

EVALUATING AN INDIAN AND MÉTIS EDUCATION STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Richard M. Jones
Evelyn A. Mazurkie
Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment
Regina, Saskatchewan

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to provide formative information to the Indian and Métis Education Branch of Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment on its Staff Development Program. The evaluation was designed in cooperation with the Indian and Métis Education Branch and with input from the provincial Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee. Data for the study were collected by means of questionnaires, telephone surveys, group interviews, on-site visits, and document analyses. The evaluation provided information on the extent to which the program has met its objectives.

Résumé: L'objectif de cette étude était de fournir à la Direction de l'éducation indienne et métisse du ministère de l'Éducation, de la Formation et de l'Emploi de la Saskatchewan des renseignements sur le programme de formation professionnelle qu'elle offre. Cette évaluation a été conçue en collaboration avec la Direction de l'éducation indienne et métisse, avec le concours du Comité consultatif provincial sur l'éducation indienne et métisse. Les données de l'étude ont été réunies par questionnaires, sondages téléphoniques, entrevues de groupe, visites sur place et analyses de documents. L'évaluation a fourni des renseignements qui permettront de définir dans quelle mesure le programme a répondu à ses objectifs.

■ In 1989-90 the Indian and Métis Education Staff Development Program was established by Saskatchewan Education to promote teachers' awareness and understanding of Indian and Métis people, and to provide teachers with information and skills that would help them to portray Indian and Métis people more appropriately.

The Staff Development Program involves consultants from Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment working with local school

community teams. The program has three main components: an introductory seminar; resources including a binder of information and materials, catalogues, and department consultants; and networking meetings.

First-year teams, usually made up of one central office person, one teacher, one school administrator, and two community members, attend a three-day introductory seminar. At the seminar, which is usually held at a central location in the summer, team members are given resources related to developing Indian and Métis awareness and participation, cross-cultural education, materials evaluation, instructional approaches, and strategies for effective staff development, team building, and planning for change.

The in-service consultants from the Indian and Métis Education Branch work closely with school community teams during the first year of the teams' involvement in the program. Networking meetings, usually held in the spring and fall, are used for sharing information and ideas among team members. As local teams grow more experienced, the amount of time required of the department consultants decreases.

By the end of the 1992 school year, approximately 55 school community teams, comprising 213 individuals, had participated in the Staff Development Program.

The Indian and Métis Education Staff Development Program had been in operation on a pilot basis for three years, and it was felt that a formal study was needed to evaluate the program. Acting on a motion of the province's Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee (IMEAC), the Indian and Métis Education Branch of the department requested that the Assessment and Evaluation Branch conduct an evaluation of the program.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The general purpose of this evaluation was to provide formative information to the Indian and Métis Education Branch on its Staff Development Program. More specifically, the evaluation was intended to:

- determine the extent to which the program had met its objectives,

- determine the extent to which the program addressed local needs, and
- provide recommendations for program improvement.

The study was designed around the following four evaluation issues and specific research questions related to each issue:

Issue: Objectives of the Program

- To what extent are the program's objectives understood by school community team members?
- Are there any changes needed to the program's objectives?

Issue: Value of the Program's Components

- To what extent do school community team members feel the three main components—seminar, resources, and networking meetings—support the delivery of the program?
- To what extent do school community team members feel logistics such as facilities, fees, and timetabling support delivery of the program?

Issue: Effectiveness of the Program

- To what extent have the intended objectives of the program been realized?
- Are there any unintended outcomes (positive or negative) of the program?

Issue: Emerging Needs of the Program

- Are there additional issues or areas of concern that the program should address?
- In what ways can the program be improved?

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A variety of assessment techniques were needed to evaluate the effectiveness of a program that involved students, teachers, community members, and department personnel. As a result, the study used document analyses, questionnaires, telephone surveys, onsite visits, and group interviews to collect information.

Department documents such as policy papers, program resource materials, and year-end reports submitted by participating teams were analyzed to aid in the development of research issues and questions, and in the preparation of questionnaires, surveys, and interview guides. A draft questionnaire, to be completed by members of all teams participating in the Staff Development Program to date, was drawn up. As well, because the program is applicable to all schools and school divisions in the province, telephone surveys were conducted with random samples of principals and directors of education that had not yet participated in the program.

The Indian and Métis Education Staff Development Program was intended to effect change in both the school and the wider community. Therefore, visits to communities, involving observation and semistructured discussions with students, teachers, administrators, and other community members, were considered essential. The project team visited two sites, one urban and one rural, where the Staff Development Program was being implemented. Results of the questionnaires suggested discussion items that were used with local team and community members. The qualitative information derived from the onsite visits complemented the quantitative data collected by means of questionnaires and telephone surveys.

Following the onsite visits, the information obtained from all data-gathering techniques was analyzed to identify issues and questions to pursue in group interviews. These semistructured interviews were conducted with participants in the networking meeting who were divided into like groups (i.e., teachers, administrators, and community members). Qualitative information obtained from the group interviews complemented the data gathered by other means.

The evaluation project team consulted with the Indian and Métis Education Branch and IMEAC on the design of the evaluation and the subsequent interpretation of data.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this program evaluation have been organized around the four evaluation issues and specific research questions associated with each issue.

Issue: Objectives of the Program

Generally, Indian and Métis Education Staff Development Program team members appear to know and understand the objectives of the

program. The program's objectives appear to be appropriate. Some clarification is needed about whether the program is intended for all schools or just those with relatively high aboriginal student populations.

Issue: Value of the Program's Components

Generally, the summer seminar is viewed as a positive experience that helps participants to become familiar with the program's components, identify issues in Indian and Métis education, network with colleagues involved in other staff development programs, and develop teambuilding and cooperative learning skills. The seminar appears to be somewhat less effective in helping team members to become familiar with staff development principles and to develop plans to address specific school community needs.

In general, human resources (including contact people and department consultants), print resources (such as the program's newsletter), and audiovisual resources are also considered useful. The contributions of the department consultants, in particular, are viewed as most helpful.

Issue: Effectiveness of the Program

In general, the Staff Development Program is not designed as a "quick fix." However, given that the program has only just completed its third year of pilot and that it is a voluntary program, there is sufficient evidence to say that it has been meeting its objectives and that it is making a positive contribution to Indian and Métis education in the province.

Numerous new programs and practices have been associated with the Staff Development Program. Examples of these positive developments are employment of aboriginal teachers, counsellors, or aides; self-esteem programs; stay-in-school programs; improved communications; and more community involvement in schools.

It will take more time before communities begin to see changes. Nevertheless, some positive unintended outcomes attributed to the program are fewer school attendance and "late" problems, a greater sense of pride on the part of aboriginal students and their parents, and improved staff morale.

Additional issues that could be addressed by the program include how to involve schools and school divisions that do not view Indian and Métis education staff development as a priority and how to better liaise with Indian and Métis communities.

Some suggestions offered regarding how the program could be improved relate to better promotion of the program, alternative ways to deliver the program, and ongoing program evaluation.

The evaluation of the Indian and Métis Staff Development Program was designed to collect information for program improvement. Because of the formative nature of the study, heavy reliance was placed on consultations with program participants. In addition, because of the cultural sensitivity of the information collected, the involvement of the Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee in validating the methodology and in confirming interpretations made by the project team strengthened both the degree of acceptance for results of the study and level of commitment to the program. These collaborative approaches were important to ensure that concerns about cultural differences and understanding were addressed.