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## An Advisory For School Boards

# First Nations and Métis Education

## Module 11

Revised August 15, 2008

*Participate in this seminar to learn more about First Nations and Métis education. Module 11 workshop and resource materials include these important topics.*

- Enhancing awareness of First Nations and Métis cultures.
- Policy leadership for First Nations and Métis education.
- Challenges and success stories for educational equity and educational governance.

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# First Nations and Métis Education An Advisory for School Boards



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# Acknowledgements

**The Saskatchewan School Boards Association  
acknowledges with appreciation the following contributions:**

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# Introduction

## Introduction

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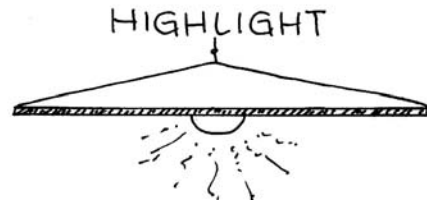
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# Chapter Highlights



## **Purpose of This Document**

This document was written for Saskatchewan school boards and their senior administrators. It raises issues, asks questions, and presents options for school boards to consider. It provides a range of approaches rather than definitive answers, because different approaches and solutions will be appropriate for different communities.

This revised edition of *First Nations and Métis Education* features data from the 2006 Census.

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## Purpose of This Document

*What questions do you have about the education of First Nations and Métis students?*

*What opportunities do you see for your school board to enhance education for these students?*

*What complexities are you dealing with regarding education of First Nations and Métis students?*

*First Nations and Métis Education: An Advisory for School Boards* was written for Saskatchewan school boards and senior administrators as they seek to answer questions such as those above and to strengthen education for First Nations and Métis students. It speaks directly to school board members and provides information and ideas that will help school boards develop policies to promote success for First Nations and Métis students and ensure that First Nations and Métis students have positive experiences of schooling.

This document is called an “advisory” because it raises issues, asks questions and presents options for school boards to consider. It is not intended to provide definitive answers or solutions, because in many cases there are no definitive answers. Rather, there is a range of approaches, each of which may work best within particular communities, situations or contexts.

This revised edition of *First Nations and Métis Education* has been updated to include data from the 2006 Census. The charts and narrative information in the chapter titled “First Nations and Métis People in Saskatchewan” is drawn from the 2006 Census.

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## The Context of First Nations and Métis Education

A variety of situations may exist within school divisions.

- Métis, non-status, and off-reserve First Nations students are living in the community and attending provincial schools. The home reserves of First Nations students may or may not be located within school division boundaries. This situation is typical of some Saskatchewan cities and large towns.
- There are one or more First Nation reserves within the boundaries of the school division and the parents of some students living on-reserve choose to send their youngsters to provincial schools.
- There are one or more First Nation reserves within the boundaries of the school division. The First Nation enters into a service agreement with the school board which specifies that the school division, for a fee, will provide educational services to the students that fall under the First Nation's jurisdiction.

The three situations described above are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes two or all three of these situations occur at the same time within a school division.

*In your school division which of the situations above predominate?*

*How does the situation vary from school to school, community to community?*

This advisory on First Nations and Métis education is designed to support school divisions in all three of the situations described previously. It presents background information and general principles. For advice and assistance with a particular situation, consult with the First Nations and Métis governments and organizations in your area, and/or with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

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## Definitions

Below are definitions of key terms used throughout this document.

**Aboriginal Peoples** – The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (now known as First Nations people), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2005).

**First Nations** – Refers to Indian bands and their peoples. This term acknowledges that Indian people were the First Nations in North America and had developed complex economic, political and social systems before contact with Europeans (Saskatchewan Learning, 2003).

**Inuit** – An Aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in the Northwest Territories, and in Northern Quebec and Labrador. The word means “people” in the Inuit language – Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk (Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations, n.d.).

**Métis** – Refers to Aboriginal people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis people, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree (Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations, n.d.).

## Useful Websites

For additional definitions go to:

- **Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations. *Glossary***  
[www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/glossary.htm](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/glossary.htm)
- **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. *Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada***  
[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index_e.html)
- **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. *Terminology***  
[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/tln\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/tln_e.html)

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## Organization of This Document

This introduction is followed by a description of basic principles that provide a foundation for school boards as they address First Nations and Métis education.

Next comes a section on the role of the school board which emphasizes that school boards are responsible for making the system-wide changes needed to ensure equitable success for First Nations and Métis students. This section also emphasizes the importance of a strategic approach to governance. With strategic governance, school boards focus on the “ends” they want to accomplish and the results they want to achieve.

Three sections describe the context of First Nations and Métis education in Saskatchewan. These sections provide demographic and statistical information about Saskatchewan’s First Nations and Métis population, a short historical overview, and a description of First Nations and Métis education, past and present.

A section on governance stresses that school boards and School Community Councils should be representative of the people they serve.

The final section on promoting student success describes actions that school boards can take to foster success for all students.

Each section ends with *School Boards Can ...* which offers suggestions for school board action and *To Think About/Talk About* which includes questions to stimulate thought and discussion.

This document concludes with a list of references that gives full bibliographic information for the studies and reports cited in the body of the document.

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## For More Information

This document provides basic information about First Nations and Métis education in Saskatchewan. It also provides links and suggests books for further reading.

To learn more about First Nations and Métis education attend a workshop organized by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. The Association regularly organizes face-to-face workshops for school board members across the province. Check the Association's website [www.saskschoolboards.ca](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca) for dates and locations of upcoming workshops.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association also delivers workshops to individual school boards upon request. These custom workshops can focus on First Nations and Métis education in general or provide detailed information about specific topics or issues. Contact the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (306-569-0750) for more details.

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# Basic Principles

## Basic Principles

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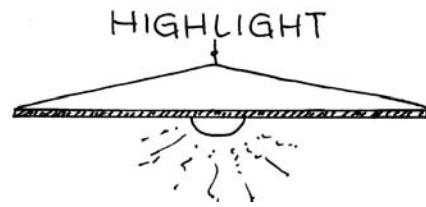
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# Chapter Highlights



## Basic Principles

Three principles provide a foundation for school boards as they address First Nations and Métis education.

**Success for all students** – Saskatchewan school boards are committed to quality education and success for all students. Success means that school attendance rates, school marks, high school graduation rates, and rate of participation in post-secondary education for First Nations and Métis students are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal students.

Implementing changes to ensure that First Nations and Métis students achieve at high levels and graduate from Grade 12 is the right thing to do.

**The value of First Nations and Métis ways** – School boards and school systems can learn from and adopt traditional First Nations and Métis ways that have the potential to promote school and life success for children and youth.

**The importance of relationships** – It is important that school boards establish and nurture relationships with First Nations and Métis governments and organizations. Schools boards should be making decisions in concert with First Nations and Métis people – not taking action on their behalf.

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## Success for All Students

*Why should Saskatchewan school boards care about First Nations and Métis education?*

*Why should First Nations and Métis students be a focus for school board discussion and action?*

First Nations and Métis students are a high priority for school boards because **Saskatchewan school boards are committed to quality education for all students – to success for all students**. School boards want all students to attend school regularly, to benefit from their schooling, to achieve at high levels, and to graduate from Grade 12 with the knowledge and skills needed to enter post-secondary education or to participate successfully in the labour force.

Presently, these goals are not being achieved in many school divisions in Saskatchewan. Only a proportion of students are achieving at high levels and graduating from Grade 12, and all too often it is First Nations and Métis students who are not receiving maximum benefit from their education.

First Nations and Métis students will be receiving maximum benefit from their education when their school attendance rates, school marks, high school graduation rates, and rate of participation in post-secondary education are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal students. School boards can measure their progress toward these indicators of success by collecting data regularly and systematically, and by asking themselves “How are we doing?”

School boards should be concerned about First Nations and Métis education because **higher levels of education usually mean a better quality of life for individuals and families**. Education opens many doors. It improves the quality of everyday life. It gives people the literacy and numeracy skills needed for everyday tasks such as managing a household budget, reading instruction manuals, filling out income tax forms, and reading maps.

Education gives people choices and a greater sense of control over their lives. Higher levels of education often mean more income and a greater range of job and lifestyle choices.

School boards should be concerned about First Nations and Métis education because **education better equips people to participate in democratic processes** in their town, city, rural municipality or First Nation. It helps voters ask sharp questions, understand the issues and make informed decisions. It gives candidates the skills necessary to mount an effective campaign.

School boards should be concerned about First Nations and Métis education because **education is the key to employment and job success**. Today most jobs require computer skills and Grade 12 graduation, and many jobs require post-secondary education or skills training. You need an education to get a job. Most unskilled jobs are in the hospitality industry and retail sector where the pay is low and the hours irregular. The number of high-paying unskilled and manual labour jobs is rapidly declining. Higher levels of education mean more potential for employment in a satisfying, well-paying job.

School boards should be concerned about First Nations and Métis education because **full employment is essential to create a strong and prosperous province**. Saskatchewan is now facing a labour shortage. This shortage is evident now in the skilled trades and will expand to many areas of the economy in the next 10 to 15 years as the baby boomers retire. A general labour shortage in the years ahead will have disastrous consequences for Saskatchewan. It will stunt the province's economic growth, limit its prosperity and hinder its ability to compete with the rest of Canada and the world. It will mean that Saskatchewan citizens cannot get the goods and services they want and need to maintain quality of life.

The best way to address Saskatchewan's upcoming labour shortage is to increase the educational levels of First Nations and Métis citizens and thus better equip them to participate in the labour market.

**School boards should be concerned about First Nations and Métis education because it is the right thing to do.** School boards are committed to public education which means quality education and success for all students, not just a select few.

### ***Online Publications***

***Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future: A Policy Framework.*** (1997).  
Saskatchewan Learning.

A policy framework for education equity in Saskatchewan that has been endorsed by all of Saskatchewan's partners in education.

([www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/equity/](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/equity/))

***Education and Lifetime Income for Aboriginal People in Saskatchewan.*** (2002).  
Eric Howe. University of Saskatchewan.

A statistical analysis of the impact that various levels of education have on the lifetime income of Aboriginal people.

([www.arts.usask.ca/economics/faculty/papers/Howe\\_dp\\_2002\\_1.pdf](http://www.arts.usask.ca/economics/faculty/papers/Howe_dp_2002_1.pdf))

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## The Value of First Nations and Métis Ways

For thousands of years before the Europeans arrived in North America, First Nations people had social and educational systems that equipped young people with the skills and values they needed to be productive, contributing members of society. However, when Europeans arrived they imposed their social systems, educational systems and values on First Nations people, usually with disastrous results.

The time has come to ask, **“What can we learn from traditional First Nations and Métis ways of doing things?”** Although traditional First Nations and Métis approaches to education and to life may be different from European approaches, they are no less valuable or effective. Since European approaches, for the most part, have not worked for First Nations people, it is appropriate to learn from and adopt traditional ways that have potential to promote both school and life success for children and youth.

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## The Importance of Relationships

In our society we are all interdependent and rely on each other for everything that makes life worthwhile. Strong relationships are central to a strong society. **It is important that school boards establish and nurture relationships with local First Nations and Métis governments and organizations.**

Strong relationships which endure over time help build trust between school boards and local First Nations governments and organizations. Trust enables the partners to work out problems that may arise in a spirit of collaboration and good will. It facilitates new initiatives where the goals may be clear, but the road to achieving the goals unknown. Trust fosters open and honest communications.

It is also important that school boards encourage school principals and other staff to do the same. As well as forming relationships with First Nations and Métis governments and organizations, it is vital that school principals and teachers form relationships with their students' families and find ways to engage parents and other family members in children's schooling. Strong, ongoing relationships provide a focus for consultation, joint decision making, and shared responsibility for the education of children and youth.

School boards should be making decisions in concert with First Nations and Métis people, not making decisions or taking action on their behalf.

Relationships can be both formal and informal. A formal relationship involves defined processes to ensure that First Nations and Métis perspectives are reflected in school board deliberations and decision making (see the Governance section of this document). Informal relationships mean being able to call each other spontaneously on the phone or go for coffee to share ideas and talk about possibilities.

**Both formal and informal relationships are facilitated by:**

- **Open, honest communication** – No closed-door discussions, no hidden agendas, no secret deals – truly listening to each other with understanding rather than judgement.
- **Honesty** – Trust grows when the partners do what they say they will and communicate openly and honestly.
- **Sharing** – Sharing of goals and dreams for the future – sharing of ideas for achieving a bright tomorrow for all children.
- **Teamwork** – Creating situations where the school board and its First Nations and Métis partners work together as equals on a team for the benefit of children.
- **Finding common ground** – Physical common ground means meeting in places that are neutral, for example, a school or restaurant rather than the school board or band council office; intellectual common ground means identifying shared beliefs, values, goals and dreams and using these as a basis for discussion, decision making and action.
- **Appreciation of cultural differences** – First Nations, Métis and European people have different views of the world and different ways of doing things. Respecting that each approach has value is central to a strong relationship.
- **Appreciation of linguistic differences** – Translation services when needed – recognition that pacing of speech, acceptability of interruptions, and the meaning of silence may differ among people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

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# School Boards Can ...

*In order to create a strong foundation for Indian and Métis education, school boards can:*

***Learn more about traditional First Nations and Métis ways of doing things,*** particularly traditional approaches to interpersonal relationships and education.

***Develop processes to learn about the hopes and dreams*** that First Nations and Métis people have for their children and their future. These processes will always start with listening and understanding, rather than telling.

***Organize inservice sessions*** to help board members increase their understanding of and appreciation for local First Nations and Métis history, culture, governance, and perspectives. These sessions can be led or facilitated by local First Nations and Métis people.

***Model the approaches they expect of the director of education, principals and other school staff.*** School boards can establish relationships and create partnerships with First Nations and Métis governments and organizations in their area. They can consult on relevant matters and organize joint projects or programs. When school boards undertake actions such as these they serve as role models for school principals, teachers and others in the education system.

***Provide recognition*** for schools whose actions and activities are consistent with the board's philosophy. For example, if the board expects schools to establish relationships and create partnerships with local First Nations and Métis organizations, the board can monitor this aspect of school operations and provide recognition for appropriate relationships and partnerships.

***Organize ceremonies to celebrate significant events or achievements*** such as a highly successful school project, the signing of a partnership or governance agreement, or the beginning of a new program.

***Attend First Nations and Métis community events.*** For example, most pow-wows are open to the public and everyone is welcome.

***Learn more about all the topics addressed in this advisory*** by attending a Saskatchewan School Boards Association workshop on First Nations and Métis education. Check the Association's website ([www.saskschoolboards.ca](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca)) for dates and locations.

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## To Think About/Talk About



1. *Why should your school board be concerned about First Nations and Métis education?*
  
2. *How can your school board learn more about traditional First Nations and Métis customs, perspectives, and ways of doing things?*
  
3. *What relationships and partnerships has your board created with First Nations and Métis governments and other organizations?*
  - *What can you do to strengthen and enhance the relationships you already have?*
  - *What can you do to create new relationships?*
  
4. *What can your board as a whole and individual members do to talk less and listen more when working with the community in general and First Nations and Métis people in particular?*
  
5. *How many First Nations and Métis community events have school board members attended in the last year? What can you do to increase the number and types of First Nations and Métis community events that board members attend?*

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# The Role of the School Board

## The Role of the School Board

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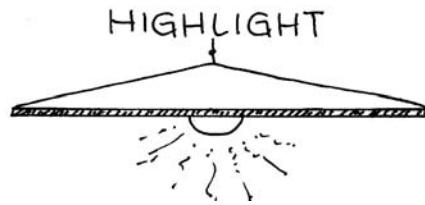
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# Chapter Highlights



## **The Role of the School Board**

School boards are responsible for education in the school divisions they govern, and it is up to school boards to implement changes so First Nations and Métis students will benefit from their schooling. The extent to which school boards are able to facilitate the success of First Nations and Métis and involve First Nations and Métis families will be the measure of their success in the years ahead.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association encourages and supports school boards to pursue a strategic approach to governance – to focus on the ends they want to achieve and to leave the means to achieving those ends to the director of education and other staff.

It is important that the school board establish systems to collect data about key indicators of student success. Accurate data allows the board to determine if existing programs are effective and to make decisions on the basis of evidence.

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## The School Board's Responsibilities

School boards are responsible for education in the school divisions they govern. School boards serve the citizens of the division and are accountable to those same citizens. First Nations and Métis people are among the citizens served in every school division in Saskatchewan. School boards are responsible and accountable to these citizens just as they are to other groups of citizens in the division. It is up to school boards to make the system-wide changes needed so that First Nations and Métis students are well served by the school system.

The goal for every school board is equity of outcomes for all students. Equity means that the school attendance rates of First Nations and Métis students, their school marks, high school graduation rates, and rates of participation in post-secondary education are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal students.

**The extent to which school boards are able to facilitate success for First Nations and Métis students and involve First Nations and Métis families will be the measure of their success in the years ahead.**

### ***Online Publications***

***Racial Incidents: Policy Development Guidelines.*** (1992). Lorraine Thompson. Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

Describes the importance of having school board policy to address racial incidents and outlines a process that can be used to develop such a policy.

([www.saskschoolboards.ca/research/education\\_equity/92-05.htm](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/research/education_equity/92-05.htm))

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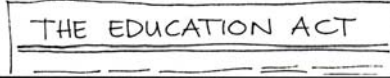
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## The Legal Role of the School Board

The school board's role is to provide direction and supervision for the education program of the school division it oversees.

School boards are responsible for specific aspects of the education program as defined in *The Education Act, 1995* (see the box on the right).

School boards have a responsibility to create an environment within the division that facilitates teaching and learning. They have a responsibility to “administer and manage the educational affairs of the school division” in a manner that promotes success for all students and makes schooling a productive and positive experience for all students.



THE EDUCATION ACT

### ***The Education Act, 1995***

#### **Duties of the board of education**

85(1) ... a board of education shall:

- (a) administer and manage the educational affairs of the school division in accordance with the intent of this Act and the regulations;
- (b) exercise general supervision and control over the schools in the school division and make any bylaws with respect to school management that may be considered necessary for effective and efficient operation of the schools;

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## Strategic Governance

Throughout this document ideas are presented for actions that school boards can undertake to promote the success of First Nations and Métis students. These ideas are presented within the context of strategic governance.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association encourages and supports school boards to pursue a strategic approach to governance.

With strategic governance, the school board focuses on the “ends” it wants to achieve, the goals it wants to attain and the results it wants to see. The “means” to achieve these ends are the responsibility of the director of education and other staff. Within the policy framework created by the board, the director of education has broad freedom to determine the means for achieving the ends identified by the board. The board monitors and holds the director of education accountable for compliance with board policy (McDonough, 2002).

In a strategic governance approach, the board directs its efforts to turning its values and vision into reality. It engages the community to ensure the board’s work reflects the community’s values.

An effective strategic governance board:

- Develops and articulates vision and goals
- Aligns resources to attain the goals
- Adopts policies to support achievement of the goals
- Establishes an accountability framework that measures progress toward goal achievement, and
- Builds an effective governance team (McDonough, 2002)

The strategic governance approach contrasts with the traditional approach in which school boards govern with a high degree of hands-on involvement in the day-to-day management of the school division.

School boards are moving to a strategic approach to governance because the traditional hands-on approach has many limitations. It can result in unclear channels of communication, ambiguous decisions, inconsistent treatment of staff and students, and governance by intuition rather than in accordance with established, clearly defined principles and policies (Renihan, 1991). Moreover, the traditional hands-on approach is simply not practical or possible with today’s large school divisions.

## ***Useful Websites***

For **information** about **upcoming seminars on the strategic governance approach** check the website of the **Saskatchewan School Boards Association** ([www.saskschoolboards.ca](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca)). In addition to scheduled workshops the Saskatchewan School Board's Association will custom design workshops upon request from individual school boards.

## ***Online Publications***

***A Pathway to Effective Board Policy Development.*** (2002). Ken McDonough. Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

Describes the strategic governance approach to school board operations and offers suggestions for ways that boards can move from traditional policy models to the strategic governance approach.

([www.saskschoolboards.ca/research/governance/02-09.htm](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/research/governance/02-09.htm))

***Policy Leadership.*** (1999). Loraine Thompson. Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

Describes processes by which school boards can effectively develop, implement and monitor a strategic approach to governance.

([www.saskschoolboards.ca/research/governance/99-09.htm](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/research/governance/99-09.htm))

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## Data Collection

School boards will know that they have facilitated success for First Nations and Métis students when the school attendance rates of First Nations students, along with their school marks, high school graduation rates, and rates of participation are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal students.

In order to assess progress, it is important that school boards set up systems to regularly collect data on each of these important indicators. Regular data collection also allows school boards to make decisions about budget allocations and programming on the basis of evidence rather than intuition or hearsay. In short, regular data collection tells the board whether existing programs are effective in moving the school division toward the goal of success for all students, or whether new directions are needed.

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# School Boards Can ...

*In order to promote success for First Nations and Métis students within a strategic governance framework, school boards can:*

**Identify** success for all students as a strongly held value and a goal of the board.

**Develop policies** that describe, support and reinforce the board's vision of success for all students.

**Identify and implement system-wide changes** that will enhance education for First Nations and Métis students and strengthen outcomes for these students.

**Allocate resources** to support the board's policies. Resources often mean dollars and staff, but can also include use of facilities, transportation, access to inservice training and the like.

**Monitor progress** to ensure that policies which describe, support and reinforce the board's vision of success for all students are being implemented. It is the director of education's responsibility to implement these policies, therefore, boards will need to request specific types of information from the director to ensure that policies are being implemented as intended.

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## To Think About/Talk About



1. *How can your board identify system-wide changes that are needed to promote success for all students?*
2. *What values statements, goals statements and policies has your board created to support success for all students?*
3. *What is your board doing to monitor the actualization of values and goals statements and the implementation of policies relating to student success?*
4. *What is your board doing to recognize schools that have been effective in promoting success for all students?*
5. *What data do you collect now about key indicators of student success? What data do you need to collect?*

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# First Nations and Métis People in Saskatchewan

## First Nations and Métis People in Saskatchewan

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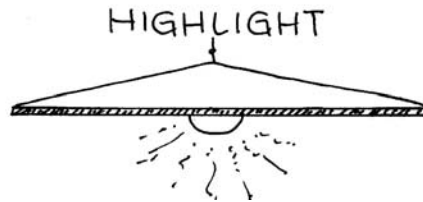
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## Chapter Highlights



### First Nations and Métis Demographics

**Population** – First Nations and Métis people make up an increasingly large proportion of the Saskatchewan population. In 2006, First Nations and Métis people represented 14.88 percent of Saskatchewan's total population. Almost one-third of Saskatchewan youngsters under the age of five are of First Nations and Métis ancestry, and this proportion is projected to increase in the years ahead.

**Education** – The First Nations and Métis population as a whole has lower levels of educational attainment than the general population. For example, among people aged 25-34 the proportion of Aboriginal people who have no type of certificate, degree or diploma is almost three times greater than the proportion of non-Aboriginal people.

**Employment** – Overall, the employment picture is bleaker for First Nations and Métis people than for the population as a whole. However, Saskatchewan's recent economic boom has benefited First Nations and Métis people more than the general population. For example, between 2001 and 2006, the employment rate of the general population increased by about 1.7 percent, but among First Nations and Métis people, it increased by almost 10 percent.

**Housing** – Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis population lives under much more crowded housing conditions than the non-Aboriginal population. In addition, a much larger proportion of the First Nations population lives in homes that need major repairs.

Note: All of the statistics in this chapter come from the 2006 Census, therefore, the terminology used reflects Census terminology. The term "Aboriginal" includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and people who identify with two or more of these groups. The terms "First Nations", "Métis" and "Inuit" refer specifically to people who identify specifically with each of these groups.

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## The First Nations and Métis Population

First Nations and Métis people make up an increasingly large proportion of Saskatchewan's population.

- Between 2001 and 2006, Saskatchewan's First Nations population increased by 9.14 percent and the Métis population increased by 10.12 percent. In contrast, the non-Aboriginal population declined by 2.52 percent (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Saskatchewan, Census Population by Aboriginal Identity, 2006 and 2001**

	2006	2001	% Change
First Nations	91,400	83,745	9.14%
Métis	48,115	43,695	10.12%
Inuit	215	235	-8.51%
Other Aboriginal*	2,155	2,515	-14.31%
Non-Aboriginal	811,960	832,960	-2.52%
Total	953,850	963,155	-0.97%

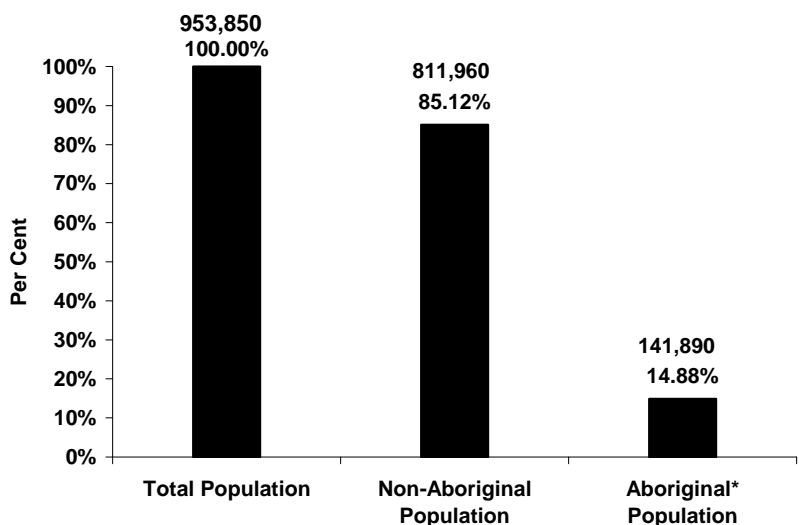
\* Includes multiple response and Aboriginal responses not included elsewhere.

Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2008a (based on 2006 Census).

- In 2006, Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population (which includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit people) represented 14.88 percent of the population (Figure 2).
- Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis population has been increasing for at least the last 25 years. It is projected that by 2025, First Nations and Métis people will make up 20.5 percent of the total Saskatchewan population (Elliott, 2004).

**Figure 2: Saskatchewan, Percentage Aboriginal\* and Non-Aboriginal Population, 2006**



\* Includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and people who identify with two or more of these groups.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2008a.

## ***Useful Websites***

The **Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics** ([www.stats.gov.sk.ca](http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca)) provides up-to-date statistical information on Saskatchewan's population.

- For specific information about the **First Nations and Métis population** go to [www.stats.gov.sk.ca/pop/2006%20Census%20Aboriginal%20Peoples.pdf](http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/pop/2006%20Census%20Aboriginal%20Peoples.pdf).

**Statistics Canada** ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)) conducts a **Canada-wide Census** every five years and makes the results available on its website.

- The ***Community Profiles*** series allows you to search every community in Canada that has a population of over 250 people. The information displayed includes the Aboriginal population of that community.  
<http://www12.statcan.ca/English/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E>
- The ***Aboriginal Population Profile*** allows you to search by community and provides detailed information on the Aboriginal population of that community including age, marital status, housing conditions, language knowledge, frequency of household moves, employment status, income, educational attainment and other information.  
<http://www12.statcan.ca/English/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E>

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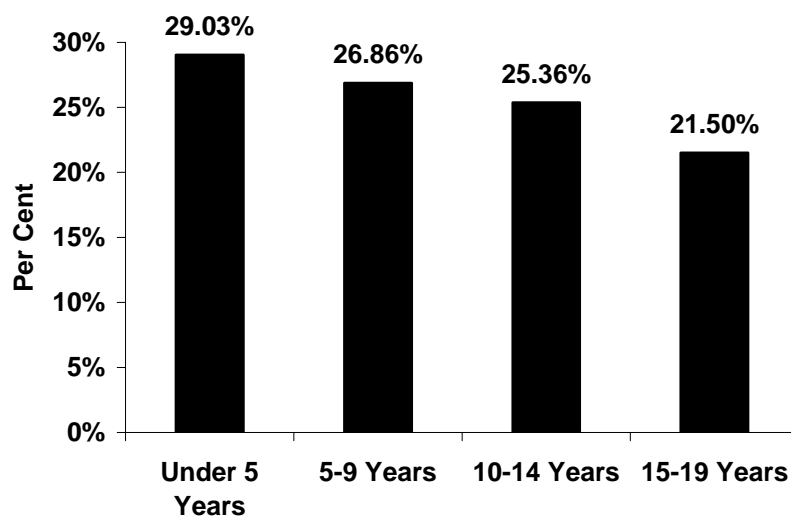
## The Student Population

**A significant and increasing percentage of children in Saskatchewan schools are of Aboriginal ancestry (including First Nations, Métis and Inuit people).**

- Aboriginal people (including First Nations, Métis and Inuit) make up 14.88 percent of Saskatchewan's total population, but they make up a much larger percentage of the preschool and school-age population. As illustrated in Figure 3, Aboriginal children represent:

- 29.03 percent of Saskatchewan children under the age of five
- 26.86 percent of Saskatchewan children aged five to nine
- 25.36 percent of Saskatchewan children aged 10-14 years
- 21.50 percent of Saskatchewan youth aged 15 to 19.

**Figure 3: Saskatchewan, Percentage of Preschool and School-Age Population that is Aboriginal\*, 2006**



\* Includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and people who identify with two or more of these groups.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2008a.

- Aboriginal children (which includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit children) are not evenly distributed across the province or evenly distributed within school divisions. Some schools and school divisions have a high Aboriginal population, and some have a low Aboriginal population. For example, in 2006, the percentage of children and youth aged 0 to 19 who were Aboriginal was:
  - 50.79 percent in Prince Albert
  - 34.09 percent in North Battleford
  - 2.83 percent in Swift Current (Statistics Canada, 2008a).

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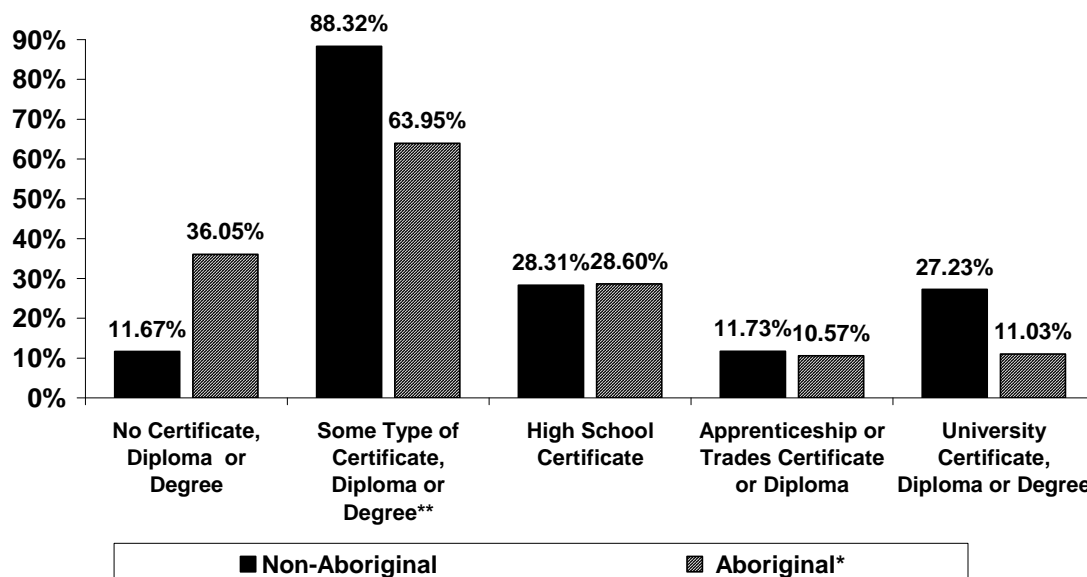
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## Educational Achievement

**First Nations and Métis students have not been well served by public education in the past.** Dropout rates are higher, and achievement levels are lower among First Nations and Métis students than among the non-Aboriginal student population.

- The causes of lower levels of educational achievement among First Nations and Métis people are complex. The poverty, discrimination and general socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by many First Nations and Métis people are significant factors. However, some of the responsibility rests with the school system. In the past, most schools were excessively Eurocentric and unwelcoming to First Nations and Métis students. Many First Nations and Métis students experienced rejection and failure at school and so were turned off at an early age.
- **Figure 4 illustrates the highest certificate diploma or degree achieved by the Saskatchewan population aged 25-34 in 2006. It shows that:**
  - The proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25-34 without a certificate, diploma or degree was 36.05 percent, almost triple the proportion of non-Aboriginal people at 11.67 percent.
  - The proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of this age group who have a high school certificate or an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma was approximately equal.

**Figure 4: Saskatchewan Population, Aged 25-34 Years, Highest Certificate, Diploma, or Degree, 2006**



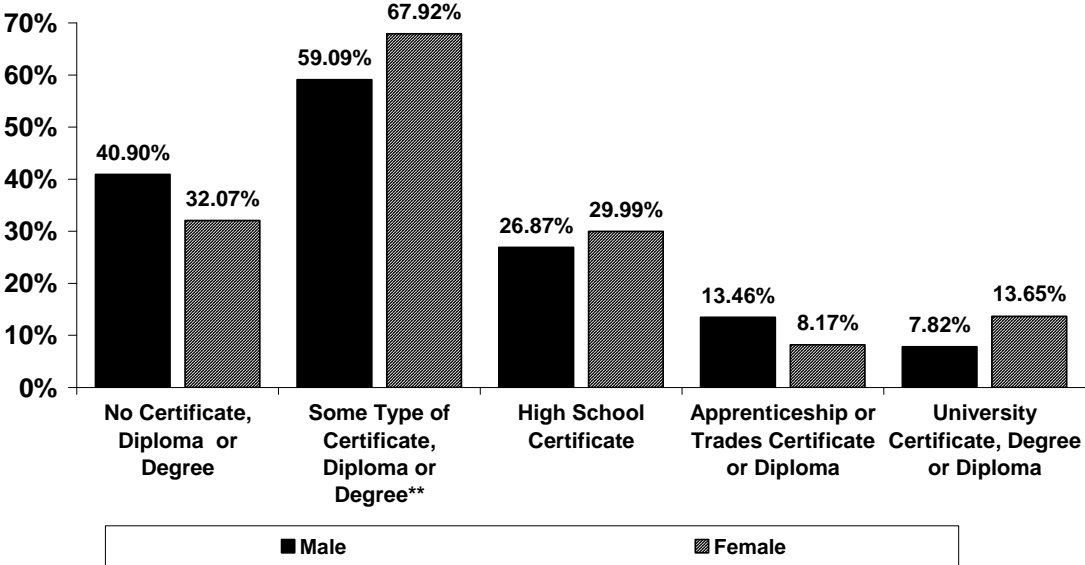
\* Includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and people who identify with two or more of these groups.

\*\* Includes all types of certificates, diplomas and degrees – the three types illustrated in this graph, plus other types of credentials

Source: Statistics Canada, 2008b.

- The proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25-34 (11.03 percent) who attained a university degree or diploma was lower than the proportion of non-Aboriginal people (27.23 percent).
- Aboriginal youth who participated in the 2001\* Census were asked about their reasons for dropping out of school. The main reason given by male youth was boredom. Among female youth, the main reason for dropping out of school was pregnancy or looking after children. (Siggner & Costa, 2005) (\* Note: This information comes from the 2001 Census. Comparable information from the 2006 Census is not yet available.)

**Figure 5: Saskatchewan Aboriginal\* Population, Aged 25-34 Years, Male and Female, Highest Certificate, Diploma, or Degree, 2006**



\* Includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and people who identify with two or more of these groups.  
 \*\* Includes all types of certificates, diplomas and degrees – the three types illustrated in this graph, plus other types of credentials.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2008b.

- In general, Aboriginal women aged 24-35 have higher levels of educational attainment than men (Figure 5). For example, the percentage of women who achieve a high school diploma or a university degree is higher than the percentage of men. The only exception is attainment of an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma where men predominate.

**Useful Websites**

For information about **First Nations and Métis post-secondary educational institutions** in Saskatchewan go to SaskNetWork <http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/html/Learners/educationtraining/aboriginalinstitutions.htm>

## The Employment Picture

The employment picture is much bleaker for First Nations and Métis people than for non-Aboriginal people.

- In 2006, 49.0 percent of Saskatchewan's First Nations population and 68.2 percent of Saskatchewan's Métis population participated in the labour force. This compares to a labour force participation rate of 70.1 percent for the non-Aboriginal population (Figure 6).
- In the same year (2006), the unemployment rate for the First Nations population was 24.9 percent compared to 10.6 percent for the Métis population and 4.2 percent for the non-Aboriginal population (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Saskatchewan Population, 15 Years and Over, Labour Force Characteristics, 2006 and 2001**

	2006	2001	% Change
<b>Participation Rate</b>			
Total Population	68.4%	67.8%	0.9%
Total Aboriginal*	56.4%	54.5%	3.5%
First Nations	49.0%	46.9%	4.5%
Métis	68.2%	67.4%	1.2%
Non-Aboriginal	70.1%	69.3%	1.2%
<b>Employment Rate</b>			
Total Population	64.6%	63.5%	1.7%
Total Aboriginal*	46.1%	42.0%	9.8%
First Nations	36.8%	33.1%	11.2%
Métis	61.0%	56.9%	7.2%
Non-Aboriginal	67.1%	66.0%	1.7%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>			
Total Population	5.6%	6.3%	-11.1%
Total Aboriginal*	18.2%	23.0%	-20.9%
First Nations	24.9%	29.4%	-15.3%
Métis	10.6%	15.5%	-31.6%
Non-Aboriginal	4.2%	4.8%	-12.5%

\* Includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit and people who identify with two or more of these groups.

Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2008b (based on 2006 Census).



- Saskatchewan's employment picture improved for all workers between 2001 and 2006, but the employment picture improved more for the Aboriginal population than for the general population. For example, between 2001 and 2006:
  - The labour force participation rate increased by 0.9 percent for the total population and by 3.5 percent for the Aboriginal population.
  - The employment rate increased by 1.7 percent for the total population and by 9.8 percent for the Aboriginal population.
  - The unemployment rate decreased by 11.1 percent for the total population and by 20.9 percent for the Aboriginal population.

### ***Useful Websites***

- **Participation in SIAST Programs by Equity Groups** – Each year the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology reports on the number and percentage of Aboriginal students in each of its programs.  
Go to [www.siastr.sk.ca/departments/ira/rp1.html](http://www.siastr.sk.ca/departments/ira/rp1.html) and click on the most recent edition of this table.
- **SIAST Graduate Employment Survey** – Each year the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology reports on the most recent graduating class's employment status. This report is broken down into categories including Aboriginal, disabled, visible minority, male and female.  
Go to [www.siastr.sk.ca/departments/ira/rp1.html](http://www.siastr.sk.ca/departments/ira/rp1.html) and click on the most recent edition of this report.

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## Housing

**Saskatchewan’s First Nations and Métis population lives under more crowded housing conditions than does the non-Aboriginal population** (Figure 7).

- Among the non-Aboriginal population slightly more than 1 percent of people live in dwelling units where there is more than one person per room. In comparison, among First Nations people almost 26 percent live in dwelling units where there is more than one person per room. The comparable figure for Métis people is about 6 percent.

**Figure 7: Saskatchewan Population, Number of People Per Room\*\*, 2006**

	<b>1 Person or Fewer Per Room</b>	<b>1.01 to 1.49 Persons Per Room</b>	<b>1.50 Persons or More Per Room</b>
Non-Aboriginal	98.95%	0.68%	0.37%
Total Aboriginal*	80.81%	11.57%	7.62%
First Nation	74.02%	15.25%	10.74%
Métis	93.66%	4.56%	1.77%

\* Includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit and people who identify with two or more of these groups.

\*\* Rooms refers to all rooms within a dwelling, excluding bathrooms, halls, vestibules and rooms used solely for business purposes.

Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2008c (based on *2006 Census*).

**Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal population lives in lower quality housing than the non-Aboriginal population.**

- “In 2006, 58.36 percent of the dwellings occupied by individuals self-identifying as non-Aboriginal in Saskatchewan required only regular maintenance. For First Nations individuals living on reserves, this number was 16.23 percent.” (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2008a)

While only 8.51 percent of the dwellings of non-Aboriginal people required major repairs, 53.72 percent of the dwellings of on-reserve First Nations people were in that category. (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2008a)

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# School Boards Can ...

*In order to create policies and set goals appropriate for the entire student population, school boards can:*

***Collect accurate information*** about the First Nations and Métis people in the school division. Boards will be interested in the proportion of First Nations and Métis students in the division and in comprehensive demographic information about the total population living within the school division's boundaries.

***Develop policies and programs*** to address the educational inequities experienced by First Nations and Métis students.

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## To Think About/Talk About



1. *Consider the demographic information in this section. What implications do these demographics have for Saskatchewan's education system? What implications do they have for your school division?*
2. *Consider your school division. What is the proportion of First Nations and Métis students in each of the schools in your division?*
3. *What do you know about the First Nations and Métis students in your division? For example, what is their graduation rate compared to students in general? How many First Nations students live on-reserve and off-reserve?*
4. *During the 2001 Census, male Aboriginal youth said their main reason for dropping out of school was boredom. Female youth said their main reason for dropping out was pregnancy or looking after children. How can your school division respond to these issues?*

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# The Historical Context

## The Historical Context

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# Chapter Highlights



## The Historical Context

The First Nations and Métis peoples are two of Saskatchewan's original peoples.

Before contact with Europeans, Saskatchewan's First Nations were autonomous societies, each with their own political, social and economic systems. During the early years of European contact, the Europeans and the First Nations peoples approached each other as equals and both benefited. Later, however, Europeans imposed their social, political and economic systems on the First Nations and restricted them to reserves in order to make room for settlers. Between 1871 and 1906, seven Treaties were signed in Saskatchewan between the government of Canada and the First Nations. The Treaties are formal agreements that provide each party with benefits and impose conditions on each party. In recent years, the First Nations people have focused on self-government which means controlling, within the context of the *Canadian Constitution*, the institutions that affect their lives such as educational, justice and health systems.

The Métis are the children of First Nations mothers and European fathers and are a distinct nation with their own culture, traditions and language. In the early years, the Métis were involved in the fur trade as trappers, middlemen and traders. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century they had become major players in the buffalo hunt and also transported furs and hides across the prairies in vast caravans of Red River carts. The period 1870-1884 saw the influx of many Métis from Manitoba and the issuing of scrip by the Canadian government. Scrip was a certificate redeemable for land or money and was intended to extinguish Métis land rights. However, most of the scrip was bought up by unscrupulous land speculators or banks. Although the Métis lost their land base, they did not lose their sense of identity as a distinct people, nor their culture and traditions which are vibrant and alive today.

## Useful Websites

For **information** about **First Nations languages and culture** go to the **Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre** ([www.sicc.sk.ca](http://www.sicc.sk.ca)).

For a **brief history of First Nations people from pre-contact to the present** go to **Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations**. ([www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/fnhist\\_intro.htm](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/fnhist_intro.htm)).

## Good Books

*Enduring Values: First Nations Culture in Saskatoon*. (2006). Saskatoon Public Library. A description of traditional First Nations values which endure to the present day.

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## Pre-Contact

Before contact with Europeans, Saskatchewan's First Nations were autonomous societies, each with their own political, social and economic systems.

Saskatchewan's First Nations varied in their beliefs, political and social systems and economies. For example, First Nations living in the northern part of the province hunted large animals such as moose and elk, and trapped the furbearing animals common in the area. The Plains Cree in the southern part of the province had an economy that was based primarily on the buffalo.

## Useful Websites

For **information** about **traditional First Nations life** go to [www.royalsaskmuseum.ca/gallery/first\\_nations/first\\_nations.shtml](http://www.royalsaskmuseum.ca/gallery/first_nations/first_nations.shtml)

This website describes the First Nations Galley at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and features many photographs of exhibits in the Gallery and descriptions of everyday life in times past.

## Online Publications

*Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 1, Section 4 – Stage One: Separate Worlds.* (1996).

Provides a good overview of the lives and culture of Canadian First Nations people before contact with Europeans. Information addresses all regions of Canada and is not limited to Saskatchewan.

([www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm4\\_e.htm](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm4_e.htm))

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## Early Contact

During the early years of European contact, the Europeans and the First Nations peoples approached each other as equals and both benefited. The newcomers depended on the First Nations knowledge of the land and waterways and on their ability to obtain furs. The First Nations obtained manufactured goods from the newcomers including clothing, guns, metal knives and tools, and household implements.

It was during this period of early contact that the Métis Nation came into being. The children of First Nations mothers and European fathers, the Métis are a distinct nation of people with their own culture, traditions and language (Michif). Many Métis spoke both First Nations and European languages, were familiar with both cultures, and became intermediaries in the fur trade.

Some First Nations, such as the Cree around Hudson Bay, also played the role of middleman, purchasing furs from local trappers and selling them to European traders.

The missionaries arrived close behind the fur traders and tried to impose their beliefs upon the First Nations peoples through both persuasion and coercion.

### **Online Publications**

***Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 1, Section 5 – Stage Two: Contact and Co-operation.*** (1996).

Describes early contact between Canadian First Nations people and European newcomers which was mutually beneficial to both groups.

([www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm5\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm5_e.html))

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## Later Contact

The growing fur trade brought many changes. Traditional economies changed as First Nations peoples became more dependent on manufactured goods. Traditional political systems changed too, because the English and French were often in conflict over territory and access to furs and First Nations were sometimes caught up in these conflicts.

The Europeans brought diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis and measles which wiped out whole communities. As the fur trade became an increasingly significant force, some First Nations people were faced with starvation due to over-hunting and over-trapping.

### **Online Publications**

***Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 1, Section 6 – Stage Three: Displacement and Assimilation.*** (1996).

Describes how increasing European settlement caused displacement of Canada's First Nations peoples and resulted in efforts to assimilate them.

([www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm6\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm6_e.html))

### **Good Books**

***Big Bear: The End of Freedom.*** (1984). Hugh A. Dempsey. Canadian Plains Research Centre.

A biography of Big Bear who recognized that increasing numbers of European settlers and the reserve system meant poverty for his people, refused to sign Treaty 6 and protested peacefully, and was imprisoned for treason when his followers killed white people at Frog Lake in 1885.

***kôhkominawak otâcimowiniwâwa Our Grandmothers' Lives As Told in Their Own Words.*** (1998). Freda Ahenakew, H. C. Wolfert. Canadian Plains Research Centre.

Reminiscences and personal stories from Cree women over the past century.

***Saskatchewan First Nations: Lives Past and Present.*** (2004). Christian Thompson. Canadian Plains Research Centre.

Biographies of 125 historical and contemporary Saskatchewan First Nations people.

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## Important Legislation

Three key pieces of legislation defined the relationship between the First Nations peoples and the British government and, later, the relationship between the First Nations peoples and the Canadian government.

***Royal Proclamation of 1763*** – The *Royal Proclamation of 1763* was the defining document in the relationship between First Nations and Non-Aboriginal people in North America. It was issued in the name of the King of England and set out the rules that were to govern British dealings with First Nations people – particularly in regard to land.

... the central messages of the proclamation are clear in its preamble. Aboriginal people were not to be “molested or disturbed” on their lands. Transactions involving Aboriginal land were to be negotiated properly between the Crown and “assemblies of Indians”. Aboriginal lands were to be acquired only by fair dealing: treaty or purchase by the Crown.

The proclamation portrays Indian nations as autonomous political entities, living under the protection of the Crown but retaining their own internal political authority. (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a)

The *Royal Proclamation of 1763* used the term “Nations or Tribes of Indians”, which is sometimes interpreted as British recognition of the existence of Indian Nations as sovereign states (Nestor, n.d.).

***The British North America (BNA) Act*** – The *British North America (BNA) Act* created the country of Canada in 1867 and is Canada’s original constitution. Section 91(24) established federal jurisdiction over “Indians and lands reserved for Indians”.

***The Indian Act*** – The first *Indian Act* was passed in 1876. Initially it defined those who had “status” as an Indian and thus were entitled to live on Indian reserves. Over the years, the *Indian Act* and its numerous amendments have been used to control many aspects of life for First Nations peoples. For example, at various times, it was used to ban the Sun Dance and Potlatch, to legislate the abduction of First Nations children, to prevent First Nations people from loitering in pool rooms, and to make it an offence for a First Nations person or group to retain a lawyer for purposes of advancing a land claim (Henderson ..., n.d.).

### ***Useful Websites***

For the full text of the current *Indian Act* go to <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en-i-5>).

## **Online Publications**

*Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.* (1996).

- For information about the *Royal Proclamation of 1763* go to ([www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm11\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm11_e.html)).
- For information about the *Indian Act* and its implications go to ([www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm9\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm9_e.html)).

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## Treaties

Between 1871 and 1906 seven numbered Treaties were signed in Saskatchewan. The Treaties are formal agreements between the government of Canada and the First Nations. Each party has certain objectives, expectations, and obligations. The Treaties provided First Nations with annuities, education, health care, reserve lands, and protection of their traditional economies. The government of Canada acquired the means to open up territories including modern-day Saskatchewan, for settlement and agricultural and resource development. (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, n.d.)

First Nations people believe the Treaties are binding agreements that are to last forever. In most of Canada, interpretation of Treaties in a modern-day context has largely been defined by the courts. In Saskatchewan, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner has a mandate to facilitate discussions concerning the Treaties, in order to resolve issues in a cooperative rather than a confrontational manner.

The Treaties that affect Saskatchewan are:

- Treaty No. 2 – 1871
- Treaty No. 4 – 1874
- Treaty No. 5 – 1875
- Treaty No. 6 – 1876
- Treaty No. 7 – 1877
- Treaty No. 8 – 1899
- Treaty No. 10 – 1906

Treaties Number 2 and 7 are sometimes omitted during discussion of Saskatchewan Treaties, as these affect very small land areas in which no First Nations are located.

### ***Useful Websites***

For a **map of Saskatchewan Treaties, full text of the Treaties, and background information** go to the **Office of the Treaty Commissioner** ([www.otc.ca/abouttreaties.htm](http://www.otc.ca/abouttreaties.htm)).

For **videos about Canadian treaties, timelines, maps, background information** go to **The Federal Treaty Policy Directorate** ([www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/trts/hti/site/index\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/trts/hti/site/index_e.html)).

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## The Reserve System

By the late 1800s, large numbers of European immigrants began arriving on the prairies. Indeed, the Canadian government conducted a very aggressive advertising campaign in Russia, Ukraine, Poland and other parts of Europe to attract immigrants. The Canadian government pressured First Nations to settle on reserves, in order to provide land for the immigrants. Many of the First Nations had few options because the buffalo had disappeared and they faced starvation.

The federal government sent Indian agents to the reserves, who controlled most aspects of life on the reserve. For example, the pass system required First Nations people to get a pass from the Indian agent to leave the reserve. First Nations people absent from the reserve without a pass were considered to be criminals. The pass system was enforced until the mid 1930s and was not removed from the *Indian Act* until 1951.

The Indian agent also controlled the financial transactions of First Nations people. They needed a permit from the Indian agent to sell cattle, grain, hay, firewood, berries and other products and to purchase groceries and clothes. The permit system remained in the *Indian Act* until 1995.

In the 1950s and 60s, First Nations began to gain control over their own affairs and gradually the position of Indian agent was eliminated (Saskatchewan First Nation and Métis Relations, 2006a; Nestor, n.d.).

It was difficult for First Nations people to make a living on reserves. The pass and permit systems severely limited their economic opportunities. For example, if the Indian Agent denied them a pass to leave the reserve, they could not work for local farmers or businesses and the potential to earn cash through employment was lost. If the Indian Agent denied them a permit, they could not sell products they had grown, gathered or created, nor could they purchase food, clothing and other goods that would contribute to quality of life.

Some reserves were on marginal land not suited for farming. When the land was suitable for farming, farming activity was controlled by the Indian Agent, who sometimes prohibited the purchase of tools and equipment needed for farming.

Some reserves were small and did not support enough wild animals to feed the people living on the reserve. Thus, many First Nations people came to depend on funds provided by the government.

Today First Nations people live both on- and off-reserve. Many of those who live off-reserve have retained their ties to the reserve community and see it as home.

## ***Useful Websites***

For a **map of Saskatchewan First Nations reserves** and for the **names and contact information of Saskatchewan's First Nations** go to **Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations** ([www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/map\\_firstnations.htm](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/map_firstnations.htm)).

For a **list of Saskatchewan First Nations and Tribal Councils, contact information and logos of most Saskatchewan First Nations** go to the **FSIN** ([www.fsin.com/firstnations.html](http://www.fsin.com/firstnations.html))

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## First Nations Self-Government

Before the arrival of Europeans, the First Nations of Saskatchewan were independent self-governing nations. Each First Nation had political systems that defined how they selected their leaders, laws that governed the ways people treated each other, processes for dealing with people who violated the laws, and protocols for interacting with other First Nations.

When the Europeans arrived they imposed their political systems on the First Nations and ignored traditional systems that had worked so well for hundreds of years.

Today, many First Nations see self-government as a way to preserve their cultures, their languages, and their economic well-being. Their right to self-government flows from their inherent rights bestowed by the Creator and from the Treaties which were nation to nation agreements.

Self-government means that First Nations people have control over their lives and over the institutions that affect their lives, rather than being governed by the European institutions forced upon them. Self-government means that, within the context of the *Canadian Constitution*, First Nations people design and control their own justice systems, schools, health clinics, employment services and businesses. It also means that First Nations governments are increasingly responsible and accountable to the people they represent, rather than to the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

### ***Useful Websites***

For the **FSIN's perspective on Treaty Governance** go to [www.fsin.com/treatygovernance/index.html](http://www.fsin.com/treatygovernance/index.html).

For **information about Treaty Land Entitlements** go to:

- the **Office of the Treaty Commissioner**  
<http://www.otc.ca/AboutTLE.htm>

and/or to:

- **Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations**  
[www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/lands/Lands\\_intro.htm](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/lands/Lands_intro.htm).

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## **The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations**

Today, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations represents 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan. It is committed to honouring the spirit and intent of the Treaties signed more than a century ago, as well as to promoting, protecting and implementing the Treaties. It also fosters economic, educational and social progress for First Nations people.

The FSIN is governed by a Legislative Assembly comprised of representatives of the member First Nations. The Chief and several Vice-Chiefs are elected. Secretariats have been established to address major areas such as economic development, education and training, and lands and resources (FSIN, n.d.).

### ***Useful Websites***

For **information about FSIN Secretariats, Legislative Assembly and Executive** and for **current news** go to [www.fsin.com](http://www.fsin.com).

### ***A Good Magazine***

***Saskatchewan Indian Magazine***. (Monthly).

The official publication of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. Includes information about FSIN policies, initiatives, and programs, along with news from the First Nations of Saskatchewan.

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# Métis History

## The Early Years

“The Métis are one of Saskatchewan’s founding people and have contributed to Saskatchewan’s social, cultural, economic and political fabric” (Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, p. 603). The Métis were created by intermarriage between European fur traders and First Nations women. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Métis were involved in the fur trade, primarily in Northern Saskatchewan. They were trappers, middlemen, and traders, and they played an important role in the establishment of communities in Northern Saskatchewan. The two oldest continuously inhabited communities in Saskatchewan – Cumberland House (1774) and Ile-à-la-Crosse (1778) – are Métis communities, and Prince Albert was founded in 1866 by James Isbister, a Métis.

## The Nineteenth Century

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Métis had become involved in the buffalo hunt in Southern Saskatchewan and carried out orderly, well-organized hunts.

Between the consolidation of the fur trade in 1821 and the construction of the railway in the late 1880s, the Métis played a major role in transportation. Métis traders crisscrossed the prairies in vast caravans of two-wheeled Red River carts. Their cargo consisted primarily of buffalo hides and furs, but they occasionally transported other goods as well.

As the fur trade started dying out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more and more of the prairie Métis settled in the Red River region of what is today Manitoba. The Red River region centred on the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, where Winnipeg is now located.

This area was controlled by the Hudson’s Bay Company, but in 1869 the HBC sold its rights to this region to the new Dominion of Canada, without discussing it with the people of the region. Essentially, the Métis people’s land was sold out from under them. The result was the Red River Resistance of 1869 led by Louis Riel.

Manitoba became a province in July, 1870, with the passing of the *Manitoba Act*. Under the terms of this Act, the Métis retained existing land holdings in Red River and were guaranteed a 1.4 million acre land grant to be reserved for Métis children. This guarantee proved to be short-lived, however. An 1874 amendment to the *Manitoba Act* called for the distribution of scrip to Métis adults in an effort to extinguish their title to the land in the Red River area. Scrip was a certificate redeemable for land or money. With the decline of the fur trade and buffalo hunt, many Métis were in a desperate need of money and sold their scrip to banks and land speculators to keep their families from starving.

By 1884, two-thirds of the Métis people had moved out of the province of Manitoba. Some relocated to the north and the U.S.A., but the majority moved to Saskatchewan and Alberta. Batoche became a main Métis settlement in Saskatchewan. The Métis settled in other Saskatchewan communities as well including Willow Bunch, Crooked Lake, and Lebret.

The Métis resumed their demands for a land base – demands that were ignored by the federal government. The Métis were expected to apply for land individually as homesteaders. The federal government wanted to prevent large concentrations of Métis people in one area to keep land available for settlement by European immigrants. As well, the expansionist policies of the Canadian government were again pushing the Métis off their land.

In 1885, the Métis of the Batoche area, under the leadership of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, took up arms against the Dominion of Canada. In what has become known as the NorthWest Resistance, they were defeated, and Louis Riel was hanged for treason. The Métis dispersed throughout what is today Saskatchewan and became known as “Road Allowance People,” because they lived on road allowances – land set aside for future development of roads and not available for settlement. Their life on the road allowances was precarious – the Métis people were sometimes forcibly removed and in a few instances their homes were burned.

Between 1876 and 1921, scrip was again provided to Métis people, through the provisions of the *Dominion Lands Act*. However, most of this scrip again fell into the hands of land speculators and banks, who took it through dishonest means.

## The Métis Today

Although the Métis lost their land base, they did not lose their sense of identity as a separate, distinct people, nor did they lose their culture and traditions.

Today the Métis people of Saskatchewan are represented by the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan – a province-wide political organization. A democratically elected Provincial Métis Council provides overall direction for the organization. There are 12 Regions, each with an elected representative, and within the 12 Regions there are about 130 Métis Locals. The mandate of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan is to pursue the rights of the Métis within Saskatchewan and to work towards development of the social, cultural, economic, civil, political and legal rights of the Métis (Métis Nation—Saskatchewan, n.d.).

*The Métis Act*, which was passed by the Government of Saskatchewan in 2002, recognizes the Métis as a separate and distinct people, acknowledges their contribution to the province of Saskatchewan, commits the province and the Métis Nation to collaborate on some practical issues and establishes the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan Secretariat Inc. (Archer, 1981; Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, 2005; Saskatchewan First Nation and Métis Relations, 2006b; Nester, n.d.)

## Useful Websites

For a **brief history of the Métis people** go to **Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations** ([www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/metishist\\_intro.htm](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/metishist_intro.htm)).

For **information about Métis culture, oral histories in Métis heritage languages and many nice photographs of Métis people and Métis art work** go to the **Virtual Museum of Métis History** at ([www.metismuseum.com](http://www.metismuseum.com)).

For **background information** about *The Métis Act* go to **Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations** ([www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/metishist\\_5metisact.htm](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/metishist_5metisact.htm))

For the **text of *The Métis Act*** go to ([www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=3064](http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=3064)).

For **map showing the Regions and Locals of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan** go to **Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations** ([http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/map\\_metis.htm](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/html/community/map_metis.htm)).

For **access to the *Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians*** go to [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/interloc/index\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/interloc/index_e.html).

The Interlocutor is the link between the Government of Canada and organizations that represent Métis, Non-Status Indians and urban Aboriginal people.

## **Good Books and Videos**

*The History of the Métis of Willow Bunch.* (2003). Ron Rivard and Catherine Littlejohn. Published by the authors.

A history of one Saskatchewan Métis community.

*Kitaskinaw i pi Kiskinohamakoya: The Land Gives Us Our Knowledge.* [Video]. Gabriel Dumont Institute.

The story of the Métis of Ile a la Crosse. In Michif with English Subtitles.

*Métis Development in the Canadian West Series.* Calvin Racette. Gabriel Dumont Institute.

A series of five booklets that trace the development of Métis culture and the role of the Métis in Canadian society from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Métis Historical Booklet Series.* Joanne Pelletier. Gabriel Dumont Institute.

A series of booklets that examine the history of the Métis from the 1810s through to the 1885 Resistance.

*The Métis: Our People, Our Story.* Arnold. [Multimedia.] Gabriel Dumont Institute.

A comprehensive CD-ROM which provides comprehensive information on Métis culture and history. Includes visual images, videoclips, music, maps and charts.

*The Story of the Crescent Lake Métis: Our Life of the Road Allowance.* [Video]. Gabriel Dumont Institute.

The Story of the Métis of Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan. In Michif with English subtitles.

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# School Boards Can ...

*In order to better understand the communities they represent, school boards can:*

***Learn more*** about the history of the First Nations and Métis people in the school division.

***Learn more*** about the past and present culture and traditions of the First Nations and Métis people in the school division.

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## To Think About/Talk About



1. *What do you know about the First Nations in your school division?*
  - *Which First Nations are located in your area? What treaties affect these First Nations?*
  
  - *What are the geographic boundaries of the land base of each First Nation?*
  
  - *What is the history of each First Nation in your area?*
  
2. *What do you know about the Métis people in your area?*
  - *In what European and First Nations cultures do the Métis of your area have their roots?*
  
  - *What Métis traditions are alive in your area?*
  
3. *What can your school board do to enhance its members' knowledge about the history of the First Nations and Métis people in your area?*

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# Education – Past and Present

## Education – Past and Present

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## Chapter Highlights



### Education – Past and Present

In traditional First Nations society children and youth were nurtured and educated by the extended family, with Elders playing a particularly important role.

After the Treaties were signed, residential schools were established throughout the prairies. Residential schools were used deliberately to break down the transmission of language and culture from one generation to another, and abuse was common in these schools.

Residential schools were phased out in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and replaced with on-reserve day schools operated by the federal government. After 1972, First Nations gradually assumed responsibility for their own schools and today most First Nations control their own education systems.

Métis children born during the fur trade era could be educated either in the European or First Nations manner. After the signing of the Treaties neither the federal nor the provincial government assumed responsibility for the education of Métis children and their education was haphazard until the mid 1940s when the provincial government accepted responsibility.

### Online Publications

*Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Retrospective and a Prospective.* (1999, Fall). Verna J. Kirkness. Journal of American Indian Education. Vol. 39, No. 1, Special Issue 2.

Provides a good overview of First Nations education past and present in Canada. Although not specific to Saskatchewan this article shows how developments in Saskatchewan have been influenced by federal policy.

(<http://jaie.asu.edu/v39/V39I1A2.pdf>)

*State of Aboriginal Learning: Background Paper.* (2005). Marie Battiste. Canadian Council on Learning.

Provides a brief review of contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning in Canada.

([www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/About CCL/KnowledgeCentres/ AboriginalLearning/index.htm](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/About%20CCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/index.htm))

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## Pre-Contact

In traditional First Nations society children were valued as gifts of the Creator. They were not seen as belonging to their parents, but rather as on loan from the Creator. Children and youth were nurtured by the extended family. Parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts, and other family members all shared the responsibility of caring for children and passing on the knowledge and skills needed to function in society. Elders played a particularly important role in the education of children. (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b; Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, 2005)

“It was an education in which the community and the natural environment were the classroom. ... Members of the family were the teachers, and each adult was responsible for ensuring that each child learned how to live a good life. Traditional education was largely an informal process that provided the young people with specific skills, attitudes, and knowledge they needed to function in everyday life within the context of a spiritual worldview” (Kirkness, 1999, pp. 22-23).

Traditional child-rearing practices permitted children to exert their will with little interference from adults. Children were encouraged to explore the world around them and were rarely told what to do or punished. Children were taught through modeling rather than through direct instruction. Children were expected to observe and imitate other members of the community. Social control was exercised through indirect means such as teasing rather than through direct reprimands or instructions on how to behave.

These childrearing and educational practices served to foster cooperation and suppress conflict in societies where a high degree of cooperation was needed for survival (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b).

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# First Nations Students

## Residential Schools

*Imagine the following situation ...*

*A society from a far-away planet arrives in Saskatchewan and by virtue of their advanced technology imposes their social, economic and political systems on the province.*

*Every fall, the invaders gather up all the children aged six to 16, stuff them into a spaceship, and take them to the far-away planet until the next June.*

*When the children are at home during the summer, they rarely talk about their experiences away, but they are thin and starving when they first arrive home. Many of them are covered with scars and bruises. The younger children have forgotten English; they speak only the invaders' language which few adults understand. Some of the older boys have become angry and violent.*

*What effect does this situation have on your community?*

*What effect does it have on your family?*

*What effect does it have on you personally?*

*What effect does it have on the children who are taken away?*

Since the earliest days of contact, education was seen as a tool for assimilating First Nations and Métis people into European society. Assimilation through education became the dominant government policy after the signing of the numbered Treaties, and residential schools were established throughout the prairies. The operation of most residential schools was turned over to the churches, chiefly the Roman Catholic Church, but a few were also run by the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and by the United Church.

The residential schools were used deliberately to break down the transmission of culture and language from one generation to the next. They were seen as a bridge from the First Nations world to the European world. That passage was marked out in clear stages: **separation** from First Nation culture, **socialization** into European culture, and **enfranchisement** which allowed males to avail themselves of the enfranchisement provisions of the *Indian Act* and leave their Indian status behind. (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b)

For nearly a century, parents and grandparents were legally obligated to turn their children over to residential school authorities. When families did not comply, the children were taken by force.

In the residential schools, English was the only language allowed in or out of class. Children were often beaten for speaking a First Nations language (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b).

Beatings and sexual abuse were commonplace. Food was often lacking in both quality and quantity and many children were malnourished. Infectious diseases, particularly tuberculosis, were rampant and some children died of disease. Children were taught to reject their culture, language, families and communities, and by extension to reject themselves. These conditions were systemic, widespread and deliberate.

The disastrous results of the residential schools are still being felt today. The residential schools weakened the family and community bonds that formed the foundation of traditional First Nations society. They imbued a sense of self-hatred and powerlessness in young people, who lacked the skills and knowledge to function effectively in either First Nations or European society, and sometimes turned to alcohol to cope.

The residential schools destroyed young people's ability to be good parents and to create healthy families, because children who attended residential schools had no nurturing, and no positive experiences of parenting or of family and community life. They experienced only pain and shame. People parent as they are parented, and so students of residential schools went forth into the world ill-equipped to be parents.

## The Present Day

Education of First Nation children is defined as a federal government responsibility under the *Indian Act*. The process of phasing out residential schools started about 1930-1940, although some stayed in operation much longer than that event into the 1970s.

For several decades during the middle of the 20th century, many First Nations children were educated in on-reserve schools controlled and operated by the federal government. These schools allowed First Nations students to live at home and to retain ties to their community, but parents and other family members played no role in their children's education. The federal government made all curriculum and financial decisions, hired and fired teachers and set policy concerning treatment of students. The government did not create any mechanisms for family or community involvement.

In 1972, the Assembly of First Nations (formerly the National Indian Brotherhood) published a document entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education* which asserted the rights of First Nations parents to determine the kind of education they wanted for their children.

Two principles of education were proposed in this document:

- parental responsibility, and
- local control of education.

The Federal government accepted the document as policy in 1973. (Nestor, n.d., p. 16)

After 1973, First Nations gradually assumed responsibility for the education of their children. The funds that the federal government previously used to operate schools on reserves were provided to First Nations to operate and control their own schools.

Today, most First Nations operate their own schools. There are very few federally-operated schools.

Some First Nations purchase education services from a local school division instead of operating their own schools. The First Nations contract with the school division might cover educational services for all students attending school or it might cover only certain categories of students such as high school students or special needs students.

### ***Useful Websites***

For **information about the actions to address the injustices of residential schools** go to the federal agency **Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada**  
[www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca/english/index.html](http://www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca/english/index.html)

### ***Online Publications***

***Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1, Section 10 – Residential Schools.*** (1996).

Describes in detail the history of residential schools in Canada, the conditions in these schools, and their effects on First Nations families and communities.

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm10\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm10_e.html)

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## Métis Students

Métis children born during the fur trade era were educated in one of two ways:

- Those who lived within the Indian community were raised and educated in the traditional Indian manner.
- Those who lived within the fur trade community were raised and educated in a Christian and European manner. Schooling was provided in mission schools which were established near trading posts.

The quality of education for Métis and non-status Indian children deteriorated after the signing of the numbered Treaties and the Resistance of 1885. Neither the federal or provincial government would assume responsibility for the education of these children. Some were allowed to attend day or mission schools if there was space. Education in southern Saskatchewan was haphazard, and very limited in northern Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan First Nation and Métis Relations, 2006b; Nestor, n.d.).

However, there was a residential school for Métis students in Ile-a-la-Crosse which operated from the 1920s until about 1974.

In 1944, the Piercy report documented the grave educational conditions of the Métis people and shortly thereafter the provincial government assumed responsibility for the education of Métis and non-status Indian children (Saskatchewan First Nation and Métis Relations, 2006b; Nestor, n.d.).

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Saskatchewan's K-12 education system paid little attention to Métis culture and heritage. This situation began to change in 1980 with the formation of the Gabriel Dumont Institute which (among other things) conducts research relating to Métis history and operates SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program).

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# First Nations and Métis Students' Experiences of Schooling

First Nations and Métis students, like all students, vary a great deal. They vary in their innate abilities and interests, their life experiences, and their experiences of schooling.

The sections below describe some factors that may influence First Nations and Métis students' experiences of schooling.

## Home/School Differences

The values and expectations that some First Nations and Métis children experience at home may conflict with those of the school. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996d) explains this conflict thusly:

Values and traditions of [First Nations] peoples and nations are diverse, but there are common elements that often conflict with those dominant in the conventional classroom. For example, [First Nations] children may be raised in a home environment where cooperation and non-competitiveness are emphasized. They may be taught that intellectual and other gifts are meant to be shared for the benefit of others rather than for personal gain. In some [First Nations] cultures, the principle of non-interference predominates; the child's will is respected, and adults do not interfere in the choices made by the child. The imposition of the adult's will on the child is considered inappropriate except, of course, in instances where the child may encounter harm. By contrast, the regimentation of the classroom experience, the emphasis on individual achievement, and the exertion of the teacher's authority constitute a rupture with the child's home environment.

## Racism

*Complete each of the partial sentences below.*

*Racism looks like* \_\_\_\_\_.

*Racism sounds like* \_\_\_\_\_.

*Racism feels like* \_\_\_\_\_.

*Did you feel uncomfortable completing these sentences? Did you find yourself squirming a bit?*

Dr. Verna St. Denis and Dr. Eber Hampton (2002), two well known Saskatchewan academics, point out that people are uncomfortable talking about racism – for many it is a taboo topic. When the issue of racism is raised, denial is a common response, occasionally even by First Nations and Métis people themselves. Suggesting that racism is something that took place only in the past or is limited to special situations such as the Holocaust is also common. Yet racism is something that many First Nations and Métis students have experienced.

**Overt forms of racism include verbal and physical abuse and prohibiting First Nations and Métis youngsters from participating in certain programs.**

### **More subtle forms of racism include:**

- **Psychological abuse** such as assuming that First Nations and Métis people are second class citizens, that First Nations and Métis cultures are inferior to other cultures, and that First Nations and Métis achievements are inferior to that of the majority culture. (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002)
- **Low expectations** for First Nations and Métis students which create a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you expect a child to fail, she probably will. This is probably the most pervasive form of racism that many students encounter (Minister's National Working Group ..., 2002).
- **Denial of professional support** and attention such as ignoring a child's request for help in the classroom, or ignoring situations where a First Nations and Métis child is being bothered or bullied by non-Aboriginal students. (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002)
- **Rules and procedures that facilitate failure**, for example, punishing First Nations and Métis students more harshly than non-Aboriginal students for the same offence, and rigidly enforcing attendance policies when First Nations and Métis students may lack transportation to get to school. (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002)

The more subtle forms of racism are all the more problematic because they can be unintentional and because observation over time is needed in order to identify them.

### **Racism has profound effects on those who experience it. Racism:**

- limits opportunities for the victim
- blames the victim for his or her circumstances
- leads to internalization of low self-worth
- produces First Nations and Métis people as hostile
- leads to early school exit (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002)

### **Online Publications**

*Literature Review on Racism and the Effects on Aboriginal Education.* (2002). Verna St. Denis and Eber Hampton. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Minister's National Working Group on Education.

Describes types of racism that First Nations and Métis students experience, its effect on students' personal and educational development and actions which can be taken to reduce racism.

([www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/kw/rac\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/kw/rac_e.pdf))

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# School Boards Can ...

*In order to better serve all students in the school division, school boards can:*

***Learn more*** about the education of previous generations of First Nations and Métis students in the school division.

***Reflect*** on how the educational experiences of the parents, grandparents and great-grandparents of today's students affect the education of today's students.

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## To Think About/Talk About



### *1. What is the history of First Nations education in your area?*

- Were there residential schools in your area? If so, when were they phased out? What accounts do Elders give of their experiences in residential schools?*
  
- Did the federal government operate schools on the First Nation reserves in your area? If so, when did the First Nations assume control of their own schools? What accounts do adults give of their experiences in on-reserve federal schools?*

### *2. What is the history of Métis education in your area?*

- Did you find question #2 above difficult to answer? If so, why has information about Métis schooling faded away?*

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# Governance

## Governance

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**The School Community Council**

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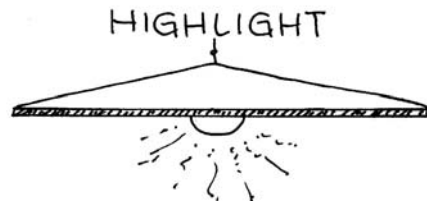
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## Chapter Highlights



### **Governance**

Every school board should be representative of the people it serves. Today most school boards serve First Nations and Métis students, so First Nations and Métis voices should be heard during the board's deliberations. There is no single "right" or "best" approach to ensuring First Nations and Métis representation during school board deliberations, but rather a number of possible approaches that may be appropriate for different situations.

School boards are required to establish a School Community Council for each school in the division. Membership on these Councils should be representative of the students in the school. For example, if half the students in the school are of First Nations and Métis ancestry, then so should half the members of the School Community Council.

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## The School Board

Every school board should be representative of the people it serves. Today, most Saskatchewan school boards serve First Nations and Métis students, who may range in numbers from a small percentage of the student population, to the majority of the student population. Thus, it is appropriate that Saskatchewan school boards ensure that First Nations and Métis voices are heard during their deliberations.

The approach that is used to ensure First Nations and Métis representation during school board deliberations will vary depending on the situation, the nature of the community, and the wishes of the school board and local First Nations and Métis community.

Some possible approaches are described on the pages that follow. Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. There is no single “right” or “best” approach. Choose the approach that works best for your school division. In some situations, two or more of these approaches may be operating at the same time. For example, a school board may informally seek advice from a tribal council and at the same time create a joint board to operate a particular high school. A school board may have a formal written partnership agreement with a First Nations and/or Métis organization and at the same time have service agreements with one or more First Nations to provide educational services to the children of the First Nation.

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**Approach:** No special provisions. It is assumed that when a school division includes a significant number of First Nations and Métis people, some of the school board members who are elected will be First Nations or Métis.

**Considerations:** The assumption upon which this approach is based may or may not be valid. There are systemic barriers which make it difficult for many First Nations and Métis people to participate in elections, both as candidates and as voters. For example:

- Elections are a European concept and not part of traditional First Nations culture. Thus, some First Nations and Métis people feel alienated by the whole election process.
- Practical considerations such as lack of transportation may make participation difficult.

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**Approach:** Informally seeking advice from a band council, tribal council, or First Nations and Métis organization on school board plans and/or issues.

**Considerations:**

- Control rests with the board, as the board decides which issues it will consult on, who it will consult with, and the extent to which it will accept the advice given. This may or may not be a problem.
- The success of this approach depends, in part, on the way it is handled. The potential for success is **increased** if the school board establishes an ongoing relationship with First Nations and Métis organizations, creates an ongoing pattern of consultation, and acts on the advice it is given. The potential for success is **reduced** if the board asks for advice in isolated situations and/or fails to act on the advice it is given.

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**Approach:** Creating a formal written partnership with a local band council, tribal council, or First Nations or Métis organization and developing a formal mechanism that allows the First Nations and Métis partner to participate in decision making.

**Considerations:** This approach is sometimes used by city school boards, when the school division has numerous Métis, non-status and off-reserve First Nations students, who come from a variety of backgrounds.

The school board may have more than one such partnership – one with a tribal council and one with a local of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, for example.

There may be more than two parties to such a partnership. For example, a school board and several First Nations and Métis organizations may form a partnership.

The written agreement between the partners typically defines how the parties will work together, the matters or issues they will address, and the decision-making and financial responsibilities of each.

The success of this approach depends on the nature of the relationship (in both the written agreement and the working relationship that evolves over time) and on whether the First Nations and Métis partners have opportunities to make real and significant decisions that are implemented by the board.

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**Approach:** Specifying that one seat on the school board is reserved for a person of First Nations or Métis ancestry, to be elected by voters who are also of First Nations and Métis ancestry.

**Considerations:** This approach could be problematic:

- How do you define “First Nations and Métis ancestry?” How do candidates or voters prove they are of First Nations or Métis ancestry?
- Can a First Nations or Métis voter vote for non-Aboriginal candidates in addition to, or instead of, a First Nations or Métis candidate.
- How do you manage the logistics of what is essentially an election within an election?

---

**Approach:** Creating a ward system or subdivisions within the school division. Candidates run in a particular ward or subdivision and are elected by people who live within the ward or subdivision.

**Considerations:** Since First Nations and Métis people sometimes live in specific areas of the school division, this approach has potential for election of a First Nations or Métis board member by First Nations and Métis people.

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**Approach:** Creating a joint board to operate a particular school or program.

**Considerations:** Sections 92 to 96 of *The Education Act, 1995* provide for establishment of joint boards comprised of a school board and a variety of other bodies including an Indian band. Joint boards are sometimes established to operate specific schools or programs. The purpose of the joint board and the roles of the partners in the joint board are spelled out in a formal agreement and are subject to the requirements of *The Education Act, 1995*.

---

**Approach:** Development of a formal service agreement between a First Nation and the school division, in which the school division, for a fee, agrees to provide educational services to students who fall under the First Nation’s jurisdiction.

**Considerations:** A service agreement can cover all K-12 students who fall under a First Nation’s jurisdiction or only certain categories of students, such as high school students or special needs students. It can cover all components of the education program or only some. For example, First Nations students might be bussed to the provincial school once a week for industrial arts or some other specialized subject.

The nature of the services to be provided, and the terms and conditions under which these services are provided are spelled out in the service agreement. Within the framework provided by *The Education Act, 1995*, all aspects of the educational program are negotiable. For example, the First Nation might have requirements concerning First Nations content in the education program.

While a formal contract is essential to define the parties’ expectations of each other and their legal obligations, the key to a successful service agreement is the relationship that develops between the school board and the First Nation and the extent to which the parties trust each other and are able to talk to each other.

---

**Approach:** Providing that a representative of each First Nation within the school division's boundaries has a seat on the school board. Each First Nation is treated as a subdivision as per Section 40 of *The Education Act, 1995*.

- Considerations:**
- First Nation representatives are sometimes appointed by the Chief and Council of their First Nation, rather than being elected. *The Education Act, 1995* requires that board members be elected. Is this a problem?
  - The board will be voting on financial matters that affect the off-reserve mill rate. Can the tuition fee that First Nations pay to the board under educational service agreements be tied to the school division budget or the mill rate?
  - Saskatchewan Learning policy presently provides for up to five subdivisions. What happens if there are more than five First Nations within a school division's boundaries?
  - The First Nation subdivisions may contain fewer people than the subdivisions in the rest of the school board. Is this a problem?
  - Each First Nation is separate and distinct, with its own history, culture, and traditions. This approach acknowledges the uniqueness of each First Nation.
- 

## **Online Publications**

***Building Partnerships: Educational Agreements Resource Guide.*** (2005). Saskatchewan Learning.

A very detailed guide to the development of educational service agreements between school boards and First Nations. Describes the process of negotiation and outlines elements that might be included in a service agreement.

[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol\\_eval/spip/docs/BuildingPartnershipsESARG.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol_eval/spip/docs/BuildingPartnershipsESARG.pdf)

***Building Partnerships: First Nations and Métis Peoples and the Provincial Education System. Policy Framework for Saskatchewan's Prekindergarten to Grade 12 Education System.*** (2003). Saskatchewan Learning.

Describes several different types of governance partnerships between school board and First Nations.

[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/buildpartneraborig.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/buildpartneraborig.pdf)

***Building School Climate through Shared Governance.*** (2006). Harry Lafond, Saskatchewan Learning.

Describes a partnership between Saskatoon Tribal Council and Saskatoon Public Schools including benefits of the partnership and the manner in which the partners achieved agreement on vision and goals.

[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/BuildingSchoolClimate.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/BuildingSchoolClimate.pdf)

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# The School Community Council

As of summer 2006, School Community Councils provide a formal mechanism for public engagement at the school level.

Sections 140.1 to 140.5 of *The Education Act, 1995* require that school boards establish a School Community Council for each school in the division. The responsibilities of the School Community Council as defined by legislation appear in the box on the right. Most of these duties are advisory. However, school boards may choose to delegate specific decision-making responsibilities to School Community Councils.

The Regulations to *The Education Act, 1995* specify that if a pupil at a school lives on reserve, the school board **shall** appoint to the School Community Council representatives identified by the First Nation to which the reserve belongs.

Membership on a School Community Council should be representative of the students in the school. For example, if half the students in the school are First Nations and Métis, then half the members of the School Community Council should also be First Nations and Métis.

*The Education Act, 1995* provides for both elected and appointed members. When First Nations and Métis people are under-represented on the School Community Council, the school board may use its authority to appoint members to help create a representative School Community Council.

## Useful Websites

For publications relating to **School Community Councils** and **upcoming workshops** check the website of the **Saskatchewan School Boards Association** ([www.saskschoolboards.ca](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca)).



### ***The Education Act, 1995***

#### Duties and powers

140.5 Every school community council shall:

- (a) facilitate parent and community participation in school planning;
- (b) provide advice to its board of education;
- (c) provide advice to its school's staff;
- (d) provide advice to other agencies involved in the learning and development of pupils; and
- (e) comply with the regulations and the policies of its board of education.

### ***Saskatchewan Regulations 102/2006***

(4) If a pupil at a school resides on reserve, the board of education shall, for the school community council for that school:

- (a) request that the Indian band, for whose use and benefit the reserve where the student resides has been set aside, identify individuals willing to represent that Indian band on the school community council; and
- (b) if practicable, appoint at least one of those individuals to the school community council.

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# School Boards Can ...

*In order to ensure that First Nations and Métis voices are heard during their deliberations, school boards can:*

***Identify and implement*** appropriate processes to involve First Nations and Métis individuals and organizations in their decision making.

***Ensure that membership*** on a School Community Council is representative of the students in the school. For example, if one-third of the students in the school are of First Nations and Métis ancestry, then one-third of the members of the School Community Council should also be of First Nations and Métis ancestry.

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## To Think About/Talk About



1. *What arrangements does your school board presently have to ensure that First Nations and Métis voices are heard during your deliberations?*
  - *How well are these arrangements working?*
  
  - *What can you do to enhance First Nations and Métis representation during your deliberations?*
  
2. *To what extent is membership on the School Community Councils in your division representative of the students in each school?*

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# Promoting Student Success

## Promoting Student Success

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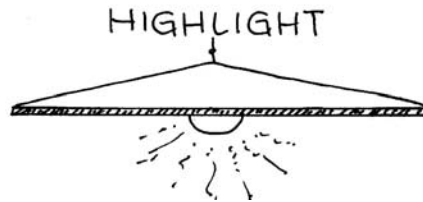
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## Chapter Highlights



### Promoting Student Success

Success is defined differently by different cultures, and First Nations, Métis and European cultures may have different understandings of what success means. Many of the elements that influence the success of First Nations and Métis students are within the control of the school board. For example:

- A curriculum that features the integration of First Nations and Métis content contributes to the success of First Nations and Métis students.
- Personal and academic supports can promote learning and facilitate attendance for all students.
- First Nations and Métis teachers provide positive role models for all students.
- Early childhood education provides a foundation for positive learning experiences.
- Students do better when families are engaged in their children's education.
- Elders can make a positive contribution to the school program.

### *Useful Websites*

For information about provincial government initiatives relating to First Nations and Métis education go to the **First Nations and Métis Education Branch of Saskatchewan Learning** ([www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me)).

## **Online Publications**

***Aboriginal Identity and Learning: An Assessment of Educational Practices in a Rural Saskatchewan Collegiate.*** (2006). Naome Soleil, Verna St. Denis, Frank Deer. Saskatchewan Learning, Aboriginal Education Research Network.

A study which investigated the factors in the learning environment that enhance or limit the academic and social development of First Nations and Métis students.

<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/AboriginalIdentity.pdf>

***Factors that Contribute to Aboriginal Students' Success in School in Grades Six to Nine.*** (1998). Lorri Melnechenko, & Helen Horsman. Saskatchewan Education.

Interviews with Grade six to nine students who give their own opinions about factors that promote school success.

Report: [www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/Factorsthatcontribute.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/Factorsthatcontribute.pdf)

Executive Summary: [www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/Factorsexecsummary.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/Factorsexecsummary.pdf).

***Listening to Megan: Narratives of a Female Aboriginal Youth with a Disability.*** (2002). Cynthia Fey. Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

A Grade 11-12 female Aboriginal youth with a disability tells her story through interviews, short stories, poems, songs and plays.

<http://saskschoolboards.ca/research/students/02-06.htm>

***Our Children: Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge: Final Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education.*** (2002). Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Presents a vision for First Nations education in Canada, describes the characteristics of a quality education and describes the role of INAC and the provinces.

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/Finre/ouchi\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/Finre/ouchi_e.pdf)

***Sharing Our Success: Ten Case Studies on Aboriginal Schooling.*** (2004). David Bell et al. Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.

A large book which provides case studies of 10 Western Canadian schools that have been successful in promoting success for Aboriginal students. Also includes a synopsis of the literature relevant to Aboriginal learning and a summary of the factors that make the 10 schools effective.

[www.sae.ca/pdfs/021.pdf](http://www.sae.ca/pdfs/021.pdf)

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## What is Success?

*What is success?* The answer to this question can vary from one culture to another. Success is defined differently by different cultures. First Nations, Métis and European cultures may each have different understandings of what success means.

Within an educational context success means graduating from Grade 12 with the skills and knowledge required to successfully participate in post-secondary education and/or the labour force. But beyond this basic foundation success can mean many different things.

*What does success mean to you? Your idea of success might be quite different from that of a First Nations parent or grandparent. Don't assume that everyone has the same definition of success.*

*A few meanings of success are listed below. Check the ones that describe your idea of success. Find out what success means to other school board members. Find out what success means to First Nations and Métis people in your community. How are your ideas of success the same? How are they different?*

### ***Success can be ...***

- Competing with other students
- Cooperating with other students
- Helping other students who have personal/family problems
- Helping at home
- Standing out from the other students in the class
- Fitting in with the other students in the class
- Getting extremely high marks
- Showing that you know more than other students during class discussions
- Achieving at the same level as other students in the class
- Showing obedience and respect to teachers and other school staff
- Talking back to teachers and being sassy to show that you are an individual and to stand out
- Retaining your cultural heritage and showing pride in your cultural heritage
- Staying out of trouble
- Following the rules of the school to show obedience and to create harmony
- Ignoring the rules of the school to show that you are an individual and to stand out
- Getting all your work done
- Doing only enough work to pass the course
- Participating in extra curricular activities
- Only participating in activities that count for marks

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# First Nations and Métis Content in the Educational Program

Integrating First Nations and Métis ways of knowing, content, and perspectives into the education program is an important way of making schools more inclusive for all students. The two sections below discuss integrating First Nations and Métis content into the curriculum and into learning resources.

## The Curriculum

Many studies have shown that a curriculum that features the integration of First Nations and Métis content is one of the factors that contributes to the success of First Nations and Métis students. (Bell et al., 2004; Canada Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Kanu, 2005; Lofthouse, 1995; Melnechenko & Horsman, 1998a, 1998b; Morin, 2004; Robillard, 1993; Wotherspoon and Schissel, 1998)

First Nations and Métis Ways of Knowing, Content and Perspectives are a key element of Saskatchewan's curriculum. The Saskatchewan curriculum is designed so there is centralized infusion of these elements. This means that First Nations and Métis Ways of Knowing, Content and Perspectives are to be an integral part of all curricula, in all classrooms, at all grade levels. They are not an add-on or intended just for classrooms with significant numbers of First Nations and Métis students. This approach to curriculum is based on the belief that incorporation of First Nations and Métis Ways of Knowing, Content and Perspectives promotes in all students understanding and positive attitudes toward First Nations and Métis peoples.

As well as infusing First Nations and Métis Ways of Knowing, Content and Perspectives into the entire curriculum, the Saskatchewan program of studies includes some courses that specifically address First Nations and Métis topics. For example, there are high school courses in Aboriginal Languages and Native Studies that can be taken for credit.

The Saskatchewan curriculum makes provision for Locally-Determined Options which allows school divisions to develop and teach (subject to Saskatchewan Learning regulations) topics or courses that are of particular relevance to the community. School divisions may use this provision to develop and teach courses or units of study specific to the First Nations and Métis in their area.

## Learning Resources

Learning resources include the books, videos, computer programs, online databases, and other educational materials used in the instructional program. Learning resources also include materials in the school library and online resources that students use for research, enrichment and personal reading. It is important that a proportion of the learning resources in every school feature First Nations and Métis Ways of Knowing, Content, and Perspectives. This allows First Nations and Métis students to see themselves, their families and their communities reflected in the resources they use in school. It enables all students to learn more about First Nations History, traditions and culture and to see historic and contemporary events from a First Nations and/or Métis perspective.

## **Useful Websites**

For information about the integration of First Nations and Métis Ways of Knowing, Content, and Perspectives across the curriculum go to the website of Saskatchewan Learning [www.sasked.gov.sk.ca](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca).

For copies of Saskatchewan curriculum guides that focus specifically on First Nations and Métis topics go to Saskatchewan Learning's Evergreen Curriculum at [www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/curr/evergreen/index.shtml](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/curr/evergreen/index.shtml).

## **Online Publications**

***Beyond the Vision: A Study of the Integration of Aboriginal Content in Community Classrooms.*** (2005). Sarah Longman. Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

A research report which describes approaches to the integration of Aboriginal content into classroom teaching and barriers to the integration of Aboriginal content, and makes recommendations for the future.

<http://saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/ResearchAndDevelopment/ResearchReports/IndianAndMetisEducation/05-05.pdf>

***Diverse Voices: Selecting Equitable Resources for Indian and Métis Education.*** (1994). Saskatchewan Learning.

Provides guidelines for selecting learning resources that provide accurate and unbiased presentations of First Nations and Métis people.

[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/policy/diverse/index.html](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/policy/diverse/index.html)

***Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education: A Literature Review with Recommendations.*** (2002). Marie Battiste. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. National Working Group on Education.

A long, scholarly article which describes First Nations ways of knowing and experiencing the world and contrasts these with European ways of knowing and discusses the value of First Nations ways of knowing in the educational program.

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/ikp\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/ikp_e.pdf)

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# The School Board and the Education Program

## The Role of the School Board

The school board is responsible for ensuring an appropriate program of studies for every child. The broad goals of education and the curriculum are provincially determined, but school boards are responsible for making choices and organizing appropriate learning opportunities for the students in their division.

Although the basic curriculum is prescribed by Saskatchewan Learning, *The Education Act, 1995*, gives school boards considerable control over the school program.

### THE EDUCATION ACT

85 (1) ... a board of education shall:

(j) subject to the *Regulations*, authorize and approve the courses of instruction that constitute the instructional program for each school in the school division.

87 (1) ... a board of education may:

(f) subject to the *Regulations*, approve textbooks and other learning resource material and teacher reference.

176 (1) With the approval of the Minister, a board of education or a conseil scolaire may authorize the implementation of a course of study that has been developed within the school division or the francophone education area for use in any of the schools in the school division or the francophone education area, and that a course may be recognized for credit purposes in accordance with the *Regulations*.

179 A board of education or a conseil scolaire may authorize the organization of cultural and athletic activities, youth travel, outdoor education and similar activities as features of the educational program of the schools.



### **School boards are responsible for:**

- Approving the educational program in each school.
- Approving textbooks and other resource materials. This is usually done by development of a materials selection policy; the *Regulations to The Education Act, 1995* require that every school board have such a policy.
- Approving courses of study that are developed locally (Locally-Determined Options). This is usually done by creating a policy which specifies procedures for development and approval of Locally-Determined Options.
- Authorizing cultural and athletic activities.

### **In order to shape the education program in their school division, school boards can:**

- **Establish goals for student outcomes.** School division goals for student outcomes will be influenced by provincial priorities, but boards are certainly not limited by provincial goals. Boards may want to refine provincial goals for student outcomes or set additional goals. The provincial and local student outcome goals will be one of the elements that determine what is taught in the schools.

It is appropriate for a board to set goals concerning outcomes for First Nations and Métis students. For example, one goal might be that the graduation rate for First Nations and Métis students will be the same as the graduation rate for the student population in general. Another goal might be that achievement scores for First Nations and Métis students are comparable to those of the student population in general.

- **Make decisions about those aspects of the education program that are under the board's control.** In some cases this will involve developing a policy, in other cases it will involve reviewing and accepting (or not) recommendations put forward by school staff.
- **Align resources to reflect priorities.** Resources usually include money and staff, but may also include inservice training, facilities and transportation.
- **Establish monitoring systems to assess progress toward achieving goals for student outcomes.** Effective monitoring tells board and staff whether existing programs are supporting progress toward improved student achievement. Monitoring systems should be designed so the school board will know whether the goals it has set concerning outcomes for First Nations and Métis students are being achieved.

## Supporting Students

In situations where outcomes for First Nations and Métis students, such as the school attendance rate and the high school graduation rate, do not reflect goals set by the school board, an appropriate board response is not to lower expectations for First Nations and Métis students, but rather to ensure that First Nations and Métis students see themselves, and their culture and heritage reflected in the school program and to provide appropriate supports for students.

Information about the education program appears throughout this section. Since school boards are responsible for approving the educational program in each school, the board can ensure that First Nations and Métis Ways of Knowing, Content and Perspectives are appropriately integrated into the curriculum, school activities and the school environment.

Other supports that promote learning and facilitate regular attendance for all students include:

- **Academic supports** such as tutoring or enrichment programs, a quiet place to study after school, or consistent access to a computer.
- **Personal supports** such as addictions counselling, personal counselling or anger management programs.
- **Practical supports** such as meal programs, clothing depots/exchanges, transportation or child care for teen moms.
- **Family supports** in situations where the student's family is experiencing dysfunction that interferes with learning.
- **Supports that enable participation in extracurricular activities** such as transportation to and from the extracurricular event and financial assistance to purchase sports equipment, musical instruments, art supplies, and other items needed for extracurricular activities.

School boards alone are not responsible for providing the supports that students require for effective learning. School boards can form partnerships with First Nations governments, First Nations and Métis organizations, and government agencies that serve children and youth (such as health, justice and social services) to provide supports in a consistent and coordinated manner.

Two provincial government initiatives focus on supports and partnerships to foster student learning.

- **The Community Schools Program** aims to establish schools as centres of learning and hope for children, families and communities. The four key components of the Community Schools Program are: the learning program, family and community partnerships, integrated services, and community development. About 12 percent of the schools in Saskatchewan have been designated as Community Schools (Saskatchewan Learning, n.d.a). These schools receive enhanced funding in order to provide the supports that students need for learning. However, implementing the community school philosophy doesn't depend on enhanced funding. Creating family school partnerships, establishing policies and procedures that foster shared decision making and shared leadership, and collaborating with other agencies in the community are ways of doing business and depend more on attitude and approach than on money for success.
- **School<sup>PLUS</sup>** is a concept rather than a program. In the School<sup>PLUS</sup> model, schools improve student learning by delivering a strong learning program and serving as centres for social, health and other services for children and their families. "Achieving School<sup>PLUS</sup> is a shared responsibility. It engages families, students, educators and community members in actively working together with human service systems to give Saskatchewan children and youth what they need to succeed" (Saskatchewan Learning, n.d.b.).

### ***Useful Websites***

For more **information about the Community Schools Program** and **School<sup>PLUS</sup>** go to the website of **Saskatchewan Learning's Community Education Unit**  
[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol\\_eval\\_community\\_ed/](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol_eval_community_ed/).

### ***Online Publications***

***A Review of First Nations Special Education Policies and Funding Directions within the Canadian Context.*** (2002). Gerry Hurton. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Minister's National Working Group on Education.

Describes the historical context for special education; summarizes research relating to First Nations special education, special education policy and funding trends; outlines INAC policies and practices relating to special education; and makes recommendations.

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/kw/spe\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/kw/spe_e.pdf)

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# Classroom Teachers

## Effective Teachers

The influence of teachers on students' learning and their enjoyment of schooling is well documented. **Teachers do make a difference.**

Effective teachers of First Nations and Métis students have the following characteristics (Bell, 2004; Melnechenko & Horsman, 1998a):

- The ability to build warm relationships with students and earn students' trust. They are friendly, understanding and less critical than other teachers. They can empathize with students, understand their world and listen to students.
- The ability to reach out to the First Nations and Métis community, develop relationships within the First Nations and Métis community, and become involved in community life.
- A teaching style that builds a family-like atmosphere in the classroom, recognizes cultural diversity, and relies on the use of cooperative and group learning rather than direct instruction and classroom competition.
- An ability to give students considerable freedom within predetermined limits. They “set standards and maintain control while allowing students responsibility and freedom to learn” (Melnechenko & Horsman, 1998a, p. 12).
- Expectations for First Nations and Métis students that are consistent with those for other students in the system. Effective teachers do not expect less of First Nations and Métis students.

## First Nations and Métis Role Models

Children learn by observing and interacting with people in the world around them. They model their behaviour on the behaviour of other people in their immediate environment and develop a vision for their future that reflects the possibilities they see for themselves.

For these reasons, First Nations and Métis teachers, educational associates and other school staff are important. They provide models of success for students.

However, full responsibility for teaching students about First Nations and Métis culture and heritage should not be placed on the shoulders of First Nations and Métis teachers. These teachers will have varying degrees of knowledge about First Nations and Métis traditions depending on their personal experiences and academic studies. Responsibility for teaching about First Nations and Métis culture and heritage can be shared by all teachers in the school.

Aboriginal teachers may find themselves in a particularly awkward predicament, both professionally and personally.

They are often burdened with an expectation on the part of many administrators and teaching colleagues that they are the de facto experts regarding First Nations and Métis cultures and histories and that they should take a leadership role in all aspects of Aboriginal education (St. Denis et al., 1998: 4-6; Bouvier, 2004: 39). To resist these inappropriate and often overwhelming expectations takes considerable courage. At the same time, however, Aboriginal teachers are given the message (sometimes none too subtly) that if they do not show leadership on Aboriginal education initiatives, no one else will. This dilemma is compounded by an accountability environment where what is “really important” are certain subjects (mathematics, the sciences, and language arts/literacy), not Aboriginal education (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006, pp. 25-26).

### ***Useful Websites***

For information about First Nations and Métis teacher education programs in Saskatchewan go to SaskNetWork [http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/html/learners/educationtraining/aboriginal\\_teachered.htm](http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/html/learners/educationtraining/aboriginal_teachered.htm). SaskNetWork provides descriptions and contact information for the three “TEP” programs as well as the program at the First Nations University of Canada.

### ***Online Publications***

*Diverting the Mainstream: Aboriginal Teachers Reflect on Their Experiences in the Saskatchewan Provincial School System.* (1998). Louise Legare et al. Saskatchewan Education.

Interviews with 38 First Nations and Métis teachers with experience in the provincial school system provide information about the role and experiences of these teachers.

[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/diverting.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/diverting.pdf)

***Okiskinahamakewak – Aboriginal Teachers in Saskatchewan Publicly Funded Schools: Responding to the Flux.*** (1998). Verna St. Denis, Rita Bouvier, and Marie Battiste. Saskatchewan Education, Research Networking Project.

A research project that investigated the experiences of First Nations and Métis teachers in Saskatchewan's education system and makes recommendations for Saskatchewan Learning.

[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/resptoflux.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/resptoflux.pdf)

***The Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Teachers in Saskatchewan Schools.*** (1994). James McNinch. Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

Describes steps that school boards can take to recruit and retain First Nations and Métis teachers.

[http://saskschoolboards.ca/research/education\\_equity/94-10.htm](http://saskschoolboards.ca/research/education_equity/94-10.htm)

***Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Training: Implications for First Nations Education: A Literature Review.*** (2002). Jo-ann Archibalt et al. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. National Working Group on Education.

Addresses issues relating to the need for an adequate number of appropriately trained teachers for First Nations students and, more specifically, issues relating to the training, recruitment and retention of First Nations teachers.

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/kw/tec\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/kw/tec_e.pdf)

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## Early Childhood Education

Much of the research done on First Nations and Métis education points to the importance of early childhood education programs as the foundation for positive learning experiences and school success. Early childhood development, including the prenatal stage, is the most important stage in lifelong learning, as it provides the developmental foundation for all later learning and increases the likelihood of success. (Battiste & McLean, 2005)

In education, as in health, childhood is the foundational stage. Traditional family life provided a firm foundation of security and encouragement for Aboriginal children. Aboriginal families of today are not always able to provide this. Parents may be hampered by the effects of poverty, alienation, residential school experience, and dysfunctional family or other relationships. Many Aboriginal children arrive at school with special needs for understanding and support to liberate their in-born capacity for learning.

Like all children, Aboriginal children need to master the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual tasks of early childhood. Equally, they need grounding in their identity as Aboriginal people. (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, p. 18)

Effective early childhood education programs provide children with a positive self-concept, a desire for learning, and an opportunity to develop broad social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills that will serve them well in many different situations and contexts (Battiste & McLean, 2005). For example, effective early childhood education programs aim to develop a curiosity about books and an enjoyment in being read to rather than memorization of the alphabet. They aim to develop a love of music (both First Nations and Métis and contemporary) and a sense of rhythm rather than memorization of any particular song.

In Saskatchewan, the provincial government funds a Prekindergarten program for three- and four-year old children who can benefit from additional supports such as speech, language and social development programming. The program gives young children extra attention so they will be prepared for Kindergarten and Grade 1. Most of the Prekindergarten programs are located in Community Schools.

The provincial government also funds KidsFirst, a community-based program for vulnerable children up to the age of five and their families.

In addition, the federal government funds various programs for young children and their families. Aboriginal HeadStart is a community-based program currently being offered through Health Canada. It targets Aboriginal children from birth to the age of six years, with an emphasis on three- to five-year-old children.

## **Online Publications**

***Early Childhood Development: Models and Studies.*** (2002). Sarah Cox. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Education Renewal Initiative Secretariat.

Describes both general and Aboriginal specific models of early childhood development programs. Summarizes economic and social factors that affect the health and well-being of First Nations and Métis children.

[www.ainc.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/eal\\_e.html](http://www.ainc.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/eal_e.html)

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## Parent and Community Engagement

There is a huge body of research showing that when families are engaged in their children's education, students achieve higher grades, are more likely to stay in school, have better attendance and more positive attitudes toward school (Kavanagh, n.d.). This is true of all students, regardless of where they live, their cultural backgrounds, or their socioeconomic status.

Strong involvement of First Nations and Métis families and communities in their children's development and education is entirely consistent with First Nations educational traditions. "Traditional First Nations education was largely an extended family nurturing system in which the young developed vital character and life skills attributes" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1988).

Even though engagement of family and community in children's learning promotes student success and is a key element of traditional First Nations and Métis culture, many obstacles inhibit that engagement. These include:

- **Many adults have had bad personal experiences at school** – Many First Nations and Métis adults have experienced failure, humiliation, and pain at school. Some Elders – the grandparents and great-grandparents of today's students – perceive schools in terms of the residential school.
- **Family members don't feel welcome at school** – School staff members may, intentionally or unintentionally, patronize family members, talk down to them, devalue their contribution or ignore them. Family members may feel that their values are not respected by the school staff and become disillusioned if their attempts to become involved make no difference. Alienation of parents is increased when teachers do not contact parents unless there is trouble with their children. Even when none of these things occurs, a school that does not reflect First Nations and Métis cultures and values can seem unwelcoming.
- **Schools and teachers may not know how to increase parent and community involvement** – Teacher education programs may not provide specific training in parent and community involvement and many teachers and principals are uncertain about how to establish positive relationships with families and communities. In addition, conventional power relationships between teachers and parents can block effective communication.
- **Parents and families may not know how to help their children** – Parents may feel they do not have the knowledge and skills to help their children. This is particularly true of parents with low literacy levels. They may be willing to assist, but don't know how.
- **Fitting learning activities in at home can be difficult** – Some parents experience poverty and providing for food, clothing and shelter takes priority over schooling. Working parents may be juggling job and home responsibilities and may have limited time to become involved in their child's education (Kavanagh, n.d.).

There's a lot that schools can do to encourage family engagement. Research shows that three key factors appear to explain parents' decision to become engaged in their children's education:

- their belief that it is important, necessary and permissible for them to do so;
- how comfortable they are in helping their children with schoolwork; and
- whether they feel they have been invited through meaningful opportunities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Six different types of family engagement activities are possible (Kavanagh, n.d.):

- **Assisting with the creation of safe and supportive home environments** – This includes supporting positive parenting, helping families meet their basic needs, and encouraging parents to emphasize the value of learning.
- **Designing effective two-way communication strategies** – Parents have a right to be informed about school programs and students' progress using parent-friendly language. They also have a right to express to the school their concerns about their child and their hopes and dreams for their child.
- **Creating caring welcoming environments for parents' involvement in the school** – Warm, welcoming, respectful staff members are important in creating an environment that fosters family involvement. So is a physical and educational environment that reflects First Nations and Métis culture, history and traditions.
- **Helping parents to assist with home learning activities** – Research shows that parents want schools and teachers to advise them about how to help their child at home at the various grade levels. Parents can be encouraged to establish a daily routine and to schedule daily homework times. Family literacy programs and similar activities where people of all ages learn together can be helpful when parents feel they lack the skills to help their children.

- **Involving parents as key partners in educational decision-making** – Parental participation in school and school board decision-making makes that decision-making more effective for students and schools. It also gives parents more of a sense of ownership and commitment. In order to ensure maximum participation it may be appropriate to provide family members with information about opportunities for involvement and with training relating to responsibilities, meeting procedures and the like.
- **Integrating school and community agencies to support students and families** – Schools can work with cultural and recreational groups, and health, social service and justice agencies to provide access to and coordinate support services for children and families. Schools can also work with community agencies to ensure that the educational, social and health needs of parents are met, so that parents are better able to support their children's education (Kavanagh, n.d.).

### **Online Publications**

*The Role of Parental and Community Involvement in the Success of First Nations Learners. A Review of the Literature.* (n.d.). Barbara Kavanagh. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Minister's National Working Group on First Nations Education.

Describes the importance of parent and community involvement, identifies six different types of parent and community involvement and makes recommendations for the Federal Government.

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/pae\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/pae_e.html)

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## First Nations and Métis Elders and Traditional Ceremonies

**“The over-arching benefit of involving Aboriginal Elders, community workers, cultural advisors and other resource people in the school is that Aboriginal students see themselves and their cultural heritage reflected and respected within the school. This helps students develop positive self-esteem, which in turn helps them achieve their potential in school and in life”** (Saskatchewan Education, 2001, p. 3).

Other benefits include:

- **Building relationships with the community** – First Nations and Métis resource people can enhance communication and relationships between the school and the First Nations and Métis communities and help parents feel welcome in the school (Saskatchewan Education, 2001).
- **Providing support for students and teachers** – Students may be more willing to share concerns with an Elder than with a peer or a teacher. Teachers may seek out Elders for practical information about First Nations and Métis culture and traditions or for personal advice (Saskatchewan Education, 2001).
- **Enhancing awareness and knowledge of First Nations and Métis ways of knowing, perspectives, culture and traditions** – First Nations and Métis resource people can help students and teachers better understand First Nations and Métis perspectives and help schools staff integrate First Nations and Métis content in the education program (Saskatchewan Education, 2001).

A series of questions about the involvement of Elders and other First Nations and Métis resource people in the school program follow. There is no single “correct” or “best” answer to any of these questions. First Nations and Métis traditions and protocols are quite different. As well, traditions and protocols vary from one First Nation to another. There can be significant differences between the northern and southern parts of the province. School boards and communities, also, will vary in their perspectives and in the types of relationships that have been established between the board and First Nations and Métis groups.

School boards should work in collaboration with local Métis and First Nations organizations, tribal councils and/or band councils when addressing the questions below. The procedures used should be those that are accepted by the school board and the local First Nations and Métis community.

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**Question:**        **Who is an Elder?**

**Response:**        Elders are people who are respected by their community for their knowledge, wisdom and/or personal characteristics. Elders are usually older people. Their knowledge and wisdom comes from their own life experience and because they are keepers of the knowledge that has been passed from one generation to another through the oral tradition.

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**Question:**        **How do we identify an Elder?**

**Response:**        Elders are identified by the community. School boards may want to consult local First Nations and Métis organizations when identifying Elders, as these organizations know who is respected in the community and whose knowledge and wisdom qualifies them to be an Elder. People who aggressively promote themselves as Elders to the school board may not be true Elders. True Elders are humble and kind. They receive respect because of their personal qualities and knowledge, and do not promote themselves.

**Considerations:** Most school boards have human resources policies that prescribe a competitive process for employee selection. This process typically involves advertising, application with resume, interview, reference checks, and selection by an administrator or panel. The process for identifying an Elder is quite different and school board human resources departments may have to develop policies specifically for this situation.

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**Question:**        **How do we approach an Elder?**

**Response:**        Seek the assistance of a knowledgeable intermediary to ensure that the appropriate protocols are followed. The protocols vary from community to community and may involve presenting the Elder with a gift. The gift is a token of respect, not a payment, and it may or may not have monetary value.

**Considerations:** A gift of tobacco is often traditional for an Elder. However, this may not be appropriate in an educational situation because schools are smoke-free environments and because schools do everything they can to prevent students from smoking. Ask a knowledgeable intermediary for suggestions concerning an appropriate gift. This aspect of an Elder's program should be addressed before the Elders program is initiated (Saskatchewan Education, 2001).

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**Question:** **Must Elders provide a criminal record check?**

**Response:** Most school divisions have a policy that anyone who is in contact with children must provide a criminal records check. To do otherwise is to risk exposing children to harm and to risk a lawsuit for the school board.

**Considerations:** This process can be made easier if you pay the cost of the criminal records check and assist the Elder with the paperwork involved.

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**Question:** **What are the expectations of Elders who work in schools?**

**Response:** Elders can play a wide variety of roles in schools including:

- providing a positive role model
- assisting with curriculum adaptations
- advising students, teachers, administrators, and school board members on cultural matters
- direct teaching of students
- counselling students, teachers, administrators, and school board members
- working with students and their families

**Considerations:** Expectations of Elders and other community resource people should be defined in order to prevent confusion. This can be done through a job description or through an outline of the role of the Elder. Elders' responsibilities will vary from one school to another depending on the nature of the school community and the Elder's area of expertise. Therefore, job/role descriptions are best developed at the school level rather than the school division level.

Elders each have their own areas of expertise. A single Elder may not have the expertise or desire to play all the roles listed above. Thus, it may be appropriate to employ more than one Elder with different areas of expertise or to adjust the job description to reflect the expectations of a particular Elder. (Saskatchewan Education, 2001)

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**Question:** **How do we pay Elders?**

**Response:** Elders' knowledge, expertise and time have value. Elders should be fairly reimbursed for their contribution to the school. At the same time, however, some Elders may be uncomfortable talking about money matters. Elders' pay will depend on whether they work full- or part-time. It is a good idea to ask local First Nations organizations about appropriate payment for Elders and to check with other school boards regarding their practices in this regard. (Saskatchewan Education, 2001)

**Considerations:** In the interests of fairness and consistency, school boards may decide to tie Elders' payments to the salary schedule for teachers, educational assistants or other school personnel.

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**Question:**           **What supports do Elders need?**

**Response:**

- Elders who are in the school frequently will probably want a desk or other personal space. Some Elders may need an office or seminar room where they can meet with individuals or small groups.
- The Elders who work in various schools across the division may want to get together occasionally to share information, discuss issues, or enrich their knowledge. The content of such sessions should be determined by the Elders themselves, not laid out by the school division. These sessions might feature formal or informal discussions among the participants, guest speakers, visits to each other's schools, and the like.

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**Question:**           **What role do traditional ceremonies play in the school program?**

**Response:**           Saskatchewan Learning recommends that, in most situations, traditional ceremonies are the responsibility of the home and the community, not the school. However, there may be unique factors which make these ceremonies appropriate in some schools and some situations. Seek the advice of the school's Elder in this regard and accept the wisdom of the Elder.

**Considerations:**   If a school or situation in your division is one where traditional ceremonies are appropriate, be sure to make provision for both First Nations and non-First Nations students who do not wish to participate. There is diversity within the First Nations community and different people express their spirituality in different ways. Some school boards require a signed consent form from the student's legal guardian as a condition of participation. Alternative activities that are just as interesting and engaging should be provided for students and teachers who choose not to participate.

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# School Boards Can ...

*In order to promote success for all students, school boards can:*

***Develop policies*** that define the board's expectations regarding:

- Desired outcomes for all students
- Parent and community involvement in education
- First Nations Elders and resource people in the schools
- Traditional ceremonies in the schools

***Align resources*** to reflect the board's expectations. For example, if the board develops policy supporting an Elders program in the schools, that program will need to be supported with resources, such as money and transportation. If the board sets goals for student outcomes, those goals will need to be supported with resources for the education program.

***Establish monitoring systems*** to ensure that the board's policies are being implemented as intended. The board must identify the information it needs to obtain through the monitoring system and request that information from the director of education.

***Celebrate the successes*** of students, families, teachers and the school division as a whole. Improved student outcomes, increased parent and family involvement, and strong relationships with First Nations governments, First Nations and Métis organizations and community agencies are all things to celebrate.

***Learn more about all the topics addressed in this advisory*** by attending a Saskatchewan School Boards Association workshop on First Nations and Métis education. Check the Association website ([www.saskschoolboards.ca](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca)) for dates and locations.

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## To Think About/Talk About



1. *How do you define student success?*
  
2. *What policies and procedures does your board use to approve the education program in each school?*
  - *How do you ensure that First Nations and Métis students see themselves and their culture reflected in the education program of the school they attend?*
  
3. *What policies have you developed concerning:*
  - *desired outcomes for all students?*
  - *parent and community involvement in education?*
  - *First Nations Elders and resource people in the schools?*
  - *traditional ceremonies in the schools?*
  
4. *What monitoring processes have you set up to assess the extent to which these policies are being implemented?*

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## For More Information

The websites listed below are good sources of information about First Nations and Métis issues. All websites listed are large and multidimensional.

### **Aboriginal Canada Portal** [www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca)

The Aboriginal Canada Portal provides a single window to Canadian Aboriginal online resources, contacts, information, and government programs and services. It has sections for Elders, women, youth and kids, a job centre and information about upcoming events plus hundreds of links to others sites, including educational sites and the sites of Aboriginal organizations. Information can be accessed by topic or searched by province. A very large and comprehensive portal.

### **Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre** [www.ccl-cca.ca/aboriginallearning/home/default.asp](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/aboriginallearning/home/default.asp)

The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre is a program of the Canadian Council on Learning. The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre is a consortium made up of more than 80 members across Canada working together to create a path for improvement of Aboriginal learning in Canada. The Centre's website provides research documents and other publications relating to Aboriginal learning, information about research in progress and upcoming events, and links to other organizations.

### **Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN)** [www.fsin.com](http://www.fsin.com)

The FSIN represents most of the First Nations in Saskatchewan. Its goals include protection of treaties and treaty rights and fostering of progress in the economic, educational and social endeavours of First Nation people. This website provides a great deal of information about the FSIN including its history, governing structure, members and programs.

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)** [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca)

INAC is the federal government department responsible for meeting the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nation and Inuit peoples and Northerners. Its large website includes information about Canada's Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal and treaty issues, economic and social development, and federal government initiatives and programs. The full text of all the treaties that affect Saskatchewan is provided. There is a section on classroom resources which includes items for both student and teacher use. The site also includes many reports and research papers.

**Métis Nation – Saskatchewan** [www.metisnation-sask.com](http://www.metisnation-sask.com)

This website offers information about the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan including its governance, programs and services, and upcoming events. There is information about Métis culture, rights and governance and the flag of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan. The website provides online access to the “New Breed” magazine.

**Office of the Treaty Commission** [www.otc.ca](http://www.otc.ca)

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner is an independent and impartial office with a mandate to facilitate exploratory treaty discussions between the federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and the Government of Canada. The OTC website provides information about treaty issues, the numbered treaties in Saskatchewan, and treaty land entitlements. It provides several maps, fact sheets and online videos on these topics. It also provides classroom materials for both teacher and student use on topics related to treaties.

**Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations** [www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca](http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca)

Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations is a provincial government department that provides overall direction for the provincial government’s approach to issues concerning First Nations and Métis peoples. Its website includes information about demographics, First Nations and Métis history, treaty land entitlement issues, and provincial government programs and initiatives. There are maps that show the location of Saskatchewan’s First Nations, Métis Nation areas, and areas encompassed by the numbered treaties in Saskatchewan.

**Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre** [www.sicc.sk.ca](http://www.sicc.sk.ca)

The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre is an agency of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations that promotes and enhances the cultural values and traditions of the First Nations of Saskatchewan. This website provides photos and printed information about many aspects of traditional and contemporary First Nations life. Of particular interest is the Saskatchewan Indian languages section of the site.

**Saskatchewan Learning** [www.sasklearning.gov.sk.ca](http://www.sasklearning.gov.sk.ca)

Saskatchewan Learning is responsible for prekindergarten to grade 12 education in this province. It develops educational policy and curriculum. School boards are responsible for delivery of education.

Saskatchewan Learning’s website provides access to:

- The full text of all Native Studies and Aboriginal Languages curriculum guides (through the Evergreen Curriculum)
- Information about the Department’s First Nations and Métis Education Branch. The Branch’s programs are described in detail and the full text of numerous documents is available.
- Information about programs such as School<sup>PLUS</sup> and Community Schools which help support Aboriginal students.

**Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture** [www.metismuseum.com](http://www.metismuseum.com)

The Virtual Museum is a project of the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research and a rich source of information about Métis history and culture. It includes video clips, music files, oral histories in Métis heritage languages, historical photographs, photographs of historical and contemporary artwork, and print information about all aspects of Métis life – past and present. It also includes many links to other Aboriginal websites.

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