

***ni ahkwatonâmonân:***  
**An Indigenous Language Pathway to Improved  
Student Learning Outcomes  
at  
St. Frances Cree Bilingual School**

**A Joint Nomination by:**

**Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools,**

**Saskatoon Tribal Council,**

**and**

**Indian Teacher Education Program, University of Saskatchewan**

**for the**

**2017 Premier's Board of Education Award for  
Innovation and Excellence in Education**

**September, 2017**

Board Chair: Diane Boyko  
Director of Education: Greg Chatlain  
Saskatoon Tribal Council: Tribal Chief Felix Thomas  
U of S College of Education, Dr. Michelle Prytula

## About the Project

*Ni ahkwatonâmonân* is a *nēhiyaw* term meaning "we speak with a strong voice." This is a fitting title for a proposal that brings forward the voices of First Nations and Métis families and community, as well as supportive partners, to commit to designing and resourcing an innovative learning program to support Indigenous student belonging and success. The St. Frances Cree Bilingual Program provides the foundation for students to achieve their full potential and offers an incubation site for innovations in Indigenizing the curriculum and improving First Nations and Métis student learning outcomes. In partnership with Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC), St. Frances offers a dual-stream Cree and English program to 575 pre-kindergarten to Grade 8 students from 57 neighbourhoods in Saskatoon and area. In addition, the on-site STC Early Learning Centre serves 74 infants and toddlers. Being a Catholic school, the learning program is infused with Gospel values in addition to *nēhiyaw* language, knowledge and culture. The results are highly engaged students and families, low student mobility, and demonstrable gains in learning outcome.

The innovation that the St. Frances Program is built on is the purposeful redesign of a learning community with foundations in *nēhiyaw* language and culture. Just over 10 years ago, the imperative for improved student learning outcomes for First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan was emerging with renewed urgency. Emerging partnerships enhanced First Nations and Métis community participation and signaled a new paradigm for the education sector. The Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools' Board of Education challenged administration to develop a long-term strategy that blended the best of what we know about Indigenous epistemologies with cutting-edge pedagogies to create a space where Indigenous learners were advantaged through a familiar context and the best classroom and learning supports available. Achieving this ideal required innovative partnerships to guide program development with new strategies born of collaboration and commitment.

Innovations at St. Frances are best described through a glimpse into a day in the life of the Cree Bilingual Program. With approximately 650 children and youth on site, there is always plenty of movement as students, staff and community partners unfold countless overlapping narratives. The office is a hub of activity with parents and community members making inquiries with front office staff. Students pour in from a long line of buses and cars, with book bags and skipping ropes. The morning clamour is reminiscent of most schools, except for the fact that most of the talk is in the *nēhiyaw* language. Everyone pauses for morning prayer and *Oh Canada* rendered in Cree, with most students able to enthusiastically add their voices to the chorus. Shortly after the day begins, the roar of students involved in physical activity beckons you into the gymnasium. The teacher consults with a student from the College of Nursing and an Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) teacher candidate as they collaborate to ensure students are indeed experiencing quality daily physical education. Across the hall is the Dreambroker's office. This aptly named program, funded by SaskSport, works with children and families to provide opportunities to participate in sports, recreational activities, and the arts. The broad grin on a student's face tells you that dreams are indeed coming true as she may have just registered for hockey, karate or piano lessons.

Next door, in a retrofitted storeroom, an expert math teacher is huddled around a crowded table with half a dozen Grade 4 boys and girls, passing a soccer ball back-and-forth. A closer look confirms that they are not practicing soccer, but that the ball has numbers written on it in magic marker and that students are passing the ball to practice addition equations. The Math Coaching Program, an innovation that emerged from St. Frances, has demonstrated extraordinary results in closing the learning gap for students.

Down a few steps into what was once a skate room is a makeshift clinic. Students and faculty from the College of Nursing have been working with students on preventative healthcare at St. Frances for nearly a decade. This partnership has ensured that health and education work together to ensure that students are ready to learn. Further down the hall, you come across a pre-kindergarten classroom with moms and dads engaged in play-based learning and oral language development. Up the back stairs and you come across a Learning Assistance area as a student announces to the Leveled Literacy Intervention teacher that he is going to move from yellow to green this year! Across the hall, the Grade 8 students are preparing their summations for the defense in a mock trial taking place in the Provincial Court House later that afternoon.

Up another set of stairs and there's an office where the Literacy Catalyst Teacher, who is a fluent Cree speaker, pours over benchmark data to determine which students and what skills require her immediate attention. Peek into a classroom down the hall, and you see a group of ITEP students from the University of Saskatchewan. They are learning within the context of a concept called a Professional Development School (PDS). A PDS brings together teacher candidates and experienced teachers to exchange knowledge and collaborate on improving pedagogical practices. Down another flight of stairs and you come across a Grade 4 classroom teacher and the Cree Language and Culture Catalyst Teacher collaborating to interpret and apply the *nēhiyaw* language curriculum that was developed specifically for the St. Frances Program. The curriculum is built on Saskatchewan Curriculum Outcomes to ensure that language permeates learning. Back down towards the office and just off of the staff room, in what used to be a telephone cubby, a respected Elder from a local First Nation is sitting with a group of youth and imparting teachings that they will require when they are serving the traditional feast planned for the following day. He ensures that they are conversant with the meaning, tradition and practices of the ceremony. Back towards the gymnasium, just as it is filling up with parents, grandparents and community members who are gathering for a primary language showcase. Mushoms and kokums beam, and tears well up in their eyes, as their grandchildren sing in Cree, returning the language to families and communities after generational interruptions.



*Figure 1: Cultural Advisor Elmer Tootoosis leads the St. Frances Wolves Drum Group as they placed 1st in the drum category at a local Powwow.*

These scenes, and many others, play out everyday at St. Frances. The longer one has the opportunity to spend at St. Frances, the more prevalent two particular themes emerge: cultural belonging and academic excellence. These themes were predicted to come together to create an effective and sustainable learning program for Indigenous children. Ten years into the project, the board is able to look back at how their commitment has come to life and enumerate the many successes with families and partners that demonstrate positive and lasting outcomes for countless families and their precious children.



### **Program Goals**

The St. Frances Cree Bilingual Program is guided by the following program goals:

- A welcoming school climate reflective of the children, families and the community that we serve.
- Families and community engagement at all levels of program development and evaluation.
- Permeation of *nēhiyaw* language and culture across the curriculum.
- *Nēhiyaw* language learning outcomes consistent with individualized language acquisition goals.
- One year's growth in one year's time in reading and math.

### **Board Influence and Participation**

While the spark for the Cree Bilingual Program originated in the First Nations and Métis communities, our Board of Education has nurtured the flame for over a decade. The board was faced with the challenge of declining enrolments at St. Frances School. They had a number of options before them to purposefully utilize the space. The board decided, though, to examine their goals and determine if there was an opportunity for program expansion or development consistent with their commitments. The Saskatoon Tribal Council, through the *mamawkomatowin* partnership, was advocating for enhanced Indigenous language programming. The board challenged administration to come up with a concept that would allow St. Frances School to continue to serve the local community, while providing a point of delivery for Indigenous language. With a concept developed and presented to the board, they approved the program in June of 2007. Since its inception, the board has remained engaged in the development and monitoring of the St. Frances program through countless updates, monitoring reports and budget approvals. Two particular issues, the development of innovative partnerships and the board's ongoing advocacy for an improved facility for the St. Frances program, demonstrate the ongoing involvement of the board (Appendix 1).

## Innovations

While there are many innovations within the St. Frances Cree Bilingual Program, three particular innovations characterized the board's commitment to improved student learning outcomes: Indigenizing the curriculum, staff development and excellence in the learning program.

After visiting many schools that teach an Indigenous language, the goal of developing a more responsive *nēhiyaw* language curriculum, based on Saskatchewan curricular outcomes, was born. A team of Indigenous language learning experts worked for over two years to develop a curriculum that allows language and culture to be delivered by the regular classroom teacher within the context of provincial curriculum. The result is a comprehensive document that allows teachers to permeate curriculum with language and culture while ensuring success in all subject areas. This supports students that may move on to other schools by ensuring consistency and smooth transitions (Appendix 2).

Another innovation that has grown out of the St. Frances Program is Math Coaching. The Math Coach works with students that require enhanced opportunities to learn based on diagnostic math assessments. The Math Coach works with small groups of students to address particular gaps in learning. In addition, St. Frances utilizes the Leveled Literacy Intervention. Similarly, this program works with students identified below expected level through the Benchmark Reading assessment, and addresses specific skills to assist students in closing learning gaps. The learning innovation, though, is not these individual program components, but the establishment of literacy and language learning communities that raise the level of expertise of all staff, while capitalizing on the vast experience of the group.

The desire to ensure that teachers are prepared to assist students to achieve their language, literacy and math goals precipitated one of the most recent innovations at St. Frances. The Professional Development School model is a partnership between the board, the Saskatoon Tribal Council and the College of Education's Indian Teacher Education Program. Research indicates that new teachers are often not fully prepared for their teaching assignments. A PDS builds a teacher candidate's confidence and effectiveness while enhancing the skills and knowledge of practicing teachers. St. Frances teachers have a unique blend of Indigenous epistemological knowledge and contemporary pedagogical skills that are worth imparting on teachers in training. Pre-service and in-service teachers work together to link theory and practice to improve teacher skills and share best practice. The PDS also enhances understanding of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews, and introduces teacher candidates and in-service teachers to traditional paradigms to improve understanding of Indigenous cultures and the students. At the Professional Development School, University of Saskatchewan teacher candidates take classes at St. Frances. Ultimately, the goal of a PDS is to improve student-learning outcomes. The partnership agreement is included in Appendix 3.

## **Sustainability**

The most visible sign of sustainability is the continued enrolment growth at St. Frances (Appendix 4). The current pre-kindergarten to Grade 8 student population is approximately 575 students. With the 74 infants and toddlers in Saskatoon Tribal Council's on-site Early Learning Centre, the total population approaches 650 students. Beyond the numbers, St. Frances serves as a transition point for many families moving to the city from their First Nations communities. Sustainability is driven by demand. First Nations families demand and expect a language option for their children.

Sustainability is also anchored in partnerships. The St. Frances Cree Bilingual School has been a partnership school with the Saskatoon Tribal Council since its inception. The board is now working with the Saskatoon Tribal Council to explore co-governance options. The vision is that the renewal of the facility will provide opportunity for the board and the Tribal Council to initiate a new model of commitment and collaboration, realizing a greater role for the First Nations community in determining the rate and direction of change in Catholic education. Ultimately, the St. Frances Program is a central commitment within the board's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and helps to challenge the board to new heights in responsiveness and collaboration.

## **Cost-benefit Analysis**

St. Frances School enjoys a preferential staffing ratio as well as additional supports for language, literacy and mathematics instruction. Arguably, these supports are commensurate with student learning needs. The board views these resource allocations as a moral imperative to enhance learning outcomes among First Nations students and to support the retention and proliferation of the Cree language. The prolific partnerships at St. Frances also add great value to the program with little direct cost. The immense contributions of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the College of Nursing, the College of Education and SaskSport, to name a few, help ensure that student readiness to learn is enhanced and learning needs are met. These partners typically share a mandate to support our vulnerable children and youths and add value for children and families. In addition, their organizations learn and grow, and as a result, are more responsive to client needs.

The social cost of illiteracy and leaving school early are well documented, as are the benefits of engaged students receiving individualized instruction. The innovations at St. Frances add value to the program and to improved student learning outcomes, further enhancing the value proposition of the program and the benefit to students, families and the province as a whole.

## **Client Support for the Innovation**

The manner in which students express their support for the program is measured differently than the manner in which adults express their support. St. Frances has steadily experienced increased student attendance and lower student mobility.

Student reported indicators of engagement and belonging, measured by the OurSchool Survey, also demonstrate increased student belonging and engagement.

Parent and family support is primarily measured through enrolment of their children in the program. Celebrations of learning at the school enjoy overwhelming support and attendance. Indeed, even consultations on the future of the facility realized immense participation. In January, 2016, over 400 people attended a consultation on the future of the facility. In May, 2017, there were approximately 500 people in attendance for a similar consultation. Parents also developed an advocacy group to promote the facility needs at St. Frances and have twice attended a board meeting to communicate their expectations. One parent took it upon herself to collect hundreds of signatures on a petition to support facilities improvements at St. Frances. Parents are also keen to routinely participate in the Catholic School Community Council.

The St. Frances Cree Bilingual Program is staffed by 64 remarkable teachers and support staff. Of the 64 staff members, 24 are fluent Cree language speakers. In the beginning of the program, it was often difficult to recruit and retain Cree teachers. In the last approximately four years, it has become easier to recruit, as many teachers will approach the board vying for an opportunity to teach within the program. While urban opportunities provide a rationale for some, many of these expert teachers express a desire to be at St. Frances because of its vibrant language-learning context.



### **Partnerships**

The board has come to appreciate the numerous partnerships at St. Frances, including partnerships with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan, the College of Nursing, the SaskSport Dreambroker Program, PotashCorp, BHP Billiton, CHEP Good Food Inc., Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Indigo, and many more. These partnerships are foundational in the innovation of providing responsive and effective programming within an Indigenous learning context. Repeatedly, partners express how their own organizational learning is enhanced through their participation at St. Frances.

The First Nations community has also demonstrated its support for the Cree Bilingual program. Many community resource people and First Nations and Tribal Council representatives offer to enhance language programming by offering cultural learning opportunities. This kind of support is instrumental in ensuring language and cultural authenticity within a program that is not situated within a First Nations community. First and foremost, the Saskatoon Tribal Council is a partner that is always willing to provide supports and to offer constructive feedback to ensure that the program is culturally responsive and is meeting the learning needs of all students.

The University of Saskatchewan is also an anchor partner within the Cree Bilingual School. The dean of the College of Education and the director of the Indian Teacher Education Program participate in guiding the development of the Professional Development School model. In addition, a First Nations education consultant from Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools is currently seconded to the College of Education to facilitate the ongoing operations of the PD School at St. Frances.

### **Evidence of Improved Student Achievement**

Of the five broad goals for the St. Frances Cree Bilingual Program, three of the goals pertain specifically to improved student learning outcomes in the areas of *nēhiyaw* language acquisition, and reading outcomes. The *nēhiyaw* Language Curriculum creates an imperative for individualized language acquisition goals, consistent with a student's language foundations and program exposure.

Literacy development goals are at the forefront of the St. Frances Program. With a whole-school literacy imperative, there is high consistency throughout the school with a balanced literacy approach, consistent guided reading and a network of compensatory supports for developing readers. Many of the St. Frances teachers come from outside of the division, so literacy learning knowledge and skills vary. At St. Frances, we celebrate the gifts that each teacher brings, while collaboratively working to bring everyone to a level of mastery to actualize a strong foundation of balanced literacy in every classroom. Through collaborative learning, we integrate inquiry-based learning as a high-impact strategy to engage students in their learning. Professional development focusses on fostering teacher collaboration and bridging theory to practice to achieve quick wins and sustainable gains. Learning communities use a strategic cyclical process for teacher cohorts to identify a Problem of Practice (POP), co-create lessons to address the POP, teach and observe the lesson, debrief and analyze the data, and reflect and revise plans accordingly. A reading imperative and deliberate professional development have resulted in consistently improving student outcomes. In June of 2016, 43% of students from Grades 1 to 8 were reading at or above grade level, up from 33% the year prior. Program efficacy is evident in that 57% of students who were present all year grew at least one grade level; up from 29% the year prior. In addition to balanced literacy in every classroom, every day, with fidelity and effectiveness, St. Frances enjoys the support of 1.25 FTE literacy support teachers and have re-purposed the Learning Assistance Teacher role to better support students with Plus and Focused Intervention supports for students in Grades 1 to 3. June 2017 results measured by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment indicate 15% growth in students meeting or exceeding expectations compared to the November 2016 results. Literacy will always be an imperative at St. Frances but our commitment to students and families is that the learning program will contribute to marked growth in learning.

Mathematics instruction at St. Frances has developed within a similar framework as the literacy program. There is a whole-school imperative, consistent instructional expectations and Plus and Focused Interventions to supplement Quality Core Classroom Instruction. Students are engaged in daily small-group instruction, with lessons that are systematically designed around research-based improvement



strategies. In addition, compensatory math supports supplement, small or whole-group instruction in the classroom. Teachers collaborate to refine practice and improve Quality Core Classroom Instruction. A 1.0 FTE Math Coach supports Plus and Focused Instruction by offering targeted supports to Grades 4 to 6 students. The June 2017 Common Math Assessment results for grade 6 students demonstrate 27% growth in students who are meeting or exceeding expectations in number, patterns, and relations as compared to June 2016 results. In addition, the Basic Concepts in Math assessment, a number, pattern, and relations screen that is completed each year, indicated that in 2016/17, 80% of Grade 4 to 6 students achieved one or more grade levels of growth in number, patterns, and relations concepts. As with literacy instruction, the imperative is ever-present, but the promise is a consistent professional response that ensures that the school will work with students and families to achieve academic success rather than make excuses for gaps in learning.

The notion of *responsibility before accountability* guides the learning program at St. Frances. Through high expectations for teachers and commensurate support, students enjoy deliberate and responsive Indigenous language, reading and math programming. Significant improvements in learning outcomes are a direct result of deliberate interventions. Families at St. Frances can be assured that their children are the primary benefactors of the efforts and innovations that have resulted in a learning program designed for the students and designed for success.

### **Conclusion**

In many ways, the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School is a school of the future. It has formulated goals with the First Nations community, shares responsibility for student success with the whole community and deliberately pursues innovations to engineer student success. Closing the gap for Indigenous learners requires sharing power, risk-taking and extraordinary resourcing. With these commitments, Indigenous student success is not a goal measured in decades, but a goal measured year by year—one year's growth in one year's time.

## **Appendix 1: Evidence of Board Influence and Participation**

Jan 9, 2006	Board identifies Trustees to participate in the January 12, 2006, partnership development meeting with Saskatoon Tribal Council.
June 5, 2006	Board is updated on the progress of the Partnership development between STC, CUMFI, GSCS and Sask Learning.
Nov 20, 2006	Board is provided information on the Aboriginal Education Accountability Framework.
Jan 8, 2007	Board requests options for the use of the St. Frances facility.
Jan 22, 2007	Board is provided an update on the consultation process regarding St. Frances School.
Mar 19, 2007	Board is provided an update on the developing partnerships regarding St. Frances School programming.
Mar 26, 2007	Board has further discussions on the developing partnerships regarding St. Frances School programming.
Jun 4, 2007	Board approves the nêhiyawak Cree Language Immersion Kindergarten at St. Frances School commencing September 2007.
Jun 4, 2007	Board receives and discusses the proposed plan for partnership development central to the programming offerings at St. Frances School.
Jun 20, 2007	A pipe ceremony was held at St. Frances School to acknowledge the partnership between Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) and the Central Urban Metis Federation (CUMFI) and to launch the Cree Immersion Kindergarten in the fall of 2007.
Aug 27, 2007	Board is provided details with respect to the ongoing facility, programming and instructional planning and activity currently underway at St. Frances School.
May 26, 2008	Board participates in a facility and program tour of St. Frances School.
Nov 17, 2008	Board is updated on the partnerships involved with St. Frances School.
Apr 6, 2009	Board is informed the FNME team, STC and CUMFI are hosting a FNME planning/visioning workshop on May 26, 2009.

- Oct 19, 2009 Board is invited to the signing of the Memorandums of Understanding for STC and CUMFI on October 22, 2009.
- Mar 29, 2010 Cree Bilingual Program is in its third year, Board is provided an update by Superintendent G. Martell and delegation.
- Dec 6, 2010 Board receives an update regarding the māmawohkamātowin partnership.
- Nov 21, 2011 Board is provided an update on the māmawohkamātowin Partnership and the work being done.
- Dec 17, 2012 Board approves the 2012-2015 First Nations and Métis Education Plan. Cree Bilingual programming is now offered at St. Frances School for K to Gr. 5 students.
- Nov 3, 2014 Board develops advocacy plan for St. Frances facility.
- Apr 20, 2015 Board tours programs at St. Frances School.
- Jan 4, 2016 Board is informed of the community consultation regarding the St. Frances facility on January 27, 2016.
- Jan 27, 2016 Board participates in the first St. Frances School facilities consultation.
- Feb 8, 2016 Board is provided with a summary of the community consultation meeting on January 27, 2016.
- Feb 29, 2016 Board discusses the next steps in the advocacy plan for St. Frances Cree Bilingual School.
- March 1, 2017 Board signs MOU for a Professional Development School with Saskatoon Tribal Council and the University of Saskatchewan.
- May 16, 2017 Board participates in the second St. Frances school facilities consultation.
- Sep 26, 2016 Board has further discussions regarding the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School advocacy plan.
- Sep 11, 2017 Board approves the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School May 16, 2017 Facility Consultation Report.

## **Appendix 2: Nehiyaw Language and Culture Curriculum Overview**

A Cree bilingual curriculum was developed for kindergarten to grade eight at St. Frances Cree Bilingual School in Saskatoon to be implemented by the Cree speaking teachers. The curriculum is written in the Y-dialect and is designed around the language, traditions, values and belief of the plains Cree People of Central Saskatchewan. The Y-dialect is one of three Cree dialects in Saskatchewan and with each dialect there are cultural and traditional variations which the students are made aware of.

The two languages of St. Frances Cree Bilingual School are English and Cree, where both languages are thread through specified subject areas. The Cree curriculum is aligned with the goals and outcomes of the provincial curriculum. The provincial curricular outcomes will be achieved through the integration of the Cree curriculum indicators. The curriculum is a living document whereby teachers can modify areas to accommodate the level of learning of their students. The layout of the curriculum is intended to support a spiral curricular approach to enable laddering of the Cree language from one grade to the next.

The Cree language consists of value based teachings that are transmitted to the students through the wellness model in the curriculum. As teachers and students work through the etymology of terms, a new level of the language emerges due the interconnection of the language and culture. Language and culture cannot be separated in teaching; therefore, learning the language includes history and belief systems of the people. Students study the connections between the language and their common and environmental surroundings. Through the components of the curriculum students identify with their history and cultural background. For many this may be the first exposure to their language and ancestral background.

The Cree bilingual curriculum is teacher friendly offering methodologies and ideas to permeate the themes of the provincial curriculum. The curriculum is also a tool that demonstrates how the target language can be taught in correspondence with English. The Cree language concepts enhance the knowledge base that students acquire from the provincial curriculum teachings.

## Appendix 3: Professional Development School Partnership Agreement



### Memorandum of Understanding

Between

University of Saskatchewan, College of Education – Indian Teacher Education Program,

Saskatoon Tribal Council Inc., and

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

Whereas, on this (date), 2016, in Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan College of Education Indian Teacher Education Program, Saskatoon Tribal Council Inc., and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools agree in principle to collaboratively develop and administer a Professional Development School Pilot Project at St. Frances Cree Bilingual School (hereinafter referred to as the "PDSP Project");

And whereas, this Memorandum of Understanding sets out the terms and understanding to have a formal committee comprised of representatives from the University of Saskatchewan College of Education Indian Teacher Education Program, Saskatoon Tribal Council and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, to be known as the St. Frances Professional Development School Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "Committee");

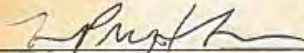
And whereas, this Committee will work collectively and strive for the highest achievable outcomes for the education of students at St. Frances Cree Bilingual School, pedagogical development of pre-service teachers in the Indian Teacher Education Program, and professional development of St. Frances Cree Bilingual School faculty.

The Committee will be collaborative with shared administration over the PDSP Project functions, objectives, goals and outcomes.

The PDSP Project Committee agrees to the following terms:

- i. Work towards an authentic and unique model of Professional Development School concept that is responsive to the needs of *nēhiyaw* culture, language, spirituality, and people.
- ii. Ensure and promote community participation, input and consultation, and that the community and their children are always at the forefront of planning and development.
- iii. Ensure that the Committee is transparent, reciprocal, mutual, equitable, honest and understanding.
- iv. Promote and support *nēhiyaw* language development and teachings for St. Frances students, faculty, and pre-service teachers.
- v. Promote and support *nēhiyaw* cultural components in the learning and professional development objectives for St. Frances students and pre-service teachers.
- vi. Enhance and design an array of suitable and valuable learning components and objectives for the pedagogical and practical development of pre-service teachers.
- vii. Ensure and design an array of suitable support systems for in-service teachers as they support, aid, guide, and direct pre-service teachers' competencies and professionalism.
- viii. Ensure that the College of Education has adequate space within the school for the functions of instruction, collaboration, reflection, and development.

On this March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 the following organizations have agreed and signed to this Memorandum of Understanding.

  
College of Education

  
Saskatoon Tribal Council Inc.

  
Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

#### Appendix 4: Enrolment Growth

The following table illustrates student population growth and projections:

<b>ACTUAL</b>	<b>PRE-K</b>	<b>ENGLISH</b>	<b>CREE</b>	<b>CREE GRADES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
2009	7	96	32	K-2	133
2010	16	98	57	K-3	171
2011	32	88	134	K-4	254
2012	32	60	174	K-5	266
2013	32	79	237	K-6	348
2014	32	75	292	K-7	399
2015	48	79	346	K-8	473
2016	48	89	406	K-8	543
<b>PROJECTED</b>	<b>PRE-K</b>	<b>ENGLISH</b>	<b>CREE</b>	<b>CREE GRADES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
2017	48	101	458	K-8	607
2018	48	100	467	K-8	615
2019	48	105	485	K-8	638

## Appendix 5: St. Frances Cree Bilingual School Catholic School Community Council, Letter of Support



### **St. Frances Cree Bilingual School**

2141 McPherson Avenue

Saskatoon, SK S7J 0S8

Tel: (306)659-7310



To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing to express my support through this letter for the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School nomination for the Premier's Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education.

As a member of the St. Frances Catholic School Community Council, as well as being a kokum that has children and grandchildren attending St. Frances School since 2011, I am pleased to support this nomination. What drew me to enroll my own children into this school is that it offered a safe and inviting place for the nehiyaw culture and language to be taught and, most importantly, preserved.

St. Frances School has passionate, dedicated, knowledgeable staff that can make a difference for Indigenous children in learning Cree language, and teaching them their culture. St. Frances School will enrich the lives of close to 600 children with a sense of belonging, a place to participate in cultural teachings such as the opportunity to cleanse their mental, emotional, physical, and, spiritual beings with a weekly smudge. As well, tipi teachings are a part of the St. Frances program. Most importantly, the Cree language will be maintained for generations to come.

As a result from gaining all this valuable nehiyaw culture, St. Frances Cree Bilingual School Staff are graciously participating in the solution of revitalizing Culture and Language for years to come.

Hiy! Hiy!

Roberta McIntyre  
St. Frances Cree Bilingual School

## **Appendix 6: St. Frances Cree Bilingual Facility Advocacy Committee Terms of Reference**

**Type:** Ad hoc

### **Role**

In light of St. France's consistently increasing enrolment situation and the spatial challenges this has created, the role of the *St. Frances Facility Advocacy Committee* will be to work on behalf of the St. Frances parent community to advocate that the Ministry of Education commit to funding facility renovations and upgrades.

### **Responsibilities**

- Collaborate with St. Frances school staff, GSCS administration, and trustees, to identify current and future actions that will assist in meeting the goal of the committee, which is ultimately the successful completion of renovations at St. Frances Cree bilingual school.
- Act as the voice of the parent community concerning matters related to advocating for school renovations and report progress to all parties – both divisional and community.
- Communicate progress and needs using various forms of media (social, written, and external representation).
- Plan, organize, and create strategies and timelines for activities related to advocating for renovations - such as community consultations and events.
- Represent the parent community in dialogue with the Ministry at all events and conversations concerning St. France's need for increased space.

### **Membership and voting**

- A maximum of twelve members (the committee will consist of six - nine parent representatives, and two - three division administrative staff).
- The committee will work on a consensus format without voting processes.

### **Chair**

- A Parent member will chair the committee with operational supports from divisional staff and management.
- A co-chair may be appointed by the committee to facilitate committee activities in absence of the chair.

### **Frequency of meetings**

- Monthly, and at the call of the committee Chair.



## Appendix 7: Saskatoon Tribal Council, Letter of Support



### SASKATOON TRIBAL COUNCIL ASIMAKANISEEKAN ASKIY RESERVE # 102A

200 – 335 Packham Avenue  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 4S1  
Phone (306) 956-6100 Fax (306) 244-7273

Office of the Tribal Chief



September 26, 2017

Saskatchewan School Boards Association

Attention: [admin@saskschoolboards.ca](mailto:admin@saskschoolboards.ca)

**Re: St. Frances Cree Bilingual School Letter of Support**

As a proud partner with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools and supporter of its educational programming, the Saskatoon Tribal Council is privileged and honored to support the nomination of St. Frances Cree Bilingual School for the Premier's Innovation and Excellence in Education Award.

St. Frances Cree Bilingual School programming strives to reduce barriers by providing education in the promotion of the Cree language and culture simultaneously with the English language, engaging children in healthy lifestyles, supporting activities and improving the quality of life for children and their families.

The preservation of the Cree language is a huge step to closing the gap for the children and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools/St. Frances Cree Bilingual School has been instrumental by achieving this initiative in acknowledging the needs of the community. Our partnership is about attaining that goal.

We are proud and fully support St. Frances Cree Bilingual School for the Premier's Innovation and Excellence Award.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office at (306) 956-6100 if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tribal Chief Felix Thomas  
Saskatoon Tribal Council

Kinistin   Mistawasis   Muskeg Lake   Muskoday   One Arrow   Whitecap Dakota   Yellow Quill

## Appendix 8: University of Saskatchewan, College of Education, Letter of Support



Office of the Dean  
28 Campus Drive Saskatoon SK S7N 0X1 Canada  
Phone: (306) 966-7627 Fx : (306) 966-7644

September 18, 2017

Dear Members of the Premier's Board of Education Award:

Please accept this letter in support of the nomination for the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School (GSCS) Board St. Frances Professional Development School (PDS) project. I write this letter as an honoured partner and proud member of the PDS partnership, and with humble recognition of the GSCS Board for this idea and for its commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.

Four years ago, the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Board initiated the development of the St. Frances Professional Development School project, and since that time, they have been relentless in their commitment to its vision, implementation, and sustainability. Modeled as a Professional Development School, the St. Frances PDS project is a unique design for GSCS, working in collaboration with educational partners who share common goals in the improvement of teaching and learning. As leaders in this initiative, the GSCS Board effected the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School as the anchor site, and approached the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) and the College of Education faculty, staff, and the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) to advance the idea of developing a Professional Development School partnership at St. Frances School. Sharing the common goals of developing a strong sense of Indigenous student identity, promoting high student achievement across all subject areas for all students, and furthering the development of culture and language at all grade levels and among staff, the PDS concept and partnership between GSCS, ITEP, and the STC made great sense. Four years later I can attest that the through partnership with GSCS and the STC, the project has achieved great success.

The St. Frances PDS concept is innovative in its approach to student learning in that the concept promotes focused, targeted, and sustained teacher candidate learning in a real-world environment; it better develops the knowledge and skills of faculty and teachers at the school; it facilitates engagement in inquiry of practice; and it results in improved teaching quality. This improved quality develops, as a result, stronger student learning. Students benefit from the collaborative resources of the school as well as its partner organizations. In addition, because the partnership combines resources and uses the energy and creativity of an active steering committee, the PDS is sustainable, evidenced by the fact that it is now in its third full year following implementation.

I am especially proud of this cooperation. Each partner has a deep commitment philosophically, practically, and financially. The project is a model for other organizations on how collegiality, partnership, creativity, and commitment can improve teaching and learning in schools.

Thank you for considering the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Board's St. Frances Professional Development School project for the 2017 Premier's Board of Education Award. The Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Board is much deserving of this recognition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Prytula".

Michelle Prytula  
Dean, College of Education

## Appendix 9: College of Nursing, Letter of Support



HM (Huey-Ming) Tzeng, RN, PhD, FAAN  
Dean and Professor  
College of Nursing  
104 Clinic Place, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 2Z4  
Telephone: (306) 966-5568 Facsimile: (306) 966-6621  
Email: [huey-ming.tzeng@usask.ca](mailto:huey-ming.tzeng@usask.ca)

September 19, 2017

Saskatchewan School Boards Association,  
[admin@saskschoolboards.ca](mailto:admin@saskschoolboards.ca)

**Subject: Letter of Support for St. Frances Cree Bilingual School**

The College of Nursing is pleased to offer a letter of support in nominating the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School for the *Premier's Innovation and Excellence Award*. We have been an active partner at St. Frances where our faculty have supported nursing students through designing classroom health education modules, elementary student dental screening, fluoride varnish application, student and family advocacy on numerous issues, and student medical consultation.

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools has been a receptive partner and our college has engaged every level of their leadership at some point during our collaboration. After several years, our faculty has become significantly integrated into the school. In the past couple of years, we have engaged over five hundred elementary students and this has also provided us with the ability to forge strong linkages with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit community, who makes up nearly 98 per cent of the school community. The Greater Saskatoon Catholic School System has consistently provided on-site space allocation for our students and faculty and fully provided a supportive environment to support nursing student learning.

Through the valued partnership between the College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan and the St. Frances School community, the outcomes have been invaluable including: improvement in elementary student health outcomes and outstanding opportunities for the nursing students in which to learn. It is a privilege to be able to support this nomination to acknowledge the educational innovations to support student achievement. It is through the support of this partnership that the school community has been able to benefit a holistic approach to student health, wellness and education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Huey-Ming Tzeng".

Huey-Ming Tzeng, MN, PhD, FAAN  
Dean and Professor, College of Nursing

## Appendix 10: SaskSport, Letter of Support

**SASK SPORT INC**

A Federation of Provincial Sport Governing Bodies



John V. Remail Centre  
510 Cynthia Street  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7L 7K7

Ph: (306) 975-0800  
Fax: (306) 242-8007  
www.sasksport.sk.ca

To: Saskatchewan School Boards Association  
From: Cheryl McCallum, Manager of Community Sport Development – Sask Sport Inc.  
Re: St. Frances Cree Bilingual School  
Date: September 19, 2017

### LETTER OF SUPPORT

We are pleased to provide a letter of support for the nomination application from Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools for the *Premier's Board of Education Award For Innovation and Excellence in Education*.

Over the past six years, Sask Sport Inc. has worked closely with the St. Frances Cree Bilingual School in support of the *Dream Brokers* program created to assist children and youth. The purpose of this valuable partnership is to provide a multi-sectorial approach that provides the framework to link education outcomes with sport, culture and recreation initiatives in support of under-represented children and youth. This school and the division leadership have consistently recognized that providing valuable opportunities for students contributes to their success rates. Through this partnership we have seen increased attendance, improved performance in school, increase positive attitudes towards education and extra-curricular activities, student leadership, and an enhanced sense of belonging.

St. Frances School utilizes a student-centered approach that ensures that culturally relevant programming is supported and nurtured. The innovative solutions put forward through this collaboration produce outcomes, long-term success, and address the many challenges First Nation and Métis youth encounter on a daily basis.

As a partner, we are a major supporter of the St. Frances School program model and we would encourage the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to recognize their innovative approach and excellence through education. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information. I can be reached by phone at 306.975.0807 or by email [cmccallum@sasksport.sk.ca](mailto:cmccallum@sasksport.sk.ca).

Sincerely,

Cheryl McCallum  
Manager, Community Sport Development  
Sask Sport Inc.