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Pride Perseverance Possibilities



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

In this issue:

GDIT&E Clients
Awarded
Scholarships

Taking A Break is
Good for Your
Health

Christmas Break

Payroll Cutoff
Calendar

Highlights:

How to De-Stress
Christmas 1

ASETS Program
Extended 2

Sask Economy
Strong With Room
for Improvement 4

How to De-stress Christmas!

By Jim Edmondson

Christmas is typically one of the most stressful times of the year. The expense of buying gifts, the pressure of last minute shopping, and the heightened expectations of family togetherness can all combine to undermine our best intentions. Below are tips that could help you reduce 'Christmas stress'.

Making a list of what you need to do or where you are expected to go can allow you to concentrate on the important stuff instead of stressing over the small, insignificant stuff. Plan ahead, try to prioritize the items on your list: can they be done now, and are they essential? Do not overestimate how much you can achieve on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. With regards to the meals and dainties that seem to be everywhere at this time of year, any recipes can, at least in part, be made ahead of time and frozen thus reducing tasks in the immediate run-up to Christmas Day.

Budgeting for Christmas

For many of us, the Christmas aftermath includes massive credit card bills that can take months to clear. Christmas doesn't have to be a financial headache if you plan ahead. Stress reduction strategies include:

Work out a rough budget of expected Christmas costs as

early as possible. This includes 'hidden' expenses such as food bills and long distance telephone charges. Calculate how much disposable income you have between now and Christmas. A certain percentage of this can be dedicated each week (or pay period) to covering your expected Christmas costs. Don't be discouraged if the amount seems small. If you save \$5, \$10, or \$20 per week over a year, it can provide you with a hefty nest egg.

If your nest egg isn't enough to cover your estimated expenses, consider recalculating your Christmas budget to a more realistic amount. And, if you have trouble keeping your hands off your Christmas nest egg, then consider opening a 'Christmas Expense' account.

Christmas cards

Even though they are meant to bring good tidings and cheer, Christmas cards often cause us more stress and consternation than they should. There are the questions like; who do you send to, how soon do they go out, how much information to include. Remember that the cards are meant to be from the heart so only send to individuals that are important to you or family. Many

people receive and send lots of cards at Christmas time so to avoid the stress of last minute card stress, start in mid-November, if you can, and write a few cards and envelopes each day keeping them to one side before posting or delivering them in early December.

Presents

If you have a large circle of extended family or friends to buy gifts for, it can be very costly. You might be able to reduce the stress and cost of Christmas for everyone if you suggest a change in the way your family and friends give presents. For example, you could suggest that your group: buy presents only for the children; have a lottery system, where everyone draws a name out of a hat and buys a present only for that person; or set a limit on the cost of presents for each person.

Christmas shopping

According to recent studies, around 60 percent of Canadians do not like Christmas shopping, just 20 percent plan their shopping expeditions, and the majority of us (nearly 75 percent) often come home without a single purchase for our efforts.

To make the shopping less stressful, we suggest that you should consider doing the following:

Continued on Page 2.



Members, GDI Board of Governors

GDIT&E Clients Awarded Prestigious Scholarships

By Peggy Chartier and James Oloo



Glenn Lafleur, Vice Chair

One of the key goals of the Métis leaders and community members who birthed the vision for a Métis-owned and operated educational institution, namely, Gabriel Dumont Institute, was to create opportunities for Métis people to enable them get knowledge and skills they need for gainful employment. For over three decades, that vision is being realized, thanks to the community and stakeholder support, visionary leadership, and an exceptional workforce.

As a priority, the Institute leadership emphasizes the empowerment of our Métis clients to enable them

overcome multiple barriers and challenges they often face. To this end, a lot of effort has been made through partnerships, fundraising, and dedication of the Gabriel Dumont Scholarship Foundation (thanks to Laurie Bouvier and Amy Briley) to provide funding assistance to our clients.

This month we celebrate four GDI Training and Employment clients who have been named the 2014-2015 scholarship recipients in northern Saskatchewan. Lorraine Kenny, in the Educational Assistant program at Île-à-la-Crosse,

has received the Centennial Merit Scholarship worth \$3,500. Grade 12 Scholarships of \$1,000 each have been awarded to Randell McCallum (Welding program) and Justine Daigneault (Institutional Cooking) both of Buffalo Narrows.

The Northern Saskatchewan Student Achievement Award of \$500 has been awarded to Dorothy Herman. Dorothy is taking Institutional Cooking program in Buffalo Narrows. Of the four award/scholarship recipients, Lorraine Kenny is a client of GDI Training and Employment counselor Cassandra Morin; while Randell, Justine, and Dorothy are clients of Peggy Chartier. 🌐



Viola Bell

ASETS Program Extended

By Audrey Blondeau

Gabriel Dumont Institute Training & Employment (GDIT&E) has been offering programs and services to assist Saskatchewan's Métis looking to improve their educational and career outcomes since 2006 with the acquisition of the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) agreement. The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), the AHRDS successor program, was secured for 2010-2015 to continue providing skills and job training, employment based programming, and other supports to Saskatchewan's Métis.

On November 17, 2014, the Government of Canada announced a one-year extension of the ASETS program to March 31, 2016. This extension will ensure uninterrupted programming

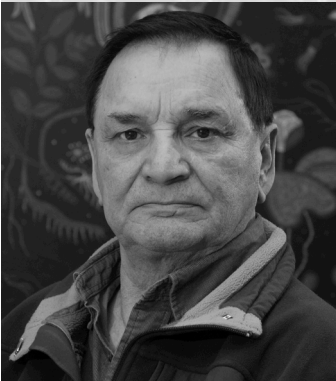
and services for our Métis clients, while also providing GDIT&E with stability while the Federal Government looks at opportunities to renew and improve Aboriginal labour market programming post-2016.

The ASETS agreements offer Aboriginal organizations across Canada, like GDIT&E, the flexibility to create programs that will best meet the needs of clients. Each agreement holder must show positive performance results while meeting accountability obligations including a strategic business plan, annual operating plans, annual reporting and financial audits, mid-year updates, and quarterly financial claims.

GDIT&E applied for this extension as part of the results based accountability that is integral to the ASETS agreements. Only current agreement holders were

eligible to apply for the extension and funding allocations will be the same for the 2015-2016 fiscal year as they were for the 2014-2015 year. All applications, including updated strategic business plans and annual operating plans, are due in January 2015, and GDIT&E anticipates signing the extension early next year.

Across the country, ASETS has supported meaningful employment for Aboriginal people and communities. GDIT&E has been very successful with delivering on the pillars of ASETS: demand-driven skills development, fostering partnerships, and emphasizing accountability and results. The effect of the ASETS agreement for Métis people in Saskatchewan is a point of pride for GDIT&E, and we look forward to consulting with the Government of Canada for improvements to the program when it is renewed post-2016. 🌐



Jimmy Durocher



Collette Robertson
Photos by P. Beszterda



Taking Breaks Boots Your Health and Productivity

By Jim Edmondson

With the onset of winter in Saskatchewan, our thoughts wander to exotic holidays or dreaming of getting away from the everyday stressors of our lives and jobs. One of the many benefits that Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) provides its staff is paid time off, vacation, 13 statutory holidays per year and time to be with family at Christmas which allows us to do just that, get away. Not taking advantage of the vacation time provided is a bad idea, as it harms your health, both physically and mentally, and has a detrimental effect on productivity at work. These are key findings of a study conducted in numerous U.S. and Canadian cities over the past three years.

A study by Oxford Economics titled *An Assessment of Paid Time Off* found that over 40 percent of North American workers who received paid time off did not take all of their allotted time during the year. North Americans left an average of 3.2 paid time off days unused in 2013, totaling 429 million unused days. This is despite the obvious personal benefits of taking the time off such as increased productivity, stronger workplace morale, greater employee retention and significant health benefits.

While most managers recognize the importance of

time off for their employees, nearly 34 percent of employees surveyed indicated that their employer neither encouraged nor discouraged employee leave of absence. This anomaly goes against what we practice at GDI. The Institute employees are not only encouraged to utilize their accrued vacation days but employees are only allowed to carry forward five accrued vacation days from one fiscal year to the next (please see GDI Vacation Leave and Vacation Allowance Policy #3.23.11).

In a survey conducted in 2011, four in ten North American workers said their employer supported time off, but their heavy workload kept them from using their earned days. Despite the myriad benefits of taking time off, North American workers succumb to various pressures - some self-imposed and some from their managers - to not take the time off to which they are entitled. It has been proven that not utilizing the vacation days accrued actually harms, not only the employee through poor health and morale but also the employers by creating a less productive and less loyal employees.

There is a common misconception that employers are ahead of the game when their employees don't use the time they've earned. In fact, studies have shown that

stockpiled time off creates considerable financial liability for organizations and governments when employees 'cash out' upon departure. The primary research for the study was based on an online survey conducted between September and October 2013. The sample included 971 employees, 700 of whom receive paid time off as part of their benefits package.

It's critical to understand that your brain works hard every day, regulating your breathing, controlling the heart rate, conducting the daily tasks of your job, and helping you shout answers at the TV while *Jeopardy* is on. Your brain gets as much out of a vacation as the rest of your body. A break or vacation, usually of more than a single day or weekend at a time will result in many recognizable benefits; some are listed below:

Lower stress levels

I don't have to tell you that taking time off from stressful work makes you feel less stressed. Gone are those knots in your stomach and neck, you don't yell at your wife or kids as much. You may have only suspected the corollary benefit, which is that your performance goes up after a period of no stress, like the surge of energy or performance that often occurs following that trip to Mexico or the spa. 🌐

Members, GDI Board of Governors



Jackie Kennedy



Kimberly Smith



Mavis Taylor
Photos by P. Beszterda

Christmas Break 2014

By James Oloo

2014 is coming to a close. The 2014 Christmas break dates as passed by the Gabriel Dumont Institute Board of Governors at the

March 26, 2014 meeting are from Wednesday, December 24, 2014 to Friday, January 2, 2015 (inclusive). The Institute will reopen on January 5, 2015.

Thank you for reading the GDI Communicator and giving us feedback this year. Very merry Christmas to you and your loved ones. 🌐



Sask Economy: Strong with Room for Improvement

By James Oloo



Lorraine Kenny

Statistics Canada released the country's employment numbers last month. Saskatchewan has the country's strongest rate of job creation with 15,300 more people working in the province last month compared to November 2013. That is an increase of 2.8% over the past year, the fastest growth rate in the country, compared to the national job growth rate of 0.9%.

Saskatchewan also posted Canada's lowest unemployment rate for the 24th straight month. The province's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.4% in November, compared to the national rate of 6.6%.

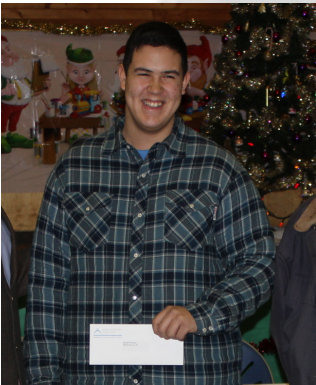
Employment growth was recorded in a number of sectors including construction (over 5,000 new jobs), and forestry, agriculture, mining, oil and gas added another 3,600 jobs from a year ago. These are sectors that have direct relation to the work of Gabriel Dumont Institute such as adult upgrading, apprenticeship, and skills training. The number of workers aged

25 years and over in Saskatchewan grew by 17,300 from a year ago, totaling 486,500. In general, youth unemployment in the province was also much lower than the overall Canadian number, with Saskatchewan recording 6.5% compared to the national rate of 13.5%. There were 81,100 workers in the 15-24 year age group, which is a decrease of 2,100 from the previous year. While it is not clear what proportion of the 2,100 15-24 year old workers who lost their jobs are Métis, this is an age group that could benefit from Gabriel Dumont Institute services.

According to the Government of Saskatchewan, there remains a strong demand for skilled labour in the province. An estimated 60,000 new jobs will be opening up in the province over the next six years. Form the province's employment trend; it is very likely that most of the new jobs will be in the trades sector. Therefore, Gabriel Dumont Institute will continue to play a key role in enhancing Aboriginal participation in the skilled trades.

However, with this growth in the province's economy are unique challenges. Not everyone in Saskatchewan has a reason to celebrate. Among Aboriginal population, for example, employment rate plateaued in its three-month average. As well, over 1,000 fewer First Nations people are employed.

As well, with the falling oil and commodity prices at the international markets, the current economic boom in our province may not last forever. It is therefore important that attention be paid to training programs such as adult upgrading, apprenticeships, and trade. In the near term, Saskatchewan will continue to attract newcomers from across Canada and other countries. However, having home grown talent that includes skilled Métis labour force is a smart public policy. To this end, the recently announced one-year extension of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) is an important step in enabling our Métis clients acquire the skills they need for gainful employment. 🌐



Randell McCallum



Justine Daigneault



Dorothy Herman
Photos Courtesy of
Peggy Chartier

Having a Stress-Free Christmas ... *continued from Page 1*

Make a list of all the gifts you wish to buy before you go shopping. If you wait for inspiration to strike, you could be wandering aimlessly around the shopping centre for hours. Perhaps you could get to know the interests of family and friends to help you when choosing gifts (remember money is also a great gift as it allows people to choose what they want).

Cross people off the list as you buy to avoid duplication. Also, it

is perhaps better to buy a few extras, such as chocolates, just in case you forget somebody or you have unexpected guests bearing gifts. If possible, do your Christmas shopping early – in the first week of December or even in November.

Some 'well-organized' people do their Christmas shopping gradually over the course of the year, starting with the post-Christmas sales. A growing trend includes shopping for gifts by mail catalogue or over the

Internet. Some companies will also gift-wrap and post your presents for a small additional fee.

Know When to Stop

Decide when you will stop your Christmas preparations and start to relax and enjoy the holiday. Work towards and try to stick to this goal, even if it is in the late afternoon on Christmas Eve. Remember that Christmas is your holiday too! Merry Christmas everyone! 🌐



Taking a Break is Good For You ... Continued from Page 2

Enhanced creativity

Time off that involves venturing to another locale, possibly out of town, province, or abroad; will often result in the added benefit of kick starting your creative juices. Travel outside the country is expensive and not everyone has the chance to do it, so travel to somewhere you have never been; take in cultural events, or just relax somewhere, it does not matter, the results can be achieved in numerous ways!

Improved memory

Dopamine is one of the “happy hormones” produced by the brain that plays a number of roles, but especially factors into learning. Dopamine is

released when we experience something new (as we often do during a vacation) and helps form memories. Having a better memory goes hand in hand with being sharp and having the ability to critically think, which will greatly benefit you in your home life and in the job.

Improved reaction time

A 2006 study out of New Zealand discovered that after a vacation, people had a 25 percent quicker reaction time in the brain, eyes, and muscles on average, and as much as an 80 percent improvement in some cases. And that was after a vacation that lasted as little as two or three days! The boost was attributed to the better-quality and longer-lasting

sleep that travelers get on vacation.

Better planning

In addition to allowing you more free time to work out, virtually every vacation involves exercise you wouldn't normally get, like carrying luggage, running to make a flight, walking around sightseeing, and more. And of course, the brain benefits of exercise are well-documented. Aerobic exercise strengthens your mind's ability to plan long-term, coordinate multiple tasks, and stay focused longer. So while relaxing on a beach for a week or going to the lake is good, mixing in a hike, bike ride, fishing, or golf outing is even better. 🌍



Lisa Wilson, Director of GDI Training & Employment with Geordy McCaffrey, GDI Executive Director, and Brett Vandale, Director of Dumont Technical Institute



Cory McDougall, Director of Finance & Operations
Photo by P.Beszterda

Payroll Cutoff Calendar, January 2015

By Carmala Thiessen and Veronica Verzonowski

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 New Year's Day Stat Holiday	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Cutoff @ 12:00 for Jan 9 Student Payroll	Cutoff @ 3:00 for Stop Payments on Student Jan 9 Direct Deposits		Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Student Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/P Invs – TMS & Payroll Revisions for Jan 15 Payday	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	Cutoff @ 4:30 for Jan 23 Student Payroll			Staff Payday Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		Cutoff @ 3:00 for Stop Payments on Student Jan 23 Direct Deposits		Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Student Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	Cutoff @ 4:30 for TMS & Payroll Revisions for Jan 30 Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for Feb 6 Student Payroll			Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Staff Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	

Employee contracts due prior to payroll cutoff date.



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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