

## EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (EPP)

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Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) created the Educational Partnership Program (EPP) with the intended outcome of the creation of meaningful and working education partnerships between First Nation Schools and Provincial School Divisions.

The program as set by INAC consists of three phases to be completed by March 31st, 2013:

- CONSULTATION – beginning discussions with potential partners
- ESTABLISHMENT – creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Saskatoon Tribal Council, Provincial Ministry of Education and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- ADVANCEMENT – development of local MOU's and/or letters of understanding between each First Nation community and local provincial school divisions

Through the consultation phase and initial discussion in the establishment phase, three themes emerged as areas that were incorporated in the creation of the Memorandum of Understanding. In order for the academic standing of First Nations students to improve and ultimately reflect the standings of non-First Nations students, consideration was given to:

- Student retention and transition
- Family and community support and involvement in education
- Curriculum and professional development

It was also noted that in order for the MOU to be considered both meaningful and effective, the educational standards must improve for First Nations students attending either First Nations or provincial schools.

## EPP MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING PREAMBLE

In preparation for the signing of the “Memorandum of Understanding for First Nation Education in the Saskatoon Tribal Council Catchment Area,” extensive consultations were held with each of the seven First Nation Communities along with the STC Education Advisory Committee. Discussions were also held with the directors of education in each of the seven provincial school divisions in the STC catchment area. The information gleaned from this process formed the basis for the MOU and began the process of developing new partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships.

Officials from AANDC and the provincial Ministry of Education were involved in the creation of the MOU given the direction from the STC communities and provincial school divisions.

As a direct result of the signing of the MOU there has been:

- A renewed interest and re-visioning of previously existing formal partnerships.
- Numerous discussions on strengthening less formalised partnerships.
- Preliminary discussions of forming partnerships where none existed.
- A growing interest in the province, as to the partnerships and numerous requests to present to: the Directors of the Provincial School Association, the Saskatchewan School Board Trustees’ Association and PAGC.
- Two presentations to First Nations organizations that are at the initial stages of EPP funding.
- Partnerships formed beyond the parameters of the MOU include the Office of The Treaty Commissioner and the
- Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit.
- A significant input of resources into each community to support the initiatives outlined in the MOU and ultimately assisting in the enhancement of quality educational opportunities for students.

## MOU SIGNING

The Advancement Phase commenced with the signing of the tri-partite MOU on October 14th, 2010 at Whitecap Dakota First Nation and was signed by:

- The Honorable John Duncan, Minister of Indian and Northern Development, Government of Canada.
- The Honorable Donna Harpauer, Ministry of Education, Government of Saskatchewan.
- Tribal Chief Felix Thomas, Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council.

The primary objective of the Memorandum of Understanding is to enhance education outcomes for First Nation students attending either First Nation or provincial schools and to provide non-First Nation students with a greater understanding of First Nations communities. The means through which the parties will pursue this objective is partnership arrangements between Saskatoon Tribal Council affiliated schools and proximate provincial school divisions.

Key focus areas are:

- Student Transition and Retention
- Family and Community Support/Involvement
- Professional and Resource Development

With the signing of the Partnership MOU at Whitecap Dakota First Nation on October, 14th, 2010 by The Honourable John Duncan, The Honourable Donna Harpauer and Tribal Chief Felix Thomas the parties agreed that:

- The primary objective of this Memorandum of Understanding is to enhance education outcomes for First Nation students attending either First Nation or provincial schools and to provide non-First Nation students In order for The Saskatoon Tribal Council to receive funding from INAC, under the Educational Partnership with a greater understanding of First Nations communities.

- The means through which the parties will pursue this objective is partnership arrangements between Saskatoon Tribal Council affiliated schools and proximate provincial school divisions.

Staffs at STC have been in constant contact with the Directors of Education and other staff at seven Provincial School Divisions in the STC catchment area. In addition to supporting and strengthening existing partnership, resources are devoted to the development of new partnerships between First Nation Communities and provincial School Divisions.

## CURRENT MOU INITIATIVES

With the implementation of EPP, two staff positions were created to support partnership work and initiatives. They include:

### **1. Community School Coordinator (CSC)**

Seven community school coordinators have been hired. Their primary role is to create, support and enhance relationships between homes and school. In addition they are to develop and support activities that will engage the First Nation community and the local provincial school/community as part of the life of the school.

### **2. Student Transition Worker**

Seven Student Transition Workers have been hired for schools. Their main role is to ensure that students attend school on a regular basis and that there is a smooth transition among educational institutions. The transition points would be between First Nation and provincial schools as well as to post-secondary institutions, and ultimately career opportunities.

### **3. Local History Project**

Through a partnership with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner the Local History Project involves collecting historical information from each member First Nation to be

part of Teaching Treaties in the Classroom kits available to all schools in Saskatchewan. These historical vignettes will create better awareness for non-First Nation students, and help with identity among the First Nation students. This project also builds on partnerships and relationships that existed during early times.

The project currently involves the Community School Coordinator, as well as a Community Resource Gatherer who facilitates historical research as well as conducting Elder interviews. A technical team (of senior students) will be created in each community to record and edit the material into a modern media format.

#### **4. Place-Based Learning Activities**

The Placed-Based Learning activities were designed to create linkages between the First Nation Schools and neighboring provincial schools. These linkages create a positive two way relationship that fosters smooth transition to the provincial school, as well as providing the provincial school with greater understanding of the First Nation School and community.

Examples of the Place-Based Activities range from interschool visits, combined social activities, sharing resources, and combined classroom projects.

### ESTABLISHED EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS:

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#### **1.) *OKICIIYAPI PARTNERSHIP* (Saskatoon Public Schools)**

Renewal Memorandum of Understanding Among

- Saskatoon Tribal Council
- Central Urban Métis Federation Incorporated
- Saskatoon Public Schools

On this 20 day of June, 2006, at Confederation Park Community School, Saskatoon, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Central Urban Métis Federation Incorporated and Saskatoon

Public Schools agree in principle to develop collaboratively the Okiciyapi Educational Partnership

This partnership will commence as of this date and will be a collaborative design, whereby First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education will be promoted, strengthened and facilitated through the development and implementation of enhanced services, programs and curricula. The partnership will extend beyond the boundaries of the Saskatoon city limits and will embrace the Saskatoon Tribal Council and its member First Nations: Kinistin Saulteaux Nation, Mistawasis First Nation, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, Muskoday First Nation, One Arrow First Nation, Whitecap Dakota First Nation, and Yellow Quill First Nation.

Saskatoon Tribal Council, Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. and Saskatoon Public Schools agree to the following:

- To acknowledge and honour the significance of Indigenous Knowledge as a vital component of the Okiciyapi Partnership, whereby Indigenous Knowledge will be valued and equated with mainstream teachings or universally.
- To recognize, support and ensure Treaty knowledge is honoured within the educational system to support healthy relations among all students.
- To create an equitable governance council to ensure that decision making is a shared process and representative of all stakeholders.
- To recognize and celebrate common interests and uniqueness.
- To enhance and to design an array of sustainable educational supports, programs and services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education from Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12.
- To develop an effective communication strategy.
- To ensure the Okiciyapi Partnership is based on respect, honesty and understanding.
- To explore and to develop a mechanism for shared services, information and resources among the partners.

- To address the issue of equity as it relates to both education and employment aspects.
- To collaboratively develop a procedure that will address the preservation, the promotion and the revitalization of culture and language for all First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.

## **2.) *mamawohkamatowin* PARTNERSHIP (Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools)**

Memorandum of Understanding Between:

- Saskatoon Tribal Council
- Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

On this fourth day of February, 2010, in Saskatoon, the Saskatoon Tribal Council and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools agree in principle to collaboratively develop an Education Partnership.

This partnership will be a collaborative design, whereby First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education will be promoted, strengthened, and facilitated through the development and implementation of enhanced services, programs, and curricula. The partnership will extend beyond the boundaries of the Saskatoon city limits and will embrace the Saskatoon Tribal Council and its member First Nations: Kinistin Saulteaux First Nation, Mistawasis First Nation, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, Muskoday First Nation, One Arrow First Nation, Whitecap Dakota First Nation, and Yellow Quill First Nation.

The Saskatoon Tribal Council and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools agree to the following:

- To recognize, support and ensure Treaty knowledge is honored within the educational system to support healthy relations among all students
- To create an equitable governance council, to ensure that decision making is a shared process and representative of all stakeholders
- To recognize and celebrate common interests and uniqueness including the role of spirituality within the respective communities.

- To enhance and to design an array of suitable educational supports, programs and services for First Nations, Métis and Inuit education from Pre-Kindergarten to grade 12
- To develop an effective communication strategy
- To ensure the Partnership is based on respect, honesty and understanding
- To explore and to develop a mechanism for shared services, information and resources between partners
- To address the issue of equity as it relates to both education and employment aspects
- To acknowledge and honor the significance of Indigenous Knowledge as a vital component of the partnership, whereby Indigenous Knowledge will be valued and equated with mainstream teachings or universality
- To collaboratively develop a procedure that will address the preservation, the promotion, and the revitalization of culture and languages for First Nations and Métis people