



We are on a **Shared Journey** ...working to ensure a brighter future for us all.

Welcome to our Spring Edition

Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations (FNMR) would like to thank everyone for their positive comments and feedback on the inaugural issue of **Shared Journey** which was released in December, 2006.

The response was phenomenal and our distribution has expanded considerably after just one issue. This spring brings a new fiscal year, a new budget, and a new list of exciting initiatives so there is a lot of news to share! We continue our "**Shared Journey**" – "Wicipimôthitowin" where we are working in partnership to ensure a brighter future for us all. The arrival of spring brings a time of renewal and new beginnings. Our spring edition of **Shared Journey** will bring you up-to-date on current initiatives and up-coming events. To all of you, we say "Ékosi."



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**Excellence
in Action**

*Best Practices in First Nations, Métis
and Inuit Economic Development*

What would happen if you hosted a national symposium on Aboriginal Economic Development? We received our answer January 23-25, when Saskatchewan played host to *Excellence in Action*. Over 600 delegates travelled to Saskatoon representing every region of Canada. They came representing First Nations, Métis, Inuit, provincial and federal governments, and business. They shared their best practices to further increase successes in the area of Aboriginal economic development.

The Province of Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund joined forces to host this world-class event. It was a huge undertaking which involved consultation with other jurisdictions and Aboriginal organizations to ensure a sound cross section of First Nations, Métis and Inuit projects were presented. Corporate interests were well-represented as were Aboriginal youth with more than 50 delegates in attendance. Read more about this exciting event inside.

Spring Budget Highlights

Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations saw continued support in the 2007/08 budget in the areas of economic development, gaming and employment initiatives, to name just a few.

A major announcement in this year's budget is the formation of a \$2 million Consultation Capacity Fund at FNMR. The Fund will be used to build consultation capacity within First Nations and Métis communities and allow parties to carry out their "duty to consult." More information on this exciting initiative will follow in our next edition of *Shared Journey*.

The Aboriginal Employment Development Program received an additional \$100K to continue working to achieve a more representative workforce in Saskatchewan. As you can see AEDP has had a busy spring, and has welcomed six new partners into the process. These partnerships are outlined on the following page.

There was also \$100K in additional funding announced to expand small grants for Aboriginal initiatives. This is a welcome addition since requests always exceed budget dollars available for these valuable projects.

Did you know?

- In February, 2007 – 30,400 First Nations and Métis people were employed. This is an increase of 3,700 positions over the same time last year.
- The Aboriginal unemployment rate in Saskatchewan decreased from 17% to 11.5%.
- These numbers represent the 11th straight month of record job numbers.

It is important to remember that these budget enhancements only highlight activities underway at FNMR. Across government programs and initiatives were announced that will benefit First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan. Aboriginal organizations are also taking the lead and are joining in partnership with government to achieve their objectives.

Below, Big River First Nation enters into a partnership that will benefit their community. These continuing efforts will improve the social and economic outcomes of all our citizens, and will make Saskatchewan an even better place to live, work and raise a family.



Province signs \$2.5-million partnership to improve access to the Big River First Nation

RM of Canwood Reeve Richard Porter, Big River First Nations Chief Bruce Morin, and First Nations & Métis Relations (FNMR) Minister Maynard Sonntag acknowledge the historic signing.

A Time for Celebration!

Since our last newsletter in December, six new partners have signed Aboriginal Employment Development Program Agreements.

The first signing took place on February 8th, 2007 between Saskatchewan School Boards Association, Saskatchewan Learning and FNMR. The Saskatchewan School Board Association represents all 28 boards of education in Saskatchewan, serving approximately 164,000 students, and is the voice of the public in education.

The Public Service Commission signed on February 27, 2007. They will join in efforts to develop welcoming workplaces that will help to increase employment opportunities, employment success and improved retention of First Nations and Métis employees.

Next, we were pleased to welcome the Kawacatoose First Nation who joined as a full partner with INAC and FNMR on March 1st, 2007. In addition to a wonderful signing celebration, a job readiness conference was hosted. The youth were in attendance, and Chief Dennis Dustyhorn noted that this partnership agreement was focussed on ensuring increased opportunities for members.

Keewatin Yatthé Regional Health Authority, its Unions, SAHO and FNMR were the next to join in partnership on March 6th, 2007. Board Chair, Alex Taylor stated that he hoped the efforts of this partnership would solidly establish a welcoming place for Aboriginal people to work in all levels of the health care system.

Then on March 7th, FirstSask Credit Union and UFCW local 1400 joined AEDP. They are the first financial institution to come on board as a full partner.

Our sixth signing took place on April 5th at the Treaty 4 Governance Centre between the Little Black Bear First Nation, INAC, and FNMR. Chief Clarence Bellegarde said he hopes this agreement will build on the economic growth and positive initiatives that are presently underway at Little Black Bear.

There are now 78 AEDP Partnership Agreements. We welcome our new partners and look forward to working together to achieve a more representative workforce in Saskatchewan.



Kawacatoose First Nation AEDP signing ceremony participants.



Andrew Bemister, Chief Dennis Dustyhorn, and Minister Maynard Sonntag sign an AEDP agreement that will work towards giving these young Kawacatoose First Nation dancers a brighter future.



Elder Florence Carrier joins Minister Deb Higgins, Richard Gladue, and Roy Challis at the Saskatchewan School Board Signing.



Minister Buckley Belanger, Tom McKnight, Duane Favel and Alex Taylor sign the Keewatin Yatthé Regional Health Authority signing.



Ardith Stephanson serves as MC at the SSBA signing.



Andrew Bemister, Chief Clarence Bellegarde, and Minister Maynard Sonntag join guests during the Little Black Bear First Nation signing at the Treaty 4 Governance Centre.



National Aboriginal Economic Development Symposium

The *Excellence in Action* Symposium was the fulfillment of a promise made by Premier Calvert at the First Minister's Meeting on Aboriginal issues held in Kelowna, BC.

At that time he offered to host a national symposium that would stimulate greater economic activity and labour market participation in all areas of Canada and in all sectors of the economy.

It was a huge undertaking that achieved huge success. The provincial government, in partnership with FSIN and CCDF, hosted a world-class event. People from across the country recognized that



Saskatchewan Plains Dancers

Aboriginal economic development was being given centre stage, and that this was their opportunity to take an active part in addressing the challenges and exploring the possibilities.

Some of the workshops included First Nations, Métis, and Inuit economic development toolboxes. They discussed the Aboriginal economic advantage and the key components involved in moving towards a new framework.

The sessions continued as government, business and Aboriginal leaders from across Canada led discussions on Housing as a Economic Generator, Innovative Partnerships in Banking, Information Technology, Forestry, Tourism, Renewable and Non-renewable Resources, and Transportation as economic enablers.

Other workshops dealt with training, labour market development, governance, procurement, youth entrepreneurship, communications, and representative workforce strategies.



Premier Lorne Calvert, Chief Lawrence Joseph of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, and Ron Rivard, Vice-chair of the Clarence Campeau Development Fund lead discussions on the challenges and opportunities.



Surrounded by flags from across the nation, delegates join in a common purpose.



Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine welcomed delegates.



Ice Inukshuk

Saskatchewan Aboriginal entertainers did our Province proud as they entertained representatives from across the nation at Wednesday night's gala traditional dinner. Wine was provided by the Osoyoos Indian Band winery.

The evening was hosted by Andrea Menard who guided delegates through a wonderful evening with Métis entertainment provided by John and Vicky Arcand and the Riel Reelers.

The First Nations entertainment was provided by the Saskatchewan Plains Dancers, and the Young Scouts Drum Group.

The evening ended with our Inuit entertainment which included Elisha Kilabuk mesmerizing us with Folklore and legend story teller, followed by Throat Singer, Koomook McLister.

It was an evening filled with tradition, pageantry, friendship and fellowship. Delegates agreed that our booming economy and youthful Aboriginal population is presenting unprecedented economic opportunities for Aboriginal people.

We look forward to the partnerships forged at this conference and anticipate the positive results they will have on the economic future. The Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy's Final Report is also eagerly awaited, as it is sure to be a launch pad for further discussion and action.



Andrea Menard served as MC for the gala evening.



Nelson Bird and Carla Robinson hosted the daily events.



Riel Reelers



Photos courtesy of Excellence in Action and Ted Whitecalf.

As Premier Calvert said, "There can be no social progress without economic progress." It is our hope that this conference will help to address both of these areas to ensure an even brighter future for us all.

The Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Economic Development Program continues to assist Aboriginal entrepreneurs wanting to start a new business, or expand an existing business. This program has ensured that more First Nations and Métis people are given the opportunity to participate in, and enjoy, the economic and social prosperity of this province.

In fact, to date we have processed more than 60 applications to assist Aboriginal entrepreneurs in gaining a greater presence in the economy of Saskatchewan. Much of this funding has gone to supporting the energy, mining and transportation sectors, but we are also starting to see manufacturing take a hold.

To find out more about this program visit our website at www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca





ACRE Phase III

As members of the Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE), Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across the Province have been working together to strengthen the rural economy and make life better for Saskatchewan families. Since its formation in 2000, ACRE has been engaged in ongoing dialogue about the challenges and opportunities in rural Saskatchewan, and has been making recommendations to government on how to stimulate development in this important sector.

ACRE has just recently embarked on Phase III, its latest round of study. Phase III will focus on defining and enhancing communities and developing small businesses and entrepreneurs in rural Saskatchewan. Another element, and a very important one that has been added to ACRE's Phase III work on community, is an examination of First Nations and Métis communities in the Province.

ACRE will look at the current relationships between First Nations and Métis communities and other communities, and examine how these relationships could be strengthened or improved. First Nations and Métis have the fastest growing youth workforce per capita in the province, and Saskatchewan cannot succeed without First Nations and Métis participation in the economy. The future success of this Province requires strong, equal partnerships between all communities in Saskatchewan.



Deputy Premier Clay Serby welcomes ACRE committee members, from left to right: Audrey Horkoff; Guy Lonechild; Wanda Wolf; Dick De Ryk; and Deb Ehmann, to launch Phase III of ACRE.

To that end, several new members, both First Nations and Métis, have recently been appointed to serve on the ACRE committee. ACRE is excited about the experience and perspective these new members, in addition to the existing representation from that sector of the population, will bring to the table – and, more particularly, to the two specific issues that ACRE will have as its focus as it moves forward in Phase III.

For more information on ACRE committees, reports and recommendations, visit <http://www.recd.gov.sk.ca/acre/>

Aboriginal History Month

The Province of Saskatchewan has proclaimed June 2007 as Aboriginal History Month in recognition of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people's contributions to Canada. The Regina Aboriginal Professionals Association (RAPA), which is a non-profit organization with a mission to develop a network of people committed to fostering opportunities for Aboriginal people in education, employment and economic development initiated the campaign to have the month of June proclaimed as Aboriginal History Month. Saskatchewan is among the first nationwide to support this exciting initiative. Efforts continue at the federal level to have the month proclaimed at a national level. Now in addition to National Aboriginal Day on June 21st, the entire month of June 2007 will be devoted to illustrating and celebrating the many contributions First Nations, Métis and Inuit people made, and continue to make to our province.

Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiatives

Skilled craftsmen have passed their knowledge and skills one-to-one to a new generation of craftsmen for centuries. This learn/work environment became apprenticeship training as we know it today. The Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI), created in 2000, further builds a stronger community-based teacher-to-student learning system and is growing in popularity.

"While the commission has been offering apprenticeship for more than 60 years, Aboriginal people have not successfully participated or have not had opportunity to participate in trades training," said Lyle Bear, Aboriginal Liaison for the AAI. His job is to promote, coordinate, develop and ensure the success of Aboriginal apprenticeship projects.

"Saskatchewan has a high population of young Aboriginal folks between the ages of 17 and 30 that are unemployed, untrained and unskilled. As a result, they can't participate in the wage economy of Saskatchewan. But, AAI is changing that and is opening up a whole new world of opportunity for our young people."

Apprenticeship is job training directly connected to employment. Working jointly with the six tribal councils, four tribal agencies and the 74 First Nation communities in Saskatchewan, AAI creates grassroots training opportunities for apprentices. AAI also provides a learning environment that mirrors the learning style of traditional apprenticeship.

AAI, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, SIAST, Regional Colleges, Tribal Councils and First Nations form partnerships to offer training in trades from carpentry to plumbing to food and beverage services.



Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiatives Graduation

Living, working and studying in their community, near one's family, is one reason the AAI is such a success. "Rather than displace people into a foreign learning environment, apprentices train right in their First Nation community."

AAI also helps First Nations communities in need of housing, plumbing and electrical work. Projects created on First Nations provide that community with needed facilities built by young,

talented apprentices who call that community home. "Last year, we had 101 Aboriginal apprentices registered in AAI."

A career in trades is an excellent choice for anyone building a future. "Many people try to steer youth to an academic or university education," said Bear. "But not all our people are going to be doctors or lawyers. Through the AAI, we promote apprenticeship for First Nations people living on or off a reserve. Our dream is to encourage youth, families, men and women to consider what this apprenticeship program can do for them and their communities."

For more information about AAI, call the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission at 1-877-363-0536.

Child and Family Services Agreement a First

Saskatchewan Community Resources signed a first-ever agreement with a Tribal Council for the delivery of child and family services on- and off-reserve.

Meadow Lake Tribal Council Child & Family Services has been delivering child and family services for the Birch Narrows Dene Nation since 1993. The Tribal Council will now also deliver these services for Turnor Lake which borders Birch Narrows.

The agreement will assist in the delivery of seamless, accessible services to families living in the two northern communities located 75 kilometres southeast of La Loche.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Deputy Minister of FNMR

We are pleased to announce that Richard Gladue is the Department's newly appointed Deputy Minister. Richard has more than 20 years experience as a leader in First Nations governments and organizations.

Most recently, Mr. Gladue was the Assistant Deputy Minister, then Acting Deputy Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations. We are fortunate to have a Deputy Minister with Richard's experience and welcome the leadership he will provide.



2007 Métis Election

The Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MNS) is poised to hold a general election on June 27, 2007. In April, a Métis Legislative Assembly and General Assembly were held in Saskatoon where Métis leaders and members voted unanimously to support the Independent Oversight Committee's Strategy for a Métis election. The election will be conducted by independent Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) David Hamilton.

Métis citizens in Saskatchewan have been without official political voice since 2004 when electoral irregularities caused the withdrawal of both federal and provincial funds from the MNS. During this political hiatus, the Government continued engagement with Métis affiliates across the province to ensure services continued to be delivered to Métis people. The Department is pleased with the number of Métis people who turned out to vote and the unity with which they expressed the desire to have the independent CEO conduct a new election.

TLE Brochure Available

A new brochure is now available that gives an overview of Treaty Land Entitlement in Saskatchewan. Entitled "Helping to Fulfill Promises from the Past for a Brighter Future," it outlines the benefits and challenges of the TLE process, and highlights how by working in partnership we can move forward to greater social and economic development. Visit our website for your copy.

Scholarship Opportunities

It's time to review this year's scholarship and bursary funding opportunities. Remember to get your applications in early. Here are a couple of websites to begin your search:

- http://www.naaf.ca/html/education_program_e.html
- <http://www.sasknetwork.ca/html/Learners/financialhelp/scholarships.htm>

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