



Saskatoon  
Public  
Schools

**First Nations, Inuit &  
Métis Education Unit**

**Cort Dogniez**  
Coordinator, FNIM Education  
683-8326

**Dennis Esperance**  
Aboriginal Employment  
Development Officer  
683-8340

**Jennifer Hingley**  
FNIM Learning Leader  
683-8322

**Faye Maurice**  
Métis Education Worker  
683-8433

**Holly Mayes**  
FNIM Secretary  
683-8310

**Lori McAuley**  
FNIM Project Leader:  
Research & Innovation  
683-8434

**Patricia Prowse**  
Superintendent of Education  
683-8265

**Jack Rayne**  
Student Success Coach  
683-7800

**Deanna Speidel**  
Whitecap Partnership  
683-8307

**Don Speidel**  
Waakiye (Traditional Helper)  
683-8317

**FNIM NEWS**

is a publication of  
Saskatoon Public Schools

**Editor:** Cort Dogniez

Send comments  
and/or submissions to :  
dogniezc@spsd.sk.ca

# FNIM News

## Saskatoon Public Schools

Fall, 2008

Volume 1 Issue 2



*Back Row from left to right: Deanna Speidel, Jennifer Hingley, Holly Mayes, Lori McAuley,  
Seated left to right: Cort Dogniez, Patricia Prowse, Don Speidel  
Missing: Faye Maurice, Dennis Esperance, Jack Rayne*

Happy New School Year and welcome to our second publication of FNIM News. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide our readers with contact information, recommended resources, professional learning opportunities, upcoming events and celebration items. Each publication will feature the work of our *FNIM Education Unit* and our award winning *Okiciyapi Partnership*. Saskatoon Public Schools benefit greatly from this strategic alliance with the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) and the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) as we work together to improve learning opportunities for all children and youth. If you would like to learn more about our FNIM Education Unit and the Okiciyapi Partnership visit our Saskatoon Public Schools website or contact a member of our FNIM team.

As challenged by our new Director, Mr. George Rathwell, our FNIM Unit is committed to the plan. We are focused on supporting the work of our learning community through *Collegiate Renewal*, *Literacy for Life* and this year we are excited about our learning initiatives in community schools. We are committed to improve learning outcomes for our students through the development of culturally responsive classrooms and schools. In this edition you will learn more about the concept of cultural responsiveness. During our initial exploration of this topic our research team (supported with an Aboriginal Education Research Network grant) traveled to international, national, provincial and local sites. We have listened and learned from these visits and from the wise counsel of our local Elders, Advisory Members, students, staff, parents/guardians and community members about what it means to move beyond cultural awareness to being culturally responsive. I challenge you, in whatever role you play in our organization, to explore what you can do this year to demonstrate cultural responsiveness. Albert Scott, Kinistin First Nation Traditional Knowledge Keeper, described the journey of cultural responsiveness in a powerful way. He said, *"This work is like dropping a stone in the water. We are creating ripples and eventually all people will find themselves in the circle."*

In closing, our FNIM Education Unit is committed to our learning community and is available to support our learning priorities, provide assistance in the inclusion of FNIM content and perspectives, assist you in the development of culturally responsive classrooms and schools, share and promote promising research practices and facilitate respectful authentic community engagement. Let us work together to drop these stones in the water and create the necessary ripples until we have built a harmonious, respectful and inclusive circle for all.

Wishing you the very best this school year,  
Patricia Prowse, Tiwahe WasteWinj, Superintendent of Education

## Developing a Culturally Responsive School Division

If you recall from our last newsletter Jennifer Hingley is providing leadership in our school division on a research project funded by the Ministry of Education. The research project is entitled, *Developing a Culturally Responsive School Division*. In this edition of our newsletter Jennifer has provided us insight into what it means to be culturally responsive.

Cultural responsiveness is a term that has been widely accepted and used by Saskatoon Public Schools. We believe in becoming and being culturally responsive because it affirms students with the intent of improving learning and develops cultural competencies and a sense of social responsibility in all students. In the 2007-2008 school year Saskatoon Public Schools engaged in research to gain a better understanding of cultural responsiveness and its implications for a large public school system. The following definitions were developed based on the teachings of our advisory committee, the body of research that is available and the work of the Alaskan people.

### Our Cultural Advisory Committee defines Cultural Responsiveness as:

**Affirming:** validates FNIM knowledge, ways of knowing , doing and being

**Holistic:** engages the heart, mind, body and spirit of all learners and recognizes the gifts and strengths of all students and grows and nurtures those gifts

**Ceremonial:** ceremonies nurture the spirit and offers guidance in personal development and self awareness.

Ceremonies promote pride in nationhood, community, family and the individual; fosters family togetherness and a spirit of community pride as the community witnesses and celebrates the achievement of individuals.

**Healing:** schools become centers for cultural continuity. Language, learning from place, traditional songs all reinforce pride in who you are as a person

**Value Based:** respect, balance, integrity, belonging, compassion, forgiveness, generosity are foundational beliefs

**Visual:** school is symbolic of welcoming, pride, representation of cultural beliefs and values

**Purposeful:** creates a stronger sense of personal self worth

**Community based:** a true partnership between child, family, school (all adults in the building and the system that is in place) and community exists

**Inclusive:** school is a place that nurtures the spirit of belonging. Belonging is about caring, connection and the belief that all are equally valid and needed for the community to be strong.

**Honouring:** Elders and traditional knowledge keepers are the foundation for the transmission and continuation of culture. They become the foundation and the center of our work.

These characteristics define cultural responsiveness and provide a vision for what cultural responsiveness has the potential to become in schools. At the heart of this understanding is that the purpose of school is to strengthen, educate, and nurture children and young people so that they can contribute to their family, school, community and nation in a good way.

*Successful Schools are culturally affirming places of learning for all students*  
(Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee—AEPAC)

## SPS Fire Keepers

At a June Administrator's meeting the SPS Fire Keepers were recognized for their ongoing support of First Nations and Métis cultural practices in our school division. The Fire Keeper role was recognized three years ago at our TKK Cultural Camp and has been supported by an SPS administrator since that time.

John Dewar was our first Fire Keeper. Dean Newton took over the role last year and this year the role has been assumed by Shane Skjerven. Thank you for modeling your journey to becoming culturally competent.



## Culturally Responsive Teaching by Geneva Gay

Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Gay (2000)

It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum. It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.

It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.

It teaches students to know and praise their own and each others' cultural heritages.

It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects

### Guidelines for Culturally Responsive Schools (Alaska Native Knowledge Network)

According to the Alaska Standards, "the focus moves from learning about cultural heritage as another subject to teaching/ *learning through culture as a foundation for all education*, it is intended that all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing, and world views be recognized as equally valid, adaptable and complementary to one another in mutually beneficial ways and skills routinely taught in schools (p. 29). Check out the Alaska Native Knowledge Network at: [www.ankn.uaf.edu](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu)

## Nêhiyâwiwin Cree Language and Culture Program



*Nêhiyâwiwin Cree Language and Culture Program Kindergarten and Grade 1 / 2 classes performing at National Aboriginal Day at Friendship Park in Saskatoon*



It is an exciting time for teachers, students and parents involved in the Nêhiyâwiwin Cree Language and Culture Program. The program is in its fourth year of operation at Confederation Park Community School and we have expanded to include a pre-kindergarten class and a Grade Three class. One of the main goals of the program is to support the development of oral fluency of the Cree language with students. We would like to welcome Pam Bonaire who teaches

Pre-K in the afternoons and Edie Venne-Hyggen who teaches Kindergarten in the mornings. Returning are Wanda Peekeekoot teaching Grade One and Sheila Kennedy teaching Grade 2/3. The Okiciyapi Partnership supports the Cree Language and Culture Program through the development and implementation of Cree resources, Elder inclusion, community engagement, cultural events and out of school trips.

Free bussing is available for participating students. Application forms are available at all elementary public schools as well as Saskatoon Public Schools' central office and the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

**Michif language classes are once again being offered Monday evenings at the CUMFI office. Everyone is welcome! For more information contact Faye Maurice at 683-8433**



The Okicīyapi Partnership is an innovative strategic alliance that promotes, strengthens and facilitates First Nation and Métis (FNM) education in all of the Partnership schools and communities.

The Partnership has planned and implemented various programs to meet seven key goals in the areas of employment, curriculum and cultural programming, language development, anti-racism education, cultural responsiveness, student success and Partnership governance. Together the partners work to provide comprehensive programs designed to promote FNM education and student success.

### Did you know . . .

The Okicīyapi Partnership supports one day teacher exchanges to Saskatoon Tribal Council Schools? Contact Holly Mayes at 683-8310 for further information.

## Okicīyapi Partnership Initiatives

### Naming Ceremony



*Acting Tribal Chief Oliver Cameron and CUMFI President Shirley Isbister spoke to the accomplishments championed by SPS leadership and presented gifts on behalf of their organizations. Both recipients were very humbled and grateful to everyone who supported the Naming ceremony. Dr. Jutras was named Chanté Waste itoncha—Good Hearted Leader. Cort Dogniez was named Wamble Mato—Eagle Bear.*

*Support of leadership is an important part of cultural responsiveness. On May 28, 2008 Dr. Jutras, Director of Education and Cort Dogniez, Coordinator of FNIM Education were both honoured with spirit names. The ceremony was held at the Gathercole Auditorium with family, staff and representatives from CUMFI, STC and SPS.*



### What is a Naming Ceremony?

Hunka (the Making of Relatives):

There are two ways to conduct a Hunka ceremony. One is through the naming of a family member or an extended family member. The other is for adopting others, who are not blood relatives. A Hunka relative is considered to be closer than a blood relative. In the old way we used to say they are above our blood relatives for they are our Spirit relatives. We are connected in the above world and remember each other here in this one as well. When making another person a relative, permission must be granted from the one you want to Hunka. If that person is still a child, then permission must be granted by whoever is responsible for that child.

Traditionally speaking when a non-Lakota person is adopted into a Lakota family, that non-Lakota person is adopted into that specific family, or clan. This does not mean they are adopted into the whole of any Lakota, Dakota, or Nakota Nation. It means that they are accepted as being part of that family who adopted them.

*Spirituality is the essence of our connectedness to everything in the universe.*

Otto Fietz TKK Advisor

## Métis Education Worker

Faye Maurice is our Métis Education Worker who works to support the inclusion of Métis content and perspectives in four SPS schools. This year Faye is working with staff at Brevoort Park, Lakeridge, Silverwood Heights and Vincent Massey schools. Faye is also helping the TKK program in providing Métis perspective for other schools seeking assistance through this program. Faye is a very competent and energetic resource person and we enjoy her lively spirit.



## Student Success Coach

Jack Rayne is the Student Success Coach at Mount Royal Collegiate. Jack's role is to work in collaboration with Mount Royal staff to support students with their various transitions. The Student Success Coach also liaises with students, parents and community members, supports students and staff in the inclusion of First Nations and Métis content and perspectives, helps maintain a caring and respectful school climate, and supports anti-racism training.

## Whitecap Student Advisory Counsellor

Deanna Speidel is the new Whitecap Partnership Student Advisory Counsellor. Deanna works half time supporting Whitecap students who attend SPS elementary and secondary schools. The other half of her position is still to be determined but will focus on supporting students and their families to strengthen relationships between home and school.



## Seasonal Sweatlodge Ceremonies

In order to become culturally competent we require opportunities to experience the world through another cultural lens. To assist staff in their life long learning and to support their cultural competencies Saskatoon Public Schools sponsors four seasonal sweatlodge ceremonies throughout the year. It is our desire to provide this experience in a safe, non-threatening manner. Information sessions are held a week prior to the ceremony to provide staff with important protocol information and to answer any questions they may have about the ceremony. All SPS staff are welcome to join us and learn more about First Nation spirituality through a personal experience. Our summer and fall sweatlodge ceremonies have already taken place. Two more sweatlodge ceremonies will be planned throughout the year. Contact Holly Mayes for further details at 683-8310.

## Traditional Knowledge Keepers' Program

One of the promising practices identified in our system strategic plan is the inclusion of First Nations, Inuit and Métis content and perspectives. The Okicīyapi Partnership supports schools by providing funding for Traditional Knowledge Keepers (TKKs). Traditional Knowledge Keepers are resource people recognized within our community who possess gifts and talents that would support curricular outcomes for students.

The Okicīyapi Partnership provides funds for each school to access TKKs for one full day or two half days. Information concerning the Traditional Knowledge Keepers' Program and registration process are available on the Saskatoon Public Schools portal under Division Documents - First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education.

**Daily  
Elder  
Meditations  
available at:**

[www.whitebison.org](http://www.whitebison.org)

**Did you know . . .**

- SPS staff participated in the development and piloting of The K—6 treaty resources developed by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner? Thank you to all our teachers who supported the development of these units.
- This year's Saskatoon West Intertribal Powwow will be held at Mount Royal Collegiate on May 29, 2009?
- SPS staff can access resource materials from the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre's library? Ask your teacher librarian for details.
- CUMFI produces a bi-annual newsletter addressing programs, new initiatives and upcoming events?  
For further information contact Eileen Trotchie at [e.trotchie@sasktel.net](mailto:e.trotchie@sasktel.net)
- Central Urban Métis Federation Incorporated (CUMFI) has moved into its new home? The new address is 315 Ave. M South.

**Congratulations to  
CUMFI!**



## Traditional Knowledge Keepers' Cultural Camp

The fourth TTK Cultural Camp began with an Elders Forum on September 29th. This forum was well attended by central office staff, Admin Council, trustees, and various school staff members. This was an opportunity for our school division and Partnership to provide the Elders and TTKs with information concerning our past and present initiatives and seek their guidance and advice. It was also an opportunity to have informal conversations around topics of interest to the participants. The day camps were held over three days and attended by nine of our collegiate's, five elementary schools and three STC schools. Workshop sessions included Science and Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Métis History, Medicine Walks, Storytelling, Traditional Games, Hide Tanning, Treaty Awareness, Song and Dance, Residential School Experiences, and traditional Family Roles. Secondary students were also offered an opportunity to participate in Sweatlodge Ceremonies. This initiative requires a lot of planning and coordination on behalf of Don Speidel, System Waakiye, Holly Mayes and their team of supporters.



### Treaty Resources

Every school has now received a binder containing the new K-6 Treaty Resources. Watch for upcoming professional development opportunities to support the use of this resource. More information can be found at:

**Office of the  
Treaty Commissioner**  
[www.otc.ca](http://www.otc.ca)

Please remember our Curriculum Materials Centre has numerous resources to support the inclusion of FNIM content for all grade and many subject areas.

### A Time for Significant Leadership

This professional development strategy is intended to nurture existing leadership within school staffs, school administration, parents and community, and youth. *A Time for Significant Leadership* utilizes a train-the-trainer model designed to build capacity within learning communities for self-reflection and assessment, planning for action, and team building. It is expected that this initiative will be integrated within existing professional development, and school and school division goal setting plans for actualizing SchoolPLUS community based education models and positive school climates. Saskatoon Public Schools is partnering with the Ministry of Education to provide this valuable training opportunity to SPS staff. We hope to see this PD strategy implemented in all our schools in the future.

### Round Dance

The Okiciyapi Partnership will once again be co-sponsoring the First Nations Language Keepers Feast and Round Dance with the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre. The event will be held on December 4th at the White Buffalo Youth Lodge. The feast will start at 5:00 pm and the Round Dance will follow. Everyone is welcome to attend so come out and join us for good food, good fun and good entertainment!