

A Diploma of Social Work in Northern Alberta

Prepared for the
Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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The Clearinghouse Project

The *Clearinghouse Project* is a collaborative project between the Northern Alberta Development Council and five public colleges located in Northern Alberta. The purpose of the *Clearinghouse Project* is to provide on-going research relevant to the labour-market trends in Northern Alberta. The information collected through the *Clearinghouse Project* is used by the Colleges to assist them in determining strategies to meet the training and employment needs of the Region. Current members in the *Clearinghouse Project* include: Fairview College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Lakeland College, and Northern Lakes College. Twice a year these members convene to determine the research priorities of its Research Consultants. The following report is a result of this process.

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Clearinghouse to assist the partners in determining if they should or should not invest in the development and delivery of a Diploma of Social Work in Northern Alberta. The information presented in the report was collected using a variety of research strategies. Employer need and student demand were primarily assessed with a questionnaire. Discoursing with industry resource persons provided much of the “in-house “knowledge presented, while Internet and hard-copy scans served the primary method for program content research and community population statistics.

Section 1 – The Social Services Industry

Social work is an Industry that intermingles with a variety of other industries such as Education, Health, and Justice. Collectively these industries are frequently referred to as the human services. Alberta Occupational Profiles clusters the job title Social Worker under an industry profile referred to as the Social Services Industry. There are 11 other job titles listed in the industry profile. Examples are Child & Youth Care Worker, Volunteer Coordinator, Personal Care Attendant, and Mental Health Counsellor. There are also 22 related job titles listed within the Social Services Industry. Examples are Probation Officer, Community Health Nurse, and Special Education Teacher. ¹

During the data collection phase of this report the Researcher made a conscious effort to keep the distinction between the industry social services and the job title Social Worker at the forefront. Keeping the focus of the research to the broader cluster of social services permitted the researcher to critique the industry from a number of perspectives that would have been answered by default if the focus of the report were directed only toward the job title Social Worker. Keeping this broader perspective also allowed for assessment of need for agencies that do not specifically recruit for Registered Social Workers but have identified that social service training is preferred.

Section 2: The Alberta College of Social Workers

The concerns of professional regulation (RSW) and the Health Professions Act (1999) were frequently encountered while researching for this report. Depending on who was making the comment, there were a multitude of opinions and differences of fact coming from a variety of information sources. To ensure that the Clearinghouse partners received the correct information on these two topics, the Alberta College of Social Workers, contributed the following information to this report.

In January 2000, Council of the Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW) placed a moratorium on granting approved program status to any new programs or new brokered programs until such time as the Professional Social Work Education Board (PSWEB) has developed criteria for approval for such programs. At that time ACSW had been advised that the Health Professions Act (HPA) would be proclaimed in 2000. This decision was prompted by a number of factors.

In the Social Work Profession Act (SWPA) proclaimed in 1995, the Universities Coordinating Council (UCC) was named as the body with the authority to grant approved social work program status to academic institutions. The UCC used its authority to grant approved social work program status to five Alberta community college diploma programs (Grant MacEwan, Maskwachees, Mount Royal, Portage, and Red Deer).

A November 1998 legislative amendment removed the UCC role from the Social Work Profession Act. The UCC role for social work was to be addressed through the Health Professions Act (HPA) passed in 1999. Acting on advice that the HPA would be proclaimed and come into force for social work by the end of 2000, ACSW proposed for its HPA regulations that a Professional Social Work Education Board (PSWEB) be established.

The PSWEB would review the education, training, experience, practice, and competence required of applicants for registration as Registered Social Workers for the purposes of making recommendations to ACSW Council regarding which social work education programs should be granted approved program status. The PSWEB would have authority for its role upon proclamation of the HPA.

One of the tasks of the PSWEB would be to recommend standards for community college programs as no such standards exist in Canada (standards for University level social work programs are established by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work). To assist with this task, the five approved Alberta community college programs were asked to develop accreditation standards.

In December 2001 the HPA was amended to clarify wording enabling professional colleges to approve educational programs for the purpose of registration. The Ministry of Health & Wellness is in the process of drafting HPA regulations for social work.

ACSW has been advised that the HPA should be proclaimed for social work by the end of 2002. These delays have extended the duration of the moratorium.

Submitted by the Alberta College of Social Workers ²

Alberta is the only province to accept a Diploma of Social Work for registration as a Social Worker. The diploma must come from one of the Colleges noted in the previous section. Registration at the diploma level was introduced in 1991 through Alberta's Social Work Profession Act. Currently British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec do not have mandatory registration for a person to present him/herself as a Social Worker. ³

Ontario has recently introduced a two-tiered system. The credential "Registered Social Worker" is reserved for BSWs or higher; while the credential "Registered Social Services Worker" is used for Diplomas of Social Work. The four Atlantic Provinces have mandatory registration with the minimum criteria being a BSW. These inconsistencies across Canada are causing a challenge for the Agreement of Internal Trade, which is intended to remove mobility barriers for regulated professionals. In May 2001 the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) had passed a resolution to support the BSW as the entry-level criteria for the RSW credential across Canada. However, it is up to each province to determine the criteria for provincial membership.

In anticipation of HPA, the Alberta College of Social Workers provided a one-time opportunity for persons working in a social work capacity, without social work

credentials, to grandparent during 1999/2000. The ACSW currently has 4500 members. There are 477 members from Northern Alberta. Of these 477 members, 107 have a Diploma of Social Work, 128 BSW, 49 MSW, and 193 grandparented. ⁴

Section 3 - Agency Input

Through a combination of a “mail / fax back” questionnaire and telephone interviewing, 50 human services agencies across Northern Alberta were invited to complete an Agency Questionnaire (see Appendix). Thirty-eight questionnaires were completed, a response rate of 76%. Two of the respondents declined completing the survey citing FOIP concerns within their agency. As a result, 36 (72%) of the questionnaires contained analyzable data. The results are presented in Table 1.

Agency Type	SS Recruited	RSW Required QA2*	Salary Range (Thousands) QA3	# SS Staff QB1	Difficult Recruit QB3	Turnover Level QB4	New SS Positions QB5
47% Gov.	Yes 97%	Yes 14%	25 - 12%	1-10 - 64%	Yes 74%	VS 9%	Yes 89%
47% Non-Prof	No 3%	No 86%	30 - 34%	>10 -16%	No 26%	S 48%	No 11%
6% Private			35 - 31%	>20 - 7%		US 26%	
			40 - 21%	>30 - 6%		VUS 17%	
			NR - 2%	>40 - 3%			
				N.R. - 4%			

Table 1: Percent response for selected questions from Agency Questionnaire.

Table 1: Of the 97% of agencies that recruit for social service positions 14% of these agencies indicated that registration as a Social Worker (RSW) is required. However, even without the required RSW criteria, (with each increasing credential required recruitment becomes more and more difficult in Northern Alberta), 74% of the agencies indicated having difficulty recruiting for social service positions. While 89% of the respondents predicted they would be recruiting for new social service positions within the next two years. Salary range shows that 65% of the current positions noted by the respondents fall between \$30,000 – \$35,000 per annum.

Figure 1 presents the entry education level for advertised social service positions as indicated by the respondents. Figure 2 presents the education level of current staff.

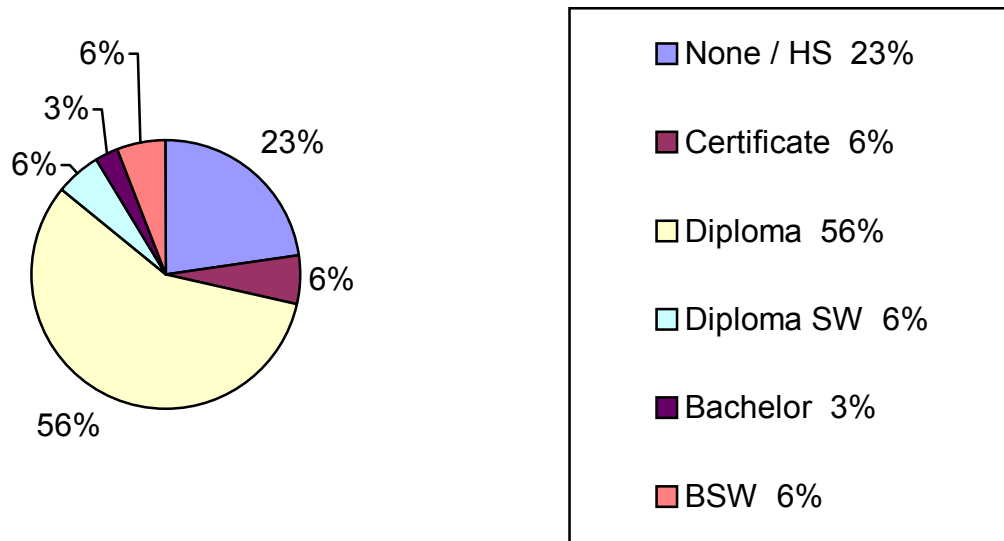


Figure 1: Entry education level preferred for social service positions (Question A.1).

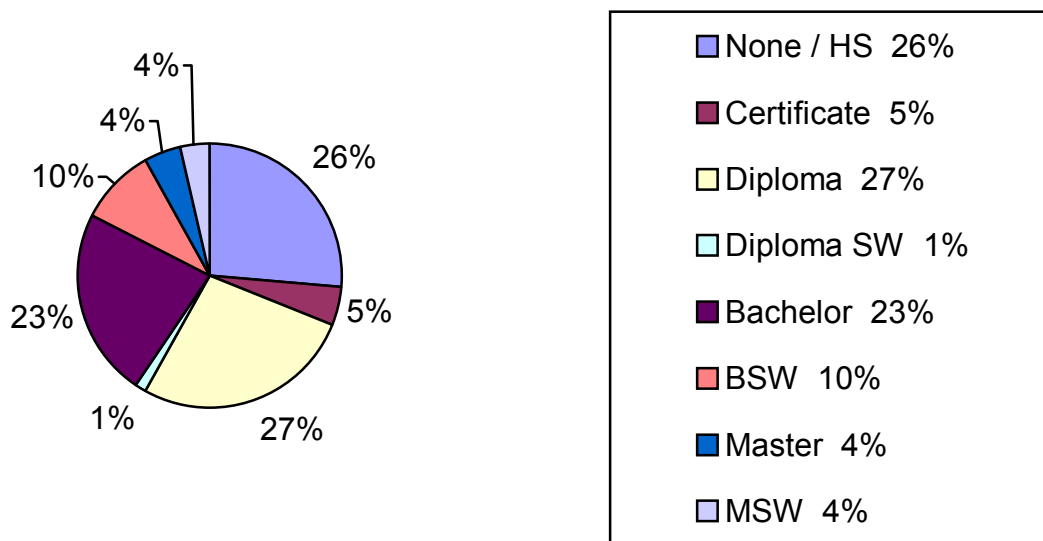
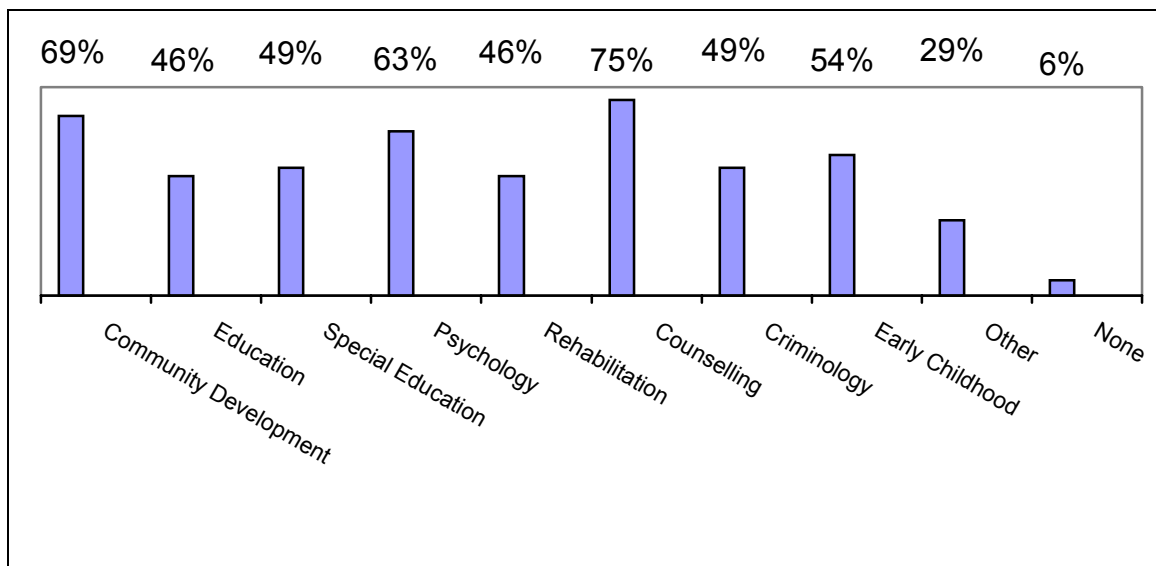


Figure 2: Education level of current social service staff (Question B.2).

A comparison of [Figure 1](#) to [Figure 2](#) highlights three key points. First, the percentage of current social service staff with no post-secondary education is consistent with the percentage of agencies that indicated they do not have a minimum educational criterion. Second, for those agencies that indicated an entry-level diploma criterion, the majority (20/22 = 91%) did not specify Social Work as the academic focus. This may reflect the reality that there is no pool of DSW graduates (except for Northern Lakes College - Salve Lake campus) being generated from the Clearinghouse partners.

Third, the lack of diploma level training in social work in Northern Alberta appears to be largely absorbed through the hiring of generic Bachelor level training. Question A.4 of the [Agency Questionnaire](#); deals with perception of equivalencies to Social Work, presented in [Figure 3](#). Respondents could check all that applied.

Figure 3: Agency Perception of Equivalencies to Social Work



Perhaps not surprising the most common perceived equivalency to Social Work is Counselling (75%), while Community Development, Psychology, and Early Childhood were viewed as equivalent by more than half of the respondents. This outcome highlights three key points. First, while completing the questionnaire, the majority of the respondents were considering the term “Social Work’ from an industry perspective and not from a job title perspective. Second, the 6% of respondents who indicated “none” were equivalent to Social Work were the same respondents who indicated the entry-level education requirement of a BSW (Figure 1) on the questionnaire.

A third point to consider relates to the employment of the Diploma of Social Work graduate. This can be considered in two ways. First, DSW graduates will have competing pools of human service graduates for positions that do not specifically recruit for DSW / RSW. However, a second way to view this outcome is that potential DSW graduates will have a greater likelihood of obtaining employment across a variety of human services.

Section 3 of the Agency Questionnaire requested the respondent’s opinion on the need for a Diploma of Social Work in Northern Alberta. Level of support for such a program was assessed through questions dealing with willingness to provide work placements, participation at the advisory level, and permission for the Clearinghouse partners to conduct follow-up contact to this report. This feedback is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Respondent Support for a Diploma of Social Work in Northern Alberta

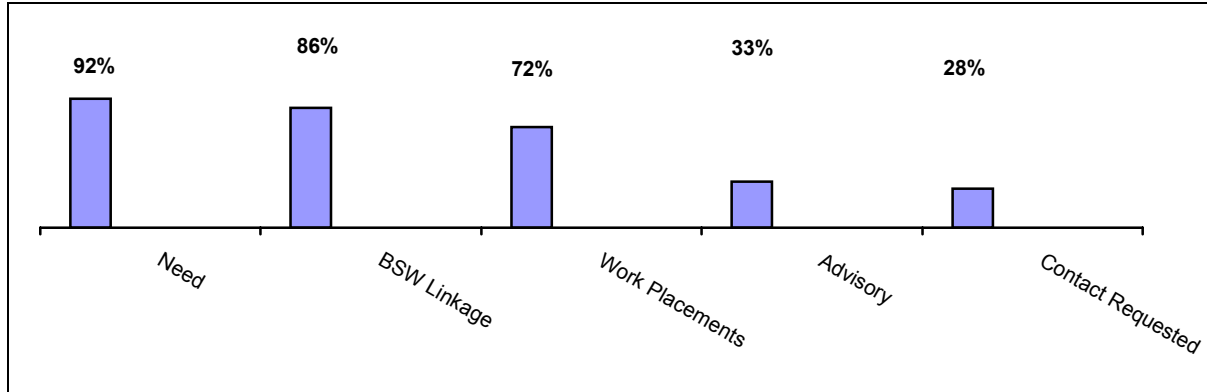


Figure 4 shows that 92% of the respondents think that there is a need for a Diploma of Social Work to be available to residents of Northern Alberta through the Clearinghouse partners. An equally impressive percentage (86%) of the respondents think a matriculation option to the BSW level is an important factor. While 72% are willing to consider DSW work placements. These three factors show that agencies in Northern Alberta are willing to be community partners in the delivery of a Diploma of Social Work. (Practicums must be under the supervision of a Registered Social Worker). Question B.3 of the Agency Questionnaire addressed observed weaknesses in the current labour pool for social service positions, while Question C.2 considered DSW graduates in particular.

A recurring theme in the feedback from the respondents was a lack of qualified applicants for positions advertised. Although most agencies indicated that the number of applicants was not considered a problem. This is an interesting point in that it highlights there is a potentially hidden pool of unqualified persons applying for social service positions. These persons may be potential students for the Diploma of Social

Work. Respondents also indicated that they frequently resorted to hiring under-qualified and/or over-qualified individuals for positions advertised. Noting that there is no labour pool to suit their needs for the entry-level social service positions they advertise. Two agencies indicated that this shortage of has become so commonplace in their region that they have stopped requiring social service training in their advertisements.

Question C.2 inquired if the respondent noticed weaknesses in Diploma of Social Work graduates. Recall that [Figure 2](#) showed that only 1% of current social service staff (relative to the agencies of the respondents) has a Diploma of Social Work. This is why it was surprising to find that 33% of the respondents indicated, “YES” to this question. Three recurring themes emerged from the feedback for this question. First, the amount of time dedicated to work placements needed to be longer. Second, case management skills needed improvement. And third, knowledge of how to apply relevant legislation to real community issues was weak.

Question C.1 – “Yes” - Asked for specific target groups, issues, or gaps in services that the Diploma of Social Work curriculum should include. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the respondents provided details to their response. Following is a summary of these comments.

Table 2: Respondent suggestions for Diploma of Social Work Curriculum Development.

Question C.1 Feedback	
Are you aware of any specific target group, issue, or current gap in services in Northern Alberta that a Diploma of Social Work should consider in its curriculum plans?	
The way CFSA's do business is changing. We will be expected to rely much more strongly on the community to deliver services to the family. At this point that general base of knowledge is lacking.	We hire individuals with post-secondary education in the human services. A Diploma of Social Work would fit our criteria.
There are no trained individuals in our community. We have to look outside our community. This makes it difficult for the new worker to be accepted by the community and increases turnover.	A diploma program would meet the needs of the residents in the region to train locally for human service jobs. And I would anticipate over time raise the calibre of the workers in the field.
This program should target potential aboriginal students.	This is a much-needed diploma. Particularly if it can be obtained while people are still working.
Program should emphasize the potential variety of employment, not only child protection. Our agency is evolving to the community development model and we will need more applicants trained in early intervention and community development skills.	Cross Culture training, not just aboriginal focused. Our aboriginal residents need knowledge of other cultures in order to be successful as a team member in the social work field.
Rural, aboriginal and remote issues need to be covered. How to work in rural areas and be successful.	When (CFSA) looking for community-based contractors in rural areas we have difficulty finding anyone with formal credentials. We prefer a human services diploma.
I am glad to see this collaboration. Because the diploma of social work is not offered in the north (except in Slave Lake) my family member has to relocate to an urban centre.	Aboriginal Cree speaking students. (A number of respondents noted the need for the Aboriginal perspective.)
While it is unlikely we would hire new graduates from a diploma program, we would support a diploma program to provide manpower for entry-level positions within the community based services.	The diploma should have been in place before the BSW was offered. Unfortunately, our community is likely to lose the BSW access due to low response. I think the lack of a diploma program was the real issue, not lack of interest.

<p>It is likely that the provincial government will require us to hire workers with social work or equivalent training in the near future (within five years). Without more trained personnel available we would have to shut down.</p>	<p>There were many people in the community who did not have the entry criteria for the BSW Access program. A diploma program is what a lot need, maybe even a certificate first to get them started. Also, the program must be available outside of work hours.</p>
<p>Existing staff need to the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications without moving out of the community.</p>	<p>We don't need a BSW. The diploma level would serve our needs.</p>
<p>Issues in the north need to be included. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, doing three jobs, being in an isolated community. And how to get involved and be accepted by smaller communities. We see a lot of people who come and go because they never fit in with the lifestyle here.</p>	<p>For aboriginal communities social work is about caring for the people and community first. We need people to be not only trained in our culture but also accepting of it and realizing there are alternative models to the standard child protection approach.</p>
<p>This program has been needed for a long time in our community. We have stopped asking for training because we know we just can't get it.</p>	<p>We recruit for 4 CFSA's and 8 HRE departments in Northern Alberta. The problem we run into most often is that individuals lack the necessary years of experience along with their education. Individuals need to understand what options the diploma gives them so they apply for the appropriate positions and gain experience.</p>
<p>I support the diploma because Aboriginal individuals seem to complete the diploma and go to work at their home reserve thereby gaining the required experience. Alberta Children Services are often looking for individuals who can provide cultural specific enhancements to their organization.</p>	<p>Some people find the idea of a degree daunting. If the program is broken up into 2 parts of 2 years each more individuals may feel that accomplishing the training is possible. Many of our applicants do not a BSW (preferred for child protection, the most we recruit for). I can only support the diploma program if it is accredited to a BSW.</p>

Recurring themes from Table 2 are: aboriginal focus, offering the diploma as a starting point to the BSW, and that the DSW would serve the community development initiatives happening across the region. The comments from the agencies also allude to another point; a potential target group of students for the DSW – staff currently working in a social work capacity.

Section 4 – Career / Guidance Counsellor Input

A questionnaire was forwarded to 40 Career / Guidance Counsellors working with high-school students in Northern Alberta (representing 50% of the number of high-schools located in the Northern Alberta). Twenty-five questionnaires were completed, a response rate of 63%. Table 2 summarizes feedback from selected questions from the Career / Guidance Counsellor Survey.

Number of high school students QA.1	Opportunity to discuss career goals with students QA.2	Noticed student interest in social work QA.3	~ Percentage of students indicating interest in social work QA.4
0-50 Students - 24%	Yes – 96%	Yes – 68% →	1%-5% - 51%
51 – 100 students – 8%	No – 4%	No – 28%	5%-10% - 12%
101 – 200 students – 4%		NR – 4%	>10% - 3%
201- 300 students - 32%			NR – 2%
301 – 400 students – 4%			
401 – 500 students - 8%			
>500 students – 16%			

Table 3: Percent response for selected questions from Career / Guidance Counsellor Survey.

Table 3: The respondents represent a collective knowledge of the career interests of approximately 5600 students in Northern Alberta. Though 68% of the respondents indicated they noticed an interest in social work among their students, when asked to quantify student interest, the vast majority noted an interest level of 5% or less. Taking the halfway point of the 0-5% interest rate, this calculates to about 140 potential students. Because the sample surveyed reflected 50% of the high schools, one could double this number to approximately 280 interested high school students. Note though that this number is spread over a vast geographic region and in competition with other human service programs that offer courses like Counselling and Psychology. The following unsolicited comments from the respondents might offer some insight into the interest level of high-school students.

Unsure of interest in social work specifically but a large portion of our students are interested in psychology and counselling.”	“Social workers need to promote their profession not just their job at the CFSA”.
“Students tend not to think of social work as a job choice but are more into researching about counselling programs. “	“ I noticed that aboriginal females have a greater interest in social work”.
“Most of my students want jobs in the oil & gas or computers.	When I discuss career options with students they think of studying psychology or childcare or something like that to work at the agencies in the community.”
“We had a social worker in as a guest speaker during one of our career classes and she was surprised that students thought that all social workers could do was take children from homes or women from abusive spouses.	When we have career fairs the students are most interested in programs that will get them high paying jobs or make them a “rock star”.
Social work is perceived as an “uncool” job by my students	You are competing with industries that offer more prestige and money. It’s hard to sell social work as a career choice to this age group”.
I have noticed that with the push for the sciences, even female students aren’t that interested in the helping jobs anymore.	

Table 4: Unsolicited comments from Career / Guidance Counsellors

There appears to be an image problem for the social work profession among the students represented here. This problem is nothing new to the profession, as identified by the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada - People think of Social Workers as “cheque writers” or “baby snatchers”. This issue has been highlighted as an immediate priority by the membership. ⁵

Section 5 – Diploma Level Enrolment

A request for Diploma of Social Work enrolment numbers was sent to Grant MacEwan College, Mount Royal College, Maskwachees Cultural College, Portage College, and Red Deer College. None of these colleges responded to the request. However, Northern Lakes College did forward the following information.

Social Work Diploma Program – Northern lakes College Various Statistics

The Social Work Diploma Program is a brokered program offered in the Northern Lakes College region by Grant McEwan College. The data described here goes back to 1992 when the College automated its student information system. For the first six years, the program ran alternating offerings between the Grouard Campus and the Slave Lake Campus. The last offering in Grouard ended in 1998 and it is now begun every other year in Slave Lake.

The following tables describe the applicant and registrant information for each offering. It looks at full-time students only though records indicate that occasionally students do come into the program for a short period of time (likely to complete one course on a part-time basis). Northern Lakes College does not give the credential so the student numbers do not indicate how many people graduated. It does indicate those students who are still present at the end of the offering. Their graduating would be contingent on passing all the requirements set out by Grant McEwan.

Though a look at student number does provide some relevant information, the FLE (full-load equivalent) is the standard in counting. Following are the total FLEs for the Social Work Diploma program (in 1998-9 Northern Lakes College entered into a brokering agreement that allowed them to count half of the FLEs towards their official enrolment).

FLE - Diploma of Social Work

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
FLE	29.651	33.350	36.253	33.378	29.223	39.875	18.458	16.064

Table 5: Northern Lakes College FLE for Diploma of Social Work 1993 – 2001

When students complete their program, they receive an exit survey from our College in which standard questions prescribed by Alberta Learning are asked. Response rates from the Social Work Diploma graduates have always been very good so the data is considered reliable. The table that follows presents the responses to some of these standard questions.

Graduate Satisfaction – Diploma of Social Work

	2000-1	1998-9	1997-8*
How satisfied are you with:			
Relevance of Courses	58%	100%	
Quality of Teaching	100%	81.30%	100%
Overall Satisfaction	83%	100%	87.50%
Would you take the same program again	100%	93.80%	100%
* 3 point scale used so only top rating makes up the percentage. This was replaced by a 5 point scale in later years to which the top two ratings give the percentage			

Table 6: Student Satisfaction – Diploma of Social Work 1997 - 2001

Because Northern Lakes College does not give the credential, we do not generally gather statistics regarding employment after the program. However, for the 1998-9 graduates, 4 students were contacted 6-9 months after graduation. All were working, 3

in a directly related field but 1 was working part-time in a field not directly related but this person was also a full-time student again. Of the 2 that indicated having worked before their program, both said that their income had improved with the program.

Student Numbers Diploma of Social Work				Year 1			Year 2				
Location	Start Date	End Date	# Applied	Start #	-WDL	End #	-WDL	+2nd Yr. Intake	Start #	- WDL	End #
Slave Lake	Fall 2001	Spring 2003	18	16	1	15	5	0	10		
Slave Lake	Fall 1999	Spring 2001	30	27	1	26	8	0	18	0	18
Slave Lake	Fall 1997	Spring 1999	25	18	0	18	0	0	18	1	17
Grouard	Fall 1996	Spring 1998	28	26	5	21	3	0	18	0	18
Slave Lake	Fall 1995	Spring 1997	24	22	7	15	2	1	14	0	14
Grouard	Fall 1994	Spring 1996	29	28	8	20	1	3	22	2	20
Slave Lake	Fall 1993	Spring 1995	38	27	9	18	1	0	17	0	17
Grouard	Fall 1992	Spring 1994	28	27	3	24	1	3	26	1	25
		T	220	191	34	157	21	7	143	4	129

Table 7: Northern Lakes College – Diploma of Social Work Enrolment – 1992 – 2001.

Submitted by Northern Lakes College ⁶

The dramatic drop in Fulltime Load Equivalent (FLE) coincides with the introduction of the Health Professions Act (1999) and the Alberta College of Social Workers one-time opportunity to grandparent (1999 / 2000). The years preceding these two events showed a stable FLE range of 29.22 – 39.88.

Ontario – Social Service Worker Diploma

Ontario is the only other province that has a system in place for the professional regulation of Social Workers with diploma level training (RSSW). Twenty-one public colleges in Ontario offer a 2-year Diploma of Social Service Worker. Following is the provincial total for DSSW graduates of 1999 and 2-year follow-up employment rates.

Total DSSW 1999 Graduates	Total Surveyed	Employed Full Time (related)	Average Annual Salary	Employed Part Time (related)	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force
936	682 (72.7 %)	213 (23%)	\$23,241	81 (8.7%)	55 (5.9%)	198 (29%)

Table 8: Ontario Graduate Employment Survey for Diploma of Social Services Worker - 1999

Collectively the public colleges in Ontario have 22 programs that fall under the provincial educational category Social Services (e.g. Behaviour Technician, Rehabilitation Worker, Career & Work Counsellor, and Sign Language Interpreter). Provincially there were a total of 1704 graduates in 1999 under this category; 936 or 55% of the total Social Services provincial graduates came from the Diploma of Social Service Worker. ⁷

Section 6 – Bachelors of Social Work

University of Victoria:

The University of Victoria has been offering a distance BSW program for over 20 years.

“The program can be part-time or full-time study, offered across Canada, leading to a Bachelor of Social Work degree. Graduates have a fully accredited degree, which opens career opportunities in a variety of different social service organizations. They are also eligible for membership in the professional associations of social workers.

Admissions requirements are two years of transferable university or college credit (30 units) completion of SOCW 200A and 200B or equivalents (must be completed or in progress at time of application) and a grade point average of 67% on the last 24 credits of university transfer courses. There is one Admissions intake per year for the BSW program. Application packages are available the first week of December, due January 31st, for a start date of the following September.

Most of the courses are offered in a distance education format. This involves purchasing a package of course materials, which is completed on a self-study basis. Students will have regular access to their instructors via telephone and e-mail. There will also be teleconference and list-serve options available for each course.

Note:

SOCW 300 has a 10-day face-to-face component that is offered in various regions and at the University of Victoria.

SOCW 304 and 402 (field work) involve working in a practicum setting and can usually be done in their own community. “

Inserted from University of Victoria Website

The Admissions Coordinator for Social Work at the University of Victoria noted there are currently 25 students from communities in Northern Alberta enrolled in the Distance BSW program. Alberta currently has a total of 75 students enrolled, reflecting 13% of total program enrolment. ⁸

University of British Columbia:

The University of British Columbia does not offer a Distance BSW.

“Admission to the B.S.W. program is open to persons with a Baccalaureate degree, and to persons with a minimum of 60 credits of the Bachelor of Arts program at UBC, or its equivalent. Applicants are required to fulfill the following prerequisites:

- * UBC’s SOWK 200 AND UBC’s SOWK, or the equivalent;
- * 6 credits of English (applicants with a degree from a Canadian institution are exempt);
- * 18 credits of course work in the social sciences and humanities. Courses may be selected from Anthropology, Canadian History, Economics, Psychology, Political Science, Sociology, Women’s Studies and Family Science. Courses in Canadian political economy and the history of Canada and its First Peoples are highly recommended.
- * GPA of 2.7 (68%) over the last 60 credits preceding admission.
- * Suitability for a career in social work as demonstrated by the professional statement, employment and/or volunteer history, and letters of reference;
- * An official Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of at least 580.

Inserted from University of British Columbia Website

The prerequisite courses for UBC (SOWK 200 AND 201) can be taken at many colleges and universities in British Columbia, including: University College of the Cariboo University, College of the Fraser Valley, Malaspina, College of New Caledonia, Nicola Valley University of Northern BC, Okanagan University College, Open Learning

Agency, Selkirk, and the University of Victoria. Transferability of courses from out-of-province colleges, and CEGEP is at the discretion of the UBC Office of the Registrar/Admissions.

The Student Advisor for Social Work at the University of British Columbia noted that Diploma/Certificate programs such as Social Services Worker, Youth/Child Care or Early Childhood Education will **not** receive transfer credit to the UBC Faculty of Arts, as the courses are not university transferable.⁹

University of Regina:

Since 1972 the University of Regina has been evolving a decentralized delivery model for its BSW. The model, based on the use of Continuing Education Centres in Saskatoon and Prince Albert, has attempted to use alternative technologies for a number of courses in recent years. The University has also entered into partnership with 9 Regional Colleges to offer components of the BSW program. Currently, the University of Regina does not offer a Distance BSW.¹⁰ Admission to the BSW program requires 30 university credit hours (including transfer credit) with a 65% average. Applicants must also complete a social issue essay as part of the admissions process. The admission credits are applied toward the 120 credit hours required to achieve the BSW. The 120 credit hours for the BSW program consists of 60 required social work credit hours. The University of Regina stipulates that 45 of these social work credit hours must be completed through their BSW program. Applications for admission are reviewed twice a year, one for the spring intake and one for the winter intake.

Dalhousie University:

The Maritime School of Social Work recently launched a BSW through distance education available to students across Canada. The BSW Distance program is offered on-line on a part-time basis. It consists of 3 full credit courses, 10 half-credit courses and 1 two-credit course. Students can complete the BSW Distance Program in three years of part-time study. Applicants must have an undergraduate degree in order to be considered for the BSW program. Also a two-week residency is required at Dalhousie University.

The Coordinator of the Social Work Distance program indicated they are receiving calls largely from students in Atlantic region. There are some students from other parts of Canada registered however currently they do not have any students from Alberta. Dalhousie University expects that the enrolment will increase as other provinces become aware of the program. ¹¹

"Students who have taken our distance programs say that: "This method of learning allows total flexibility in one's schedule." "I can avoid traveling in stormy weather and study at home with a cup of hot chocolate." "The instruction on WebCT is simple to use as I am a novice and am having no difficulty." "There are instructors that are assigned to each course so it is not like you are alone in cyberspace." "Distance education is great for busy people who are working full-time and want to continue building their career. It is also good for stay-at-home Moms raising their children"

Inserted from Dalhousie University Website - Director Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard

Maskwachees Cultural College:

The Coordinator for the social work diploma at Maskwachees noted that the College is still in the developmental phase of an Aboriginal Social Work Degree. It is hoped that the college will be ready to take their first group of students in September 2004. The Coordinator noted that Maskwachees is attempting to design a degree program that is not compartmentalized. For example, instead of taking an exclusive course on social policy analysis the program would like to intertwine this skill into numerous courses with increasing depth required as the student progresses. They are also attempting to revamp their diploma program towards this model. ¹²

University of Calgary - Access:

In 1997/1998 a collection of stakeholders met to discuss the need for a Bachelor of Social Work program in Northern Alberta. The result of these inaugural meetings was the launching of the Access BSW program in four northern communities – Grande Prairie, Peace River, High Level, and Salve Lake (Blue Quills / Portage came on board in 2002). In January 2001, 19 northern students were admitted to the program. By January 2002, this number had risen to 76 students.

A Senior Researcher for Northern Alberta Development Council noted that the first group of students from the program recently graduated this fall. Below are the enrolment numbers for the BSW Access program for Winter 2000 (first enrolment) and Winter 2002. ¹³

Winter 2000	TOTAL STUDENTS REGISTERED	# ADMITTED	# UNCLASSIFIED
Grande Prairie	14	7	7
Peace River	8	5	3
High Level	10	1	9
Hobbema	13	10	3
Standoff	14	5	9
Slave Lake	14	6	8
Total	73	34	39
Winter 2002	TOTAL STUDENTS REGISTERED	# ADMITTED	# UNCLASSIFIED
Grande Prairie	36	32	4
Peace River/High Level	14	10	4
Hobbema	37	30	7
Standoff	18	15	3
Slave Lake	29	24	5
Red Deer	30	29	1
Medicine Hat	16	9	7
Blue Quills/Portage	22	10	12
Total	202	159	43

Table 9: Enrolment in BSW Access 2000-2002 Inserted from University of Calgary Website

The Peace River / High Level in-take of new students has been discontinued due to low enrolment as of Fall 2002. The delivery model used the program, referred to as a “Learning Circle”, requires sustainable pools of in-takes in order for the model to be feasible. This is currently not the reality for the Peace River and High Level locations. As of September 2002, students previously enrolled from these two communities have joined the Slave Lake or Grande Prairie locations.

Admission requirements for BSW Access are:

- * Two years of university / college transfer credits or an undergraduate degree or a Diploma of Social Work from a college in Alberta, with a minimum 2.00 GPA.
- * Three letters of reference and a qualifying essay.
- * Related work / volunteer experience
- * Must reside outside of Calgary, Edmonton, or Lethbridge.

It would be no surprise to hear that graduates of a Diploma of Social Work in Alberta would find the first year of a standard BSW program to be largely repetitious. This would be because BSW programs accept applicants with a variety of academic backgrounds in the social sciences. To address this issue the University of Calgary is considering a post-diploma program for DSW graduates.

Canyon College:

Canyon College, an on-line college operating out of Idaho, offers an on-line BSW. There are no admission requirements indicated on their website. The BSW consists of a total of 10 courses. There is no mention of a required practicum, however, there is an option to complete a practicum in the list of core courses. Canyon College notes that it will accept transfer of up to 75% of the program through a combination of life experience / post-secondary credits assessed by the Registrar. Tuition is charged per course at rate of \$400.00, calculating to \$4000.00 US for the BSW.

The Admissions representative for Canyon College was contacted to assess, if possible, the response they were getting from potential students in Canada, Northern Alberta in particular. The Admissions representative stated Canyon College could not provide enrolments figures. When asked if the College could forward hard copy of any promotional materials, the Admissions representative indicated that Canyon College does not have hard copy available. When questioned regarding the BSW recognition in Canadian provinces, the Admissions representative stated it was the responsibility of

the student to ensure the program met local guidelines. When asked for a list of current Canadian provinces that did accept the BSW the Admissions representative refused comment. ¹⁴

The Alberta College of Social Workers has received calls from residents in Alberta inquiring about the program at Canyon College. The on-line BSW offered by Canyon College's is questionable at the very least. However, taking off the academic hat and putting on the consumer hat, it is easy to appreciate the appeal this program would have to a person in Northern Alberta who can't access a program closer to home. This may be a heads up for the Clearinghouse partners. If the social work training needs of the region are not serviced by the local Colleges, there are other institutions, reputable or not, willing to break into the market.

Section 7 – Northern Demographics

Northern Alberta has close to 260,000 residents spread across 380,229 Km². More than 37% (95,233) of the total population for Northern Alberta lives in one of the three cities located in the region - Grand Prairie, Fort McMurray, and Cold Lake. Another 27% (71,198) lives in one of the 24 towns in the region. The 29 First Nations in the region make up 8% (21,830) of the population. The 8 Metis Settlements make up 4% (11,653) of the population.¹⁵ Figure 4 presents the distribution of the population in Northern Alberta. Reaching residents outside of the population pools is a challenge for all services not just post-secondary services. (Population and age characteristics for selected communities in Northern Alberta are included in the Appendix).

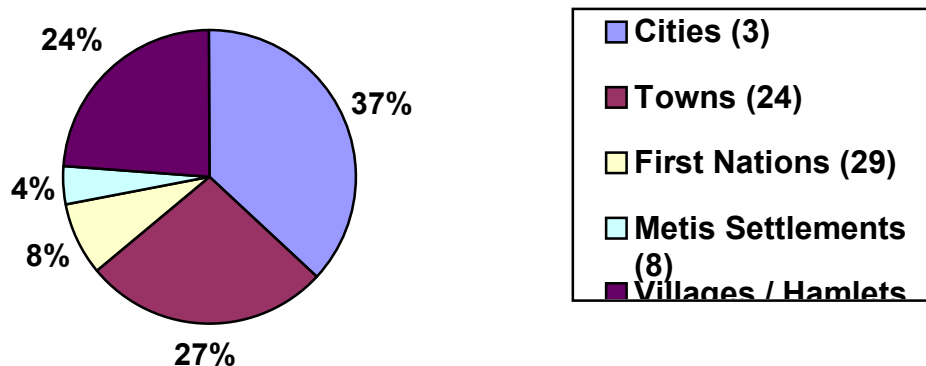


Figure 5: Distribution of Northern Alberta Population

Closing Comments

Two recurring opinions while conducting the research for this report were the need for the Clearinghouse partners to expand the variety of program completions offered and the method of delivery used. The “come to us model” is becoming increasingly outdated as more and more postsecondary institutions offer home study, e-learning and distributed learning options. Because the Diploma of Social Work is largely content based it would be an ideal candidate to test this consumer demand. However, in order for this to happen the Clearinghouse partners must make a collaborative commitment to the development of distance education in Northern Alberta that expands beyond the on-campus / satellite site model.¹⁶

Noted Resources

- 1) *Alberta Occupational Profiles*. www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo/
- 2) Alberta College of Social Workers – Rob Adachi, Registrar, 1-800-661-3089.
- 3) *The Advocate*. Alberta College of Social Workers, Vol. 26, #24, Winter 2001. and *Status of Social Work Legislation in Canada*. Canadian Association of Social Workers.
- 4) Alberta College of Social Workers – Rob Adachi, Registrar, 1-800-661-3089
- 5) *History of ASWNC – Social Workers of Northern Canada*, www.socialiworknorth.com.
- 6) Northern Lakes College – Monica Kreiner, Performance Measurement. 1-780-751-3250
- 7) *Employment Profile – 1998-99 Graduates*. Department of Education. Ontario, Canada
- 8) University of Victoria – Michelle Osborne, Admissions Coordinator Social Worker.
- 9) University of British Columbia – Alina Hymetes, Student Advisor for Social Work. 1-250-822-4119
- 10) *Review of the Faculty of Social Work Decentralized Delivery Model*. University of Regina. December 2000.
- 11) Maritime School of Social Work – Adrienne Shatzadeh, Coordinator. 1-902-494-1354
- 12) Maskwachees Cultural College – Janette Villeneuve, Coordinator of Social Work.
- 13) Northern Alberta Development Council – Audrey DeWit, Senior Researcher. 1-780-624-6274.
- 14) Canyon College – Jean Obyrne, Admissions Representative. 1-208-455-0010.
- 15) *2002 Official Population List*. Alberta Municipal Affairs.
- 16) *Business Models for Distributed Learning*. Stephen A., Stephen A., & Mokosz, P. (2000).

Appendix

A Diploma of Social Work in Northern Alberta?

Agency Questionnaire

Joni Heffernan
Research Consultant

Requested By: Data collected through this questionnaire will be summarized and presented to the members of the *Northern Alberta Labour Market Clearinghouse Committee*. The Clearinghouse Committee is a research collaboration of Grande Prairie Regional College, Fairview College, Northern Lakes College, Keyano College, and Lakeland College. Through this collaboration these public colleges strive to research and improve the academic programs and services they offer to residents of Northern Alberta.

Purpose: This questionnaire has three primary research purposes:

- 1) To determine if there is a need for the public colleges in Northern Alberta to offer a Diploma of Social Work.
- 2) To identify current recruitment status in agencies that seek to fill positions that require a social service background.
- 3) To gain insight into the needs and / or gaps in services in the delivery of social services in Northern Alberta.

Please Note: Feedback from any individual agency or respondent will not be identified in the Researcher's report to the Clearinghouse Committee.

Consent to Participate: ____ Accept ____ Decline

Agency: _____ Date: _____

Person Completing Survey: _____ Title: _____

**Please return survey using the enclosed self-addressed / stamped envelope
or
Fax: 780-618-3405 (Att: Joni Heffernan)**

PLEASE RETURN BY OCTOBER 11th, 2002

Is your agency?

Government service Non-Profit (government funded)
 Non-profit (combination of grants / fund-raising campaigns) Private

Does your agency recruit for individuals with a social service background? Yes No

If No: Please complete Section C only.

If yes: Please Sections A, B, and C.

Section A: Recruitment

A.4)_ What is the minimum **entry** education level your agency requires in order for a staff person to perform social work / services (Please circle one).

Certificate Diploma Diploma SW Bachelors BSW
Masters MSW Other: _____

A.5)_ Does your agency require that all staff performing social work / services be registered with the *Alberta College of Social Workers*? Yes No

A.6)_ What is the average starting salary range for full-time social service positions with your agency? (Please circle one)

Less 25,000 30,000 35,000 40,000 45,000 More

A.7)_ Which of the following academic specialties would you consider equivalent to your requirement for a social work background? (Check all that apply)

Community Development Education Special Education Psychology
 Rehabilitation Counselling Criminology Early Childhood
Other(Please specify)_____ None of the above

PLEASE RETURN BY OCTOBER 11th, 2002

1/3

Section B - Current Staffing

B.1) How many social service staff does your agency employ? # _____

B.2) Of the social service staff you currently employ how many have the following education level:

Certificate # _____ Diploma # _____ Diploma SW# _____ Bachelors# _____ BSW # _____

Masters# _____ MSW # _____ Other:# (please specify) _____

B.3) Do you have difficulty finding suitable candidates to fill social service positions in your agency?
Yes No

If Yes: Is there a specific skill, knowledge, and/or credential lacking in potential candidates?
(Please specify)

B.4) What is the level of turn-over for your social service staff? (Check one)

- _____ Very stable, little turn-over; most staff have been with your agency for five years or more
- _____ Stable, occasional turn-over,; most staff have been with your agency for three years or more
- _____ Unstable, frequent turn-over, most staff have been with your agency less than two years.
- _____ Very unstable, almost continuous turnover; most staff have been with your agency less than a year.

B.5) Do you foresee recruiting for **new** social service positions within the next two years?
Yes No

Section C - Future Social Work Needs

C.1) Do you think there is a need for the members of the Clearinghouse Committee to offer a
Diploma in Social Work to the residents of Northern Alberta ? Yes No

If Yes:

Are you aware of any specific target group, issue, or current gap in services in Northern Alberta that such a program should consider in its curriculum plans. (Please briefly describe)

PLEASE RETURN BY OCTOBER 11th, 2002

Section C - Continued

- C.2) Has your agency identified any specific skill / knowledge that **entry** level social service staff, who completed a Diploma of Social Work program, are lacking in?

Yes No

If Yes: Please describe:

- C.3) Would recommend that the Clearinghouse Committee pursue partnerships with universities to facilitate the continuation of diploma level graduates to the Bachelor's level?

Yes No

- C.4) Would your agency consider participating in work placements for students of a Diploma of Social Work?

Yes No

- C.5) Would your agency consider participating on an industry advisory panel for the creation / guidance of a Diploma of Social Work for residents of Northern Alberta.

Yes No

- C.6) May the members of the Clearinghouse Committee contact you for further discussion and / or guidance concerning a Diploma of Social Work program in Northern Alberta?

Yes No

If Yes: Please provide the following contact information:

Name: _____
 Position: _____
 Agency: _____
 Phone #: _____
 Email: _____

- C.7) Comments: Please feel free to provide any other feedback concerning the topic of this questionnaire.

Thank-you for your input!

Please forward completed questionnaire using the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

Joni Heffernan -Research Consultant
 8429 - 99th Avenue Peace River, AB T8S 1W2
 Fax: 780-618-3405 (Attention to Joni Heffernan) jheffern@telusplanet.net

PLEASE RETURN BY OCTOBER 11th, 2002

3/3

A Diploma of Social Work in Northern Alberta?

Career / Guidance Counsellor Questionnaire

Joni Heffernan
Research Consultant

Requested By: Data collected through this questionnaire will be summarized and presented to the members of the *Northern Alberta Labour Market Clearinghouse Committee*. The Clearinghouse Committee is a research collaboration of Grande Prairie Regional College, Fairview College, Northern Lakes College, Keyano College, and Lakeland College. Through this collaboration these public colleges strive to research and improve the academic programs and services they offer to residents of Northern Alberta.

Purpose: This questionnaire has two primary research purposes:

- 1) To identify if senior-high students in Northern Alberta are expressing an interest in pursuing social work as a career goal.
- 2) To collapse the feedback received into the data collected from a variety of stakeholders to determine if there is a need for the public colleges in Northern Alberta to create a Diploma of Social Work for the residents of the region.

Please Note: Feedback from any individual respondent will not be identified in the Researcher's report to the Clearinghouse Committee.

Consent to Participate: _____ Accept _____ Decline

Counsellor Name: _____

Date: _____ School(s) Served: _____

PLEASE RETURN BY OCTOBER 11th, 2002

Fax: 780-618-3405 (Att: Joni Heffernan)

Career / Guidance Counsellor Questionnaire

Section A - Student Interest in Social Work

A.1) What is the total # of senior-high (Grades 10 -12) students for the school(s) you service?

A.2) In your role as a Career / Guidance Counsellor, do you have the opportunity to discuss post-secondary goals with the senior-high students of the school (s) you service?

YES NO

A.3) Do you utilize the educational liaison services of: (check all that apply)

- Fairview College
 Grande Prairie Regional College
 Keyano College
 Lakeland College
 Northern Lakes College

A.4) During your discussions with senior-high students have you noticed an interest in Social Work as a career choice?

YES NO

If YES:

Of the total # of senior-high students in the school(s) you service, approximately what percent of these students expressed an interest in pursuing social work as a career choice?

% _____

Do you have a specific College or University you tend to refer these students to for more information?

YES NO

Please identify which College / University _____.

PLEASE RETURN BY OCTOBER 11th, 2002

Pg. 1 of

780-618-3405 (fax)

Contact Requested

Name	Agency	Contact Info	Comments
Kelly Penner	CFSA	624-6460	
Rod Brideau	CFSA	624-6460	
Debra Stone	Savanna School	351-3771	
Allyson Barr	PR High School	624-4221	
Bryan McLeod	St. Andrew's	523-4595	
Tanya Bell	FCSS	624-1000	
Bob Plowman	Glenmary High	624-5656	
D. Fridd	FMc Composite		
Gord Ivey	Fairview High	835-5421	
Lori Cooper	CFSA	743-7462	
Kathy Archer	WJS	332-7693	
Brenda Brochu	Women's Shelter	624-3466	
Fritz Dijk	PR Health Region	624-2535	
Marie Lavoie	Peekiskwatan	891-3640	
Jill Tomlinson	Alberta Corporate Services	324-3285	
Wes Graw	Mental Health	624-6151	
Julian Packer	Private Practice	624-5050	
Joan Haggerty	East Prairie Metis	523-2594	
Katrina Randell	Sagitawia Friendship	624-2443	

	Population		Population
Cities	11,595	First Nations	
Cold Lake	47,240	Athabasca Chipewyan	1
Fort McMurray	36,938	Beaver	359
Grande Prairie		Beaver Lake	290
Towns		Bigstone Cree	1930
Athabasca	2415	Chipewyan Prairie	223
Beaverlodge	2110	Cold Lake	1124
Bonnyville	5709	Dene Tha'	1743
Elk Point	1440	Driftpile	673
Fairview	3150	Duncan's	112
Falher	1109	Fort McKay	254
Fox Creek	2337	Fort McMurray	232
Grande Cache	3828	Frog Lake	1350
Grimshaw	2435	Heart Lake	169
High Level	3638	Horse Lake	292
High Prairie	2820	Kapawe'no	67
Lac La Biche	2776	Kehewin Cree	855
Manning	1293	Little Red River Cree	2663
McLennan	804	Loon River Cree	1
Peace River	6240	Lubicon Lake	6
Rainbow Lake	1186	Mikisew Cree	125
Sexsmith	1653	Saddle Lake	5494
Slave Lake	6600	Sawridge	28
Spirit River	1100	Smith's Landing (NWT/AB)	0
St Paul	5061	Sturgeon Lake	1097
Swan Hills	1807	Sucker Creek	490
Valleyview	1856	Swan River	294
Wembley	1497	Tallcree	457
Whitecourt	8334	Whitefish Lake	914
		Woodland Cree	587
Villages	546	Metis Settlements	
Berwyn	840	Buffalo Lake	7229
Boyle	NA	East Prairie	420
Desmarais	377	Elizabeth	596
Donnelly	306	Fishing Lake	478
Girouxville	459	Gift Lake	809
Glendon	437	Kikino	922
Hines Creek	714	Paddle Prairie	581
Hythe	231	Peavine	618
Kinuso	372		
Nampa	NA		
Plamondon	609		
Rycroft	NA		
Wanham			

Source: 2002 Official Population List – Alberta Municipal Affairs

Hamlets & Villages in Northern Alberta

<p>Hamlets</p> <p>Anzac Ardmore Ashmont Assumption Atikameg <u>Atmore</u> Bay Tree Bear Canyon Beaver Dam Beaver Lake Bezanson Blue Ridge Blueberry Mountain Bluesky Bonanza Breynat Brownvale Buffalo Head Prairie Cadotte Lake Calais Calling Lake Canyon Creek Carcajou Caslan Chard Chateh Cherry Grove Cherry Point Chipewyan Lake Chisholm Chisholm Mills Clairmont Cleardale <u>Colinton</u> Conklin Crooked Creek Deadwood Debolt Demmitt Dixonville Driftpile Eaglesham Ellscot Elmworth Enilda Eureka River Faust</p>	<p>Fitzgerald Flatbush Foisy Fort Assiniboine Fort Chipewyan Fort Kent <u>Fort McKay</u> <u>Fort McMurray*</u> <u>Fort Vermilion</u> Fox Lake Frog Lake <u>Gift Lake</u> Goodfare Goodfish Lake Goodridge Goose Lake Gordondale <u>Grassland</u> Grouard Grouard Mission Grovedale Gundy Gurneyville Guy Habay Heinsburg Hondo Hoselaw Hylo Iron River Jean Cote John D'or Prairie Joussard Keg River <u>Kikino</u> La Corey La Crete La Glace Lafond Lindbergh Little Buffalo Little Smoky Loon Lake Mallaig Marie Reine Marten Beach McRae Meander River Meanook Medley North Star</p>	<p>Notikewin Paddle Prairie Peerless Lake Perryvale Red Earth Creek Reno Ridgevalley Riverview Rochester Saddle Lake Sandy Lake Silver Valley Smith Sputinow St Brides St Edouard St Isidore St Lina St Vincent Sunset House Tangent Therien Trout Lake Valhalla Centre Wabasca Wagner Wandering River Watino Whitelaw Widewater Woking Worsley <u>Zama City</u></p> <p>Summer Villages</p> <p>Bondiss Bonnyville Beach Horseshoe Bay Island Lake Island Lake South Mewatha Beach Pelican Narrows South Baptiste Sunset Beach West Baptiste Whispering Hills White Gull</p>
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