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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

Collective Bargaining Agreement Reached

At the end of March 2008, the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) and the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees Union reached a three-year agreement that amends the Institute's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) which expired on March 31, 2007. During April, both parties ratified the agreement.

Highlights of the new agreement include economic adjustments of 3.5% effective April 1, 2007; 4% effective April 1, 2008; and 4.5% effective April 1, 2009. In addition, the new agreement includes an increase to the pension plan from 6% to 7% by both employer and employees effective January 1, 2010. A signing/retention bonus is also part of the new agreement, making all employees on staff on April 1, 2008 eligible. The payment is based on a rate of \$1,000 per FTE, but is pro-rated for less than FTE employees. The payment is based on each known employee's FTE for the 2007-2008 academic year. Sessional

lecturers are eligible for the signing/retention bonus based on a modified formula.

A major change to the benefits plan includes discarding the short-term disability benefit plan effective January 1, 2009.

Group B staff with a 200-day year will have their year reduced to 199 days. This includes Faculty, Librarians, Curriculum Development Officers, Counsellors (with the exception of Training & Employment Counsellors) and Research Officers.

Other amendments to the agreement will allow Union Stewards to utilize the employer's email system to forward union materials such as notice of meetings or union business to GDI employees provided they are not defamatory to the employer and do not contain information related to job action or job stoppage.

The sick leave benefit has been amended to include provision for a medical certificate in the case of three or more days of successive sick leave, a

measure which is in line with existing Institute policy. When GDI requires an employee to produce a medical certificate, the Institute will pay for it. In a case where an employee becomes sick and does not have sufficient sick days accumulated, GDI will advance up to five days sick leave.

Finally, new articles were added to the agreement to provide for health benefits and payment in lieu of pension benefits for sessional lecturers. Sessional employees may be eligible to receive a Health Account and a payment in lieu of pension. Details of the Health Accounts, payment in lieu of pension and eligibility are included in the agreement under Article 21.

This article is being provided as an unofficial summary only. Please consult the new CBA April 1, 2007—March 31, 2010 for full and complete details.



Collaboration on Thematic Unit Beneficial to All

By Kim Rowe



In February, instructors at the Dumont Technical Institute (DTI) Prince Albert developed an integrated unit of study using energy as a theme.

Once that specific theme was selected, ideas for each of the subject areas were brainstormed, and then those ideas were examined to determine how they could address curriculum requirements. By then, instructors were anxious to implement the ideas, and decided to hold a cultural fair on March 20, the last day of school before the Easter break.

One of the challenges inherent in carrying out such a plan is finding time to communicate with other staff members as the project unfolds. However, communication is vital to make a project work. For example, Janice teaches Métis Studies, and I teach Grade 10

Communications, Math and Computer Literacy. I started immediately on Math, focusing on ratio and proportion (scale distances); in the meantime, Janice came up with an excellent, all-inclusive assignment for Métis Studies which also featured Communications and Computer Literacy skills. She graciously agreed to let me use the essays students wrote for

her as part of my Communications evaluation. I felt bad for “piggy-backing,” and saw this overlap as a bit of a problem. By the same token, though, it can also be perceived as a bonus, relieving teachers of a certain amount of prep work—so long as all parties are flexible and willing to share as Janice did. On the other hand, if Janice and I had not communicated, I might have prepared a similar essay assignment for Communications, which would have been an exercise in overkill for our students.

It was also interesting to discover students’ hidden talents along the way. I may never have learned that one of the male Literacy students knows how to sew if I hadn’t encouraged him to make a costume for the cultural fair. He didn’t wear it, but he did create one! Other students showed great creativity and imagination in crafting items for their displays, or in using items in ways other than intended.

Students not only prepared display booths with pictures and information, they were also encouraged to dress in costume and provide food samples

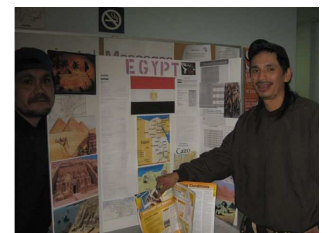
representative of the country they studied. One student also had music playing at his booth. I couldn’t resist the opportunity to dress up, too. Whether it made students more or less comfortable, I really don’t know. I know I had fun, and I received a small taste of what it’s like for the students to go through this particular type of learning experience.

I would strongly recommend other centres try planning and implementing a thematic unit. It was an interesting experience, and I believe we all learned a great deal as teachers. I would also suggest that instructors need to make time to plan collaboratively, and reflect, review and revise as a team at least once a week.

A copy of the thematic unit developed by Janice DePeel, Angela Letendre, Elizabeth Majocha, Sherry McLennan and Kimberly Rowe is available upon request. Please contact lisa.wilson@gdi.qdins.org



Students (above and right) display their projects for the cultural fair



SUNTEP Regina Update

The Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) Regina had fifty-three students enrolled in the Winter Semester: fifteen in Year 1; eleven in Year 2; seven in Year 3; sixteen in Year 4; and four students on leave or withdrawn.

Fourteen of the sixteen year four students are now in their final semester of Internship with two students completing prerequisite coursework before commencing their internships. Ten are interns in Regina Public Schools, and one student each will intern in Lumsden, Moose Jaw, Creighton, and Ochapowace First Nation. In January, the SUNTEP interns, cooperating teachers and SUNTEP faculty attended a three-day internship seminar in preparation for this

experience. SUNTEP organized a one-day call-back for the interns in order to allow them to participate in the Career Fair, connect with potential school division employers, and finalize graduation plans.

Year three students are in their second half of their pre-internship while the year two students are in their involvement semester, and are taking a full complement of professional studies classes for the first time in their program. Second-year students presented workshops on genealogy and finger weaving at the WestCast Conference held in Regina in February where SUNTEP alumnus, Dr. Sherry Farrell-Racette, was the closing keynote speaker for the conference.

The fifteen year-one students are working diligently at their studies. In December, as a culminating activity for their THEA160 class, year one students performed an ensemble play that they developed in class. This play was a compilation of their own experiences, and examined instances of oppression. In addition, first-year SUNTEP students performed the dance steps they learned in the Métis Dance Class (KHS185AB) at the all-centre meeting held in February.

The SUNTEP Regina graduation is scheduled for Friday June 6 at the Delta Regina Hotel.



SUNTEP Regina students at Duck Lake 2006

GDI Board Update

GDI is governed by a twelve-member Board of Governors. The Board of Governors oversee the Institute as a whole and are responsible for its operation and governance in all matters. Board members are appointed to represent the twelve MN – S regions. The Chair of the Board is the MN – S Minister of Education.

Current Board members are as follows:

Robert Doucette, Chair
MN—S Minister of Education

Doyle Vermette, Vice Chair, Northern Region I

Vacant, Northern Region II

Bernice Aramenko, Northern Region III

Michael Bell, Western Region I

Ron Gagnon, Western Region IA

Terry Boyer, Western Region II

Sheila Pocha, Western Region IIA

Darrel Hawman, Western Region III

Brian Chaboyer, Eastern Region I

Kathy Palidwar, Eastern Region II

Gerald St. Pierre, Eastern Region IIA

Guy F. Blondeau, Eastern Region III



The GDI Board is working to ensure that the Institute has a progressive governance model.



SUNTEP PA Internship Pilot

By Sandy Sherwin-Shields



"We wanted a model that was holistic, which not only nurtured the skills needed to be good teachers, but also to nurture their souls and their spirits."

Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) Prince Albert has a proud history of planning and delivering the four-year Bachelor of Education Degree through the University of Saskatchewan. We select instructors, design courses that meet our students' needs, place and supervise students in their first, second and third year school-based experiences, and provide them with as many cultural and professional development workshops as possible.

In the past, the one aspect we did not control was the four-month practicum in the program's fourth year. There were many reasons why we wanted to do this ourselves: we know our students, we know our school community, and we wanted a model that reflects who we are as a

program. Three years ago, the university granted us permission to place and supervise our interns.

The feedback from participants and Cooperating Teachers has been positive. For example, the final evaluation was praised as a document that interns could continue to use for development as they begin their teaching careers. The interns reported feeling more comfortable with SUNTEP faculty supervising. This confirms what we already know—that the most important factor that leads to success is "relationships." As a program we work hard towards this end. Over four years we build relationships based on respect, trust and caring.

This past fall, it was time to also put our model in place—in order to design and implement a process and manual that would be

unique to SUNTEP, Prince Albert. We started in the spring with an Advisory Committee consisting of teachers, principals, superintendents and faculty members. We wanted a model that was holistic, which not only nurtured the skills needed to be good teachers, but also to nurture their souls and their spirits. We wanted a model that the interns could use as future teachers for their continuing professional development, and evolving self images as teachers.

The model is a work in progress. We look forward to meeting again with the Advisory Committee to discuss future improvements. It is always our goal to be a program of excellence, and we are grateful to the commitment of professionals in our community to participate in this learning journey.



SUNTEP Prince Albert students on internship experiences

Evaluation Update

In the fall of 2007, the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) and Saskatchewan Advanced Education, Employment and Labour (AEEL) commissioned EKOS Research Associates Inc. to conduct an evaluation of Institute programs—Dumont Technical Institute (DTI), the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) and the Publishing Department.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the rationale, design and delivery, effectiveness and impacts for the period between September 1, 2004 and June 30, 2007.

The study involved six components: document/literature review; administrative file review; key informant interviews; staff surveys; participants' surveys; and integrated analysis and reporting.

Reviews, surveys, interviews, and analysis have been completed. Thank you to all students, staff, key informants, and others who participated in this process.

Release of the final evaluation report is anticipated in the coming weeks.



AHRDA Engagement

As many Gabriel Dumont Institute Training & Employment (GDI T&E) stakeholders are aware, the current agreement between the Institute and Service Canada will expire March 31, 2009. The national Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) is winding down, and as such, a successor strategy is being planned by the federal government.

A Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) policy and program development unit has begun the process of post-2009 discussions, labeled “engagement sessions.” The first engagement session was held in May 2007 in Saskatoon. The session was run in a workshop format with the

intent of identifying the current agreement’s perceived strengths and weaknesses.

A second engagement session occurred in November 2007. At this session, limited information was provided; however, there was some suggestion as to what a new agreement might entail, including selection processes for service delivery providers, development of geographic service areas, employer demand strategies and industry partnerships, federal/provincial/Aboriginal partnerships, and needs assessments for clients with multiple barriers.

In January 2008, a third engagement session was held which focused on the private sector. The main issues addressed included

employer needs and partnership development between employers and labour market initiatives.

Tavia Inkster, Director of GDI T&E, has had the opportunity to meet with other Métis AHRDA holders in Canada to develop a MHRDA technical issue paper to guide the development of a federal Aboriginal human resources labour market strategy. Since Métis AHRDA holders operate in separate provinces there has historically been limited contact between the different agreement holders. It is widely acknowledged by all AHRDA holders that having the opportunity to visit other agreement holders and learn about their initiatives is a valuable exercise.

GDI T&E is looking forward to contributing and seeing the results of the various engagement sessions, and to the unveiling of the successor strategy to the AHRDS by Service Canada.




Photo of GDI T&E client on job training

Strategic Planning Update

The Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) Board of Governors is in the process of developing a strategic plan for 2008-2011. This planning process, led by the GDI Board of Governors, is intended to be consultative. Its objective is to determine the Institute’s broad strategic direction for the next three years. It involves seeking input from GDI—its Board, senior management and employees, as well as GDI’s political partners, key stakeholders, and the community.

The GDI Board and senior management held two planning sessions in early 2008. The sessions helped participants focus on GDI’s big picture. It was obvious that the people involved with the Institute are passionate about our work. GDI’s cultural focus, its good governance, committed staff, responsiveness, and accountability drew heavy praise from participants. Key issues included legal status, governance relationships, relationships with the Métis political body, internal capacity, communications, and the

need for a Métis Centre of Excellence.

A discussion document containing GDI’s broad strategic goals is currently being prepared for consultation with Métis Nation—Saskatchewan Regions and Locals. The GDI Board of Governors will collect and review input from Métis communities in order to develop the Institute’s strategic plan for the next three years. The strategic plan will then guide the Institute’s annual business plans. 

“The cultural focus of the Institute, its good governance, committed staff, responsiveness, and accountability drew heavy praise from participants.”



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