



ON COURSE

Quick Reference Sheet

October 1999

Bringing Aboriginal Resource People into Schools

New Program Established

In 1999, Saskatchewan Education introduced the **Aboriginal Elder/Outreach Program** as a component of the Indian and Métis Education Development Program (IMED).

Specific IMED funding has been allocated for initiatives that bring Aboriginal resource people, such as Elders, outreach workers or cultural advisors, into schools. The purpose of this special component of IMED is to encourage the building and enhancement of relationships between school divisions and the Aboriginal community.

Aboriginal Elders, outreach workers, cultural advisors and other Aboriginal resource people play a vital role in creating a culturally-affirming school environment. These resource people can link students, staff, families and community to Aboriginal cultures and traditions, as well as bring an enhanced Aboriginal perspective to the school.

Implementing Elder/Outreach Programs *Experiences of School Divisions*

A number of school divisions have initiated Elder or outreach programs in schools. Prior to developing the guidelines for the Aboriginal Elder/Outreach Program, Saskatchewan Education contacted many of these school divisions to ask for their comments and suggestions. The major points expressed by these school divisions are listed below.

- **Sensitivity to Local Community Needs and Views**

School division staff emphasized the importance of seeking the views of the local Aboriginal community prior to considering a program. In some communities, needs are better met by an outreach worker, cultural advisor or a group of Elders, rather than a single Elder in residence.

- **Partnerships with the Aboriginal Community**

A consistent message from school divisions was to enter into partnerships with local Aboriginal organizations, bands or tribal councils when planning and implementing a program. Many of the people contacted also mentioned the invaluable assistance of Aboriginal staff members.

- **Importance of the Selection Process**

When selecting a person for a position, the message was clear – involve the community. The candidate must have the respect of students, their families and the community. It is crucial to seek the advice and partnership of Aboriginal organizations when implementing an Elder program. The selection of an Elder is often linked to local protocol and tradition.

- **Understanding the Traditional Role of an Elder**

A number of people advised that prior to implementing an Elder's program, students and staff should receive an orientation on the traditional role of an Elder and the role the Elder will play in the school. This can help prevent misunderstandings. It can also help teachers to know how the Elder can assist in classroom activities and provide advice to students.

1999-2000 Aboriginal Elder/0 outreach Program

In June 1999, school divisions submitted applications to the Aboriginal Elder/0 outreach Program requesting over \$750,000. A total of \$309,000, all the available funding, was approved. Projects were approved based on the strength of the proposal, number of Aboriginal students involved, partnerships with the Aboriginal community and existing Community Education funding.

The projects involve over 70 schools in 21 school divisions. Funding is provided for a three-year period, after which time school divisions may reapply. The following table describes a few of the approved projects.

School Division	Project Description
<p>Scenic Valley Contact: Lynne Saas, Director of Education ph: 748-2523</p> <p>and</p> <p>Hudson Bay Contact: Ron Richardson, Director of Education ph: 865-2444</p>	<p>Both Scenic Valley and Hudson Bay school divisions are including Aboriginal resource people in their alternative high school programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Scenic Valley, Elders work with high-risk students in an alternate setting. The program is new and is modeled on a large family farm. Elders from six local bands help students develop a sense of their First Nation heritage, as well as teach life skills such as gardening, cooking, canning and simple carpentry. • The Hudson Bay School Division's Student Transition Education Partnership (STEP) program is an alternative program for 12- to 18-year-old at-risk students. This year, the program includes a Cultural Liaison Coordinator to create a culturally-affirming school environment and develop linkages between the school and families.
<p>Saskatchewan Rivers Contact: Tom Sutherland, Superintendent of Education ph: 764-1571</p>	<p>The Saskatchewan Rivers School Division has expanded their Aboriginal Cultural Advisor initiative. Aboriginal Cultural Advisors help link schools and Aboriginal families, help find Elders for school activities and programs, and assist teachers to expand students' awareness of Aboriginal cultures. They are role models, mentors, counsellors and teachers to many Aboriginal students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was developed in consultation with local First Nations and the school division's Aboriginal Advisory Committee.
<p>Biggar Contact: Morris Smith, Director of Education ph: 948-3348</p>	<p>The Biggar School Division has hired an Aboriginal Outreach Worker for the Cando School. Cando School is a small school with approximately 150 Aboriginal students. The outreach worker assists the school in creating a school environment that is culturally relevant and affirming. Increasing Aboriginal family involvement is a major objective of the initiative. The outreach worker works closely with individual students and their families in an effort to break down some of the barriers that impair individual student success in school.</p>
<p>Ile a la Crosse Contact: Dr. William Duff�e, Director of Education ph: 752-2390</p>	<p>Ile a la Crosse, a predominantly M�etis community, has over 500 K-12 students. The school division has initiated an Elders Program encompassing preschool to adult education. The program involves the Headstart (preschool) Program, Rossignol School (K-12) and the Ile a la Crosse M�etis Alternate Education Program, an alternate adult education program. Elders are integrally involved in developing a Michif/Cree language program, a cultural program and an outdoor education program. The Elders Program includes an Elders' centre, workshops on cultural awareness and knowledge, storytelling, youth counselling, talking circles and healing activities.</p>

For information on the Aboriginal Elder/0 outreach Program call Pat Erhardt at (306) 787-9448.