

A PRESENTATION  
TO THE  
NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

BY

THE GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE OF NATIVE  
STUDIES AND APPLIED RESEARCH, INC.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research has been committed to the education and cultural preservation of the Metis and Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan.

In Northern Saskatchewan, where a considerable portion of the MNSI people live, the median level of educational achievement is alarmingly low. The consequences of educational deprivation, for Metis and Non-Status Indian peoples, in the north, is most evident in socio-economic and labour force statistics.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute has continued to respond to the specific needs of northern peoples with community-based programming in fields such as Local Government Administration (LaRonge), Pre-Management Training (LaLoche), Forestry Technology, Social Work (Buffalo Narrows, Meadow Lake), Business Administration (Buffalo Narrows, Cumberland House), Pre-Nursing (Ile-a-la-Crosse) and training for Chemical Dependency Workers (Ile-a-la-Crosse).

The Institute also offers opportunities for northern students such as University training in the fields of Education and Human Justice in Prince Albert, as well as in other locations across the province.

Most recently, the Gabriel Dumont Institute has been concerned with those adults in Northern Saskatchewan whose academic qualifications limit their choice of post-secondary programming. For this reason, northern-based literacy and high school completion programs have been successfully piloted by the Institute.

This paper presents a series of additional incentives to facilitate the achievement of equal access to education and training for Metis and Non-Status Indian peoples of Saskatchewan.

## 2.0 AN OVERVIEW OF THE GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE

### 2.1 THE FOUNDING OF THE GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE

In 1976, funding from the federal Department of Secretary of State enabled the Metis and Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan to organize a province-wide Cultural Conference. More than 250 delegates and guests attended. The purpose of this Conference was to develop a strategy to renew and strengthen the Native community within Saskatchewan.

Delegates of the Conference determined that the creation of a Native-controlled institution for the advancement of Native research, culture and employment-oriented programming would provide a positive first step. The Institute became known as the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, Inc., named for the heroic Metis leader, General Gabriel Dumont. The Institute was formally incorporated in December, 1976 under The Societies Act, and in 1980 continued under The Non-profit Corporations Act. In the spring of 1979, an agreement was reached for the core funding of the Institute through the Saskatchewan Department of Continuing Education.

As a completely Native-directed educational and cultural establishment, the Gabriel Dumont Institute is unique in Canada. In order to address the immediate employment needs and ultimate cultural aspirations of Native peoples, the Institute pursued the development of curriculum and historical educational materials, training of Native teachers and the delivery of programming contracted from the universities, colleges and technical institutes in the province. The first of these efforts was SUNTEP, a four-year teacher education program leading to a Bachelor of Education Degree.

### 2.2 THE GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE TODAY

When the Metis and Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan voiced the desire to have their own educational institution in 1976, it was difficult to foresee the Gabriel Dumont Institute as it is known today. Since 1989, and the dissolution of A.M.N.S.I.S., the Institute has been recognized as the official education arm of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan.

By 1989, the Gabriel Dumont Institute had 931 students; 581 in GDI programs and 340 under the SIAST Native Services Division Agreement. During that year, the Institute delivered nine preparatory programs, six technical programs and six university programs. Recent programming at the Institute includes Native Human Justice, Native Management Studies, Business Administration, Local Government Administration, Forestry Technology, Chemical Dependency Worker, Pre-Nursing, Pre-RCMP, 0 to 5 Literacy and High School Completion.

Although the main office of the Institute remains in Regina, with sub-offices in Saskatoon and Prince Albert, Gabriel Dumont programs are delivered on a needs basis in communities all across the province.

In addition to direct program delivery, and in keeping with its goal of enhancing cultural and community educational opportunities for Native people, the Institute provides library and resource information centres in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert, revolving mini-library satellite centres across the province, a Research and Development Division, a Finance and Administration Division, a Curriculum and Native Studies Division and community liaison services.

In 1989, the Institute further expanded its operation to undertake the development and operation of the first Community Training Residence for female offenders in Saskatchewan.

### **2.3 GDI MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Gabriel Dumont Institute is managed by a Board of Governors comprised of twenty-four members. The membership on the Board includes four representatives from the Metis Society of Saskatchewan, one representative from each of the eleven Metis Society districts, two representatives from the Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan, one representative from each of the two universities in the province, one representative from each of the federal and provincial governments and two GDI student representatives.

The full Board meets six times yearly to determine policy and to supervise the affairs of the Institute. The Executive Committee meets on a more frequent basis as dictated by need. The day-to-day operations of Gabriel Dumont Institute are overseen by an Executive Director and seven Department Directors.

The growth, expansion and increasingly significant accomplishments of the Gabriel Dumont Institute throughout the 1980's have been achieved by keeping the Institute's guiding principles at the forefront of all consultation, negotiation and decision-making:

- . all training and professional education delivered by the Institute must be fully accredited and recognized;
- . all activities of the Institute must be of the highest quality; and,
- . all activities undertaken by the Institute will be directed toward the self-determination, self-reliance and independence of Metis and Non-Status Indian people.

## 2.4 G.D.I. LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research has come a long way over the past eleven years working towards an education system that serves our people. A recent sampling of the graduates of the Institute indicates that over seventy percent had experienced unemployment in the year before entering their GDI program. One to two years after graduation, fully eighty-four percent were either employed or pursuing further studies.

Perhaps even more important than the statistics are the less tangible benefits of GDI--Metis students who are confident, open-minded and eager to learn, to teach and to pursue their dreams.

In future, the Gabriel Dumont Institute will continue to work to increase the opportunities for culturally-relevant education and training for our people. Ultimately, the Institute strives to increase the options and chances for self-reliance for the Metis people of Saskatchewan.

### 3.0 PROPOSED NORTHERN INITIATIVES

#### 3.1 MATCHING CONTRIBUTION TO THE NAPOLEON LAFONTAINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Napoleon LaFontaine Economic Development Scholarship Program was established in 1986 to encourage Saskatchewan Metis and Non-Status Indian people to pursue full-time studies in fields related to the economic development of Aboriginal peoples.

The original \$600,000 capital investment for this program was supplied by the Native Economic Development Program (NEDP) and is administered by the Trustees of the Gabriel Dumont Scholarship Foundation. The interest gained from this initial investment is used as the funding of annual scholarships.

Approximately twenty to thirty Napoleon LaFontaine Scholarships are awarded each year to Saskatchewan Metis and Non-Status Indian students.

These students are enroled in recognized Canadian educational institutions. In 1990, recipients of Napoleon LaFontaine Economic Development Scholarships were studying in such fields as Native Management, Local Government Administration, Business Administration and Agriculture.

In order to qualify for a Napoleon LaFontaine Scholarship, students must have resided in Saskatchewan five years or longer, achieve a "B" average and be committed to working in an Aboriginal work environment upon the successful completion of their studies.

With over nine hundred Aboriginal students enroled in Gabriel Dumont Institute and Native Services Division (SIASD) programs, each year, the competition for Napoleon LaFontaine Scholarships is steep. Many deserving students are turned away. Yet, the difference that a \$200 to \$500 grant can make to a Native student, often a single parent with family responsibilities, is remarkable.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute wants to expand access to its Economic Development Scholarships for northern Metis students. The Institute seeks a matching fund of \$600,000 from the province to invest in the Napoleon LaFontaine Economic Development Scholarship program. The interest from this additional capital funding will provide more than twenty scholarships each year to inhabitants of Northern Saskatchewan communities who are pursuing full-time post-secondary education to benefit northern economic development.

#### 3.2 THE SASKATCHEWAN METIS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

The Gabriel Dumont Institute also proposes to develop and establish the Saskatchewan Metis Technical Institute as a Federated Institute

of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST).

For the past four years, the Gabriel Dumont Institute has managed and operated the Native Services Division (NSD) of SIAST. While the Native Services Division has made a considerable impact in SIAST and in providing considerable additional training opportunities for Saskatchewan Aboriginal people, it is time to propose an enhanced and expanded role for the NSD. This would involve the certification (or accreditation) and delivery of appropriate and relevant courses and programs, by the Saskatchewan Metis Technical Institute, to Aboriginal people (see organizational chart).

As a Federated Institute of SIAST, the proposed structure would be legally and financially independent of SIAST, but academically integrated with SIAST programs. Thus, programs offered by the Saskatchewan Metis Technical Institute would be available to all Aboriginal people including Status Indians, and to non-Aboriginal people as well.

An immediate priority for the proposed Federated Institute would be to assume responsibility for the certification and delivery of Non-Status Indian and Metis (NSIM) funded Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses in the four urban centres. This is deemed a priority because of the important need to make ABE culturally relevant and to link, deliberately and systematically, ABE with technical and skill training.

For the past several years, the Institute has utilized several northern communities as training satellites to deliver programs to the community. This has proven particularly successful as northerners do not have to leave their home communities to take advanced training. A further result of this initiative has been that the Institute has built up considerable infrastructure, in terms of training facilities, in many northern communities such as Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse and Cumberland House. A Federated Institute would use and further expand the use of many of these facilities. A permanent northern component of the Metis Federated Technical Institute offering ABE courses and skill training in many northern communities would be a logical and critical part of this new initiative.

### **3.3 A METIS LOANS AND BURSARIES PROGRAM**

The culminative effects of the administrative changes in Student Financial Assistance, from 1982 through 1990, have been devastating for the Metis and Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan. The level of indebtedness (up to \$30,000) required to gain a post-secondary education has become a major disincentive to the attainment of education. In effect, the most needy Metis and Non-Status Indian students "are making a fourteen-year commitment to the bank" when they undertake a degree program.

The high unemployment rates and economic disparity of Metis and Non-Status Indian people in Northern Saskatchewan make this group particularly vulnerable to changes affecting student funding.

Further, evidence has shown that should current trends continue, student may be worse off financially as graduate professionals than they would have been had they chosen to remain on welfare or at minimum wage employment.

Ultimately, financial liability adds what may be the final stress to Metis and Non-Status Indian students who already face great odds in their attempts to return to the classroom. Many adult Metis and Non-Status Indians who come to programs, such as those delivered through the Gabriel Dumont Institute, have had a long experience of failure in mainstream educational programs. They come with dependents and family responsibilities, all of which can add to the complexity of their educational situation.

Unlike Status Indian students, the costs of post-secondary education for Metis and Non-Status Indians is not assumed by the Federal Government. Similarly, the competition for the limited number of scholarships targeted directly for MNSI students is steep.

Priority must be given to the restoration of a full student loan and bursary program which recognizes the special needs of Metis and Non-Status Indian students.

### **3.4 NORTHERN RESOURCE REVENUES AND EDUCATION**

It is the position of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, after delivering programs and services for eleven years in Northern Saskatchewan, that funding for education and training initiatives and programs remains insufficient. That is to say, the education and skill levels of northerners lags far behind those from southern Saskatchewan; for Aboriginal northerners, the situation is far worse.

In addition to maintaining current levels of funding for northern education, the Institute would like to propose that the Provincial Government immediately investigate the feasibility of targeting northern resource revenues to education. This resource revenue targeting to education would be in addition to and supplement existing educational funding for northerners. The Institute does not have a precise formula in mind when making this proposal, but we believe that a commitment by the Provincial Government to invest further in northern education by targeting resource revenues is critical at this time.



#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the northern initiatives proposed by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research warrant serious consideration. The Institute remains committed to the goals of independence and self-reliance for Metis and Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan. Education and training are key to our success.

P R O P O S E D   A B O R I G I N A L   T E C H N I C A L  
T R A I N I N G   P A R T I C I P A T I O N   S T R A T E G Y

