

Native students protest

By Allan Bezanson

More than 250 Native students and supporters took part in a demonstration at Robson Square last week to denounce government cutbacks which will severely restrict their access to post-secondary education.

From the steps of the Art Gallery speaker after speaker demanded that the government impose a moratorium on the implementation of the cutbacks. The demonstration concluded with a circle dance after which most people marched over to picket the Department of Indian Affairs office on Burrard Street. 80 of the protesters crammed into the 11th floor offices to present their demands for a moratorium.

The March 22nd protest coincided with similar demonstrations in every major city across Canada. 2000 students took part in both Edmonton and Winnipeg.

Eight Native students in Thunder Bay began a hunger strike which they vow to continue until the cutbacks are rescinded.

The cutbacks, announced on March 20 by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in its new policy on the Post-Secondary Student Assistance Programme, will make it more difficult for Native students to attend university.

Known as the E-12 guidelines the new policy puts a cap on funds precisely at a time when more and more Native students are trying to continue their education.

The number of months students can take to complete their education has been cut from 96 to 60 for a bachelor's degree. Most universities consider a student taking three courses to be full time. The E-12 guidelines require a Native student to carry four courses in order to be eligible for funding assistance.

Financial assistance has been drastically cut back. For example a single student living with an employed parent will receive a maximum of \$290. per month, a cut of several hundred dollars.

In announcing the new policy Indian Affairs Minister, Pierre Cadieux, stated that his department consulted with over 500 bands in working out the details of the E-12 guidelines which he calls generous and fair.

Not so, says Beverly Scow, Coordinator of the Inter-Campus Native Student Network which organized Wednesday's demonstration. "That's an outright lie. They are lying to the public. They call a half-hour film strip and a brief introduction of their policy to people and students consultation and that's not true. We want an honest con-

