find common grounds, co-ordinate resources and skills, to fulfill the identified needs and goals.

The success of Campus Native Student Associations and the Inter-Campus Native Student Network depends upon individuals.

"Once there were four people — Everybody, Somebody, Nobody and Anybody. When there was an important job to be done, Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it but Nobody did it.

When Nobody did it, Everybody got angry because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Somebody would do it, but Nobody realized that Nobody would do it.

So it ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done in the first place."

I challenge all Native Students to be a 'Somebody.' Take some initiative and reach out to students at your campus and throughout B.C. Develop your leadership and organizational skills. As our communities strive for Self-Government we must take responsibility for ourselves and our destiny. There are students on your campus new to student life, new to the community and new to that campus. It is our responsibility to ease that transition.

The Inter-Campus Native Student Network is enthusiastic about the potential and the momentum of Student Communication. We invite all students, potential students, past students, parents, elders, and leaders to be a part of the education process and the communication process. Please write and tell us who you are, what your concerns are, and how you can play a role in the process.

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