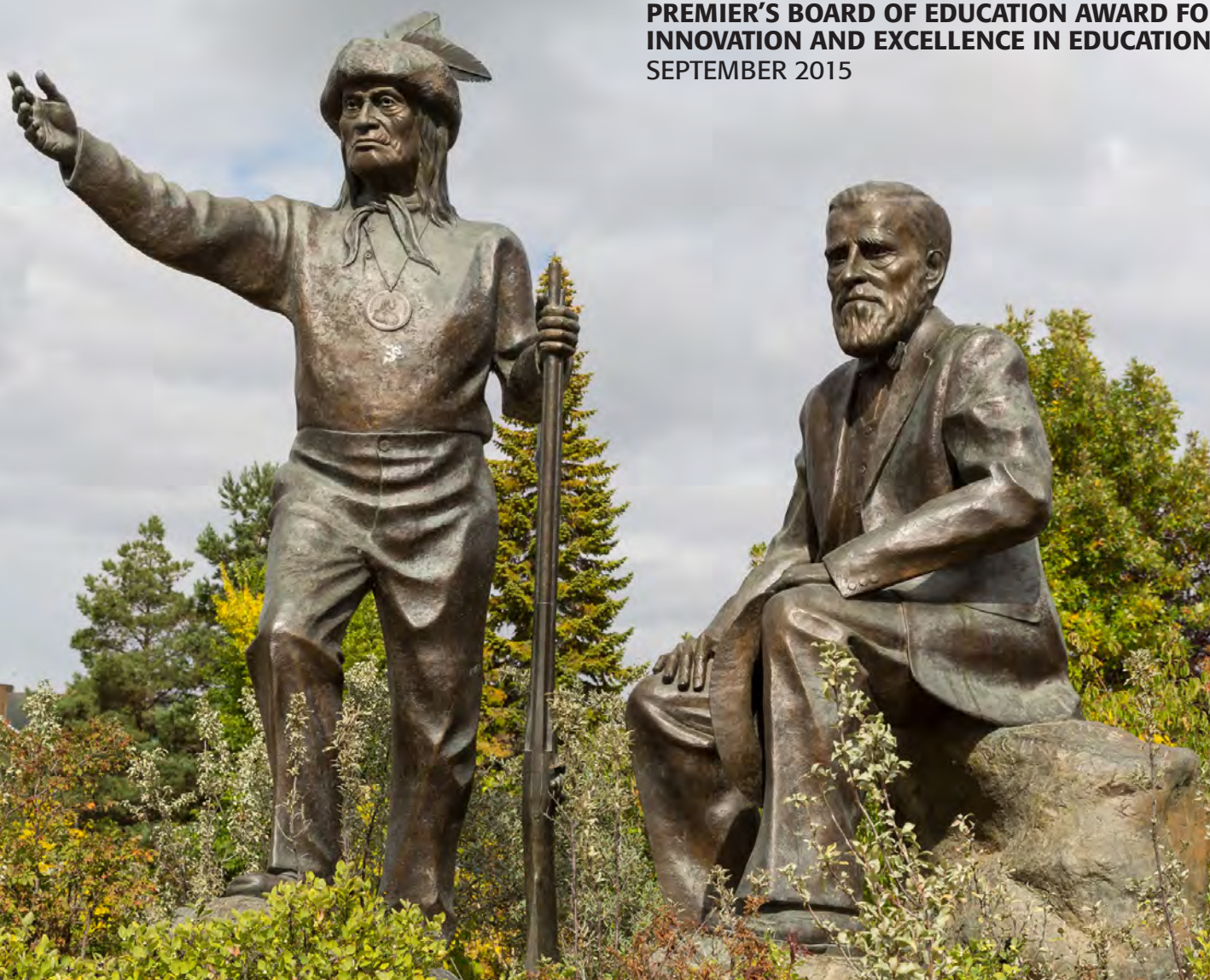


Oyāte iwaš'aķa Ohna woeçon wašte Kāga

Strengthening Community Building Opportunity

AN ALLIANCE AGREEMENT

PREMIER'S BOARD OF EDUCATION AWARD FOR
INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 2015



Saskatoon Public Schools
Inspiring Learning



School Division: Saskatoon Public Schools
Partner: Whitecap Dakota First Nation
Mr. Ray Morrison, Board Chair, Saskatoon Board of Education
Chief Darcy Bear, Chief, Whitecap Dakota First Nation
Mr. Barry MacDougall, Director, Saskatoon Public Schools

Introduction

The Whitecap Dakota First Nation (WDFN) has much to be proud of throughout its history. A critical step to ensure a continued proud and stable community has been the emphasis this progressive First Nation has placed on its educational program. The value placed on creating positive educational outcomes for all members of the First Nation is particularly evident in the partnership created with Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS).

Whitecap Dakota First Nation is located 26 kilometers south of Saskatoon and has over 500 residents. Saskatoon Public Schools is the largest school division in the province. The division operates 44 elementary schools, 11 secondary schools, two associate schools and one alliance school. The division serves more than 23,500 students and employs approximately 2,400 professional and support staff.

For the past two decades the Whitecap Dakota First Nation maintained a tuition agreement with Saskatoon Public Schools that allowed Whitecap students to attend Saskatoon Public Schools following their K-6 education at Whitecap Dakota Elementary School (WDES). (In 2014 students began to transition to SPS in their grade 5 year.) During the 1990s this agreement began to evolve into an educational partnership that focused upon improving educational outcomes and facilitated the transition of Whitecap Dakota First Nation students to both middle years and secondary programming in Saskatoon Public Schools.

In the past few years, the relationship between the two communities and education systems has developed into a more formal educational partnership that shares employees, professional development opportunities, research, and a variety of professional services such as human resources, facility, and technology expertise. The sharing of human resource began with the secondment of a principal from Saskatoon Public Schools to Whitecap Dakota Elementary School. Further discussions led to the idea of creating an 'alliance' school – a First Nations school allied to Saskatoon Public Schools that remained within the jurisdiction of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation.



Chief Darcy Bear of Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Ray Morrison, Chair, Saskatoon Board of Education, signing the Educational Partnership Memorandum of Agreement.

In order to move this educational partnership forward, the Whitecap Dakota First Nation (WDFN) and Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS) agreed that:

- The students of the school will receive excellent and consistent professional services. The recruitment and retention of teachers for the First Nation elementary school will be greatly enhanced through this partnership.
- The teachers of the school will have the same professional opportunities as those employed in Saskatoon Public Schools. This includes membership in the STF/STA, preparation time, and professional development opportunities.
- The students and families will receive adequate and equitable professional services such as access to counsellors, educational psychologists and speech language pathologists.

Through this 'alliance' model the WDES prekindergarten to grade 4 programming would provide a similar educational experience to that of any other school in Saskatoon and area, yet flexibility and jurisdiction would still

remain with the First Nation. Whitecap Dakota First Nation would partner with SPS and other stakeholders to develop resources to help strengthen the WDFN students' understanding of their history, culture and language.

A key aspect of the 'alliance' agreement is the recruitment and retention of professional staff to the Whitecap Dakota Elementary School. Professional staff are recruited and supported with the assistance of Saskatoon Public Schools, thereby attracting excellent professional teachers who are part of a large school system known for its exceptional professional development and support services.

Whitecap Dakota Elementary School currently offers classes from prekindergarten to grade 4. The students in grade 5 to grade 12 attend public schools in Saskatoon for the remainder of their educational career. It's anticipated this agreement will create conditions for smooth transitions for Whitecap students and families.

The Whitecap Dakota First Nation is a leading First Nation in our province. The community's progressive and energetic attitudes toward economic development, community infrastructure, and its education system and partnerships are evident. The partnership between Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools is a joint effort in ensuring appropriate supports are in place for young First Nation students. Much can be learned and achieved from this model of working together. An 'alliance' of Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools embeds a quality education program with culture, language, and ceremony. The fiscal support and resources have improved an already strong partnership that provides the students of Whitecap Dakota First Nation with powerful opportunities to be successful in their education. These students, our children, are key to the ongoing progress and positive future for the Whitecap Dakota First Nation.

Role of the Saskatoon Board of Education

The Saskatoon Board of Education has played an active role in providing leadership and support to the 'alliance' agreement. Ray Morrison, Chair of the Saskatoon Board of Education, along with Chief Darcy Bear and former Director of Education George Rathwell presented at the Canadian School Boards Association Congress in 2012 on the evolving partnership between Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools. In addition, as part of the 'alliance' agreement a joint governance committee (educational authority) was established that meets twice a year to review the agreement and make decisions moving forward. This 'educational authority' works as a jointly established school board between Saskatoon Public Schools and the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. This board governs both the prekindergarten – grade 4 school on the First Nation and oversees the educational partnership that governs the education of grade 5 – grade 12 students in Saskatoon Public Schools.

The 'educational authority' is comprised of a majority representation of members of the First Nation and appointed members of the Saskatoon Board of Education. This board works closely with WDFN education council and a Superintendent of Education from Saskatoon Public Schools. Board Chair Ray Morrison has been an integral member of this partnership for several years. He stated: *"This is a historic agreement and it comes after a long journey. Today is not the end, just the next step in an evolving relationship of mutual respect and collaboration. It's about the future for our students going forward."* The Saskatoon Board of Education continues to play an important role as the partnership between SPS and WDFN evolves. As a result of this 'alliance' agreement, the boundaries of the division's Ward 7 have been expanded to include Whitecap Dakota First Nation.



Goal of the Board Priorities

The goal of the agreement is to enhance educational opportunities and supports for all Whitecap Dakota students. This new education 'alliance' model brings together accountable governance processes, supported by funding levels for WDFN that are comparable to that of the provincial education system, and effective programming and teaching, resulting in a high quality education system for the Whitecap Dakota community. The overarching goal of this partnership remains the same: to improve student learning, maximize learning outcomes, and able the smooth transition of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation students into a large urban school system. Intentionally, the

partnership objectives align with the two strategic priorities of Saskatoon Public Schools – *Literacy for Life* and *Collegiate Renewal*.



Whitecap Dakota Elementary School has actively embraced Saskatoon Public Schools' key kindergarten – grade 8 learning priority of *Literacy for Life*. Student data guides decisions for targeting specific resources, focused professional development, and supporting students with small group intensive support.



Collegiate Renewal is the grades 9 – 12 learning priority for Saskatoon Public Schools that directly supports the WDFN students attending secondary SPS schools. This strategic priority is transforming collegiates to improve student engagement and learning by investing in teacher professional development, developing centres of excellence at a number of high schools, strengthening smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary education, strengthening caring relationships, and offering an abundance of exciting programs. The critical importance of high graduation rates is particularly evident on the First Nation as it has experienced recent economic and employment growth.

The 'alliance' agreement and educational partnership allows for close relationships and monitoring of students to ensure student retention and on-time completion of grade 12. This is supported by a Student Transition Worker whose costs are shared between WDFN and SPS. The Student Transition Worker is responsible for facilitating and monitoring transitions, and assisting in determining the success of any new initiatives in student transitions and support. The shared Student Transition Worker position is a long-standing support for the youth of WDFN, in place since 2002.



Whitecap Dakota First Nation brings to the partnership a strong cultural identity it shares with all students across the division and within the broader community. An example of this is the co-planning and hosting of a Powwow available to all SPS and WDFN students, families, and community members. Much can be learned from this model of reciprocal sharing and working together. With sharing of understandings comes the strengthening of community across the division. Shared services are more effective and efficient with the greater likelihood that all students will experience success.

Innovation

After a more than 20-year partnership, Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools signed a historic education agreement on October 24, 2014. Through the partnership, the school division welcomed Whitecap Dakota Elementary School as an 'alliance' school, making it the first on-reserve school to be a part of a Saskatchewan school division. All Whitecap Dakota Elementary School teachers are now employed by Saskatoon Public Schools. "Our community and our children have certainly enjoyed the benefits of our partnerships with Saskatoon Public Schools to date and we look to build on that," said Chief Darcy Bear of Whitecap Dakota First Nation. "The agreement we are signing today is a product of our recent efforts, with the support and involvement of the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan, to ensure Whitecap children have access to the same range of services as kids in Saskatoon, while continuing to receive Dakota language and cultural teachings." The agreement recognizes and respects Whitecap's inherent jurisdiction over education of its members and establishes a co-governance mechanism to oversee school operations. "This agreement solidifies our many years of collaboration and cooperation with Whitecap Dakota First Nation, all of which has been focused on doing what is best for students," said Saskatoon Board of Education Chair Ray Morrison. "While this agreement formally welcomes Whitecap Dakota Elementary School into our division, it will lead to enriching opportunities for all our students and staff members. Public education is about being open to all and I am proud to lead our division as we take this historic step forward in that regard."

Sustainability

The four-year agreement states that federal funding for the education of Whitecap students is distributed through Saskatoon Public Schools. The partnership agreement is in effect from September 1, 2014 to August 31, 2018, with provisions for renewal. It is supported by a companion funding agreement between Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS) and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) with the same four-year term.

The partnership agreement provides full transparency and accountability between the parties. As a principle, the parties agree that federal funding received will be retained for Whitecap students; SPS taxpayers will not subsidize the operation of Whitecap Dakota Elementary School. For example, WDFN will use its own revenues from taxation and economic enterprise to supplement federal funding and support Dakota language and culture programming and other programs unique to Whitecap Dakota Elementary School. The new arrangements are supported by a pilot funding approach by the Government of Canada, which applies the existing provincial education funding formula to the operation of Whitecap Dakota Elementary School.

Cost of the Innovation Related to Benefits Achieved

The prekindergarten – grade 12 education budget is submitted with the intention to address the shared priorities of all educational stakeholders in the 21st century, to ensure better educational outcomes, and to improve the quality of education for students in their respective communities. The ‘alliance’ budget was developed to meet the community and educational needs of the student population residing on WDFN.

Whitecap Dakota First Nation takes the position that the fiscal resources will achieve parity in per capita funding between First Nations and provincial education system. This will assist the WDFN elementary school to attain similar educational standards and structures as schools anywhere in the province of Saskatchewan, but particularly the schools of the nearby Saskatoon Public Schools’ system, where the majority of these students will transition for their grade 5 -12 education. The funding will provide the necessary supports for transition to attend schools within the wider provincial educational system.

Whitecap Dakota First Nation requested funding for these basic educational purposes but also sought a sustainable, predictable, and stable five-year funding model to strengthen the governance and accountability necessary for a systemic approach to the education of its children and young adults.

There are currently indicators of improved educational outcomes for the students of WDFN as standardized measures have been put in place with regard to literacy and numeracy. The standard measures used are those of Saskatoon Public Schools. The critical importance of high graduation rates are also of high priority and SPS has several initiatives in place to support First Nations students.

Client Support for the Innovation

“The students of any school are the focus of all efforts. Every community wants the best for their children. ‘The best’ can only be achieved by working together. Whitecap Dakota First Nation is well-known for its strong Dakota culture/traditions and Saskatoon Public Schools is recognized for delivering an impressive education program. It makes sense to come together to form a partnership. Partnerships create possibilities.” (Dean Swan, Principal of Whitecap Dakota Elementary School).

“I like that they have the opportunity to attend school in the city because they get to meet new people.” (Kim Buffalo, resident of WDFN).

“The parents in the community thought it would be an easier transition for their young people to get into the city and into SPS schools, make friends, and access those facilities at a younger age so we’re hoping that will help smooth those transitions.” (Ray Morrison, SPS Board Chair).

“The partnership between Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools has provided me with the truly unique experience of teaching in a small community and First Nation, while belonging to a large, world-class school division. While it has always been a privilege to work for one of the most successful First Nations in North America, it was not until the partnership between these two enterprises that I truly had access to such a wealth of professional development opportunities, teacher resources, mentorship, and support. Furthermore, joining the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation has provided me with wonderful benefits, representation, and a sense of security within my career. This partnership has truly changed my life as an educator, and I personally feel it is one of the smartest endeavors that I have ever witnessed in my many years in the field of education. It is truly exciting to be a part of this historical partnership.” (Lynn Kuny, Teacher at Whitecap Dakota First Nation).

"I like that they go to a Saskatoon school for their middle years education because it gives them time develop lifelong friendships. These friendships will help them feel comfortable/sense of belonging and will provide them with support as they transition to high school." (Cecilia Thomas, resident of WDFN).

"I like that there are more students at my new school because I have way more friends." (Vincent Parenteau, WDFN student attending Buena Vista School).

"At the end of the day, all of our students end up in the Saskatoon Public School Division system. Through our partnership we have always talked about ensuring our students have smooth transitions." (Chief Darcy Bear, Chief of WDFN).

"This has been a very positive partnership 20 years in the making. It has been based on the development of trust and relationships focused on doing what is best for children and young adults." (Barry MacDougall, Director of Education, SPS).

Partnerships in Support of the Innovation

"I commend Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public School Division for making Whitecap the first on-reserve school to benefit from an alliance with a provincial school division," said Don Morgan, Minister of Education. "This partnership allows Whitecap students to benefit from the same supports available in Saskatoon schools, right from prekindergarten to grade 12. By working together, these expanded learning opportunities will help prepare students for their futures, which is what putting the student first is all about."

Whitecap Dakota First Nation has taken steps to keep the Province of Saskatchewan briefed on this initiative.

The valuable partners of the 'alliance' agreement, the Whitecap Dakota First Nation Health Centre which is located on the reserve and directly connected to the WDES, as well as the Saskatoon Tribal Council, continue to provide valuable resources, support and programming to allow students to achieve their holistic learning goals.

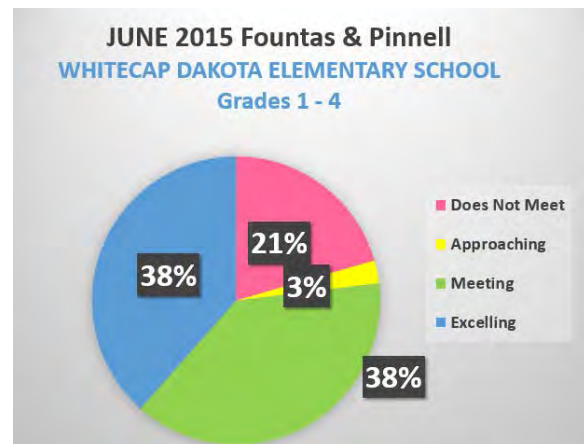
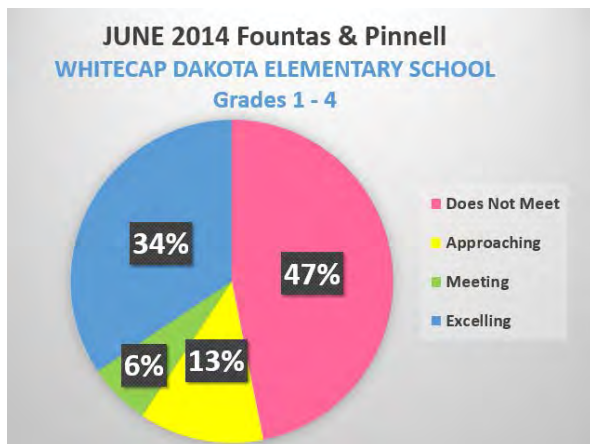


Whitecap Dakota First Nation Health Centre

Evidence of Improved Student Achievement

Whitecap Dakota Elementary School utilizes data from the Early Years Evaluation (EYE), alphabet data, and the Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) benchmark results to implement Tier I, II and III interventions.

When looking at Whitecap Dakota Elementary School's F&P data, 40% of students were reading at or above grade level in June 2014. With effective programming and intensive interventions 76% of students were reading at or above grade level, by June 2015.



Conclusion – Looking Ahead

“In working with Chief Bear and Council this has just been a logical evolution for us to give them more access to all of those services and amenities that we can provide as a school division,” explained Saskatoon Public Schools’ Board Chair Ray Morrison. Whitecap Dakota Elementary School will continue to maintain and grow its culture and language programming as the partners work together on the development of the school located in the Stonebridge area where the grade 5-8 students will attend. Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools have been involved in planning for the new school in Stonebridge. Whitecap Dakota First Nation is part of the planning/design team, ensuring that the Dakota culture is present in the building. This is evident by the inclusion of a multi-purpose cultural room, additional office space for the School Transition Worker, and the overall design/aesthetic of the school. The federal government has given \$2.7 million towards the building of the new school.

The partnership between Saskatoon Public Schools and Whitecap Dakota First Nation is continually evolving and growing as we work together to ensure student success. This innovative approach to sharing responsibility for education is an excellent example for other First Nations and provincially funded school systems in Canada. This model of education service delivery can help lead to an even brighter future for our First Nations children and youth.



Whitecap Dakota First Nation

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September 24, 2015

Saskatchewan School Board Association
400-2222 13th Avenue
Regina SK S4P 3M7

Dear Mr. Amendt:

Re: Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education

I am pleased to provide a letter on behalf of the Council and community of Whitecap Dakota First Nation in support of the nomination of the Whitecap-Saskatoon Public Schools Partnership for the SSBA's Premier's Innovation and Excellence Award.

On October 24th, 2014 the Whitecap Dakota First Nation (WDFN) and Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS) signed a historic agreement that enhanced educational programming and opportunities for our students. Through the agreement, SPS welcomed Whitecap Dakota Elementary School as an alliance school. This makes our school the first on-reserve school to be a part of a Saskatchewan school division. As well, through provincial Order-in-Council, Whitecap is now included as part of the voting constituency in SPS's Ward 7.

WDFN and SPS have maintained a partnership for over twenty years. Whitecap Dakota Elementary School offers classes from pre-kindergarten through grade 4, after which students are transported to Saskatoon to complete their elementary and secondary education at one of the SPS schools. The goal of the formal agreement is to strengthen curriculum, stabilize professional teaching services, and ensure the best available second level services – a purpose to facilitate our student's smooth transition into SPS schools. Our model also features pre-kindergarten programming and an Early Learning Centre, both in partnership with SPS and both supported by provincial resources. By combining these enhancements with our ongoing Dakota language and culture programming, we are confident of positive outcomes in both student retention and achievement.

Mr. Amendt
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A significant part of the Partnership Agreement is for WDFN to retain jurisdiction and ensure that our students continue to learn Dakota culture and language. The Agreement is proving successful in terms of governance. To manage the operations of the agreement, WDFN and SPS have a Joint Governance Committee and a Joint Operations Committee. The committees provide mechanisms for decision making and for resourcing the Whitecap Dakota Elementary School.

The Partnership Agreement and our work with SPS also enabled us to leverage additional funds from the Government of Canada so that our school is truly funded at a level comparable to other SPS schools. In addition to the increased core operational funding and additional early learning funding, by combining efforts and building a common vision, our Partnership facilitates additional capital funding for Whitecap education, including \$1 million for upgrades to Whitecap Schools, \$1.8 million for an addition to the school, \$2.0 million for the Whitecap Early Learning Centre, and a \$2.7 million contribution to SPS's new Stonebridge school where grades 5 to 8 Whitecap students will attend in the near future.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight our work together. I fully support the proposal for the Premier's Innovation and Excellence Award. I believe that Saskatoon Public Schools and Whitecap Dakota First Nation Elementary School are great candidates for this award. We are proving that implementation of innovative ideas benefits our students and families and addresses education disparity for First Nation students. By going beyond the status quo approach for First Nations education, breaking down the barriers of segregation, and combining the best of both worlds through a strong governance partnership, I am confident we are on the right path in educating our children.

Sincerely,



Chief Darcy Bear

DB:ac

c.c. Whitecap Dakota First Nation Council