

**Aboriginal Education Provincial  
Advisory Committee**

**Action Plan: Year 2000 - 2005**





## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

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### Renewed Commitment to Aboriginal Education

Saskatchewan's first Aboriginal education action plan was presented to the Minister of Education in 1984. At that time the Native Curriculum Review Committee was charged very specifically with making recommendations related to curriculum development and support materials. In 1995, an updated action plan was prepared and presented to the Minister by the Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee, by then a permanent and ongoing committee. That action plan focused on five broad topics: evaluation; governance; teachers and administrators; curriculum and school-based programs; and relationships and communications. The committee chose to make recommendations in these broad areas in recognition of the need for action on many fronts in order for real and lasting changes to occur in the formal educational experiences of Aboriginal students.

In 1999, the committee was renamed the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC) and was asked to renew its action plan for the year 2000 as part of its ongoing activity. In response to the request, we have prepared this report with its 17 recommendations for action. However, first and foremost, ***we ask the Minister of Education to renew his commitment to Aboriginal education in light of the urgent needs of Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan.***

We all know that, in spite of the accomplishments in Aboriginal education in recent years, too many Aboriginal students do not complete grade 12 or go on to acquire post secondary education. The recommendations in this report represent our expectations for an education system that is committed to making sure Aboriginal students succeed in school and have the same options beyond high school as their non-Aboriginal peers.

It is important to note that the 17 recommendations in this report pertain not only to Aboriginal students, but to all students in the province. A mistaken belief exists that, if a school does not have a significant number of Aboriginal students, then Aboriginal education initiatives do not apply. In fact, a more equitable system and widespread knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and their histories will benefit all Saskatchewan students.

It is also worth noting that in 1994 the government of Saskatchewan adopted its Action Plan for Children, which guides various government departments in their research and programming for children and youth. We see our committee's work as a component of Saskatchewan's interdepartmental plan to ensure the healthy development of young people throughout the province.

## What Has Been Achieved?

We see two major achievements in Aboriginal Education over the past years. Firstly, great progress has been made at the organization level. The educational partners have expressed their commitment to improving the educational experiences of Aboriginal students and many partnerships between organizations have been established, including intergovernmental partnerships. The unique needs of Aboriginal students have been recognized and the partners have responded through policy and programs.

The second achievement is increased awareness at the school level, where an understanding of the unique needs of Aboriginal students was lacking when the first Aboriginal education action plan was released in 1984. Now, many teachers – especially those involved in the implementation of new curricula – express their desire to know more about Aboriginal content and perspectives, and their willingness to participate in inservice programs. Although this increased awareness is only a beginning, we see it as a major step forward and the foundation for progress in the future.<sup>1</sup>

## What Needs Renewed Effort?

In spite of the efforts of recent years, we are not seeing the results that we would like to see for Aboriginal students. Now that the groundwork and structures are in place, we would like to shift our attention to actualization of Aboriginal content and perspectives in Saskatchewan schools – all schools, and not only those that have a significant population of Aboriginal students. Although we have seen growing acceptance of the need for programming for Aboriginal students, the awareness is still lacking that **all students** in the province stand to benefit if the recommendations of this committee and its predecessors are actualized.

Saskatchewan Education defines actualization as “effective implementation and ongoing renewal”. In the case of Aboriginal content and perspectives, actualization implies many things:

- that the intentions of Aboriginal content and perspectives in curricula be understood by all teachers and administrators
- that Aboriginal content and perspectives be seen as having a legitimate and rightful place in curricula for all students
- that quality in the delivery of Aboriginal content and perspectives be achieved
- that efforts to implement Aboriginal content and perspectives be continually renewed, and new ways found of making authentic connections in school programs.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on recent developments in Aboriginal education, please see *Aboriginal Education Initiatives in Saskatchewan Education*, Saskatchewan Education, March 2000.

At this time, we believe monitoring of results to be key. Therefore, we have chosen to include, along with the recommendations, a list of indicators of progress. This list reflects a shift in focus from the organizational objectives of the first action plan, to our current focus on the student and the community. The indicators are intended to guide the implementation of our recommendations, and provide a focus for both action and monitoring of results at the school level.

***There is an urgent need for action at the school level.*** Previous action plans have resulted in the development of policies, partnerships, and structures essential to the development and implementation of programs. We now want to see the effects of Aboriginal education initiatives reflected in the successes of Aboriginal students, in increased knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and their history in the general population, and in harmonious relations among all people in Saskatchewan communities.

## **The Action Plan**

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### **Goal**

Our goal is to see the following:

- Aboriginal young people with grade 12 and post secondary educations, flourishing in all professions
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and young people knowledgeable about Aboriginal peoples and their history.

### **Vision**

We believe that if the efforts of the educational partners are successful in the area of Aboriginal education, we will see:

- Organizations working in partnership to better the educational experiences of all students and eliminate barriers to success.
- Recognition of unique cultural and geographical contexts for education throughout the province (rural and urban contexts, and the North).
- Respect throughout the province for Aboriginal peoples' unique languages and histories.
- Core Curriculum, including Aboriginal content and perspectives, actualized in the classroom for the benefit of all students.
- Teachers supported by effective inservice programs and the materials they need to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Administrators acting as educational leaders in achieving the goals of Aboriginal education.
- School divisions operating on principles of equity, inclusivity, and social justice.
- Families that are involved in the education of their children.
- Communities that accept responsibility for the education and well-being of all students.
- Community partners that work together for the benefit of all students and their families.
- Students excelling and choosing from a wide range of possibilities for their futures.

### **Principles**

We believe the following principles should guide all actions based on the recommendations in this document.

**Principle #1: Aboriginal world view is a valid way of knowing and understanding the world.**

Recognition of the Aboriginal world view as a valid way of knowing and understanding the world is key to cultural affirmation in schools, success for Aboriginal students, and harmonious relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

**Principle #2: Accountability is essential to progress.**

The education system must respond to the needs of all students. In order to monitor the success of the system, we need information on its strengths and weaknesses at the various levels from the province, to the community, to the classroom. In short, we need to know whether the recommendations have been achieved. All of us involved in education have to assume responsibility for developing means of assessing our own efforts, with an understanding that we are all accountable in some way when students fail to thrive.

**Principle #3: Communication throughout the system is key to the achievement of common goals.**

We have come a long way in communicating the goals of Aboriginal education and raising awareness at the school level. We must continue to communicate our aims and goals, and ensure that we move beyond the awareness level toward true understanding. Change cannot occur in isolation and we all need to be apprised of what others are doing to achieve our common goals.

**Principle #4: Quality and authenticity are essential considerations in all Aboriginal education policy and program initiatives.**

Aboriginal education is not simply a matter of giving equitable time to Aboriginal content and perspectives in curriculum guides and classroom programs. We need to be more diligent and critical of the way we implement policy and actualize curriculum intentions. Along with the commitment to improve the educational experiences of Aboriginal students comes the commitment to evaluate continuously our initiatives in terms of their quality, legitimacy, and authenticity. By authentic we mean genuine rather than constructed from false or stereotypical notions.

**Principle #5: All people must have equitable opportunities to succeed, coupled with respect for individual experiences and knowledge.**

The concept of equity pervades our recommendations. This principle applies not only to students, but to Aboriginal teachers, parents, and representatives in decision making. Equity implies collaboration, communication, and involvement. Social

justice cannot be achieved without adherence to the principle of equity and the commitment to providing diverse and balanced programs.

## **Four Areas of Recommendation**

In developing our recommendations we identified four areas of importance. These four areas reflect our current focus on change at the school level.

### **Cultural Affirmation and School Climate**

In order for learning to take place, students must feel that the school reflects their cultural community. We know from experience and research that many Aboriginal students in the province do not find schools to be culturally affirming places. Our recommendations in this area are aimed at ensuring that schools promote the well being of each individual and community by affirming the cultures, traditions, languages, spirituality, and world views of all the students.

### **Shared Decision Making**

Education cannot truly be reflective of the province's population without the meaningful involvement of Elders, parents, and the community. The field of education has long recognized the need for involving parents and the community, but involvement has not routinely been in the area of decision making. In addition, many decisions are made at the organizational level without the involvement of Aboriginal educators and leaders. Our recommendations related to shared decision making are intended to ensure that decisions affecting the lives of children are made in partnership with Elders, parents, the community, educators, and governments.

### **Core Curriculum Actualization**

Saskatchewan Education defines curriculum actualization as effective implementation and ongoing renewal. In order for teachers and administrators to implement effectively Aboriginal content and perspectives, they must be made aware through policy, curricula, and inservice sessions that Aboriginal content and perspectives are in Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum for the benefit of all students, and that their implementation is the responsibility of all teachers. It is also necessary that teachers be provided with adequate support, and that the progress of actualization be charted. Our recommendations in this area are aimed at ensuring that Core Curriculum actualization takes place as intended, for all students and with concern for quality and authenticity.

## Life Long Learning

We hold a vision of education as a lifelong process that begins when an individual is born and continues through all stages of life. The school, then, is just one part of an individual's education and must recognize the role of Elders, family, and the community in teaching and learning. We also see acceptance of the concept of life long learning as essential to progress in Aboriginal education, and to the growth of awareness among all those involved in education. Our recommendations related to lifelong learning are aimed at achieving respect for diverse perspectives on learning, and recognition of education as a multifaceted process that occurs continuously, in and beyond school.

## Recommendations

We recommend, first and foremost, that the Minister of Education renew his commitment to Aboriginal education in light of the urgent needs of Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan.

In the area of **cultural affirmation and school climate** we recommend that Saskatchewan Education:

1. Facilitate the development and strengthening of policy related to cultural affirmation and positive school climate for all students.
2. Facilitate the creation of positive school environments.
3. Encourage schools and communities to develop healthy and productive relationships.

In the area of **shared decision making** we recommend that Saskatchewan Education:

4. Increase Aboriginal representation at all levels.
5. Develop and strengthen partnerships to facilitate shared decision making.

In the area of **curriculum actualization** we recommend that Saskatchewan Education:

6. Facilitate the development of and access to practical, relevant, and authentic resources related to Aboriginal education.
7. Support teachers in their efforts to actualize Aboriginal content and perspectives in the classroom.
8. Initiate dialogue on defining Aboriginal content and perspectives, and determining ways of ensuring quality and authenticity in the classroom.
9. Facilitate the development and strengthening of policy in support of curriculum actualization.

10. Develop and strengthen partnerships to facilitate actualization of Aboriginal content and perspectives.
11. Strengthen teacher education programs in the areas of cross cultural and Aboriginal education.
12. Strengthen mechanisms for charting the progress of actualization of Aboriginal content and perspectives.
13. With the educational partners, develop a long-term, comprehensive plan in support of Aboriginal language and culture programs.
14. Develop and strengthen connections between programs in schools, communities, and the work place.

In the area of **life long learning** we recommend that Saskatchewan Education:

15. Promote respect for diverse perspectives on education and traditional Aboriginal ideas about learning.
16. Engage other educational partners in the preparation of a comprehensive report detailing the extent of Aboriginal education initiatives throughout the province, at all levels.
17. Create a comprehensive rubric detailing the levels of progress toward implementation of the above recommendations.

## Indicators of Progress

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The following list of indicators of progress is intended to provide some measure of the successful implementation of the 17 recommendations. It is our expectation that the list will also provide a focus for action in the implementation of the recommendations. The indicators of progress describe conditions that we believe will contribute to successful school experiences for Aboriginal students.

Recommendations	Indicators of Progress
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### Cultural Affirmation and School Climate

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|---|---|
| <p><b>1. Facilitate the development and strengthening of policy related to cultural affirmation and positive school climate for all students.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All school boards have adopted equity and other policies in support of cultural affirmation and positive school climate for Aboriginal students.</li> <li>• All schools have implemented their division's policies in support of cultural affirmation and positive school climate for Aboriginal students.</li> <li>• The hiring practices of school divisions reflect a vision of cultural affirmation through the presence of Aboriginal teachers, administrators, and support staff.</li> <li>• Students are involved in planning and decision making in order that they develop their own cultural identities.</li> </ul>                              |
| <p><b>2. Facilitate the creation of positive school environments.</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All schools/communities identify the creation and maintenance of a positive school climate as a high priority.</li> <li>• The physical environment of schools reflects and affirms the culture of Aboriginal students.</li> <li>• The culture of schools is one in which teachers and students work together in new ways to achieve common goals.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>3. Encourage schools and communities to develop healthy and productive relationships.</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and Aboriginal peoples create and maintain successful partnerships.</li> <li>• The Aboriginal community is involved in a variety of ways in the daily life of the school (attendance at school functions, involvement in programming, representation on committees, etc.).</li> <li>• Individual community members assume responsibility for promoting awareness of and respect for diversity in their own community.</li> <li>• School division/school personnel and parents understand that the school's responsibility with respect to spirituality in general, and Aboriginal spirituality in particular, is to increase awareness.</li> </ul> |

Recommendations	Indicators of Progress
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## Shared Decision Making

### 4. Increase Aboriginal representation at all levels.

- Inservice in facilitating shared decision making and equitable representation is readily available to trustees, administrators, teachers, and students.
- Schools have programs aimed at developing leadership skills among Aboriginal youth (e.g., Aboriginal youth councils, Aboriginal representation on student representative councils).
- Aboriginal people are represented on provincial advisory committees, community school councils, project steering committees, etc.
- School boards have Aboriginal representation.
- Descriptions of Saskatchewan examples of shared decision making, including sample policies, are available to others as models.

### 5. Develop and strengthen partnerships to facilitate shared decision making.

- Federal and provincial governments co-operate in First Nations and Métis education.
- Policy is in place that gives priority to First Nation and school division partnerships in the operation of schools to meet the needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. (The partnership between Meadow Lake School Division and Flying Dust Band is one model.)
- Formal representative organizations of Aboriginal people (Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) are recognized and engaged in shared decision making.
- Successful partnerships exist between schools and businesses, community agencies, and other organizations.
- Non-government organizations and other agencies are involved in ensuring that students in all situations are using provincial curricula (e.g., students in youth detention centres).

Recommendations	Indicators of Progress
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## Curriculum Actualization

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|--|---|
| <p><b>6. Facilitate the development of and access to practical, relevant, and authentic resources related to Aboriginal education.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated lists of recommended resources that relate to Aboriginal peoples and perspectives are regularly compiled and made available (e.g., resource people, language resources, print or multimedia resources, bibliographies, etc.).</li> <li>• Resources and materials are shared in unique ways (e.g., technology, clearing houses, conferences, outreach services).</li> <li>• Inservice on developing resources pertinent to Aboriginal education is available, and teachers are brought together for inservice and face-to-face work sessions at their request.</li> <li>• Sufficient funding is available for the development of resources where there is a lack, using appropriate technology (multimedia, video, on-line databases, etc.).</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>7. Support teachers in their efforts to actualize Aboriginal content and perspectives in the classroom.</b></p>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal education consultants are in place in each of the seven regions to work on new inservice/support models (such as the catalyst teacher model).</li> <li>• Teachers of Native Studies have access to professional development or training, and can become accredited.</li> <li>• School divisions and the province provide support for teachers who want to take a university course in Native Studies, Aboriginal languages, or Aboriginal education.</li> <li>• Mechanisms are in place for teachers, consultants, and other educators to meet regularly to share approaches, materials, etc.</li> <li>• Teachers receive support to ensure student success in math and sciences, beginning at the elementary level and continuing through high school (in response to the relatively low numbers of Aboriginal students who go on to post secondary educations in the math and science areas).</li> <li>• Support is available to school guidance counsellors to help them provide Aboriginal students with effective academic counselling.</li> <li>• Saskatchewan's Evergreen Curriculum website functions as a provincial centre for communicating and sharing information on Aboriginal education (e.g., contacts, resources, services, links to other websites, etc.).</li> </ul> |

Recommendations	Indicators of Progress
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<p><b>8. Initiate dialogue on defining Aboriginal content and perspectives, and determining ways of ensuring quality and authenticity in the classroom.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legitimate connections between curricular areas and Aboriginal knowledge are clear.</li> <li>• The meaning/purpose of integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives in all curricula is clear, and ways of achieving true understanding are identified.</li> <li>• Teachers and administrators have access to effective inservice on the practical aspects of authentic integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives into classroom/school programs.</li> <li>• Teachers, administrators, and community partners are continuously assessing the quality and authenticity of activities and programs related to Aboriginal content and perspectives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Facilitate the development and strengthening of policy in support of curriculum actualization.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All educators are actively involved in learning more about Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal education, and recognize their responsibility in implementing Aboriginal content and perspectives in Core Curriculum.</li> <li>• All high school graduates are required to have a minimum of one Native Studies credit within the current 24-credit requirement, giving them a basic knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and their history.</li> <li>• Information on TEP teachers is compiled and available, including the numbers employed at elementary and secondary levels and an analysis of barriers to their employment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Develop and strengthen partnerships to facilitate actualization of Aboriginal content and perspectives.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school and the Aboriginal community work together to ensure that the incorporation of Aboriginal content and perspectives is authentic, accepted by the community, and integrated into the life of the community.</li> <li>• Partnerships are in place between Saskatchewan Education, school divisions, and other agencies to develop and teach Aboriginal language and culture programs, and develop support materials.</li> <li>• Programs are available to encourage teacher job exchanges between bands and provincial schools (e.g., two teachers exchange jobs for one year).</li> <li>• Businesses and corporations are involved in partnerships to support Aboriginal education.</li> <li>• The media is engaged as a partner and accepts its responsibility to give fair coverage to successes in Aboriginal education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Strengthen teacher education programs in the areas of cross cultural and Aboriginal education.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All teachers have participated in a comprehensive inservice program on Aboriginal content and perspectives (similar to the CELs inservice program), and the program remains available to new teachers.</li> <li>• All teacher education programs have a compulsory</li> </ul>

Recommendations	Indicators of Progress
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	<p>cross cultural course, and other methods courses model the incorporation of Aboriginal content and perspectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEP teachers are supported in pursuing secondary education degrees, and are encouraged to become accredited Native Studies teachers.</li> <li>• Teachers can acquire an after-degree specialist certificate in Native Studies or Aboriginal Education.</li> <li>• Funding and expertise are available for Aboriginal language training programs for teachers (through TEPs, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, Gabriel Dumont Institute, school divisions, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>12. Strengthen mechanisms for charting the progress of actualization of Aboriginal content and perspectives.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All levels of the education system follow through on research findings, indicators reports, and policy concerning Aboriginal education and Aboriginal language and culture programs.</li> <li>• Mechanisms are in place to ensure Aboriginal content and perspectives are actualized, and to chart local-level progress toward this goal.</li> </ul>
<p><b>13. With the educational partners, develop a long-term, comprehensive plan in support of Aboriginal language and culture programs.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal languages courses and specialization are available in teacher education programs.</li> <li>• An Aboriginal language and culture course is available to students at the lower levels to encourage them to study an Aboriginal language later (e.g., as a locally developed option).</li> <li>• An Aboriginal Arts Education course is available at the 10, 20, and 30 levels as a credit in Arts Education.</li> <li>• Various first language courses are taught as recognized courses for secondary level credit (e.g., Cree, Dene, Michif) and are recognized in the same way as other language courses such as French.</li> <li>• Mechanisms are in place for students who are First language speakers to acquire a language credit for their language experience.</li> <li>• Teachers of Aboriginal language programs have access to professional development or training, and can become accredited.</li> <li>• Through the development of appropriate policy, paraprofessionals are able to assist teachers with language instruction, especially at the elementary and middle levels.</li> <li>• First language teachers are encouraged and supported through distance learning programs.</li> <li>• Aboriginal languages curricula and resource development are well-supported.</li> </ul>

Recommendations	Indicators of Progress
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**14. Develop and strengthen connections between programs in schools, communities, and the work place.**

- Families are supported through programs such as pre-natal, parenting, nutrition, and child care.
- Pre-school programs are in place and accessible to all children and families who need them.
- At-risk students are involved in healing and self-esteem programs, and have access to a wide range of practical programs that address their needs.
- The issues of racism are seen as the responsibility of all people in the community, and are dealt with through a variety of initiatives.
- Native Studies courses are accessible to all people in the community through distance learning.
- Aboriginal language programs are accessible to all people in the community, and are considered an important part of learning from birth onward.
- All students throughout the province have access to a wide range of programs and services.

Recommendations	Indicators of Progress
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## Life Long Learning

### **15. Promote respect for diverse perspectives on education and traditional Aboriginal ideas about learning.**

- Elders are involved in integral ways in the schools.
- Schools and communities incorporate traditional Aboriginal perspectives on learning into the students' formal education experiences.
- Traditional cultural experiences in alternative learning settings are recognized for credit purposes as important educational experiences for students (e.g., as part of a Work-Study or Work Experience program).
- Structures are in place so that students can participate in various alternative learning experiences (mentoring programs, distance education programs, apprenticeships, school to work programs, etc.).
- Post secondary institutions consider Aboriginal knowledge, perspectives, and traditional ways of learning in all degree and certificate programs.
- The education system recognizes informal learning, is responsive to the individual, and is based on continuous progress.

### **16. Engage other educational partners in the preparation of a comprehensive report detailing the extent of Aboriginal education initiatives throughout the province, at all levels.**

- All involved in education are aware of the Aboriginal education goals and initiatives of others.
- Educators are knowledgeable about programs, learning materials, and initiatives throughout the province.
- All involved in education have a broad context within which to view their own endeavours toward meeting the educational needs of Aboriginal students.

### **17. Create a comprehensive rubric detailing the levels of progress toward implementation of the above recommendations.**

- All involved in education are knowledgeable about their own progress in the four areas described in this report.
- School divisions and schools have plans in place for progressing in the four areas described in this report.
- All involved in education are striving to achieve the highest level of implementation.

## Conclusion

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With the many changes that have taken place in Aboriginal education over the past 15 years, it is no longer appropriate for one jurisdiction to take responsibility for leadership in the area of Aboriginal education. Each partner is an educational leader in its own right. Although it has been our responsibility as a committee to provide Saskatchewan Education with direction for its planning, we hope that all the partners in Aboriginal education will view the Action Plan in this report, and particularly the indicators of progress that we have compiled, as a starting point for discussion and planning.

Although much progress has been made in recent years, we know that Aboriginal students are not being served as they should by the education system and its programs. When students in Saskatchewan fail to thrive, we all fail to thrive. We hope everyone involved will examine this report and ask themselves, “What is our role? What can we do? Are our efforts truly making a difference for Aboriginal students and their families? Are our efforts making a difference in our relationships as a provincial community?”