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Gabriel Dumont Institute
40th Anniversary
1980 – 2020



GDI Communicator

The GDI Communicator is an internal newsletter intended to increase communication between management and staff of the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research

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GDI and the COVID-19 Emergency

By Lisa Bird-Wilson

In January and February 2020, the coronavirus in China and then other parts of the world such as Italy and Spain, came to worldwide attention. In early March 2020, there was growing concern over the coronavirus or COVID-19 and the potential looming health threat across Canada and in Saskatchewan. As the awareness of the virus ramped up, GDI immediately established daily meetings of senior management in order to closely monitor the evolving situation, monitor recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Government of Saskatchewan, and to communicate important information internally and externally to our stakeholders.

Public information and recommendations changed rapidly. The Institute was concerned with prioritizing the health and wellness of GDI staff and students, and promoting strategies to minimize illness, such as handwashing, staying home if sick, cough/sneeze etiquette, and social distancing. Common kitchens, lunchrooms, etc were shut down. Extra cleaning and disinfecting efforts were scheduled for all facilities. Staff were asked to cancel all non-essential meetings, events, and travel.

DTI closed its testing centre and mobile testing labs. Notices related to illness prevention were posted in all facilities. IT began to set up remote access to the network, video conferencing options, and other important technical connections. Credible information sources were promoted such as the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the PHAC websites.

On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. On March 12th, Saskatchewan reported its first presumptive case. On March 18th the province declared a state of emergency.

In the days leading up to, and following the WHO declaration, the Institute referred to its policy, "Influenza Pandemic Planning Policy," the intent of which is to ensure business continuity in a pandemic and short-term planning with a health focus. The policy document was useful in the early days of contingency planning but the situation quickly surpassed the early stages of precautions. GDI is a complex institution with programs at multiple levels of certification, and with a variety of institutional partners. As much as possible, the Institute followed the direction of the

institution each program is affiliated with, but by March 16th all GDI classrooms were closed. By the end of the week most classes were up and running in some form of online/remote/distance delivery. This was an abrupt change in an institution where our usual model is to deliver face-to-face, community-based education and training programs in classrooms throughout Saskatchewan. Much credit is due to the faculty and staff for the quick shift to remote delivery. All efforts have been to keep students engaged.

GDI Training & Employment quickly implemented supports for funded students, included extra tutoring supports, program extensions, and remote access to employment counselling services.

On March 17, 2020, the GDI buildings and offices were closed to the general public. Business and services to Métis clients and students remain ongoing as of April 30th, with a variety of remote processes taking place across the province. Staff are working various combinations of in-office and remote work, as directed by supervisors. Social distancing is practiced in all GDI locations and the Institute follows all guidelines and regulations from the provincial government.

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Gabriel Dumont Institute

A Reflection on My First Year as an Employee of GDI

By Colleen Duffy



For more information about GDI Indigenous Apprenticeship Program, please contact **Jodi Dolter** at 1-877-488-6888 or apprenticeships@gdins.org

It was a beautiful day in May 2019 when I reported for my first day of work as the newest member of the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) staff. I always knew that the Institute had been doing an excellent job in empowering and making a positive difference in the lives of Métis students, clients, families, and communities since 1980.

Reflecting on my first year as an Employment Services Manager with the GDI Training and Employment in Regina, I would have liked to highlight a story about one or more of the incredible students that I have met. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made contact more difficult.

It could have been about a former client who came in with his wife to ask about possible assistance for their daughter who was about to graduate from high school and wanted to train as a practical nurse. I spoke with them about the Dumont Technical Institute program and how incredible the faculty and staff were and gave them a brief tour of that classroom. He called back the following day to say that the family had

made a decision. His wife, who had stayed at home to raise their children since becoming a mother, and who was now working in a minimum wage job, would upgrade her high school education then take the nursing program with her daughter.

Or, it could have been about the student who returned to school after raising a family and only being able to secure part-time work as a cashier. This was a student who struggled with some of the material and had often been told that something was wrong with her. So, when she was diagnosed with a learning disorder, she felt at ease knowing that it was not her fault. This student is now doing so much better today despite having health issues and not being able to drive; and does not see barriers anymore, it is only opportunities and possibilities.

Perhaps it could have been about the student whose spouse was laid off; but continued to thrive and envision their future success despite that setback. Though going through challenging times, the student readily and with a warm smile helped

anyone who needed it and never missed baking a cake to celebrate every classmate's birthday.

These are just a few of the students I have met since working here and you would have enjoyed meeting any of them through an in depth profile. But this is not the time to intrude as they have to make adjustments to this new reality.

Without a doubt some of them are struggling with the new remote delivery of programs; but they have the support of the instructors who really care and go the extra mile to help them meet each of their needs. They also have the support of the whole GDI organization and in Regina, they have Gareth Griffiths who works long hours making sure that every employee and every student has the technology they need to work successfully at home.

When I started at GDI Training and Employment it was spring and a time of celebration. Classes were ending and students were going on interviews and landing jobs. There were graduations and I witnessed a great deal of generational pride as families came together. What a difference a year makes. 🌍



Garrick Schmidt, B.Ed and his students. Schmidt is a graduate of SUNTEP Regina

Photo courtesy of G. Schmidt

Garrick Schmidt: A Land-Based Teaching Icon

By James Oloo

Garrick Schmidt recently completed his teacher education degree through the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), Regina. He is currently a Grade 8 teacher at Kakisiwew School on Ochapowace First Nation, Saskatchewan. Garrick has become increasingly popular

on social media for his posts including videos on how he incorporates land-based teaching and learning into both his online and face to face lessons.

Although as a teacher, Garrick's first priority is the welfare and education of his students, his "online land-

based program," as he calls it on Twitter, attracts 'students' from across the country. In the process, Garrick has become a sort of 'evangelist' for land-based teaching and learning.

This month, Garrick was featured on CBC Radio One, CTV Regina, and CTV Yorkton. *Continued on Page 4*



GDI Response to COVID-19 Emergency ... *Continued from Page 1*

GDI immediately applied to a number of sources of funding in an attempt to secure emergency funds for GDI students struggling due to the effects of COVID-19. With a variety of funds from internal sources and a \$17,000 contribution from Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship, the Gabriel Dumont Scholarship Foundation launched the COVID-19 Emergency Bursary for Métis Students. To date, 344 Métis students have been awarded in excess of \$162,000 in bursaries under the program.

Early in the pandemic, it was clear that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was in short supply across the country. Dumont Technical Institute (DTI) took stock of all PPE available from its various healthcare-related training programs across the province and donated the totality of its stock to the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

In total DTI donated 12 boxes of N95 masks, one box of disposable gowns, six boxes of procedural masks with visors, 21 boxes of procedure masks, two boxes of isogel, and one box of nasopharyngeal swabs.

The IT Department purchased laptops and Chromebooks to help support the distance learning needs of our students. By April 1, 2020, 74 students had borrowed equipment from DTI in the form of laptops or Chromebooks. As of April 1, DTI has a 74% engagement rate from Adult Basic Education students and a 96% engagement rate from Skills training students who continue their studies at home.

The GDI Culture and Heritage Department has taken measures to support those working and studying at home including providing access to Métis-specific resources for GDI staff (i.e., the [GDI history book](#) and discussion questions) and resources for children (Métis Alphabet colouring pages and the [Stories of Our People](#) comic series). A number of virtual concerts were arranged, starting with Donny Parenteau, on [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#). Followed by a Jess Lee concert on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). Other artists' performances are planned to be released each Monday, including John Arcand on Monday May 4th and Tristen Durocher on Monday May 11th. Response to the virtual performances has been excellent.

As students continue to move through their studies, it is

apparent that many are impacted by the sudden shift in delivery, home study, and uncertainty caused by COVID-19. GDI has arranged Student Mental Health Support Services for GDI students through a program called keep.meSAFE in partnership with Morneau Shepell.

This means our students will have access to counselling services free of charge 24/7. They are invited to download the free My SSP app and/or call toll free 1-844-451-9700 to access counselling services. A link will be provided in the coming days for students to access for an orientation to the services. Staff and faculty training is being arranged as soon as possible.

While the pandemic and its effects are far from over, the Province is beginning to implement measures for the gradual re-opening of some businesses and services beginning May 4th in a phased approach. More details is available at the [Re-open Saskatchewan webpage](#). As we move forward through this uncertain time, we encourage all GDI staff and students to stay safe, follow provincial and local directives, support one another, and be kind to each other and yourselves. 🌐

What is The Impact of GDI on Sask Apprenticeship?

By James Oloo

GDI has delivered or supported training in skilled trades for almost 30 years. Since 2011, when GDI launched its first apprenticeship program, it has supported the creation of 1,198 jobs for Indigenous apprentices across Saskatchewan. The GDI-Skills and Partnership Fund

Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative (2011-2014) resulted in 223 new apprenticeship jobs. This was followed by the GDI-WD Indigenous Apprenticeship Project (2014-2017) that was funded by the Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD). The program supported 407 apprenticeship jobs.

The current GDI-SPF Indigenous Apprenticeship Project (2017-2021) has so far led to 568 new Indigenous apprenticeship jobs.

Apprenticeship programming is employer-driven and is closely tied to the economy.

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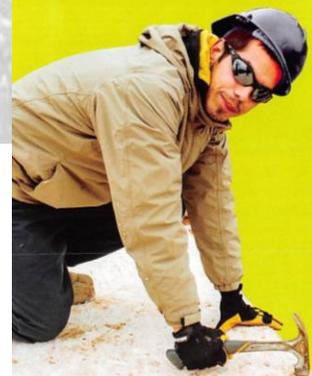
GDI Training & Employment



To qualify for the GDI Indigenous Apprenticeship you must

- ☞ Be an Indigenous person (Métis, First Nation or Inuit)
- ☞ Be unemployed or underemployed
- ☞ Have a genuine interest in working in the trades, and
- ☞ Meet eligibility requirements for registering as an apprentice.

*If you do not meet eligibility requirements for registering as an apprentice, GDITE has programs available to assist you to become qualified.



apprenticeships@gdins.org



Gabriel Dumont Institute

GDI Board of Governors:

GDI Board has 12 members comprising a representative from each of the 12 Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) Regions plus a chairperson, who also serves as the MN–S Minister of Education.

Current Members:

Dr. Earl Cook, Chair
Vince Ahenakew, NR III
Viola Bell, ER II
Brian Chaboyer, ER I
Nancy Duns, ER III
Jackie Kennedy, WR IA
Dennis Langan, ER IIA
Tracy Tinker, NR II
Juanita Tuharsky, WR III

Vacancies on the Board:

Northern Region I
Western Region I
Western Region II
Western Region IIA

SUNTEP and Land-Based Teaching ... *Continued from Page 3*

The Regina Leader-Post also did an [article](#) on him titled, ‘Sask. teacher keeping land-based learning alive online during pandemic.’

Reid Roberts (Twitter handle: @ReidRoberts13), who describes himself as an “Outdoor Ed teacher and trapper at DP Todd Secondary School, Prince George, BC.” tweeted on April 10: “If you want to learn more about Land Based Learning from an educator, I recommend following @GarrickSchmidt.”

Garrick’s March 24, 2020 Tweet (via his handle @GarrickSchmidt): “Good morning everyone! I am making land based project videos for online interaction for students and those wanting to learn. First day: learn-to shelter and fire reflector built. Traps and snares also set. Stay tuned for videos!” received

over 280 likes, retweets, and replies. The replies included: “Great job Garrick!!! Keep up the great work!;” “I appreciate you, and your teaching;” and “I plan to do the same thing once we go back after spring break.”

Garrick is proud of the education he received at SUNTEP Regina and often tags the Institute (@gdins_org) on his posts. Like him, several SUNTEP students and graduates have been sharing their experiences on social media and highlighting how the knowledge and skills they acquired at SUNTEP enables them to be effective teachers.

One of the unique characteristics of Gabriel Dumont Institute programs is that they incorporate Métis culture and ways of knowing, including traditional environmental knowledge. For example, the new Northern Saskatchewan Indigenous

Teacher Education Program (NSITEP) that is delivered by the Institute in partnership with the University of Regina, and Lac La Ronge Indian Band, is rooted in Indigenous cultures and languages, and land-based pedagogy. Given the audience that Garrick’s online land-based teaching and learning continues to attract, it is nice to see that education that is rooted in Métis traditional knowledge is being celebrated in the popular media.

It is worth mentioning that land-based education is not a new concept in Saskatchewan. A number of schools around the province have already adopted it. For example, Bert Fox Community High School in Fort Qu’Appelle and Muskeg Lake Cree Nation’s Kihiw Waciston School are offering land-based learning programs with practical life applications.

**GDI and Sask Apprenticeship ...** *Continued from Page 3*

When the economy is doing well, there tends to be a higher demand for apprentices. The number of registered apprentices in Saskatchewan has been falling steadily over the past six years, from 10,352 in 2013-2014 to 6,483 in 2018-2019, a decline of 37.3%. (Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, 2018-19 Annual [Report](#), page 12).

The GDI-SPF (2011-2014) was launched in 2011. During 2011-2012, there were 9,724 registered apprentices in Saskatchewan including 1,288 (or 13.2%) who were of Indigenous ancestry. The following year, in 2012-2013, the total number of registered apprentices in the province increased to 10,023. The

number of Indigenous apprentices increased at a higher proportion to 1,383 or 13.8% of the total number of registered apprentices.

The growth in the number of registered apprentices continued in 2013-2014, the final year of the GDI-SPF Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative. During that year, there were 10,352 registered apprentices in Saskatchewan including 1,532 who were of Indigenous ancestry (or 14.8% of all registered apprentices in the province). These numbers tell us that 1) during the three years of the GDI-SPF (2011-2014), the total number of registered apprentices – including the number of Indigenous apprentices – province increased, and 2) that

the proportion of apprentices who are Indigenous grew faster than that of non-Indigenous apprentices, (namely, from 13.2% in 2011-2012, to 13.8% in 2012-2013, to 14.8% in 2013-2014).

In 2014, the GDI-SPF (2011-2014) Apprenticeship Initiative was successfully concluded and the GDI-WD (2014-2017) started. There was six months of inactivity between the two programs as the Institute did not recruit new Indigenous apprentices. In Saskatchewan, the economy was quite strong with a low unemployment rate of [3.3%](#) in June 2014 (compared to unemployment rate of [6.2%](#) in February 2020 just before the first COVID-19 case was reported in Canada).

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Gabriel Dumont Institute Building in Prince Albert
Photo by Greg MacLeod



GDI Contribution to Sask Apprenticeship ... *Continued from Page 4*

Yet, 2014-2015, saw a decline in the number of registered apprentices by 4.0% from 10,352 in 2013-2014 to 9,953 in 2014-2015. The number of Indigenous apprentices decreased by a massive 10.4% between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

Because Saskatchewan economy was strong, it is likely that the disruption resulting from the conclusion of GDI-SPF (2011-2014) and the start of GDI-WD (2014-2017) may have had a negative impact not only on the number of Indigenous apprentices, but also on the total number of apprentices in the province.

2015-2016 was a tough year in Saskatchewan. In June 2015, unemployment rate was 4.2%. It rose to 4.4% in September, and 5.1% in December. By June 2016, unemployment rate was 5.5%. As would be expected, the apprenticeship ecosystem in the province took a hit with the total number of registered apprentices falling by 5.4% from the previous year.

However, during this period, the number of Indigenous apprentices *increased* from 1,388 to 1,436; and Indigenous apprentices as a proportion of total registered apprentices in Saskatchewan was 15.2% - a five year high.

In 2016-2017, the last year of the GDI-WD (2014-2017), Saskatchewan economy was still struggling. Unemployment rate was 5.5% in June 2016 and 6.4% in June 2017. The total number of registered apprentices fell by 15.3% from 2015-2016. The number of registered Indigenous apprentices also decreased, but at a slower rate of 9.2%.

In 2017, the GDI-SPF Indigenous Apprenticeship Project (2017-2021) was launched. In 2017-2018, the total number of registered apprentices in the province decreased by 7.8% from the previous year. The proportion of apprentices

in Saskatchewan who were Indigenous increased to 16.8%. Note that, according to the 2016 Census data, 16.3% of Saskatchewan population self-identified as Indigenous. That is, the proportion of Indigenous apprentices (16.8%) was higher than the proportion of Indigenous population in Saskatchewan (16.3%).

The number of registered apprentices in the province has been declining since 2013-2014, the proportion of apprentices who are self-identified Indigenous has been rising for the first time in year. This could be attributed, at least in part, to the apprenticeship program at GDI. 

Payroll Cutoff Calendar, May 2020

By Carmala Thiessen and Veronica Verzonowski

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
					Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/P Invoices	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		Cutoff @ 3 pm for Stop Pmts on Student May 8 Direct Deposits		Accounts Payable Cheque/EFT Run	Student Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for Accounts Payable Invoices	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Cutoff @ 4:30 for TMS & Payroll Revisions for May 15 Payday Finance Cutoff @ 4:30 for May 22 Student Payroll			Accounts Payable Cheque/EFT Run	Staff Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for Accounts Payable Invoices	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Victoria Day Stat Holiday	Cutoff @ 3 pm for Stop Pmts on Student May 22 Direct Deposits		Accounts Payable Cheque/EFT Run	Student Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for Accounts Payable Invoices	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Cutoff @ 4:30 for TMS & Payroll Revisions for May 29 Payday Finance Cutoff @ 4:30 for June 5 Student Payroll			Accounts Payable Cheque/EFT Run	Staff Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for Accounts Payable Invoices	
31						

Payroll must receive contracts prior to payroll cutoff date, otherwise the employee will be paid on the following pay period.



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Visit us at
www.gdins.org

Back issues of this newsletter
can be obtained at:

[www.Métismuseum.ca/browse/
index.php/833](http://www.Métismuseum.ca/browse/index.php/833)

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[https://gdins.org/student-
services/library/](https://gdins.org/student-services/library/)

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48 12th Street East
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GDI Mission:

To promote the renewal and the development of Métis culture through research, materials development, collection and the distribution of those materials and the development and delivery of Métis-specific educational programs and services.



GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE
of Native Studies and Applied Research