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The GDI Communicator is an internal newsletter intended to increase communication between management and staff of the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research

Analysis of Métis Literacy Released

A recent analysis by Evelyne Bougie, *Literacy profile of off-reserve First Nations and Métis people living in urban Manitoba and Saskatchewan: Results from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003 in Education Matters*, Statistics Canada's online source of facts and analysis on education, highlights urban Métis literacy levels in Saskatchewan.

The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) assessed the literacy skills of Canadians aged 16 and over from across the ten provinces and three territories. Literacy is broadly defined in this survey rather than viewed as a set of isolated skills associated with reading and writing. Literacy skills are seen as essential for individuals to realize their full personal, social, and economic potential, and are the foundation upon which people may acquire additional knowledge and skills throughout adulthood.

The framework used in IALSS measures literacy along a continuum of proficiency that indicates

how well adults are able to use information in today's society. Level 1 contains respondents displaying the lowest level of ability, while Levels 4 and 5 contain those with the highest level of ability. Level 3 is the benchmark considered to be the minimum for an individual to successfully cope in a complex knowledge-based society.

Reliable data on Saskatchewan Aboriginal literacy has been largely unavailable prior to the IALS Survey, which collected data from large enough samples of Aboriginal people living in urban areas in Saskatchewan to answer key questions about the literacy proficiency of these Aboriginal populations.

While Bougie reports on information gathered by the IALS survey, she qualifies the information by acknowledging the following:

As much as it is important to understand what is measured in IALSS, it is also important to emphasize what this survey does not measure. The ability

to use and understand the type of information assessed in IALSS is far from capturing all the different kinds of literacy practices that may be valued in different cultures or groups. In the context of First Nations and Métis people, significant domains of knowledge, such as the literacies associated with the land or the natural world as well as with Aboriginal world views and traditions¹⁰ are simply not measured by IALSS. It is thus fundamental to recognize that the multiple literacies that are part of First Nations' and Métis' cultures¹¹ are not reflected in the literacy scores derived from IALSS.

Bougie goes on to note that the importance of understanding the literacy skills measured in the IALSS lies within the context of people operating in urban settings. So while the skills measured by the IALSS may not be culturally universal, "in an urban context, the ability to use and understand the

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2006-2007 Annual Report Highlights



The long awaited, much anticipated Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) 2006-2007 Annual Report is almost complete and ready to send to print. Delays in the audit process have meant a general delay in the Annual Report; however some highlights from the report can be shared. Highlights of the 2006-2007 Annual Report include the following:

- In 2006 GDI signed a \$22.1 million, three-year Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) and Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment Services Inc. was officially incorporated.

- 55 students graduated from SUNTEP programs with their Bachelor of Education degrees in

2006-07. In total 837 students have graduated from SUNTEP – the only Métis teacher-training program in Canada.

- Dumont Technical Institute (DTI) has graduated thousands of students – the only Métis Adult Basic Education, Skills Training, Technical and Vocational institution in Canada: 29 Métis Practical Nurses graduated from DTI programs in 2006-2007; DTI ran 11 Trades-related programs, graduating 99 students; DTI participated in a successful employer partnership with SaskEnergy, linking training directly with employment--7 students graduated from that program.

- in 2006-07 all GDI scholarship and bursary

programs combined provided funding awards to 180 Métis students.

- GDI Publishing has received 5 *Saskatchewan Book Awards*, including a 2006 award for *The Métis Alphabet Book* by Joseph Jean Fauchon.

- GDI launched the *GDC Graduate Student Bursary Program* in 2006 as a three-year pilot project under its new Graduate Studies initiative.

- GDI operates the only Métis-specific publishing house in Canada.

- GDI holds the largest Métis-specific library and archival collection owned by a Métis institution or organization.



It doesn't need to be this difficult... submit your newsletter items today.

Newsletter Submissions Welcome

The purpose of GDI newsletter is to communicate with all Institute staff on a regular basis about events and accomplishments within the Institute and the various departments; initiatives being undertaken; and to provide updates and inform about progress on the Institute's strategic directions. With this purpose in mind, please consider contributing to the GDI

newsletter —send us news about your programs, student awards, new initiatives, staff updates, book launches, publishing awards, new programs and initiatives of DTI, technology innovations, particular milestones, and quantifiable data related to student numbers, graduates, budget/financial information, to name a few. Submissions of

photographs are also encouraged. All newsletter items can be sent directly to Lisa Wilson at lisa.wilson@gdi.gdins.org.



DTI Manager Invited to Present to OECD

Dumont Technical Institute (DTI) Program Coordinator Claudette Moran has been invited to present to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on their visit to Saskatchewan regarding recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The OECD brings together the governments of countries committed to democracy and the market economy from around the world to support sustainable economic growth; boost employment; raise living standards; maintain financial stability; assist other countries' economic development; and contribute to growth in world trade. The OECD also shares expertise and exchanges views with more than 100 other countries and economies. Thirty countries are members of the organization, which was formed in 1960.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is at the top of the policy and research agendas in many OECD countries and beyond. A three member team is conducting visits across Canada on the topic of recognition of non-formal and informal

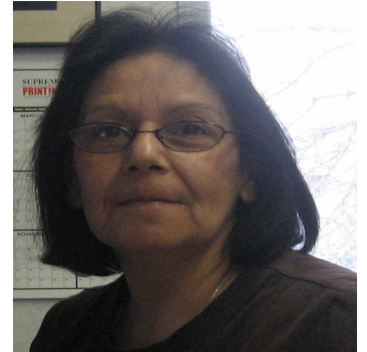
learning. The purpose of the visit is a thematic review that aims to advance understanding of stakeholder behaviour and to investigate what is working and not working with current practices. The overall project aims to map out existing institutional and technical arrangements; develop indicators to measure benefits and risks and collect evidence of who pays, who manages, who benefits, and who is at risk; collect evidence of what is working and not working with current systems; and develop effective beneficial and equitable pilot models. The OECD is particularly interested to hear about economic, educational, social, and psychological benefits of non-formal and informal learning.

The OECD is especially interested in Canada because of the decentralization of recognition of informal learning. They note that "An emerging trend is a shift in government's role as 'a provider' of recognition to a 'co-ordination body' with the increasing importance of social partners. In this context, it is timely to examine what an expected role of a government in

governance is over quality assurance, guidance and counselling, and financing" (OECD p. 3).

Claudette Moran plans to focus her presentation on the recent work done at DTI to coordinate and develop Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies and procedures for DTI Adult 12. The Institute's RPL has a unique cultural focus and is designed to provide credit for skills, ability and knowledge related to Aboriginal languages, Métis cultural practices and understandings, as well as the usual areas of employment and life experiences. Claudette notes that to her knowledge, no other Institution in Saskatchewan is providing RPL credit for cultural and language knowledge.

For more information on DTI's RPL process contact Claudette Moran at (306) 242-6070. Details of the OECD activity can be found at www.oecd.org/edu/recognition.



Claudette Moran, Program Coordinator, DTI

"...no other Institution in Saskatchewan is providing RPL credit for cultural and language knowledge."



Institute Conducts Strategic Planning

“Strategic planning is recognized as sound business practice aimed to ensure that the Institute remains proactive, generates informed decisions, and makes wise use of its resources.”



The Gabriel Dumont Institute Board of Governors and senior management held a two-day strategic planning session January 11 and 12 in Saskatoon. The two-day session was attended by approximately thirty people, including an Elder, Board members, staff members, political representatives, community members, student representatives, and managers. Strategic planning is recognized as sound business practice aimed to ensure that the Institute remains proactive, generates informed decisions, and makes wise use of its resources.

The session was facilitated by a Saskatoon-based consultant familiar with the work of GDI. Irene Seiferling of Board Dynamics led the group through exercises that included affirmation of good governance, strategic planning and business planning information, review of GDI's mission statement, internal and external analyses, and thematic grouping. A follow-up session is planned for February when the group will come together and formulate broad strategic objectives to take forward.

At the strategic planning sessions, the group was fortunate to have a presentation from Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S) President Robert Doucette, in which he outlined the strategic

framework of the MN-S and provided important information to be considered in the Institute's strategic planning process. Highlights of President Doucette's presentation included broad objectives associated with plans to build and maintain credibility, to offer quality member services and supports, and to operate in accordance with the MN-S constitution. Some of the more specific plans include dealing with community economic development; Métis land base; hunting and gathering rights; self governance; and Métis post-secondary education. The plan that most interested the group and elicited a number of questions was the goal to establish an “MN-S Subsidiaries Foundation” and place the Métis affiliates, including GDI, under this structure as subsidiary companies of the MN-S under the *Métis Act*. This entity would be responsible for Board appointments by the MN-S and funding transfers for all affiliates.

A presentation was also made by Geordy McCaffrey, GDI's Executive Director, highlighting the many accomplishments of the Institute over the past three years. Highlights of his presentation included the development of a graduate studies program through the Gabriel Dumont College; delivery

of a Métis Health and Wellness Scholarship program; the incorporation of the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) into the programs and services of the Institute under the Training and Employment arm of GDI; developments in the Northern Campus objective; and progress to-date on the Métis Centre of Excellence.

Once the broad statements of strategic direction are developed these will be made available to all Métis regions and locals in the province and representatives for each region will be consulted for feedback. The GDI Board of Governors will collect and review the input from the communities in order to develop the strategic plan for the Institute for the next three years. The strategic plan will then guide the Institute's business plan each year.

The Institute last developed a strategic plan in 2004. Several strategic objectives were identified at the time, including the development of a Métis Centre of Excellence, a Graduate Studies component of the Institute, a Northern presence, and a Métis Education Act. Many strategic goals from the 2004 plan have been accomplished or are well under way while others have been stalled due to circumstances beyond the control of the Institute.



Analysis of Métis Literacy Released

Continued from page 4

kind of information as assessed through IALSS is generally likely to be tied to a number of positive life outcomes" (Bougie).

Results of the IALSS show that among Saskatchewan Métis the proportion of adults aged 16 and over who scored below Level 3 in prose literacy was about 56%. In comparison, 37% of the non-Aboriginal population in urban Saskatchewan scored below Level 3.

Bougie notes the link between literacy levels and formal education, indicating that the link between the two can be complex. At times, some adults gain high levels of literacy proficiency while having fairly low levels of formal education and others may show low levels of literacy proficiency while having relatively high levels of formal education. Bougie concludes that, despite these complexities, "generally speaking, higher levels of formal education should be expected to be associated with higher levels of literacy proficiency." In the survey, individuals with postsecondary education were significantly more likely than those with less than high school education to score at or above the Level 3 benchmark.

Bougie states that "Differences between the

proportions of individuals at the low and high ends of the literacy distribution among the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal populations would not be important if not for the fact that literacy proficiency seems to be associated with significant life outcomes. One such outcome is labour force status." For instance, levels of unemployment were "particularly high (between 40 and 45%) among individuals scoring at Levels 1 or 2 on the document literacy scale for the First Nations population in urban Manitoba and for both First Nations and Métis populations in urban Saskatchewan" (Bougie).

Bougie concludes by noting that the unequal literacy outcomes for urban Aboriginal populations indicate inequalities in social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people, "which in turn may make the maintenance and acquisition of new competencies even more difficult." Bougie's analysis confirms the importance of education and literacy programs for Métis populations in Saskatchewan. She states "as is the case among the non-Aboriginal population, higher levels of formal education were shown to be consistently associated with higher levels of literacy proficiency." The link between literacy proficiency and labour market outcomes for Métis people is also significant

since access to jobs provides one measure of economic equity.

It is significant to note that GDI is a unique organization that works in a holistic manner, providing cultural and academic programming to Métis adults from literacy programs through Basic Education, Adult 12, certificate, diploma, and degree programs, as well as labour market programs and information via GDI Training & Employment. The connections between literacy, formal education, and labour market engagement revealed in Bougie's study provide quantifiable validation for the Institute's endeavours in these areas.

References and Notes

- Bougie, E. 2008. *Literacy profile of off-reserve First Nations and Métis people living in urban Manitoba and Saskatchewan: Results from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003* in *Education Matters*. Statistics Canada Catalogue number 81-004-XIE, vol. 4 no. 5. Retrieved January 8, 2008 from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/free/pub/81-004-XIE/2007005/article/10500-en.htm>
10. Canadian Council on Learning (CCL). <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/RedefiningSuccessModels.htm>
11. Battiste, M. 2005. *State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada*. Canadian Council on Learning (CCL).



GDI graduate Randy Ross photographed at work as a Conservation Officer.

"Literacy skills are seen as essential for individuals to realize their full personal, social, and economic potential, and are the foundation upon which people may acquire additional knowledge and skills throughout adulthood."



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