

## **Memorandum of Understanding with Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations**

Jurisdiction: Saskatchewan

Contact: Ted Amendt

Level: K – 12

Theme: Government Policies

### Description of Practice:

The Government of Saskatchewan believes in strong partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples in education planning and decision making at all levels of the education system. Working in partnership with First Nations and Métis peoples will lead to the creation of a seamless education system that provides young people with learning opportunities that reflect and respond to their unique cultures, needs and aspirations.

### Background:

Demographic trends indicate a need to escalate efforts to improve the conditions of education for Aboriginal students. Fifty-eight per cent (58%) of Aboriginal people were under 25 compared with 33% of the non-Aboriginal population, and one in four (25%) children in Saskatchewan was Aboriginal in 2001. Population projections for Saskatchewan predict that approximately 45 per cent of Kindergarten children will be of Aboriginal ancestry in 2016.

To date, the anticipated outcomes for First Nations and Métis children and young people in the provincial K-12 education system have not been fully realized. Overall, 48 percent of Aboriginal people had less than high school education versus 30.8% of the non-Aboriginal population. First Nations and Métis students continue to be over-represented among those not succeeding in or completing school. To ensure Saskatchewan's future sustainability, the provincial education system must address this challenge and create an education system that meets the needs of First Nations and Métis students.

In response to this, Saskatchewan Learning actively promotes and engages in partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples at all levels of the education system. These partnerships are created to resolve tuition agreements, as well as to support Aboriginal Education initiatives within school divisions.

### Development:

In fall 2002, officials of the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) Education and Training Secretariat and Saskatchewan Learning drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning how to work effectively together for the benefit of Saskatchewan children

and youth. The MOU was signed by the Minister of Learning and the FSIN Vice-Chief on February 27, 2003. The FSIN and Saskatchewan Learning established a joint work plan based on the objectives of the MOU. It began by initially looking at Shared Standards and is now focussed more broadly on Shared Standards and Capacity Building.

In the Fall of 2003, Saskatchewan Learning released *Building Partnerships: First Nations and Métis Peoples and the Provincial Education System – Policy Framework for Saskatchewan’s Prekindergarten to Grade 12 Education System*. This policy provided the framework for which school divisions could enter into partnership agreements with First Nations and Métis organizations.

Partnerships continue to represent formalization of relationships between the provincial school system and Aboriginal peoples and are designed to maximize student benefit and achievement. Partnership models, guidelines and policy that reflect community realities are helpful. Tuition agreements, and other forms of education service agreements, are increasingly being negotiated through our investments in partnership development.

Evidence:

Partnership agreements between First Nations and school divisions have appeared throughout Saskatchewan. These partnerships have created opportunities for shared decision-making with First Nations and Métis peoples. The partnerships have resulted in projects related to the inclusion of Aboriginal content and perspectives; curricula development; representative workforce initiatives; language programs; shared governance; and alternative high schools.

Adaptability:

The partnerships are created in a way that does not abrogate with Treaty rights. The creation of partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples and school divisions facilitates opportunities for shared decision-making. Based upon mutually agreed principles, these partnerships will lead to a shared vision of education which appropriately includes Aboriginal peoples and achieves successful outcomes for First Nations and Métis students. The notion of partnerships could be applied in many jurisdictions across Canada.

Further Information:

Ted Amendt

Superintendent, First Nations and Métis Education,  
Saskatchewan Learning  
[tamendt@sasked.gov.sk.ca](mailto:tamendt@sasked.gov.sk.ca) (306) 933-7630