



Northwest
Territories Minister of Education

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MEMBERS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Minister's Attendance at Conference of High School Presidents

Further to Mr. Lewis' question #90-91(1) attached, is a summary of the comments, questions, concerns and recommendations of the Student Council Presidents who recently gathered together in Yellowknife for their annual meeting.

Stephen Kakfwi,
Minister.

Attachment.

WORKSHOP FOR PRESIDENTS OF STUDENT COUNCILS
AKAITCHO HALL, YELLOWKNIFE
16TH & 17TH FEBRUARY 1991

SUMMARY:

The Minister of Education has sponsored workshops for Presidents of Student Councils to enable them to meet as a group, share ideas and develop their leadership skills. Participants came from all secondary schools and residences with Grade 12 students. The organization of the workshop was undertaken by the three Yellowknife Presidents.

The workshop agenda included sessions on Student Leadership, a Panel Discussion on the Role of Student Councils in Schools and Residences, a one-hour telephone exchange with Fil Fraser of the Spicer Commission, an Ideas Exchange among the Presidents, Student interaction with the Minister of Education and a closing banquet.

The final evaluation of the workshop by the Presidents, was very positive. They were punctual for all sessions and not one person missed any session. At the banquet, the Minister spoke on Leadership from a personal perspective. This was very well received by the Presidents. On the whole, he appreciated the frankness of the students and the opportunity to be with them. He advised them that their suggestions and concerns will be addressed at the earliest opportunity, and a report will be submitted to their next workshop to be held early in the fall of 1991. He made the commitment that this activity will be sponsored annually so that student leaders may meet with their Minister and the Members of the Legislative Assembly to express their concerns. He was very positive about their comments.

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BACKGROUND:

The Minister of Education has sponsored workshops for Presidents of Student Councils to enable them to meet as a group, share ideas and develop their leadership skills. The last workshop took place in Yellowknife in March 1990, and it was intended to have this year's workshop in the fall in the Eastern Arctic. Unfortunately, many student councils held their elections late in the fall and responses from the Eastern Arctic communities, were slow in coming in. Invitations were sent to all secondary schools and residences with Grade 12 students. The organization of the workshop was undertaken by the Presidents of Sir John Franklin School, St. Patrick's Secondary School and Akaitcho Hall Residence, with assistance from a staff member from the Department of Education.

PARTICIPANTS:

SANDRA KATSAK (Takijualuk School, Pond Inlet)
JEFF PINTO (Sir John Franklin School, Yellowknife)
ROY MANITOK (Maani Ulujuk School, Rankin Inlet)
INA AREY (Grollier Hall, Inuvik)
RON GONZALES (Diamond Jenness Secondary School, Hay River)
KATIE HILL (Paul Kaeser School, Fort Smith)
NAOMI WILMAN (Gordon Robertson Educational Centre, Iqaluit)
JOHNNY EJIANNIAQ (Ukiivik Residence, Iqaluit)
DOMINIC VALLERAND (St. Patrick's School, Yellowknife)
ERIC McLEOD (Samuel Hearne School, Inuvik)
LAUREEN PAMEOLIK (Qiqitliq School, Arviat)
JULIA TAUTUAJUK (Attagoyuk School, Pangnirtung)
MEL SABOURIN (Akaitcho Hall, Yellowknife)

AGENDA:

Saturday, 16th February:

A.M.: Student Leadership

P.M.: Panel Discussion on the Role of Student Councils in Schools and Residences.

Fil Fraser, member of the Spicer Commission was on line from Edmonton for one hour to talk with the presidents about Canadian issues.

Sunday, 17th February:

A.M.: Ideas Exchange among Presidents

P.M.: Student interaction with the Minister of Education

EVENING: Banquet

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP SESSIONS:

1. Student Leadership:

Facilitator - Elaine Stewart : Chairperson - Jeff Pinto.

Elaine is a former teacher and has excellent rapport with youth. She used a brainstorming session with students to help them to see the need for the development of a Mission Statement, areas of emphasis in a particular council, the establishment of priorities through consultation with the student body, setting priorities, goals and objectives, and the various steps leading to the realization of these objectives. She then went through the various planning stages by having councils ask the appropriate questions of the student body.

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How can we get there?
4. How will we do it all?
5. How will we know when we are successful?

In order to set the climate for involvement of the general student body in the activities, they were made aware of the importance of student input, that council plans will be based on that input, that council listens to student feedback, and that council recognizes student effort.

Further strategies were elicited from the students for:

- planning;
- keeping student council together;
- having a model of student run activities;
- involving students and getting feedback after events;
- co-ordinating all members of the council;
- delegating or getting volunteers to share the work;
- open communication between the students and the council;
- getting more adults involved in student council - principals, parents, teachers;
- pulling student council together and clarifying goals and jobs;
- getting students to make their requests/wishes known;
- effectively using what they learn at the workshop;
- working under pressure;
- keeping people involved and doing what they said they would do.

2. Role of Student Councils in Schools and Residences. Panel Discussion including Will Kunder (principal), Melody McLeod (parent), John Bowden (teacher) and a former student (Wayne Walsh). Facilitator Richard Nerysoo (Speaker of the Assembly). (Chairperson - Dominic Vallerand)

In his introductory remarks, Richard Nerysoo asked members of the Panel to consider some questions which he put to them so that their presentations may include responses. He talked about the rules

which are established in the schools, who sets them, what is the responsibility of the Student Council with respect to rules, do they have a say in what is taught in schools and in what is important in schools.

John Bowden referred to the process used for council elections and the ability to see things through. The system sometimes fails individuals who take on these tasks without fully appreciating the responsibilities and implications. "I must follow them; I am their leader!" He emphasized that character and compassion are more important than ideology.

Wayne Walsh stated that students must begin to look more closely at processes to achieve whatever ends they establish for themselves, rather than just the ends alone. He suggested that this could enable more students to understand how systems work and how adults make decisions.

Melody emphasized the need for rapport between student councils and their administrations in the same way that they should establish rapport with their parents and other students in their place of learning.

Will Kunder talked about the importance of developing a mission statement for the school through a process of consultation with the various stakeholder groups. That mission statement should then be used to determine what ideas the school will support and the activities which will be used to satisfy the mission.

Each speaker entertained questions from the presidents. It was most productive.

3. Fil Fraser, member of the Spicer Commission and Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission in Alberta, was on line from Edmonton to talk with the presidents about Canadian Issues. Facilitator - Bob MacQuarrie.

At very short notice, arrangements were made for Fil Fraser to engage in dialogue with the presidents. Comments ranged from GST, to Quebec to Aboriginal issues to regionalism, very well moderated by Bob MacQuarrie. Fil handled the comments and questions very well. It became obvious that there is a need for our students to obtain a better understanding of fundamental issues in our country and in the north. Too often, statements are made with very limited knowledge and understanding of the historical background. Credit is due to Northwestel for setting up the conference phone and line at short notice.

4. Ideas Exchange among Presidents:
Facilitator - Terry Sheasgreen : Chairperson - Mel Sabourin.

Mr Sheasgreen, teacher at Sir John Franklin School, used his drama

teaching strategies for this session by eliciting from the students what their expectations were, and then worked with the following three steps:

PLANNING = THOUGHT + ACTION + RESULTS.

He was able to draw from the students what their main activities were for the year, how were they executed, which of these were successful/unsuccessful from the student point of view and why. Among the typical activities were spirit days, dances, fund-raisers and graduation.

For each of these activities, students were required to answer the following questions:

- How was it determined that this activity should be conducted?
- How were the various duties assigned to accomplish the task?
- What degree of student participation did the activity get?
- How did you determine the success/failure of the activity?

Students moved back and forth from the large group to small groups to brainstorm ideas to answer these questions. In this way, those who had successful activities were able to describe the processes they followed, while those who had unsuccessful activities were able to determine why things did not go well for them.

It was quite evident from this session, that different Councils function with varying degrees of teacher support:

- there are those who have access to teacher advice and are quite satisfied with the way in which this is provided to them;
- there are those who have almost every step determined for them and they carry out decisions made for them by the advisor;
- there are those who flounder and continue to work through by trial and error, hoping that they are successful in the end.

Students favoured the first approach because they wanted to be responsible for the activities of the Council yet appreciated teacher guidance and advice.

5. Student interaction with the Minister of Education: Chairperson - Jeff Pinto

Students have noticed differences in the way in which smoking rules are applied to students and to teachers. They do not appreciate the discrimination. In the same way, they find that schools have set aside space for teachers' lounge but students are expected to have their lunches and do their socializing in less suitable places.

There are many students who have very young children or babies who have to be left in the care of friends or family to enable them to attend school. Some choose to stay home with their young rather than to attend school. They expressed the need for the provision of day care facilities in secondary schools so that students may bring their babies to a safe place near them.

Students are concerned about the freedom with which teachers are allowed to make negative comments which damage self-esteem. This sometimes results in students quitting courses or school.

Students are concerned with the way in which instruction is delivered in the schools. They commented on the lack of curriculum in Aboriginal Language courses, the inadequate supply of learning materials for Northern Studies and Aboriginal Language, the manner in which some teachers interpret and use co-operative education in their classes, and the presence of unqualified teachers in some classes. They also indicated that new teachers appear to lack the sensitivity to, or understanding of, northern issues to be able to present their lessons in a meaningful and challenging manner.

Northern Studies is not being effectively delivered. The real northern issues are not being analysed in depth. This was clearly stated to the Spicer Commission and revealed in the exchange between some students and Fil Fraser. Students emphasized the need for better understanding of the background to the current issues such as Quebec separation, Aboriginal Land Claims, Sovereignty, and the Gulf War.

While the importance of Northern Studies was recognized by the students, they wanted to know why it was mandatory. They would have preferred it to be an option which students could have chosen to study. The Minister spoke of the significance of the three components of the Northern Studies course and why every student should be required to take this course. He did go on to state that the new Northwest Territories Social Studies curriculum for Grades 10, 11 and 12 will take in the Northern Studies curriculum and make it relevant to our students.

While the workshop served a very useful purpose for all participants, it should have been held earlier in the school year, as agreed to last year. If that were to happen, ideas generated at the workshop could be taken back to the schools/residences and put into effect. Most of those who attended this workshop will not be in school next year; the rest will not likely be in the same position for another year. This would necessitate schools having their student council elections early in the new year or at the end of the current year to have their presidents ready to attend the workshop.

Presidents from residences questioned the process which is used for generating and approving rules in residences. They wanted to know why some residences have more rules or certain rules which are not in other residences. They wanted to know who monitors residence

rules and whether residence administrators are answerable to anyone.

The students agreed that the Minister needs to know what is happening in the schools and residences so that his expectations are met. They are concerned that there is not enough monitoring to enable students to give their best.

The leadership residence in Fort Smith was praised by one of the students who was pleased that the Minister plans to continue the program and that there will be a new intake of students in the fall.

Since the Community Education Council is a primary decision-making body, a request was made for students from secondary schools to have a representative on the CEC. The Minister responded that students may now attend meetings of the CEC and express their views to that body.

Students wanted to see greater use made of elders in our schools. They wanted these elders to share with them the expertise which they had instead of receiving this from southern-trained or insensitive teachers.

With the impending creation of Nunavut, the students wanted to know who will determine the curriculum for schools in the new Nunavut. The Minister indicated that it would be up to the Nunavut government to decide.

Students had heard that the name of the Gordon Robertson Education Centre is to be changed to Inukshuk High School. They were concerned that students had not been consulted on an issue which was very important to them.

On the whole, the Minister appreciated the frankness of the students and the opportunity to be with them. He advised them that he would review their suggestions and concerns with his Deputy Minister. They will be addressed at the earliest opportunity, and a report will be submitted to their next workshop to be held early in the fall of 1991. He made the commitment that this activity will be sponsored annually so that student leaders may meet with their Minister and the Members of the Legislative Assembly to express their concerns. He was very positive about their comments.

The Evening Banquet was attended by all the Presidents, the Minister, six of the thirteen M. L. A's from the Presidents' ridings, the Deputy Minister of Education and the resource persons. The Minister spoke on Leadership from a personal perspective, which was very well received by the Presidents.

The final evaluation of the workshop by the Presidents, was very positive. They were punctual for all sessions and not one person missed any session.