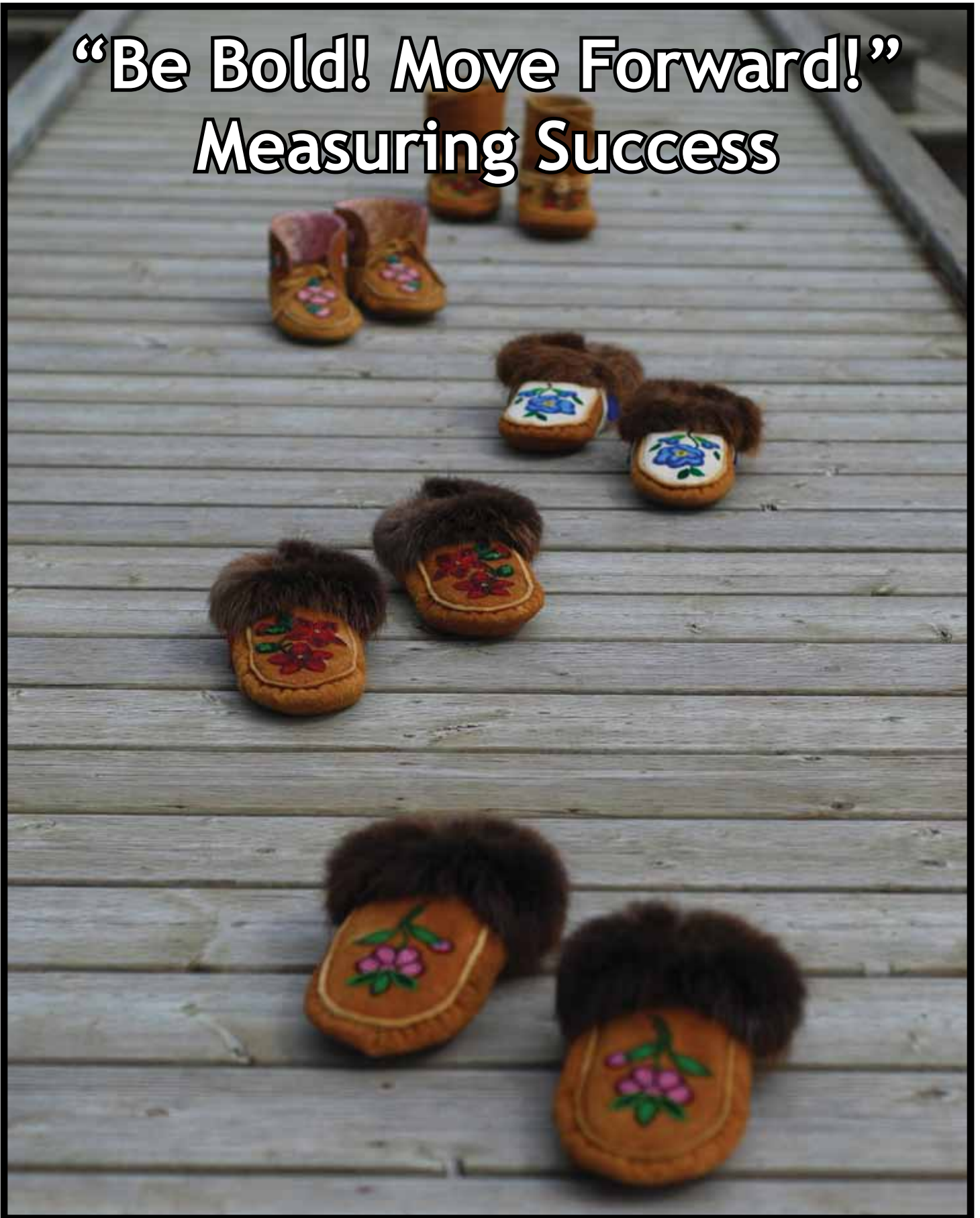


# “Be Bold! Move Forward!” Measuring Success





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A research paper prepared by SUNTEP Saskatoon  
and the Gabriel Dumont Institute, March, 2012

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## THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As teachers of teachers, the Gabriel Dumont Institute has a commitment to provide teachers with the essential knowledge and skills to meet the needs of Métis children and families for their educational expectations and careers of the future. Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education (SUNTEP) faculty and staff need to be ready to prepare teachers for all the demands that will be put upon them. This study evolved from discussions about the direction of Aboriginal education in Canada between SUNTEP graduates teaching in Saskatchewan's schools and SUNTEP Saskatoon staff. In particular, teachers were concerned about the implementation of Aboriginal Education Plans (AEPs) in schools. As a result of the concerns expressed by practicing teachers, Murray Hamilton, SUNTEP Saskatoon Co-ordinator, decided that not enough information was available about AEPs. There was conflicting information coming from different schools and boards. To ensure that SUNTEP was preparing teachers to meet the AEPs' requirements, Murray proposed a study to collect information on existing and proposed AEPs. The study was designed to interview the SUNTEP teachers in schools about the AEPs in their schools and divisions. The teachers were invited to talk about the programs, experiences, and materials which they had found resulted in their Aboriginal students' academic success. They were asked to talk about how they measured the success of their students. The resulting report offers educators with a look inside the teaching lives of Métis teachers in Saskatchewan urban schools. These professionals discussed things that they believed were necessary to make Aboriginal students more successful. The generous support of Métis teachers, Métis community members, administrators, and others who gave their time and ideas to this important project is acknowledged and each and every one is thanked for their input. Special thanks is given to: Cathy Littlejohn who developed the research design and interview schedules, analyzed the data, and authored the report; Jenn Altenberg, a SUNTEP graduate teaching in Saskatoon who was involved in the research project's initial development and provided invaluable background on the challenges of urban teachers; Murray Hamilton as research co-ordinator and university liaison; and Ron Rivard who conducted interviews and provided important insights in the analysis.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) graduates teaching in and administrating Saskatchewan urban schools are tasked with closing the academic gap between Aboriginal students and other students by 2020. At the same time, they are called upon to tend to the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual development of Aboriginal students. This entails not only academic teachings, but also involves collaboration with the Aboriginal community, coordination of Elders' activities in the school, and teaching from the Treaty Kit, as well as advising, supporting, and educating non-Aboriginal teachers about Aboriginal culture, history and spirituality.

Métis teachers are making schools welcoming and they dispel the intergenerational fears instilled in the children's caregivers by another generation of school masters. They are providing children with safe refuge from the sometimes chaotic lives they live. In some cases, teachers become surrogate parents, often cooking breakfast, serving lunch and staying to oversee after-school programs. They organize the traditional dance troupes and give their weekends to travel with dancers to events which reinforce the young dancers' pride in their culture. Teachers are role models for Métis students and understanding, caring role models who represent the Métis community. They write grant proposals, negotiate with community organizations and governments to ensure that students have enriching educational activities. At the high school level, teachers open doors for students, to identify their interests and direct them to resources and experiences which can ignite passion for a career or postsecondary education. This is especially true for the students that may be more susceptible to social risk factors such as substance abuse, gang influence, and family dysfunction.

Following the Council of Canadian Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) declaration of Aboriginal education as a priority issue in 2004 and the subsequent Aboriginal Education Action Plan approval in 2008, Ministries of Education have been under pressure to produce better academic results for their students. This pressure has been passed on to Boards of Education. Research into best practices, theories of decolonization and racism, approaches which involve partnerships between jurisdictions and stakeholders, links to employment, community engagement, and inclusion of Aboriginal content or perspective have all been flooding the literature as educators rush to become part of the new interest in Aboriginal education.

For the most part, Métis teachers are not involved in the discussions of best practices or in the ongoing research. They are involved in efforts to apply research to their classrooms after their boards have adopted the research's recommendations. For some, the new approaches brought to the classroom are solutions recommended by "people who have never set foot in a contemporary classroom." Métis teachers are confident that if the children come through the school's door, they



know how to teach them. What they see as needed is not more “best practices research,” but more support and help for the things that they know work in their own classrooms!

Métis teachers want to see their students excel. They have high expectations. However, they believe that not all teachers have such high expectations of their students; and as a result, some students may not be doing their best. For Métis teachers, identity is key to academic success. Knowing and being proud of one’s identity can be transformative. These teachers are role models for transformative education. They want to see all of their Métis students transformed by knowing their identity, being strong in their knowledge of themselves, and standing on that firm foundation to progress in their education. Many are concerned that in the current environment, Métis students are not receiving as much cultural development as they could be towards becoming strong Métis learners. For some of those interviewed, this is so serious that they question the direction of their boards and the education offered to Métis students. They believe that the Gabriel Dumont Institute, SUNTEP and the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan must become more involved in defining and supporting a system to produce the best educated Métis population since the days of the Red River Settlement. This recommendation acknowledges the Métis interviewees’ ideas for strengthening Métis education.



## 1.0 BACKGROUND

In September 2004, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) declared Aboriginal education a priority (CMEC, 2008). The Council designed an Aboriginal Education Action Plan to provide positive Aboriginal learning experiences, improve student well-being, increase Aboriginal students' success, and improve labour market attainment for Aboriginal peoples (CMEC, 2008.)

In March 2009, Saskatchewan Minister of Education Ken Krawetz introduced Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework, *Inspiring Success: Building Towards Students Achievement*, and stated, "We are taking the opportunity to work with First Nations and Métis peoples to reframe education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century." (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009.)

The Saskatchewan Ministry's vision is "a provincial education system that foundationally places First Nations and Métis ways of knowing in the learning program to create a culturally responsive education system that benefits all learners." (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, III.) The Ministry of Education is committed to eliminating the achievement gap between Aboriginal and other Saskatchewan students by 2020. Its policy goals are: 1) equitable outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners; 2) all learners to have knowledge and appreciation of the unique contributions of First Nations and Métis peoples of Saskatchewan; 3) data collection and reporting on measures outlined in the Ministry's First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework that demonstrate accountability towards improved educational outcomes; and 4) shared management of the provincial education system by promoting and sustaining partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples at the provincial and local levels.

The First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework affirmed the Province's commitment to: *(1) ensuring that curricula and content fundamentally reflect First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and accurately depict the contributions of First Nations and Métis people; (2) supporting programs that integrate the teaching of language and culture; (3) engaging children, youth, families and communities in culturally responsive learning programs and partnership that lead to shared leadership, shared responsibility, and shared decision-making in the education system; (4) ensuring opportunities exist for their [the environment and natural world] inclusion within the learning programs; (5) continuous improvement through alignment of system initiatives, and working collaboratively with First Nations and Métis peoples to strengthen capacity within the provincial and federal systems; (6) mandatory Treaty education that honours the historical uniqueness of First Nations' rights to education while acknowledging the federal government's legal, constitutional and fiscal obligations to First Nations and Métis peoples; and (7) creating a provincial education system that affirms the identity of First Nations and Métis students and respects and reflects their diverse cultures in teaching and learning practices.* (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, III.)

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education stated a commitment to work collaboratively with all educational partners "to build capacity and achieve transformational change within the provincial education system to create a culturally responsive learning program that benefits all learners" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, Policy Statement).

The Policy Framework sets out strategies for the Ministry of Education, the school divisions, and local schools for accomplishing the goals. The onus is on the educational partners along with the First Nations and Métis communities to achieve these goals. The Saskatchewan School Boards

Association (SSBA) prepared a response to the challenge of the Framework with the First Nations and Métis Education Action Plan 2010-2012. It stated:

*Boards of education are committed to narrowing the achievement gap for students and fully engaging First Nations and Métis peoples in all aspects of the school system. A significant measure of the success of the Saskatchewan education system will be our success in strengthening First Nations and Métis education.*

To support its commitment, the SSBA developed a “leadership plan for strengthening First Nations and Métis Education with specific results and strategic actions.” The three-year action plan stated its strategic results as: 1) To ensure that Saskatchewan school boards are supported in establishing a representative workforce (AEDP); 2) To ensure that Saskatchewan school boards are succeeding in eliminating the achievement gap for children of Aboriginal ancestry; 3) To ensure that Saskatchewan school boards are establishing effective practices for engaging First Nations and Métis peoples in the publicly-funded school system; and 4) To ensure that the Aboriginal Council is advancing work within the SSBA to support engagement of First Nations and Métis peoples and to strengthen student achievement.

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Since 1984, SUNTEP has graduated approximately 35-40 students per year with a Bachelor of Education degree.

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School boards are moving towards implementation of the Ministry’s goals for Saskatchewan education. School board members are depending on the administrative staff and the educators in their schools to produce the desired results. It is to these people that the research team turned to examine the policy from the school level.

Among those who are working within the province’s school systems and are tasked with closing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are teachers, who are SUNTEP graduates. SUNTEP is a four-year fully accredited Bachelor of Education program, offered by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI), the educational arm of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan in cooperation with Saskatchewan Advanced Education, the University of Regina, and the University of Saskatchewan. The program is offered in three urban centres—Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina.

Established in 1980, the SUNTEP program includes a cross-cultural specialization with an emphasis on Métis/First Nations history and culture. A substantial amount of time is spent in schools working with teachers and students. Most of this field work is done in urban centres. The program provides a solid foundation in the theories and skills of teaching. Since 1984, SUNTEP has graduated approximately 35-40 students per year with a Bachelor of Education degree. That amounts to over 1,050 Aboriginal teachers. Over 10 percent of SUNTEP graduates have proceeded to further education and earned over 200 post-SUNTEP university credentials, including postgraduate certificates, law, dentistry, masters degrees, and PhDs.

## 1.1 The Study

The purpose of this study is to examine and document the experience of SUNTEP graduates working in urban education in Saskatchewan in relation to Aboriginal Education Action Plans.

## 1.2 The Approach

Aboriginal teachers and school administrators who are graduates of the SUNTEP program, as well as counsellors, home school liaisons, and librarians who are working in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert schools were invited to participate in the study. In addition, we talked with Aboriginal community members who have direct input into the education of urban Aboriginal students.

A letter of invitation spelled out the study's parameters to the prospective interviewees and included a consent form for participants to sign with the researcher agreeing to participate in the study (Appendix 1). A copy of the questions asked is in Appendix 2. The interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions were returned to the interviewees for verification. A transcript form was presented for the interviewees' signature (Appendix 3). All were pleased that they were being asked to participate, and all were excited to have their voices heard.

The research team toured schools, and was inundated with materials and flooded with ideas and recommendations. It was an honour to meet and learn from these dedicated, caring individuals. It is hoped that this report can adequately convey the spirit of love and respect that these individuals have for First Nations and Métis students, and for the First Nations and Métis community.



## 2.0 FINDINGS

### 2.1 What We Learned

#### 2.1.1 First Nations and Métis Education Action Plans

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, in a document entitled *Inspiring Success: Building Toward Student Achievement* anticipated that each division would create a First Nations and Métis Action Plan aligning with the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) (March, 2009.)

Many of the respondents expressed the need for specific Aboriginal education plans beyond those in the CIF. One teacher stated, “Put me in a room with other Aboriginal teachers and we will come up with a plan.”

We found that the majority of teachers and administrators at the school level indicated that if there was a plan in place, they were not familiar with it, and had not been involved in its creation. They were aware of a Local Improvement Plan (LIP) in which they outlined their expectations of Aboriginal students within their classrooms and the school over the next year.

Informants identified two school boards for their work developing First Nations and Métis Education Action Plans. Other school divisions represented in the study are in the process of developing First Nations and Métis Education Action Plans. The development is spearheaded in most cases by the First Nations and Métis Coordinator or Consultant with the support of Superintendents. Consultations with Aboriginal partners continue. When internal and external discussions are completed, the plans will be taken to the boards for final approval.

The Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD)’s Aboriginal Education Plan was developed and received school board approval. The Regina Catholic Schools (RCS)’ First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Education Plan of Action followed an extensive consultation called the *Circle of Voices*. A brief summary of these two plans follows:

##### 2.1.1.1 Saskatchewan Rivers School Division First Nations and Métis Education Plan

On June 7, 2010, the SRSD Board accepted the First Nation and Métis Education Plan which was contained in a report documenting the learning outcomes of First Nations and Métis students in the school division. The expectations set out in the First Nations and Métis Education Action Plan were:

- *A focus on supports and improved outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners.*
- *Ensure all learners have knowledge of First Nations and Métis peoples’ histories, perspectives, worldviews and contributions, including mandatory treaty education throughout the learning program.*
- *Collect data and report on measures outlined in the Ministry’s First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework.*
- *Build partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples, where applicable, in support of shared management of the provincial education system.*
- *Develop resources and establish supports including Elders, cultural advisors and traditional knowledge keepers, to build capacity throughout the school division to*

*implement First Nations and Métis education* (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2010, 11.)

To meet the expectations, the school division has documented First Nations and Métis student achievement and current programs and resources in the school division; outlined best practices from the literature; incorporated a vision for First Nations and Métis Education for First Nations and Métis youth, has kept track of First Nations officials from bands that purchase education services from the school division; and has worked closely with school community councils from schools with a large population of First Nations and Métis students, the Prince Albert Métis Women's Association, the Prince Albert Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, SIAST Woodland Campus Students' Association, Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC) Urban Services, and Prince Albert Kids First (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2010, 11).

The SRSD's Three-Year Plan includes the following actions to specifically address First Nations and Métis Education:

- Continue to enhance relationships with First Nation and Métis communities, including opening lines of communication and cooperation on educational issues with the PAGC. Partnerships need to be established to expand programs to:
  - develop schools that meet the needs of urban First Nation and Métis children and their families; and,
  - develop an outreach program/school that focuses on youth age 10 to 15 years who are outside the school system.
- Strengthen the board's relationship with the PAGC by establishing a tri-party committee (school division, Ministry and PAGC) with the mandate to work together to improve the academic achievement of First Nation and Métis students.
- Establish a roundtable on First Nations and Métis education for two purposes:
  - to recognize the shared responsibility among parents, community, First Nation and Métis organizations, government, and the school division to ensure the success of First Nation and Métis learners; and
  - to eliminate the academic gap between First Nation and Métis students and the general student population.
- Develop a protocol to acquire a school division elder, by utilizing the PAGC elder pool.

The Board requires annual progress updates in each area.

#### **2.1.1.2 Regina Catholic Schools First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education Plan of Action**

In 2006-2007, the RCS First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Department researched and summarized past, current, and suggested future practices within RCS and met with numerous dialogue groups to create a vision for the future. They researched practices, considered other educational practices across Canada, and sought feedback from the dialogue groups to create a foundation for future directions for the RCS. The research was documented in a manuscript entitled, *Circle of Voices*. A three-year plan was created to be implemented in three phases:

1. Awareness (2007-2008)—increased professional development opportunities for teachers to understand First Nations and Métis ways of knowing.



2. Action (2008-2009) –continuing opportunities for teachers to more fully utilize First Nations/ Inuit/Métis’ understanding and actualize the curriculum integration and resources available to assist with reinforcing teaching content and the new mandatory K-6 Treaty Units.

3. Empowerment (2009-2010)—teachers are offered more classroom supports, but are empowered to implement First Nations and Métis ways of knowing. Resources will continue to be provided to assist with actualizing curriculum.

(Regina Catholic Schools, Programs, First Nation/Inuit/Métis, <http://www.rcds.ca>, accessed March 25, 2012.)

A new three-step plan will result in a final report to guide the RCS’ Renewed Action Plan, which will be submitted to the Ministry of Education’s Student Achievement Branch for 2012-2013.

### 2.1.2 Other Board Initiatives

All Saskatchewan school boards face the challenge of changing the way that schools provide First Nations and Métis education. With a strong commitment to change the “way that business is done,” school boards have implemented system-wide approaches to provide better Aboriginal education to their students.



### **2.1.2.1 Governance**

Of the six urban boards of education studied, there is only one First Nations board member. There is no Métis representation. Although boards have had Aboriginal members over the years and have had numerous Aboriginal individuals come forward to run for election, the urban boards do not presently have membership which represents and reflects the Aboriginal composition of our cities.

In Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert, school boards are finding ways to bring Aboriginal voices into urban school governance.

#### **2.1.2.1.1 Regina Board of Education S.D. No.4**

The Regina Board of Education (RBE) SD No. 4 has created an Elders Advisory Council as part of its governance structure. According to Board Policy 17, the role of the Elders Advisory Council is,

*Advising the Board on policy matters related to Aboriginal education and assisting the Board in developing partnerships with Aboriginal organizations and governments. (Policy 17, Section 1.1.1.2.) and [P]roviding ongoing advice and support to school staff as they develop and deliver plans oriented to Aboriginal knowledge transfer. (Policy 17, Section 1.1.2.1.)*

The council's key significance is that it is part of the board's governance structure. Although they offer advice, council members also have input into the division's educational decisions at all levels. They are in a position to add Aboriginal voices to discussions and to influence the knowledge which is brought to bear on board members' decisions.

One of the first recommendations of the Regina Public Schools (RPS) Division Elders Advisory Council was that Elders from the community work with students and school personnel "to build relations and to create ethical space where learning and sharing can occur." (Goulet et. al., 2009, 2.) A number of studies have documented the powerful impact of this decision.

The RPS Board has created a model which provides Aboriginal community participation in decisions affecting the education of First Nations and Métis children. Board members have developed a decision-sharing system which ensures that decisions affecting First Nations and Métis education are judged by those who understand Aboriginal spirituality and ways of knowing in addition to being decided solely by the board members' knowledge, skills and values. The teachers and administrators listed in the RPS system report that this structure provides them with the assurance they need to ensure that initiatives undertaken in schools will be accepted by both the education and Aboriginal communities.

#### **2.1.2.1.2 Saskatoon Public School Board**

The Okiciyapi Partnership, among Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS), Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC), and Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI), has evolved over time. In February 2002, STC signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Whitecap Dakota First Nation which set the precedent for future agreements. In June 2002, an Aboriginal education forum hosted by SPS invited participants to make recommendation to improve current school practices. One of the key recommendations was the need to create an Aboriginal committee that allowed for ongoing and consistent communication.

In June 2003, a memorandum of agreement was signed between Saskatoon Tribal Council and SPS. By September 2003, funding had been secured from Saskatchewan Learning. In November 2003, a project leader who focused on “Aboriginal content and perspectives” was hired and a memorandum of agreement was signed with STC, SPS, and the Saskatchewan Department of First Nations and Métis Relations.

During the 2003-2004 year, the partnership mapped a course of action for the next three years [to 2006-2007]. The partnership is operated by the Partnership Education Council, which is made up of the working group, which consists of First Nations, the STC, SPS Division, the community [First Nations urban parents and Métis community representation], Métis Elders, and Saskatchewan Learning. The working group is assigned tasks by the Partnership Education Council.

In March 2004, the following guiding principles or core values were approved:

Treaty: We value learning consistent with the spirit and intent of Treaties.

We value Indigenous knowledge as integral to learning.

Learning: We value holistic teaching and learning environments that are spiritually, emotionally, academically and physically safe, secure and positive.

Life-Long Learning

Unity: We value unity which comes from the spirit of equality and creates cooperation and loyalty to one another.

Communication: We value communication which is open, honest, timely and effective.

Respect: We value a culture of mutual respect which is supportive, positive and affirming.

Diversity: We value cultural diversity, the rich array of participants in our partnership and the unique contributions each person can make.

Collaboration: We value cooperative and collaborative relationships based on trust, respect, pride and responsibility as the means of maximizing learning experiences in our communities and schools.

In May 2004, the Partnership Education Council approved the vision statement: “A community of mutual respect, trust, acceptance, excellence and honesty.”

In April 2004 an Aboriginal Employment Development Officer was hired, and in October, 2004, *K-3 Working in Harmony—A New Way of Learning and Leading* was launched. A human resources audit was completed and the first seasonal Sweat was offered to SPS administration.

In 2006, CUMFI formally joined the partnership, and the partnership became *Okicīyapi, Working Together*.

### **2.1.2.2 Policy**

Some school boards have developed board policies to support Aboriginal Education. Ratham (2010) reported that improving outcomes for Aboriginal students involves interrelated policies that need to be implemented in tandem.

### 2.1.2.2.1 Regina Board of Education S. D. No.4

Policy 17 of RBE SD No.4 (June 19, 2007) sets out the Board's intent:

*To strengthen First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement, learning environments that are equitable, culturally responsive and meaningful. This policy supports the belief that the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives and Indigenous knowledge is of benefit to all students. All students will learn about the history, culture, worldviews and issues facing Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and will understand that Indigenous knowledge has a valid place in Canadian society.*



Guided by five principles, the policy is partnership-oriented, equitable and accountable, inclusive, culturally affirming, and instructionally innovative. The File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council and Métis organization partners, through a memorandum of understanding, select and appoint members of the Division Elders Advisory Council.

The council has equal numbers of First Nations and Métis members. "The council will develop its terms of reference" for approval by the board "to guide the logistics of the Council and its integration with schools, administration and the Board." (Section 1.1.4.)

Beyond advising the board, policy legitimizes and supports the role of the Elders Advisory Council in "providing ongoing advice and support to school staff as they develop and deliver plans oriented to Aboriginal knowledge transfer." (Section 1.1.2.1.)

The policy establishes an annual progress review to ensure that the objectives of the Aboriginal Education Policy, as determined by the Board of Trustees and the Elders Advisory Council, are being met.

### 2.1.2.2.2 Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division #81

On March 25, 2002, a *Policy on Aboriginal Education, Philosophical and Foundational Commitments*, came into effect for Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division #81. The policy stated,

*Regina Catholic Schools, in keeping with its philosophy, recognizes that pupils of Aboriginal ancestry represent a significant minority group. Divergent educational responses may be required to help them succeed in their educational development. Regina Catholic Schools supports in principle and will strive toward the achievement of the goal of education equity.*

Accompanying regulations state that:

1. *The Board is fully committed to the elimination of discrimination and actively fosters an environment that respects the ethnic and cultural identity of pupils.*
2. *The Board will provide opportunities for those associated with the school division to become knowledgeable about pupils of Aboriginal ancestry and to develop an understanding of their culture and their contributions of society.*
3. *Any affirmative action program undertaken by the school division with respect to people of Aboriginal ancestry is expressly qualified by and made subject to the Board's primary dedication to the preservation and promotion of Catholic values and denominational character of its schools.*
4. *Learning materials and the presentation of curricular content shall:*
  - a. *Provide opportunities for pupils to acquire Christian attitudes toward the diversity and cultural heritage of Aboriginal people.*
  - b. *Reflect the value of human dignity, irrespective of race, colour, gender, language, cultural heritage, religion, ethnicity, physical, or intellectual diversity especially as it applies to Aboriginal people.*
  - c. *Encourage and develop each pupil's ability to identify, analyze and to judge bias, prejudice, and stereotyping, particularly as it applies to people of Aboriginal ancestry.*
5. *Psychological, educational and other assessments for Aboriginal pupils shall be culturally sensitive to their primary language, dialect, culture, ethnic and racial background.*
6. *The Board encourages staffing practices that consider the need for positive role models for Aboriginal pupils. (Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division #81, Policy 1300, 1-2.)*



#### **2.1.2.2.3 Saskatchewan Rivers School Division No. 119**

SRSD's No. 119 Policy No. 7060 states that it believes in the importance of Canada's religious and spiritual heritage and supports the traditional role of spirituality in society and education. Section 2 recognizes the pluralistic nature of Canadian society, and therefore supports an approach in the context of the Core Curriculum in which religion and spirituality are seen as sensitive to and encouraging an equitable cross section of differing points of views.

The policies of the various school boards reflect the contradictions and tensions presented by the need to support First Nations and Métis education.

### **2.1.2.3 Spaces**

Regina and Saskatoon public schools have designed ceremonial spaces at their board offices. Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools have access to a piece of land at Eagle Creek where seasonal ceremonies can be celebrated. These places are homes for Elders within the system. They afford a place “away” for teachers to come to experience Aboriginal spirituality.

Some schools such as Oskāyak High School in Saskatoon have places where ceremonies are performed. One of the recommendations from the RPS research into the Elders in Residence Program was that schools need to be provided with a space for Elders.

### **2.1.2.4 System-Wide Attitude Change**

#### **2.1.2.4.1 Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS)—Culturally Responsive Schools—Placing Culture in the Centre**

“The goal of Saskatoon Public Schools is to improve student learning by adopting a model of education that is culturally responsive and affirming.”

The SPS model of culturally responsive schools states that, “(t)he advisory committee for cultural responsiveness consisted of individuals who have dedicated their lives to the advocacy, protection and promotion of First Nations culture.” (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2010, 13.) With the guidance of the Cultural Advisory Committee—consisting of First Nations and Métis individuals who are recognized for their contributions to preserve their cultures as well as Elders, cultural leaders, students, parents, staff, and community members—it was determined that culturally-responsive schools, should:

- Affirm and honour First Nations and Métis knowledge, ways of knowing, doing, and being;
- Honour Elders and traditional knowledge keepers. They are the foundation of our cultures, and they transmit and continue our traditions. They become the foundation and the centre of our work;
- Engage in a holistic manner, the heart, mind, body, and spirit of all learners, and recognize the gifts and strengths of all students and grow and nurture those gifts;
- Promote ceremonies, which nurture the spirit and offers guidance in personal development and self awareness. Ceremonies promote pride in nationhood, community, family and individual. They foster family togetherness and community pride as the community witnesses and celebrates the achievement of individuals;
- Promote healing in schools, which should be centres of cultural continuity. Languages, learning from place, traditional songs, all reinforce pride in people;
- Focus on values such as respect, balance, integrity, belonging, compassion, forgiveness, generosity and wisdom, shape relationships and guide teaching and learning;
- Promote the use of symbolism in schools, which should be welcoming and create a feeling of pride. Artwork, place names, symbols, and other visuals represent cultural beliefs and values;

- Purposeful in the creation of a stronger sense of personal self worth and connection to community;
- Adhere to community-based programming. A true partnership between child, family, school (all adults in the building and the system that is in place) and community should exist.
- Promote inclusiveness. School is a place that nurtures the spirit of belonging. Belonging is about caring, connection, and the belief that all are equally valid and needed for the community to be strong.
- Respect Cultural Diversity. All cultures should be validated, recognized and honoured. The cultural knowledge of the Swampy, Plains and Woodland Cree, Nakawé, Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Dene and Métis people must be honoured as distinct nations. There is a place for all in the Circle.
- Celebrate Life. Prayer, ceremony, and thanksgiving all show appreciation to the Creator and to those who walked before us. (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2008, 13-14.)

At the core of the cultural responsive school system are teachers and administrators who have “a way of becoming and growing as an educator that honours and respects the cultural identities of learners.” (Handout, Saskatoon Public Schools, 2012.) SPS sees cultural responsiveness as critical in improving student achievement and engagement with an emphasis on First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2010, 3)

*Improving student achievement and engagement calls upon teachers and administrators to enhance their cross cultural competencies. A school that has culturally competent and responsive staff and students will change the cultural ethos of a building to be more inclusive, accepting and respectful of all people. This spirit of belonging is an essential quality of a culturally responsive school as well as student engagement (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2010, 3).*

#### 2.1.2.4.2 Saskatoon Catholic Schools—Anti-Racist Education

Anti-racism education is based in the belief that race is a social construct and racial identifications in Canada are constructed through common place national discourse. (Schick and St. Denis, 2005, 295.) Canadians need to examine the production of racial identification, including whiteness to understand how to support the academic success of Aboriginal students.

Anti-racism education challenges educators to examine the reality of the Canadian prairie experience in relation to the dominant “White” population and the “other.”

*In this Canadian prairie context, Aboriginal peoples form the greatest critical mass to challenge normative practices of a dominant white culture. The “other” is typically understood to be Aboriginal peoples even though other visible minority groups also make the area their home. (Schick and St. Denis, 2005, 197.)*

As well, Anti-racist education challenges “white” administrators and teachers to critically assess how “white privilege” impacts what happens to Aboriginal students, families, and communities. Schools, in many ways, teach teachers and students their identities through “the history, images and language of schools.” (Schick and St. Denis, 297.) Through the process of their education, teachers learn the “rightness of whiteness.” As well, they learn the mythology which dictates their views of

Aboriginal peoples. Hence, to accomplish the change necessary for Aboriginal students to succeed, the school system is asking administrators and teachers to gain racial recognition.

Workshops in anti-racism education are just beginning, and their impact has yet to be determined.



## 2.2 What We Heard

The SUNTEP graduates in the study are committed to creating conditions to support success for every child who comes to the classroom. For many of our interviewees, success comes when it brings a child in the door, makes him/her want to learn, supports the child's positive sense of who he/she is, inspires the child to dream about his/her special place in the world, and gives him/her the tools to reach his/her dream.

Our conversations with SUNTEP graduates often returned to the SUNTEP graduates' own schooling experience. Many came from poverty, and from homes without role models who had succeeded in school. They knew that they were Métis, but did not have a clear idea of what that meant. They wanted to succeed, but had no confidence that they could, and they were not convinced that doing well in school would positively impact their lives. For the SUNTEP graduates interviewed, education became meaningful when they discovered their Métis identity. Then, education was transformative.

This personal experience provides many SUNTEP graduates with a different view of what contributes to academic success. The interviewees enumerated a number of pre-conditions for academic success and offered examples of programs which are successful in developing the environment for students to achieve academic success.

### 2.2.1 Identity Is Key to Academic Success

*“There has to be assistance to Aboriginal kids to get their identity.”*

SUNTEP graduates learned for themselves that identity is key to academic success. Each experienced the powerful impact of learning who they are, where they came from, and consciously decided where they are going. (Brian Aubichon, former SUNTEP Saskatoon Co-ordinator.) When SUNTEP teachers talk about the transformative power of identity, they are not talking in the theoretical realm. They are

speaking from first-hand experience. When they teach their students to have pride in themselves, they know that that knowledge will be the foundation for the student's future learning.

They know that academic success follows a strong positive identity. They are role models for the power of transformative education. As teachers, they teach from their identity. They want their students to experience the same transformative education. They want to see their students light up when they learn that their people have a special place in the story of Canada and Saskatchewan.





To realize a transformative education for students, the interviewed SUNTEP graduates see the need to be in the company of like-minded people. To bring about desired change in academic outcomes for Aboriginal students, they talked about the importance of having allies on staff, the difference that a supportive principal can make, and the strength that comes from knowing that the school division is behind them and really cares about Aboriginal students. They know that policies and curricula which promote and enhance positive Aboriginal identity formation will, in fact, promote and enhance academic success.

SUNTEP graduates spoke of successful Saskatchewan examples, which positively impacted Aboriginal student academic success through building the students' strong, positive Aboriginal identities. These include a number of separate approaches in the urban school systems: 1) Schools grounded in promoting Aboriginal Identity, and 2) The School as Cultural Teacher.

### 2.2.1.1 Schools Grounded in Promoting Aboriginal Identity

#### 2.2.1.1.1 Oskāyak High School, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

“Oskāyak is successful.”

“Oskāyak will have the highest number of graduates ever this year—30.”

Oskāyak High School [then the Native Survival School] was founded in 1980 by Aboriginal citizens of Saskatoon who were alarmed at the failure of Aboriginal students to succeed in Saskatoon's high schools. They believed that a radical new approach was required. An all Aboriginal high school where students would receive an educational experience reinforcing their Aboriginal identity, which would lead to academic success was proposed. The essence of the school experience was a return to the ceremonies and practices which are at the core of Aboriginal identity.

**Identity is key to academic success.**

First Nations Elders' teachings were sewn into the fabric of the school. Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing were imbedded in the school's approach. In 1995, the school was recognized by the Canadian Education Association as an exemplary school. (Gaskell, 1995.) According to the author,

*... it is the philosophy of Native spirituality, the regular sweetgrass ceremonies, the role of Elders as teachers and models and the focus on healing and wholeness that gives the school its truly distinctive quality.*

King (2006) observed, “Simon [Kytwayhat] and Mary [Lee] begin a journey for the students and teachers of returning to the culture, to the language, to the kinship ties, to the teachings and to the lands that once made us strong.” (King, 2006, 41.) According to King (2006, 40), “the drum and song are at the heart of the school.” The drum links the students with their people's past, to their own identity.

*Simon's drum and songs give voice to the Mósōms and Kókums of long ago when our medicine was really strong. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he is the link to the past and the old songs that have not been forgotten. He serves as a catalyst to monitor, mentor, guide, facilitate, teach, negotiate and model for both the students and teachers. There is a spirit with the drum and those first*

*four beats are honour beats to remember the past and to honour the drum's origin, to reach the "deep within place" and to reverberate as far as the cosmos. The drum has the power to bring out tears, to elate, to drive the dancers, to lift one's spirit and most importantly, Simon would say, "to heal." (King, 2006, 40.)*

For Simon, healing is "to achieve balance and to connect the heart to the mind once again." (King, 2006, 40.) Simon hoped to achieve this with each student. In his teachings, Simon revealed *Nēhiyawi-Kiskinwahamākowisi* (the Cree ways). He explained *Kis kina mā ha sē win* and the key elements of learning as *Nitotamok* (listen), *Nistotomak* (understand), and *Eskiatomak* (learn). Simon described "the way of respect" as a "basic premise or foundation of Nēhiyaw lifeways." King noted that Simon modeled the "respectful way," successfully reaching students and influencing teacher learning as well as pedagogical practice. (King, 2006, 23.)

There is no doubt that Oskāyak High School demonstrates the profound impact of identity on academic success, and graduates experience the transformative power of such education. It offers First Nations students the opportunity to find their identity, and make it the foundation of their education.

#### **2.2.1.1.2 Won Ska Cultural School, Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, Prince Albert**

Another successful model which interviewees mentioned is Won Ska Cultural School, an alternative school designed for high-risk Aboriginal youth who wish to complete their high school training, earn high school credits, increase literacy skills, increase life skills, and participate in employment training. Won Ska has succeeded in graduating at-risk Aboriginal students with Grade 12 diplomas from Carlton Comprehension High School through guided individual learning and bridging cultural teachings in the classroom.

Won Ska is a key partner in the Youth Alliance Against Gang Violence (YAAGV) sponsored by the Prince Albert Outreach Program Inc. A foundational approach of YAAGV is the Circle of Courage, an approach to youth empowerment based on research on healing and resiliency, and traditional Aboriginal philosophies. Won Ska students are taught to become involved in projects with the students of other schools teaching them traditional knowledge, and they participate in events with seniors in the community and those in need of help, such as the homeless.

Won Ska has its own drum and singing group which performs at graduations and other ceremonies. The school's walls are used to tell First Nations stories and reflect First Nations cultural symbols. The students' identity is strengthened and supported throughout their school experience. Pride is born.

#### **2.2.2 The School as Cultural Teacher (Cultural Affirmation)**

The interviewees acknowledged that each Aboriginal child enters the school with an image of what Métis, First Nations, or Inuit people are like. These impressions may come from TV or movies, but more likely, they come from the reality he/she lives. Educators reported that some Aboriginal children come to school "carrying the shame they have been made to feel about being First Nations or Métis." Many students hesitate to identify as Aboriginal people because of negative cultural experiences.

The interviewees believe it is crucial to turn the experience of these children around to enable them to reach their potential. SUNTEP graduates know that denial and shame are not



good motivators for academic success. A child filled with negative images of his/her people, with experiences of loss, failure, hopelessness, and despair, is not going to be able to convince him/herself that he/she has a bright future that can come through hard work in school.

School may be the only place where some children can find their true identity. Since identity is the key to academic success for Métis and First Nations students, cultural knowledge and positive cultural experiences from the child's culture need to be an integral part of the child's school experience. Shame will then be replaced with pride.

This places an incredible responsibility on a school's staff to ensure that the First Nations or Métis identity of the child is recognized and affirmed by the school. The teachers interviewed saw a great disparity among schools in their ability to provide children with cultural affirmation. They cited disparities between resources available for First Nations students and Métis students; the support given to languages other than Cree and Cree availability; involvement of the school community; and involvement of parents.

However, they agreed that school must provide a picture of his/her nation which offers the child hope and provides examples of success. These examples can include pictures, library books, songs, music, art work, role model posters, dance, stories of heroes, and history books told through the eyes, ears, and voices of the diverse nations who have lived in Saskatchewan and of the Métis who fought for a different kind of society. Teachers identified the contribution of partnerships, resource people, and cultural advisors—Elders, consultants, community members, and traditional knowledge keepers—which supported their efforts at different levels in the school division.

Most agreed that, although support to the schools is increasing, the ground keeps changing, and teachers constantly search for resources and seek grants or fundraise to cover the costs.

### 2.2.2.1 Métis and First Nations Teachers

“The SUNTEP teachers have a connection to the culture. We know who we are. We know who they are. We know what it is. We know what it means to be Métis.”

First Nations and Métis teachers bring knowledge and pride of their identity to the classroom. The educators in the study emphasize the need for more Aboriginal teachers, teachers who are “loud and proud” about their identity. They demonstrate to Aboriginal children that it’s okay to be Métis, Dakota, or Cree. First Nations and Métis teachers bring their Aboriginal-specific teacher training to the classroom. They can “put meat on the bones” of the curriculum as it relates to First Nations and Métis issues.

Métis and First Nations teachers carry many Métis and First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing to the classroom. They offer Aboriginal children familiarity, stability, and cultural experience, which encourages them to come to school and stay. Aboriginal teachers *are* role models. A First Nations or Métis teacher may be the first Aboriginal person in the child’s life who is working in a position of authority. They have gone to school for many years, and can guide the child on a path which depends on good scores on assessments.

Aboriginal teachers are making a difference in Aboriginal student success. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission proposed the concept of representative workforces in schools in 1985, and required Saskatchewan school boards to report each year the number of Aboriginal students and the number of Aboriginal educators. However, the goal of a representative workforce has not yet been realized.

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**Métis and First Nations teachers carry many Métis and First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing to the classroom.**

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More Métis teachers are needed.

#### 2.2.2.1.1 Successful Approaches to increasing the Numbers of First Nations and Métis Teachers in Schools

The Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS)’ Representative Workforce Five-Year Strategic Plan (September 2011 to June 2016), which was provided by one of the participants in this study, is a proactive approach to increasing First Nations and Métis teachers in a school system.

In keeping with the 2006 partnership agreement with the provincial Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations and the two Canadian Union of Public Employee locals, CUPE 2268 and CUPE 3730, the GSCS is currently in the first year of a five-year strategic plan for a representative workforce.

*We commit to putting in place the policies and programs to ensure that 10% of all Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools employees are self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit People, by the end of the 2015 school year. (Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Representative Workforce Five-Year Strategic Plan.)*

As of October 31, 2011, 6.07% of support staff, 5.86% of service staff, and 7.51% of teaching staff are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. The strategy defines action on recruitment, candidate processing, retention strategies, demographics reflected hiring, procurement activities, cultural competence, awareness, and anti-racism/anti-oppression strategy development and tools.

### **2.2.2.2 Elders in the School**

*Elders are invited to the school several times over the school year to teach Aboriginal Heritage, the culture and practices. Elders attend special school functions. The Elder visits help students in their identity and to be proud of who they are and their culture, thereby improving their self-esteem and know where they came from.*

First Nations and Métis Elders have a way of being with students which makes students want to be at school. They treat each student as a family member. They give each student a sense of belonging, being part of something, and having a special place in the world. Elders tell each student that he/she was placed on the earth to perform a special role and that each has a special gift. They teach traditional values and how those values have a place in everyday life. They teach the student to celebrate the good things in life and to acknowledge loss and pain. They provide a positive role model of their Aboriginal identity and help the student understand that identity has power and value in the world.

We heard of the success of the RPS' Elders in Residence Program.

#### **2.2.2.2.1 Regina Public Schools Elders in Residence Program (EIRP)**

“The overall goal of the Elders in Residence Program is to improve the success of Indigenous students.” (Favel and Racette, 2009.)

Three studies (Goulet et. al, 2009; Favel and Racette, 2009; and Fayant et. al., 2010) have documented how Elders in schools increase Aboriginal student academic success. Goulet et al. (2009, 2-3) found that Elders had a profound effect on schools, students, and teachers.

The success of the program is all about identity. The EIRP Elders personify Aboriginal identity. They infuse everything they do with pride in the ways of their people. They believe that discussions about identity are necessary for young Aboriginal people. Elders tell students that it is important to accept oneself and be accepted by others for who they are. (Fayant, et al., 7.)

Elders' ways of being alter the teaching and learning environment. Elders bring calmness and reflection to the lives of students and teachers which “strengthen the educational process.” (Fayant et. al., 2010, 1.) When the students are presented with First Nations and Métis ways of being and knowing, their relationship to the school and their own learning is transformed.

*Elders provide what is for most students, a new outlook resplendent with possibilities. Although the negativity of poverty, gang involvement and substance abuse can sometimes be seen by students to be the only choice in their life, Elders help nurture a state of mind where students come to believe otherwise. (Fayant et al., 2010, 8.)*



Elders model and teach life skills. They talk about traditional roles of men and women. Elders treat students like members of their family, asking the students to refer to them in kinship terms. To the Elders, teaching and learning are relational. Students begin to feel that they belong in the school. Elders contribute to a safe, comfortable, and welcoming atmosphere in schools. Parents take a new interest in their children's school because they respect and understand the role of Elders.

The research spells out the three stages in the development of success in an Elders program. The researchers conclude,

*In order to maximize Elder effectiveness, Elders need to be trusted and to be given significant levels of responsibility to co-plan and to deliver school curriculum. Failure to involve Elders in decision-making processes results in superficial interaction that hinders important re-examination of the goals of education necessary for the nurturing of educational equity. (Goulet et. al., 17.)*

#### **2.2.2.2.2 Elders in the School, Regina Catholic Schools**

The RCS in 2011 had four system-wide Elders (*kēhtē-ayak*) offer support to curricular outcomes in the schools. In addition, there are in-resident Elders at four elementary and two high schools, which allow students and staff to meet the Treaty outcomes and indicators, cross-cultural teachings and to meet the First Nations/Métis/Inuit outcomes and indicators outlined in the renewed curriculum.

#### **2.2.2.2.3 Elders' Gathering, Saskatchewan Rivers School Division**

On October 21, 2010, the school division sponsored an Elders' Gathering in Prince Albert. Of the 85 Elders attending, twenty-five agreed to "share their teachings with students in the school division." (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2011, 44.) Elders discussed their view of First Nations and Métis education and the direction it should take. They also discussed social issues such as housing, violence, and elder abuse. Finally, they discussed spirituality and its place in the school system.

A database identifying the Elders who were willing to visit schools and their areas of expertise was proposed. The database will include an introduction explaining the protocols when inviting an Elder to a classroom as well as a brief description of each area of expertise.

#### **2.2.2.3 Cultural Camp, Saskatchewan Rivers School Division**

Cultural Camp, sponsored by Prince Albert St. Paul's Presbyterian Church and hosted at Camp

Christopher, has brought together students and staff from Riverside Community School, Won Ska Cultural School, and twenty SUNTEP student teachers with Presbyterians from northern Saskatchewan to take part in First Nations and Métis cultural activities. Each day, over three hundred students from Riverside Community School were bussed from Prince Albert. Students participated in a series of workshops on local Métis history, teachings relating to the tipi, making dream catchers, and the teachings of the drum. Building a Red River cart and buffalo games were also demonstrated.

As to the success of the Cultural Camp, in the evaluation report, St Paul's organizers stated, "The original proposal said that 150 staff, students, leaders and others would participate in this event. With the changes that were made to the format, almost 700 people participated in the cultural camp..."

#### **2.2.2.4 Dance Troupes**

Finding a gift in dancing contributes to the academic success of some students. One of the Métis teachers described the effect of the school's dance troupes on the students, staff and community,

*I believe it gives the kids an opportunity to feel a sense of pride in their cultural practices and traditions. The students enjoy spending time after school and on the weekends practicing and going into the community to perform. When they dance you can see the sense of pride they have just by looking at them. They love it and they love to dance. Sometimes kids are at school just to dance and drum. It bothers me that we use dancing as an incentive or consequence for their behaviour. The little ones will ask everyday if it's jigging day. It is an awesome experience to be with the kids, dancing, having fun, doing the "Red River Jig." Many of the students who have moved to high school say that is what they miss the most—our dance troupe. We are working on making our troupe and cultural teachings more meaningful.*

"Dancing brings some students in the door. It makes the school an important part of their lives."

"The dance troupe and singing is important in the school. The Pow Wows are important. We are linking the culture with the dance in a positive way."

"We have traditional knowledge keepers, First Nations and Métis."

"The dance troupe is a positive influence. It makes the kids feel very important. It helps with improving their self-esteem."

"Getting the parents involved is important."

"Jigging class is good."

"After school programs work well."

#### **2.2.2.5 Aboriginal Staff in Schools**

At schools where Aboriginal teachers are grouped, there is an increase in Aboriginal academic success.

Aboriginal teachers have a bond, an understanding of how things should be done to engage Aboriginal students in learning. Where Aboriginal teachers are the majority in the school with a predominantly Aboriginal student population, they can support each other, experimenting with culturally-relevant, culturally-accepted, and culturally-defined teaching and learning approaches.

Regina Board of Education SD No.4 has developed a strategic approach to staffing community schools, which has resulted in significant jumps in assessment scores. We heard that teachers working in inner-city schools are chosen because of their training in Aboriginal education and their knowledge of, skills, and success with teaching Aboriginal students. Highly skilled and creative, Aboriginal teachers understand each others' background and strengths. They work together to create a winning learning environment.

Aboriginal teachers who have experienced success with their students are identified and invited to lunch by administrators to determine what support they need to reach their goals in the system. The administrators assist them to reach the goals that they have set for themselves. For some, this means grooming them for vice-principal, principal, or superintendent positions.

“We need Aboriginal voices at every level of the administration and at every forum where education is discussed.”

“The sensitivity of administrators is key.”

### 2.2.3 School as Refuge

Those interviewed maintained that it is not the academic issues that children struggle with, but rather issues at home and in their lives. The interviewees identified a variety of support services to deal with the child's non-academic issues that would enable the teachers to do what they know best—teach.

“We need to support the whole child.”

“We need to give the schools lots of support. We have to do that. We need to give them an opportunity to learn. If we can't feed them, we won't give them an opportunity to learn. They can't learn on an empty stomach.”

Many First Nations and Métis children come to school to get away from the chaos in their lives. At school, they find security, safety, caring adults, food if they need it, a place of reflection, and a place of refuge where the struggles of their home life do not intrude. Breakfast and lunch programs are necessary for academic success for these children. After-school classes provide a few more minutes before the students go home. Art projects, sports, and the drum and the dance troupe all give the children a purpose and solace.

Métis teachers maintain that a hungry child can't learn—so they feed children. They maintain that a child worried about his/her safety cannot learn—so they provide a safe, welcoming environment where children stay for after-school programs. Teachers say that a child cannot learn if he/she isn't in school—so, in some schools, they see that the children are awakened and brought to school. Teachers say a child can't learn if he/she doesn't feel good about his/herself and/or culture—so teachers work with children to teach them to be proud of themselves and their culture. They teach



children to dance their traditional dances. They organize and manage the school drum group and dance troupes to practice and perform, which increases their students' pride and responsibility.

### 2.2.3.1 Supporting the Whole Child

Aboriginal drummers, singers, dancers, artists, male and female Elders, and community members cooking bannock and stew all contribute to Aboriginal school success.

*We employ an Elder at this school and she is doing a good job. She is here three days a week. She does various activities with the students. She covers all of the bases. She works in small work groups and with individuals as well.*

*We have an Outreach worker that is First Nation. This worker is in partnership with one of the First Nations. She conducts home visits, and works with parent groups. She checks on the students and focuses on Aboriginal students.*

*Our school has been relatively successful. We have a social worker here and she is so welcoming. She has established good relationships with parents. Parents come specifically to see her. She is excellent.*



#### 2.2.3.1.1 Non-Aboriginal Teachers Who Are Allies

“We need to appreciate the Aboriginal children and their culture. We need to have teachers that know that!”

“We need teachers that care for them [Aboriginal children].”

#### 2.2.3.1.2 Support Personnel

“We need fulltime positions to deal with the students.”

“There should be workers that do Home Visits. There should be relationships established with the Aboriginal parents. We can't just wait for them to come to us.”

“We need a Liaise Officer to deal with the Aboriginal issues.”

“SUNTEP has to do their practicums here. We need more Aboriginal Role Models in the Catholic School System.”

“There should be a Co-ordination of Community Agencies and Services to help the Aboriginal circumstances (including health, justice and housing).”

### 2.2.3.1.3 In-Class Resources

“Smaller class size.”

“Recognizing that the children often come without the skills needed to experience success.”

“More collaboration between teachers in feeder schools and teachers in city schools to support the student’s learning.”

“We need respect and values brought into the schools.”

### 2.2.4 Parental Engagement

Getting parents involved is a continuing concern. Parents have their own memories of schools. They fear the institution and they fear embarrassing their children. Each parent is as unique as each student. Teachers work at finding ways to allay parents’ fears, and get them through the doors of the school.

“So many of the parents are survivors themselves.”

“Some of the successes have been the relationships with the parents. It is non-judgemental and they feel comfortable coming to the school.”

*Home visits are essential to support students and parents. Parents must know they have a role in their sons or daughters’ education. If students see their parents involved, they will remain in school and see that education is important to them and their parents.*

As one teacher said, “Assessment of parental engagement cannot always be measured by attendance at school events.” Some working parents cannot get their employer’s permission to leave work to attend a school activity. Their absence should not be interpreted as not being supportive of his/her child’s school. Knowing the community and knowing the parents is essential in planning engagement activities which will work.

Offering parents the opportunity to demonstrate their unique skills brings them into the school in roles that make them comfortable. Offering parent classes or activities is also effective.

*We have held family dances. We have held family dinners. We have held learning Olympics. We have held reading activities. We have a community room. We have parents come into the school and do activities at the school. It gives the parents a sense of helping. We hold after school activities. Parents do get involved. Once they get inside the doors, they like it here.*

“Parents are encouraged to become active members of our Parent Council and help us choose

the best programs for our students and community.”

*There are numerous parent sponsored activities. It gives the parents an evening out. We conduct scrapbook activities. We have had learning to make play dough at home. We want to get the parents into the school. We want to engage them.*

“Offering adult classes works well. Children see their parents learning too!”

“Traditional dancing brings parents into the school.

“Having parents come into the school, to talk about their student works well.”

Making that human contact is important. It is important to get the parents involved. Food works well. “If we announce we will have food, we get a good turnout. The first contact is the hardest.”

To get parents through the door, one school has initiated a policy that report cards must be picked up by parents. “By having them pick up the report cards, we make them more self-reflective. We make them look at the what, how, and why of their children’s report cards. We make them take ownership of the report.” A meal is served. Over 85% of parents attended.

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**Aboriginal voices are needed at every level.**

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Having parents involved in the dance troupe has been successful.

*Parents are starting to get involved especially at Pow Wow practice. They are showing the kids how to dance, and helping with sewing regalia and beading. Having them help by driving to performances is awesome. Even though we pay them, it is still great to have them involved.*

*Just recently, I took a group of 13 girls to dance at the jigging competition at Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre. It was a Friday night and the kids had practiced hard on their fancy steps. The anticipation grew all week and many kids that didn’t regularly dance wanted to come. Thankfully, another staff member, a SUNTEP grad helped to drive. That night will resonate in my mind as a powerful experience. We had so much fun together, eating, dancing and laughing. The girls were in a safe place enjoying themselves at 9:30 at night and many of our families came out too. This is the kind of meaningful engagement we need more of. ... To me, that is the true meaning of community.*

### **2.2.5 Community Engagement**

To support the children’s identity development and academic success, it is important for the school system to bring the Aboriginal community to our schools. As one interviewee put it, “Aboriginal voices are needed at every level.” Aboriginal voices are needed at the ministry level; inside the educational bureaucracy; in the school division’s governance structures where decisions are made; in administration where other types of decisions are made; on committees making curricular and hiring decisions; and at the school level, engaging with students in activities which support their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development.

Community members are welcome in the school.

*We invite them to come to the school. A lot of people out there like to help the school. The churches help. There is a great deal of help at Christmas time. We received \$16,000.00 for food hampers. There has been 30 gallons of soup donated to the school. We have a clothing depot.*

The Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre has hosted the celebration of Saskatoon's Aboriginal graduates for several years. A banquet and awards ceremony is held with every graduation celebrated. Family and friends enjoy the evening which shows pictures of the graduates and offers community recognition of their accomplishments. This has been so successful, and the numbers of graduates and attendees has increased to such an extent, that a larger space will be needed next year.

Other successful programs involve communicating activities through an updated website. Designated spaces bring the community to the school. Community members are encouraged to use the kitchen, library, and other rooms for their own purposes. Some schools have community rooms which accommodate community activities. Community school councils are training grounds for community members to become future board members. Councils assume certain responsibilities within the school's governance and organize programs and activities which support the school's work. They encourage partnerships with other organizations.



Métis teachers believe that First Nations and Métis educational success is built on relationships. Relationships have to be developed. The primary relationship is that between the teacher and the child. Teachers report that building that relationship is enhanced when the student has seen the teacher at Batoche or at a pow wow or a round dance in the community. If the teacher has attended and has been seen at an event at the Friendship Centre or at an Elder's funeral, this connects with Aboriginal children.

Elders in the school recognize the importance of relationships, and reinforce them by asking the children to refer to them as "Moshum" or "Kohkum" or "Auntie." Having school personnel acknowledge the importance of relationships and to become part of the child's relationship system, helps to break down a child's isolation and brings the school into the child's reality, which contributes to his/her desire to learn.

### **2.2.6 Partnerships**

Partnerships are important at the local school level. Teachers and administrators are busy writing proposals and networking with groups who can offer support for specific school goals. Below is a description of the different partners involved with one high school and how these partnerships support the school's goals to achieve Aboriginal academic success.

#### **Miller Comprehensive High School, Regina Catholic Schools**

One of the successful factors in retaining Aboriginal students at Miller Comprehensive High School is showing them that they have options for their future. Partnerships with a number of institutions and organizations build on the students' Aboriginal identity to show them that they can do it! Programs offer hope to Aboriginal students for their future, and provide them with the incentive to stay in school to prepare for a future career.

*There have been Partnerships established with First Nations University, Gabriel Dumont Institute and the University of Regina Aboriginal Students' Centre. Students from our school take tours becoming familiar with the university setting and have had the occasion to attend classes giving them a good sense of university life. The Aboriginal Student Centre at the University of Regina provide mentors to help in the transition from high school to university.*

*Several of our students are involved with the Pre-Health Professional Club. The club is targeted towards students who have identified an interest in working in the health care field (medicine, nursing, pharmacy). The club is coordinated by the College of Medicine/ College of Nursing and pharmacy, University of Saskatchewan. The club supports students in the preparation and application processes to enter university and pre-medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and nutrition. As well, it gives students the opportunity to explore and experience a health care career through a mentorship with one of the health care professionals. The students in their first session meet with an Elder and learn more about their culture. Parents are included so they can support their son or daughter. The last session is the mentorship with a professional.*

*One other program our students are exposed to is Boldeagle. Boldeagle is a program sponsored by the Department of National Defence and Aboriginal organizations. The program is a summer*

*program in which students are paid to be involved in a military training program. The first week is a cultural camp led by Elders and the balance of the time at camp involving military exercises. Students receive a certificate at the end of the program which recognizes their commitment to the program, their leadership and assists them in securing a job with National Defence or being referred to the RCMP for training in that program, so it opens many doors. There is no commitment to enter the army. Students must be 17 years of age, have a Grade 10, be a Canadian citizen, and be in good health.*

*In the past students were challenged to compete in the Business Development Bank of Canada Aboriginal Youth Program. In 2002 a group of students competed by developing a business plan and competed in Montreal against some 143 teams from across the nation. Our students did an excellent job which involved a tremendous amount of work and real commitment, at times almost too challenging but they ended up in first place winning the Gold. The students were given money, a computer and all expense trip to Montreal for a week. The students were honoured by the legislature and the media.*

*One group of our Aboriginal students is involved in a Leadership group at school. The purpose of the program is to develop leadership, social skills as well as communication skills. By being involved, they feel they belong and develop good and positive relationships.*

*Still another program our students are involved with is the SaskTel Aboriginal Youth Awards of Excellence. These awards recognize leadership, sports, culture, the arts, and community involvement. Students attend a major banquet in Saskatoon attended by Aboriginal organizations and the government. Our students have won several times over the past 10 years.*

*A partnership was established with the University of Regina Extension Division. A Group of Grandmothers was formed to be involved and teach. A small amount of funds were made available. Elders were involved and teachers participated.*

### **2.2.7 Assessment**

Assessing the success of Métis and First Nations students in schools is vital. Looking at the academic success of Aboriginal students, Toulouse reported:

*Research tells us a number of factors contribute to the academic success of Aboriginal students. These include: educators who have high expectations and truly care for Aboriginal students; classroom environments that honour Aboriginal students' culture, language, worldview and knowledge; teaching practices that reflect Aboriginal learning styles, e.g. differentiated instruction and evaluation; and schools that have strong partnerships with the Aboriginal community. (Toulouse, 2008, 1.)*

She goes on to say that, "A new body of research is beginning to demonstrate that Aboriginal students' self-esteem is a key factor in their school success." (Kanu, 2002.) An educational environment that honours the cultures, language and worldview of the Aboriginal student is critical. (Toulouse, 2008,1.)

While governments still seem to be defining success through various measurement tools, researchers, (e.g. Canada Council on Learning, 2007) have been investigating how to incorporate First Nations and Métis measures of success in assessing First Nation and Métis student success.

Teachers interviewed bring First Nations and Métis ways of knowing, being, and doing to the schools with them. They understand the need to educate successful Métis and First Nations individuals who succeed in the ways of the school. School divisions are bringing the teachings of Métis and First Nations of Saskatchewan into the school. These teachings set different standards of success. For Elders involved in the RPS's Elder in Residence Program, markers of success include kindness to others and individual responsibility. (Goulet et. al, 2009, 15.) Teachers observed that the Elders' expectations created behaviour changes which improved academic performance for First Nations and Métis students connected with the Elders (*Ibid.*)

For Elders, living and learning cannot be separated. Harmony is not an outcome of success—it is often a product of achieving balance in one's life. Elders believe it is important for young people to feel good about who they are, and to know that they are unique human beings. (Goulet et al., 2009, 15.) They reinforce the need for a strong positive identity to be an integral part of academic success.

Teachers are always assessing their students' knowledge and skills. It has always been the goal of Aboriginal teachers to increase the academic success of First Nations and Métis students. The teachers in the study were pleased that governments are taking an aggressive approach to determining the state of their students' academic success. That being said, they emphasized the need to assess the students with tools that can provide information on specific areas for improvement and areas where students



are succeeding. They support testing to assist the teacher in individualizing the student's learning plan. The SUNTEP graduates are uneasy with measures of success which rank children by numbers, compared to other children in their age or grade groups. They are supportive of measuring success by celebrating the change in a child's work based on his/her own past behaviour. Progress may be shown in ways that are not numerical, but are foundational to the learning process in all subjects. According to one graduate: "The best measures of achievement are those where the teacher sits with the child one-on-one and observes, hears, and sees what the child knows and judges it against what the child was capable of the last time they sat together."

Our informants spoke of successful techniques that they are using to make assessment work for the students, while providing useful data for the school board. One principal described the method used in her school:



*We assess the students by using benchmarks. It involves time factors, so we can see where the students are at. Assessments are done in the spring and fall.*

*We use the [Irene] Fountas and [Gay Su] Pinnell system (Benchmark Assessment). It involves a level of reading and writing and is done for every student.*

*International Level expectations for Reading (this is what the measures will do). We need to get back to creativity and imagination. We have to find ways of presenting this to the staff. All of the staff is on board at this school.*

*Teachers have a common writing prompter. They decided to use their own. It involves professional level development.*

*We have a system of working with others in the city. We have a Collaborative Inquiry Team (CIT). They have set out time allotments of working with others. It involves an assessment for learning components. CIT deals with ideas and traits. It shows a progression. It shows how they can share with each other. We have a number of continuums and portals to work in. It produces evidence and we are able to assess the situation.*

*Assessment for Learning (AFL). We look at the data. Use an assessment for learning data. Outline a plan to learn. Look at how they have done. Look at the writing. Coordinate the assessment. Expository writing was not good. Show Provincial, National and local levels. It shows how we are doing compared to others. We encapsulate cultural aspects into the responsiveness process. Mathematical literacy comes in also. What about math? We have to find ways of dealing with the math issues.*



*We started with putting together committees to work on the issues. We have to have a math committee. We have to have a cultural committee. We have to have a literacy committee. We have a Math committee. We have a Cultural Responsiveness Committee. Now we have a Professional Development committee that meets with the CIT.*

*We are making our way through the issues, but it is hard. We were trying to figure our way out. Out of the bumbling we have found our way. We found Rubrics. We know the kits. They bring different data to the meetings from their specific committees. They are using the Data Coach's Guide using data to improve learning for all.*

*We use 6+1Trait Writing Model (The complete guide for Middle school) by Ruth Culham. We hold regular meetings for all of these issues."*

For this principal, students' academic success is measured by pinpointing the child's performance level, the skills which they are already practicing, determining which skills are not present, and by using very specific material to increase the skills needed. Working with other teachers from schools with similar student populations and working in a team fashion at the school provides a very positive and creative atmosphere for applying the assessment findings to individual learners.

Another said, "When teachers use the test results to pinpoint specific areas which can be taught to assist an individual student to become more proficient, the tests are used effectively. When the test results are used to repeat the old oft-repeated claim that First Nations and Métis students are not as successful on those tests as other students, they serve as a detriment to the child's success."

## **2.3 What is not Working**

The educators we interviewed were clear on what needed to be improved. The complexity of creating academic success was emphasized. However, while acknowledging that school boards are making incredible strides, they provided comments on what things were not presently working.

### **2.3.1 Supporting Métis Identity**

SUNTEP educators believe passionately that a strong positive identity is the key to academic success. They can see that the schools that are grounded in Aboriginal identity provide successful academic outcomes for Aboriginal students. However, at present, there are no examples of schools grounded in Métis identity. For the most part, Métis students who come to the school grounded in Métis ways of knowing, being and doing, find that their Métis traditions are not supported. They can learn a First Nations identity which may or may not be part of their heritage. Métis people have been asked to choose another identity throughout their history. Métis educators feel that the time has come for Métis students to be able to learn their own identity in a place where it is presented as a complete way of knowing in its own right.

Some Métis educators reported that Métis parents have complained to them that their children are learning Cree. Parents ask why their children are not learning Michif. One teacher said that when the school board discovered that parents in the school were concerned that their children were not learning their ancestral/home language at school, the Cree program was pulled from the school penalizing the students who were from Cree homes. Now, no Aboriginal language is taught in that particular school which has a large Aboriginal population.

In the past, Métis student success was a community responsibility. Métis teachers believe it is time to reinvigorate the community. It is time for the community to examine “How can schools strengthen Métis identity?” “What should Métis education look like?” “How would a school be different if Métis knowledge was the basis of teaching Métis children?” “How would First Nations education look for First Nations students?” “What would Métis school governance look like?” “What would the role of Métis parents be?” “What would the role of other Métis community members be?” “Who would be ultimately responsible and accountable for Métis student success?”

Métis teachers recommend that SUNTEP makes its presence felt everywhere. SUNTEP is well respected. It is producing teachers who are prepared for working in the evolving education systems, which requires them to understand Aboriginal knowledge and the reality of Aboriginal communities. They have the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that school boards need as they move forward.

SUNTEP needs to be expanded. More role models are needed in schools, particularly high schools. Schools need more practicum students, particularly interns, which will potentially help students to see teaching as a possible career. SUNTEP students in the schools provide community connections for Métis students and show them that they too can become a teacher!

SUNTEP could support the development of Métis student leadership initiatives at high schools. Since the Métis organizations recognize sixteen-year-olds as voters, it is important that Métis students be encouraged to understand what Métis citizenship means. Student governance organization through a school club could be sponsored by SUNTEP with coaching from SUNTEP students.

The Treaty Kit is supported by the Métis educators. However, they are concerned that for those teachers implementing the Treaty Kit, they may have no time or knowledge about Métis history.

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### **Métis teachers recommend that SUNTEP makes its presence felt everywhere.**

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Aboriginal education has become Treaty education. In the process, the role of the Métis in Saskatchewan history is being overlooked. Some report negative feedback from parents and “turn-off” by Aboriginal students when the teachers do not have adequate knowledge to make the students and parents feel that what is being taught is what they have learned from their Elders. The teachers delivering the Treaty Kit can make it work or destroy its intent by a lack of understanding of the broader cultural significance. A Métis teacher commented,

*The Treaty Education Program is important. We need people that know how to teach this. We need deeper Aboriginal Training. It has to be beneficial to the student. We don't want to confuse and annoy them with cultural issues. We need to give them a real feeling for their culture.*

### **2.3.2 The Presentation of Métis Reality in Schools**

The child needs to see him/herself reflected in the school. It is not enough for the child to see a pan-Aboriginal identity presented. The diversity of the Aboriginal experience in Saskatchewan is needed to help Aboriginal children feel that their particular story is being told. For children who are from a home which has given them a grounding in who they are, they can “turn off” if their lessons are not what they hear at home. For the child lacking a strong identity, they may not see themselves in the Treaty lessons at all.

For First Nations children this is becoming a reality in the mandatory Treaty teachings. However, Métis stories are being lost as First Nations ones gain prominence, because there is not time to implement Métis curriculum in the teachings. Métis children who are unable to identify with the First Nations content because that is not what they have heard at home, are left to figure out where they fit. Some First Nations children are confused as well if the First Nations teachings are monocultural.



### 2.3.3 Conflicting Policies

One interviewee said that board policies are sometimes used to block the transfer of Indigenous knowledge and limit the contribution of Elders in the division. The informant believes the issue reflects the difference between the existing idea of religious instruction in schools and the place of spirituality in the education of Aboriginal peoples.

Both public and Catholic school boards need to examine how the school systems' philosophies reconcile with the holistic, spiritually-based education practiced by First Nations and Métis Elders. According to the interviewee, unless board members understand the distinction between the concept of religion in Saskatchewan society and the place of spirituality in the Aboriginal community, they will not be able to make informed decisions about the inclusion of First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and Indigenous knowledge in their division's schools.

### 2.3.4 Support of the Expertise of Métis and First Nations Teachers

Teachers working successfully with Aboriginal children feel that their knowledge and experience are not taken into account. One said,

*I have a lot of ideas that I can't implement. I would like to see a setup that could change things. Make changes for the better. We should have strategies to make things different. It is possible to lose enthusiasm after years of teaching without changes in sight. We need to have input into an action plan. We need to set up a process to prepare an action plan. There has to be a connection between the planners and the staff that are on the working level. A lot of things happen at the provincial level and not at our division level. We need a reality connection.*

### 2.3.5 Support for the Traditional Languages of Saskatchewan

The goal of incorporating traditional Aboriginal knowledge in schools loses meaning if the only concepts that are taught are those which can be translated into English. The impact of traditional Elders is minimized if their words are reinterpreted into the English context. The meaning is imbedded in the Elders' first languages.

Métis and First Nations worldviews are imbedded in their languages. To ensure that Métis and First Nations students understand what it means to be a person of the Métis Nation or a particular First Nation, traditional languages need to be part of their education.

### 2.3.6 Accountability

The educators interviewed acknowledged that governments and school boards were making progress in First Nations education. There was the impression that teachers are feeling inundated by all the expectations which have been placed on them. As one teacher said, "Many of the innovations suggested are coming from experts who have never stepped foot in the classroom." Aboriginal teachers said that accountability is missing at all levels in the education system.

#### 2.3.6.1 The Ministry of Education

"There needs to be more strategic support at the top level with support from the Ministry of Education."

Aboriginal teachers in classrooms say that they need more support. They are implementing assessments and programs without the backup of specialists in First Nations and Métis education at the





ministry level. They feel that just when the need is greatest, with increasing numbers of First Nations and Métis students, and when expectations of academic success are greatest at the classroom level, the Ministry has reduced its support for them as teachers.

The Ministry of Education needs to be held accountable to the Métis and First Nations communities for the academic success of Aboriginal students in their care.

### **2.3.6.2 Boards of Education**

*The Boards of Education have to be accountable. They have to be accountable on how our kids are doing or not doing. They need to identify what has to change and make the changes. Some of the possibilities should include a review to see how big a problem we have.*

*There should be Strategic Plans produced and maintained. These should be supported by the Boards, Directors and everyone should be aware of it. There should be actionable items for every employee where there is accountability.*

*Boards of Education need to be accountable in terms of student success and if there are issues academically, new programs need to be funded. More data is needed to identify needs.*

Some of the interviewees feel that Aboriginal students, Aboriginal parents, the Aboriginal community, Aboriginal classroom teachers, and Aboriginal administrators are being asked to be accountable. However, decisions about resource allocation, policy, or hiring more people to support

teachers in doing their jobs are board decisions. Until the boards set their own strategic goals and put the financial and other resources needed to meet those goals, they are not facing their own responsibility in the matter.

Boards need to be held accountable to Métis and First Nations parents and communities for the academic success of Aboriginal children in their care.

### 2.3.6.3 The School System Administrators

Accountability at the administrative level must include measuring the degree to which administrators provide successful strategies, best practices and appropriate resources to schools to ensure Aboriginal academic success. Staffing decisions have to be made on what works. The time when Aboriginal schools were dumping grounds or training grounds must give way to leadership which recognizes the opportunities, and not the challenges of their schools.

*Administrators have to be accountable for staffing decisions. Teachers who are hired to teach Aboriginal students need to be judged on their ability to motivate those children to achieve academically. Teachers need to be chosen for their ability to support and promote Aboriginal academic success.*

Performance reviews of administrators in urban school systems must include Aboriginal academic success stories. Administrators need to be accountable to First Nations and Métis communities for the academic success of Aboriginal children in their care.

### 2.3.6.4 The Aboriginal Community

*We need support from the Aboriginal politicians in lobbying at the federal and provincial levels. We need community members at discussions where new city schools will be built and what schools are to be closed. We need SUNTEP to be visible and proactive in communities. We need SUNTEP visible in our high schools. We need First Nations and Métis teams at the board office to support our work in the classroom. We need them to provide moral support, materials, ideas and work with the communities. We need the whole Aboriginal community to demand better results and ensure that the support that is needed is there for teachers in the classroom.*

Aboriginal educators agree that when the Aboriginal community works together, positive things happen. That is how traditional education happened. Each community member was accountable for the education of each child. Each person in the community knew and understood the role that he/she had. In more recent times, advancements in Aboriginal education have come about when the Aboriginal community was informed, involved and committed to change. They took responsibility. The leaders led. The politicians lobbied. The educators talked in the community about the importance of education. Community members engaged in conversations about education and what was needed to change it.

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**Métis and First Nations students need to see more Aboriginal Community members in the schools.**

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Communities took responsibility for the education of their children. As a result, movements for community control of education began. Île-à-la-Croix School Board was formed. The Northern Lights School Board was formed. SUNTEP, GDI, the Dumont Technical Institute (DTI), and Gabriel Dumont College (GDC) all came about because the Métis community stood up and demanded that more opportunities be created for Métis students to get an education.

According to the interviewees, Aboriginal parents and community members can no longer sit back and say that it is the school's job to educate their children. Métis and First Nations students need to see more Aboriginal community members in the schools. Aboriginal leaders and decision-makers need to become visitors to schools to give informed direction when on provincial, divisional, or school committees.

Elders in school increase student attendance, attentiveness, and academic success. This knowledge needs to guide board policies and programs. Regina Public Schools Elders Advisory Council needs to be studied as a possible model for other urban school divisions.

Elders need to be more involved in school programs. Staff members need to be trained on how to work effectively with Elders. Their advice in school planning is needed. To establish a more coherent relationship with the school, the Elder needs proper space and time allocation. This means that the Elders' needs should be included in the budget and schedule.

### 2.3.6.5 Aboriginal Organizations

Significant changes in Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal education have occurred when Aboriginal political organizations made education their priority. One respondent summed it up this way: “The Aboriginal organizations have to become more involved. The FSIN and the MN–S have to be more vocal on the issues. They have to look at the best practices and make sure they are shared with the people that can make changes. They have to have a presence. They have to make education a priority and lobby for changes.”

“Aboriginal organizations need to make education a priority and determine what best practices are needed to make students successful.”

*Métis Addictions Centres need to come into the schools to meet with our Aboriginal students to teach on addictions and support students who want to stop the abuse of drugs and alcohol and if necessary refer students to major treatment centres.*

*Aboriginal organizations like SUNTEP, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies have to have a stronger effort to reach out to students through school visits, information and invitations to their programs. Stronger efforts need to be taken to get SUNTEP students at our schools.*

Those interviewed believe that Aboriginal organizations and leaders have a place in promoting Aboriginal academic success. They believe that education should become the priority of Aboriginal organizations. Leaders need to challenge the community to become the leaders in the next few decades, and to do that, they need to be educated. They need to be visible to Métis and First Nations youth. They need to show the value of an education by example. They need to lobby for the kind of resources that will give Aboriginal students the support that each and every student needs. They need to be at schools to see for themselves the conditions that exist. They need to show up at graduations and cheer for the successes. They need to provide incentives and programs which create success. They need to be accountable for the results.

## 3.0 CONCLUSIONS

The Métis teachers, principals, vice-principals, co-ordinators, community liaisons, and consultants we spoke with were inspiring. Their enthusiasm was contagious. They had strength of character, were certain in who they are, and had genuine concern for their students. They are passionate about children and teaching. They bring their heart, head, hands, and spirit to their task. As a result, they don’t mask the difficulties of the job and they believe it’s up to teachers and the school system to fix them. They believe that every child comes to school wanting to succeed and every parent wants to see their child do well. Children and parents put their trust in the teacher to help the child to succeed.

Métis teachers are diligent, hard workers, but their advice is not being sought, and they are not being promoted to positions where their expertise could be used to create the policies and conditions that will result in greater Aboriginal academic success.

Many SUNTEP graduates have become the “go-to” people for other teachers. In addition to being a new teacher in a school, they become the unpaid consultant on First Nations and Métis



religion, law, spirituality, dance, song, politics, teaching materials and resource people on every subject matter at every grade level, and are expected to respond to any item about the Aboriginal community that may appear in the newspaper on any particular day. The generosity of Aboriginal teachers in offering advice, support, direction, and materials has resulted in non-Aboriginal teachers not being able to build their own knowledge, resources, and community connections with the First Nations and Métis people, nor for Aboriginal history and contemporary situations. On the other hand, it is acknowledged that SUNTEP teachers possess the knowledge and skills needed to promote Aboriginal student success.

Métis teachers feel that Métis culture is often being missed by teachers who are now concentrating on teaching the mandatory Treaty Kit, involving First Nations Elders, and participating in pow wows and in ceremonial activities. The teachers we interviewed are concerned that First Nations diversity is being minimized and children and teachers see a monolithic pan-Aboriginal culture as the norm. For the SUNTEP teachers interviewed, “identity” is the key to successful learning. When a child is secure in his/her cultural identity, the academic challenges are not as large. However, when a child is struggling with “who he/she” is all other things in life suffer. There is fear that children are being disengaged when the Treaty Kit is taught by teachers who do not have a deep enough knowledge of Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal peoples to provide the nation-specific picture for a certain child. One teacher commented that when the teacher is only as knowledgeable as the Treaty Kit background information, a child can be turned off when he says, “That’s not the way my Grandfather said it happened,” and the teacher repeats the text from the kit. Métis children are left out of the process unless a teacher understands the role and involvement of Métis in the Treaty process in many areas.

Teachers say the gap in Aboriginal academic success is a two-way gap. There is a gap with the students, but there is also a gap with the institutions. There is a need for balance—a need for meeting half way.

First Nations and Métis teachers decry the lack of recognition of the linguistic gifts of Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples say that other people have the luxury of returning to their Homeland to regain their language, but when an Aboriginal language is gone, it is lost to the world forever. Aboriginal teachers have seen a language taught for a few months or years and then dropped. This does not give the children the feeling of cultural respect that schools are trying to foster.

Teachers need to know their own culture. They need to know “who they are.” When teachers know themselves and know something of the North-American intellectual tradition of their Aboriginal students, teachers can help students to discover “who they are.” However, as long as teachers stay uninformed about Aboriginal ways of knowing, they cannot help their students with their struggle to know their identities. Teachers, knowing and respecting First Nations and Métis history, heritage, and values become facilitators in Aboriginal academic success.

This research has confirmed what researchers have been reporting: that the response to the Aboriginal achievement gap has to be multi-dimensional. Assessing literacy and math skills is a small part of the solution. Teachers in this study identified specific preconditions which lead to academic success for Aboriginal students. SUNTEP graduates emphasized the importance of building a child’s identity as a Métis, First Nation or Inuit person as the key to academic success.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations emerged from the interviews with the study participants. They reflect the Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing of SUNTEP graduates tempered by teacher training and experience working with First Nations and Métis students, parents, and communities.

### 4.1 Strengthening Métis Identity

#### Recommendation #1

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT MÉTIS COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND LEADERS, MÉTIS POLITICIANS, EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS COME TOGETHER TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO MÉTIS STUDENT SCHOOL SUCCESS.**

“The more we work together the more we will succeed.”

#### Recommendation #2

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT MÉTIS PEOPLE LOOK AT ALL ASPECTS OF MÉTIS EDUCATION, INCLUDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ALL-MÉTIS SCHOOL OR MÉTIS EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

One of the Métis educators challenged other Métis to, “Be Bold! Move Forward!”

Métis educators believe that the key to academic success is a positive identity. Métis children need an educational system which supports and reinforces their Métisness. Métis teachers want to be part of a system which supports them in doing what they know best—educating Métis children. They want to be part of a system which commits itself in a wholehearted way to having the best-educated Métis population in the country.

Métis educators are confident that they know how to educate Métis children. Some, however, feel that, if given the chance, they could bring change to the existing system. As one Métis teacher put it, “Put me in a room with other Métis teachers and we’ll come up with a plan!” Another teacher said, “Why do we keep propping up a system that is failing and fixing it where it is broken? Why don’t we have our own Métis educational system?” Another Métis teacher said, “If the Métis students come through the door, we know how to teach them.”

The time has come for Métis educators to be proactive in the education of Métis children. The time has come to put the collective resources of the Métis community to work in creating the best-educated cohort of Métis people since our days at the Red River.

The conditions are right for us to take control of our own education:

- ∞ We have a cadre of trained, experienced Métis teachers;
- ∞ We have a model which works—SUNTEP;
- ∞ We have teacher trainees who can do work experience semesters while learning to be teachers in our schools;
- ∞ We have an educational publishing unit which has been developing curriculum materials which are not being used to their potential in the existing programs;

- ∞ We have a population of young parents who want their children to learn about their Métis identity;
- ∞ We have a core of Métis teachers who have worked in other systems and know what works and what doesn't;
- ∞ We still have Michif speakers who could support Michif teaching in the schools;
- ∞ We have GDC through which we can deliver Métis-specific courses, designed from our experience, in a Métis-specific school;
- ∞ We have SUNTEP staff and the Native Studies Department who can teach Métis-specific courses at the university;
- ∞ We have the Métis stories that are essential for Métis students to understand their identity, which is the foundation of academic success;
- ∞ We have the capacity, through DTI, to offer courses to train Métis Educational Assistants to support the teachers in our schools and;
- ∞ We have the capacity to offer short courses to Métis parents and community people to be literacy and math coaches to work with students one-on-one.

## The Environment

- Métis people are recognized as a separate distinct people of Saskatchewan by *The Métis Act*. It therefore follows that Métis institutions are an acknowledged part of Saskatchewan history and conceivably, its future.
- The founding legislation of Saskatchewan recognized the right of citizens to form “Separate Schools” based on religion.
- The French School Board of Saskatchewan recognizes the right of citizens to form a separate school system based on a language and culture different from the mainstream.
- The Government of Saskatchewan has recently committed to supporting private schools in the province to a certain percentage of the amount paid for public schools.
- The province is going through an economic boom which requires a well-educated population. The Métis population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population, and it needs to be educated to fill the jobs to sustain the economic development.
- SUNTEP has proven that government investment in the *right* kind of Métis-specific education pays dividends for the whole Saskatchewan population, and the investment is repaid many times over. (Howe, 2011.)

## Next Steps

### 1. A Gathering of the Minds

It is recommended that Métis educators develop a Strategic Plan for Métis Education.

## 2. Stakeholder Meetings

It is recommended that each group that has roles and responsibilities in the Strategic Plan come together in separate meetings to develop a plan for their involvement in the larger plan. Each group would emerge from the meetings with a clear path to follow to accomplish their strategic goals in a timely fashion.

## 3. Planning the Schools

It is recommended that a pilot Métis School be open in each city with a SUNTEP Centre.

### Recommendation #3

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE BECOME MORE VISIBLE AND PROACTIVE IN PROMOTING MÉTIS CULTURE HISTORY AND KNOWLEDGE.**

Teachers say that their schools need more Métis cultural material. Children need to see and read more books about Métis heroes, culture, history, contemporary experience, and the Michif languages. Teachers suggested a number of ways that GDI could be a supporter of Aboriginal academic success: 1) Métis Kit similar to the Treaty Kit to teach Métis content; 2) Teacher in-services offered to support teaching Métis content; 3) Book fairs at schools to ensure that librarians, teachers, parents, community leaders, parent council members and students see Métis books. Parents would have a chance to buy books for their children, which are not available where they buy their children's books; 4) Métis authors and researchers do school tours to provide children with role models; 5) Cultural items loaned to a school for display in display cases at the front door of the school on a one month basis; 6) Cultural materials on loan which students could touch, see, and smell, and try to replicate; 7) GDI could provide schools with information on cultural experts from the Métis community who could visit schools and provide teachings; and 8) GDI libraries could ensure that teachers in schools have access to the latest research and documents related to Aboriginal students and their school success.

### Recommendation #4

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT SUNTEP EXPAND AND BECOME MORE VISIBLE AND PROACTIVE IN OFFERING SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS IN PROMOTING ABORIGINAL SCHOOL SUCCESS.**

### Recommendation #5

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ABORIGINAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATE VISIBLY AND ACTIVELY IN THE EDUCATION OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS.**

### Recommendation #6

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT SASKATCHEWAN'S MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ABORIGINAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS MAKE A COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING AND PROTECTING ALL ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES OF SASKATCHEWAN WITH FUNDING AND RESOURCES.**

## 4.2 Planning for Aboriginal School Success

### Recommendation #7

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT MINISTRY OF EDUCATION PERSONNEL MEET WITH TEAMS OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE RESOURCES IDENTIFIED BY THE TEACHERS AS NECESSARY FOR FIRST NATION AND MÉTIS ACADEMIC SUCCESS ARE AVAILABLE.**

### Recommendation #8

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT TEACHERS BE THE POINT PEOPLE IN LEADING DISCUSSIONS OF WHAT WORKS IN CREATING ABORIGINAL SCHOOL SUCCESS, INCLUDING BEST PRACTICES, BEST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES, AND BEST PEDAGOGY.**

### Recommendation #9

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE NUMBER AND TYPES OF STAFF REQUIRED FOR ENSURING ABORIGINAL ACADEMIC SUCCESS BE RE-EXAMINED AND THE APPROPRIATE ADJUSTMENTS BE MADE.**

More staff is needed to meet the needs of Métis and First Nations children if they are to reach their academic potential. More personnel are needed. More Aboriginal teachers are required, and more Educational Assistants, liaison workers, and attendance monitors are needed to work between the school and community.

Métis teachers reported that students were not struggling with the academic material, but with all the other stresses in their lives. Schools need counsellors, social workers, people who understand local housing issues and people who understand the social issues affecting students. It is recommended that schools be visited daily by a doctor. One teacher said, “We need stronger integrated services. All of this has an impact on the students.” As one new teacher put it, “Invest in people.”

### Recommendation #10

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ABORIGINAL STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS BECOME A MEASURE FOR JUDGING THE SUCCESS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS, SCHOOL BOARDS, BOARD ADMINISTRATIONS, AND ALL SUPERINTENDENTS, DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION, PRINCIPALS, AND TEACHERS.**

### Recommendation #11

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT SCHOOL BOARDS, IN COLLABORATION WITH FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS TEACHERS, DEVELOP STRATEGIC PLANS WITH SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES TO BE MET BY SPECIFIC PERSONNEL BY SPECIFIC DATES. EVERY BOARD EMPLOYEE WILL HAVE EXPLICIT RESPONSIBILITIES TO ENSURE MÉTIS AND FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS’ SCHOOL SUCCESS.**

Recommendation #12

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT FACULTIES OF EDUCATION ADDRESS THE NEED TO HAVE ALL THE PROVINCE'S TEACHERS COMPETENT IN TEACHING ABOUT AND WITH FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS PEOPLE.**

All teachers in Saskatchewan must be prepared to teach Aboriginal students to succeed academically. All teachers should receive courses in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history, culture, and contemporary issues as a basic requirement for certification.

Recommendation #13

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT FACULTIES OF EDUCATION ENSURE THAT NON-ABORIGINAL TEACHERS RECEIVE PART OF THEIR TRAINING UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF MÉTIS AND FIRST NATIONS TEACHERS TO LEARN HOW TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS TEACHERS.**

Recommendation #14

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT SCHOOL PLANS FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS INCLUDE SUPPORT FOR CONDITIONS NEEDED TO CREATE ACADEMIC SUCCESS.**

Métis teachers identified a number of antecedents to Aboriginal students' academic success. These include pride in self and cultural identity; belief in the meaningfulness of the knowledge being taught; an acceptance of the legitimacy of school work to his/her life; a connectedness of what is being taught to what he/she needs to know to survive; hope; empowerment; challenge; independence; a feeling of belonging; a sense of security; and respect for him/her and his/her culture.

Recommendation #15

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE WORK OF TEACHERS IN CREATING ABORIGINAL SCHOOL SUCCESS AND TEACHER WORK IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BE RECOGNIZED AND ACKNOWLEDGED IN PERFORMANCE REVIEWS.**

Recommendation #16

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT EACH SCHOOL DEVELOP A SPACE SUITABLE FOR EITHER CEREMONY, COUNSELLING, OR TO WELCOME THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY TO ASSIST FIRST NATION AND MÉTIS ELDERS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO PROVIDE WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS NECESSARY FOR THE STUDENTS.**

It is important for schools to be welcoming to people from the Métis and First Nations community. They need to encourage people to come and feel at home, and consideration needs to be given to the person's comfort. Some schools have found space for community members. Some have a kitchen. Some have an office for a cultural support person. At times, it is important that Elders have a space which affords privacy for individual counselling or cultural practice. To make community Elders feel that they are welcomed and belong in the school, it is important that they have their own space.

Recommendation #17

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT SCHOOL BOARDS OVERSEE A REVIEW OF BOARD POLICIES TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE SUPPORTIVE OF THE GOALS OF THE FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK.

Recommendation #18

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES BE REVIEWED TO ELIMINATE BARRIERS AND TO ENSURE SUPPORT FOR ELDERS PROVIDING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOLS.

Recommendation #19

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT MORE FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS COMMUNITY ELDERS BE PART OF URBAN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, PLANNING, AND PROGRAMMING.

Recommendation #20

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT MÉTIS AND FIRST NATION ELDERS BE INVITED TO BE PART OF THE PLANNING PROCESSES OF THE SCHOOL PROGRAM SO THAT THEY CAN SEE THE WHOLE PLAN AND SEE HOW THEY FIT IN IT.

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## Appendix 1

### Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Measuring Success: A Gabriel Dumont/Institute/SUNTEP Research Project to Examine the Experiences of SUNTEP Graduates in Context of School-Based Provincial Aboriginal Education Action Plans*. Please read this form carefully. Feel free to ask any questions.

**Researchers:** The research is being undertaken by the SUNTEP Saskatoon Centre under the supervision of:

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**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of the study is to examine and document the experiences of SUNTEP graduates in the context of school-based Provincial Aboriginal Education Actions Plans.

To achieve this, the research will review relevant literature, analyze pertinent documents, interview a sample of SUNTEP graduates, various education experts, and Ministry of Education officials.

The data collected will be reviewed for evidence of the action plans' successes. The degree of cultural experiential learning will be determined. The action plans will be assessed in relation to the extent to which they work in conjunction with the community school concepts in terms of social, emotional, spiritual, and academic supports. The degree of community engagement will be determined. Community-based models and strategies will be discussed and assessed. Barriers and achievements in student success arising from the implementation of education action plans will be revealed.

Findings from the data collection will be presented to Gabriel Dumont Institute and SUNTEP staff and to Métis official representatives to develop recommendations to provide new impetus to community engagement models to achieve improved well-being and learning outcomes for Métis and First Nation students.

We would like you to share some of your background, some of your teaching experiences, your experiences in the development of the Action Plan for your school and board, and we want to have you examine how in your opinion the Action Plans have promoted Aboriginal student success. We would like you to talk about strategies which you have found increase parental and community involvement. We would appreciate hearing your thoughts on the importance of community engagement and its effect on Aboriginal student success. We would like to hear any recommendations that you have for the future for achieving higher levels of parental participation and engagement and student success and well-being in Saskatchewan's schools.

To obtain this information, an interviewer will interview you, either in person or over the telephone for approximately one hour. It will be your decision whether a digital recording will be made of the interview. If you do not wish it to be mechanically recorded, notes of the interview will be made. The text of the interview will be transcribed from the recording or the notes. You will be given an opportunity to check the accuracy of the interview transcript. You may ask any questions at any time. You may correct the transcript when it is provided to you. In all, approximately 3 hours of your time will be needed for the research data collection. A small gift will be given to you in appreciation of your contribution.

**Potential Benefits and Risks:** The potential benefits of this study are that members of the SUNTEP community, such as you, can provide a framework for increasing the success of First Nations and Métis children in the classroom and engaging the Aboriginal community in schools. Your experience in teaching First Nations and Métis students and your experience as a Métis person working in Saskatchewan schools will provide practical knowledge which other teachers can apply to their classrooms. This knowledge is to a large extent missing from the literature on education and educational practice. Your knowledge and experience will be cycled back into SUNTEP through classes and activities to teach the next generation of SUNTEP students. The data collected will be archived for the use of future education students, future educational administrators, and community members.

The risks are minimal. However, in case the interview process brings back unpleasant memories or

painful experiences, the researcher will call you two days after the interview to establish that you are not suffering negative effects. Support will be provided, if necessary.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:** What you are telling the researcher will be kept in strictest confidence and will not be shared with others outside the research team. Your participation is anonymous and steps will be taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your responses unless you prefer to be identified in the report.

**Right to Withdraw:** You may withdraw from the research project for any reason without penalty of any sort. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until such time as the data is analyzed. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have occurred, and it may not be possible to withdraw your data. If you withdraw from the research, prior to that time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to consult the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office (306-966-2084). Out-of-town participants may call collect.

**Follow-up or Debriefing:** If you are interested in the findings of the study, we will schedule a follow-up visit to share the results. A copy of the final report will be available at the SUNTEP and Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) Libraries throughout the province.

**Storage of Data:** Your responses will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet in the SUNTEP office with access available only to authorized personnel during the duration of the research project. When the project is finished, the data collected will be archived in the University of Saskatchewan Archives. At that time, your consent will be required to direct the archives on your desires as to the accessibility of your interview data.

**Dissemination of Results:** The final report containing the aggregate results of the research will be made available to you as a participant and to members of the Métis community through the SUNTEP libraries, GDI website, libraries, and journal.

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time up to the time that the data is analyzed. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)



## Appendix 2

### Questions and Issues for Discussion

The purpose of the project is to examine and document the experiences of SUNTEP graduates in the context of School-based Provincial Aboriginal Education Action Plans.

1. Does your school have a school-based Provincial Aboriginal Education Action Plan? Have you been involved in the planning process?
2. If you don't have an Action Plan has there been an Educational Aboriginal Strategy developed in your school or division?
3. What has been successful in increasing the academic success and well-being of Aboriginal students in your school? Can you share examples of success elements?
4. What has not worked well and needs to be addressed in your school?
5. What measures have been used to increase Aboriginal students' success and well-being in your school?
6. What can be done to increase Aboriginal parent and community engagement in your school? Can you share some examples with us?
7. Have there been any Aboriginal cultural displays/experiences at your school? Is there anything that you would like to see at your school?
8. Are there any research materials, readings or pertinent literature that you could suggest that would be important to be considered in strengthening an Action Plan? Can you give examples?
9. What recommendations would you suggest to improve the development of a school-based Strategy or Action Plan?
10. What would you like to see change or be improved over the next three years?

## Appendix 3

### Transcript Release Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Dr. Catherine Littlejohn to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher





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