

My moccasin is soft, little one
As you grow,
You will shape it,
And continue the path of our people¹

Section I : Self-Government for the Métis People of Saskatchewan Through Education

The Métis people are the descendants of the original Indian inhabitants who have lived on this continent for thousands of years and of the early traders, explorers and adventurers from Europe. They had a role in the development of the North West of Canada, which was different from that of the Indian inhabitants and from their European fathers. They adopted cultural characteristics from both of their cultures and adapted these to their role in the Northwest. In their role they also developed new ideas, values, and ways of life over a period of several centuries. These were combined to form a new and distinct culture – the Métis culture. During the past hundred years, the Métis culture has been in decline. There is now a realization by our people that our social and economic development is linked to the renewal of our culture. The Institute is one of the ways in which we seek to achieve this cultural renewal and development. This is what the Institute is about: helping the Native people to find themselves so that they can walk with pride and dignity among their non-Native brothers.²

In 1980, the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) was officially created by Saskatchewan's Métis community. Since its inception, the Institute has been a vehicle for Saskatchewan's Métis people to attain their educational goals, and to strengthen their Aboriginal identity and culture. In order to serve the varied needs of the Métis community, GDI has had to become a multifaceted educational organization. It has developed and implemented university and technical institute programs through the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program, the Dumont Technical Institute, Gabriel Dumont College, and other programs in various communities. For the majority of these programs, GDI has built partnerships with the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. Today, the Institute is the main educational representative of the province's Métis people. In addition, GDI is an "inclusive" organization, with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees and students. GDI is the only Métis-run educational organization in Canada; other Métis pedagogical institutions are starting to develop an educational infrastructure. However, the model for these various Métis groups is GDI.

¹ Cultural Education Conference Document, p. 208.

² "Treasurer's Report to the Gabriel Dumont Institute Annual Assembly - Cultural Conference." Dave Ross, GDI Treasurer (Early 1980s?)

GDI is named after the renowned Métis leader Gabriel Dumont (1837-1906), the military commander of the Métis people during the 1885 Resistance. The Métis people of Saskatchewan have always had a deep respect for Dumont. As a leader of the buffalo hunts, a political activist, keeper of traditional knowledge, and as the military leader of the Métis people, Dumont will always be remembered for his fierce determination to ensure his people's survival. Out of respect for Dumont and his legacy, the Métis and Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan named their educational institute after him. Dumont and the other Métis resisters at Batoche called themselves "*gens du libre*," "*Otipemisiwak*" or the "free people." This desire to be independent and not reliant on others was instilled in those Métis and Non-Status Indians who created GDI in 1980. When the Métis people referred to themselves by these terms, they were stating that they wanted to have their way of life respected in a larger society which was tolerant of diversity. GDI's students and staff still believe in this desire to "own themselves":

In the exercise of Métis government and our inherent rights to self-determination and equity, we embrace the goal of excellence in education. Our people will prepare, with confidence, for the challenges and opportunities of the future, through an educational system that is accessible, community oriented and technologically relevant. In the tradition of our ancestors, we will forge a new path while holding to the principals of cooperation and respect.

And:

The Métis and Non-Status Indian people find it necessary to take control of their own education because mainstream institutions have not effectively delivered education services. The students of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, and of the institutions contemplated in its education network, have the same vocation; that is, to be citizens capable of governing themselves in a democratic state.³

The desire of self-government, through increased educational opportunities, has always been part of GDI's mission statement:

To promote the renewal and development of Aboriginal culture through appropriate research activities, materials development, collection and distribution of those materials by design, development, and delivery of specific educational and cultural programs and services.⁴

³ Strategic Planning Exercise to be Completed by All Directors and Coordinators, August 1990, p. 2.

⁴ Gabriel Dumont Institute, *A Solid Foundation for a Brighter Future*, p. 1.

GDI did not develop in a vacuum. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, in Canada and elsewhere, governments were engaging in state-building enterprises. In Saskatchewan and Alberta, New Democrat and Progressive Conservative governments were exploiting revenues from natural resources in order to expand such essential state services as education and health care. As well, Quebec rapidly extended its state apparatus and sent diplomats abroad, and in Ottawa, the Trudeau government repatriated the Constitution, implemented a Charter of Rights and Freedoms and tried to reinvigorate Canadian nationalism through such policies as the Foreign Investment Review Agency and the creation of PetroCanada. At this time, Aboriginal governments across Canada were not immune to these developments. Indeed, various Aboriginal organizations across the country began to call themselves "Nations." For instance, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations was once known as the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, and the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan was once called the Métis Society of Saskatchewan and the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan. As members of nations which existed prior to the 1867 Confederation, Aboriginal political leaders were determined to engage in "nation-building" enterprises like other levels of government in Canada. These nation-building activities would, if implemented, erase a century of underdevelopment and dependence. This, in turn, meant developing states which could offer their citizens various services, one, of which would be education. Ironically, when governments across Canada began to retrench their services, in accordance with neo-liberal political agendas, Aboriginal governments and government affiliates such as GDI wanted to expand. This would prove a problematic development in the mid 1980s until the late 1990s.

At this time, the Métis people of Canada received a victory which recognized their Aboriginal heritage. In 1982, Section 35(2) of the repatriated Canadian Constitution recognized the Métis as one of Canada's three Aboriginal peoples, the others being Indians (First Nations) and Inuit.⁵ Despite this recognition, no level of government claims exclusive responsibility for the Métis people. As a result, the Métis people are in a jurisdictional limbo, receiving bits of funding from both the federal and provincial governments. By contrast, the First Nations and Inuit are the jurisdictional responsibility of the federal government. As a result, one of the main obstacles to achieving self-government for the Métis people has been a lack of recognition by governments of the Métis people's right to nationhood:

The Métis form a nation. This nation is self-governing, even after the failed rebellion (sic) of 1885. The problem...(is)...with the lack of recognition by the Government of Canada and subsequently by the provincial governments. The Métis have renewed their struggle to gain recognition, however, we have

⁵ Department of Justice, Canada. *A Consolidation of the Constitutional Acts, 1869-1982*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1987; Section 35(2), *1982 Constitutional Act*, p. 69.

taken the position that we will conduct our affairs in a self-governing manner, regardless of government recognition.⁶

Since GDI is an Aboriginal institution, it felt the need, especially in its early years, to announce its desire to contribute to the self-government of the Métis people. The early 1980s was an area of nation-building in Canada, and GDI was on the cusp of this wave. This excerpt is an interesting glimpse on how even an Aboriginal educational organization can become political when confronting societal racism and a century of underdevelopment:

The Gabriel Dumont Institute is our instrument for exercising self-government and educating for self-government. We must be committed to the vision of an education system for the Métis people and controlled by the Métis people. We must strive to instil our values and our expectations so that we may take charge of our own lives...The right to self-government is an inalienable right of all people. We ask no one for permission. It is a gift from the Creator. What we seek is cooperation from all to exercise this right in our territory...We are people with a love of freedom, joie de vivre, and a tradition of fighting for what is right. Our commitment to principles is a strength of our people.⁷

Education, in all aspects, was needed to bring about self-determination for the province's Métis people:

The Métis people of Saskatchewan must be ready to re-establish Métis self-government and take hold of the twenty-first century. The Métis nation needs people educated to take on the responsibilities of nationhood: informed citizens, professionals, politicians, bureaucrats and business people. ...As the only Métis-controlled post-secondary educational institution in Canada, the Gabriel Dumont Institute must be involved in the nation-building process.⁸

The Institute also used newsletters and other forms of internal communication to inform employees about GDI's direction, desire for self-determination and what non-Aboriginal people needed to do in order to better accommodate Métis people. It was also a means to reaffirm Métis identity and nationalism:

This Institution is possibly the turning point for Métis people. This time we have something! Something that is OURS. This OWNERSHIP has now made the Gabriel Dumont Institute a strong financial and academic force. Many of my former SUNTEP classmates now say the Gabriel Dumont Institute has helped me to grow, to be a real person and to be strong in all areas of my

⁶ Isabelle Impey, Internal document.

⁷ *Towards Self-Government: A Mandate for the Nineties*, p. 17.

⁸ *Towards Self-Government: A Mandate for the Nineties*, p. 1.

*life. Our objective as an educational institute is to formulate, to clarify and to vitalize the ideas that will animate our true heritage and all mankind, that is the objective of GDI. Another objective for GDI is to produce individuals who are a credit to our heritage as well as the rest of society; superior persons, leaders not followers. In adversity there is strength. It is a philosophy well rooted in our Métis communities.*⁹

Many at the Institute thought and wrote a great deal about the colonial process. GDI soon developed an expertise in this field, as it strived to undo one hundred years of under development:

*A people, a nationality, cannot find the full expression of its culture, its heritage or its political aspirations if it does not have within itself a core of artists, intellectuals and thinkers, who, from a position of being immersed in that culture, can reflect upon it, analyse it and express it in ways which contribute to the people's sense of self-esteem and self-worth and at the same time raise the level of esteem and self-worth in which that people's culture is held by others. While this is true for all nationalities, those who have experienced the difficulties and degradation of colonialism face unique crisis in this regard; for a major part of the colonial process is the destruction of indigenous culture, its devaluation by the dominant culture. In all colonization processes the rejuvenation of culture and heritage has played a major role. In the great anti-colonial struggles of the world, artists, writers, poets and philosophers take their place beside the popular leaders as critical figures in the movement as a whole. They are the people who articulate the feelings and aspirations of their people.*¹⁰

GDI argued that economic development among the Métis people was a means to achieve self-government. Increased educational opportunities were to lead to further economic development, self-reliance, greater individual and community self-esteem, and to self-government:

The key to the future of our Métis people is education. Our poverty is partly due to our under-education and inability to participate in the skilled labour force and economic development of our communities. We must train our children for the jobs of the future by providing them with the knowledge, skills and experience which they need, in ways that enhance their Métis identity. Our goal is to prepare them to be strong, proud, independent Métis citizens....The goals of the Gabriel Dumont Institute are the goals of our people: self-determination, independence and self-reliance. The Institute has continually challenged the established institutions and governments to recognize and accommodate the legitimate aspirations of the Métis. Where the vision of our people surpasses the constraints of existing institutions, the

⁹ GDI Newsletter, VOL. 2, NO. 1, May 1988, Joan Dagdick and Gizelle Marcotte, Editors – Bernice Hammersmith, Chairperson GDI Board of Governors.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

*Gabriel Dumont Institute has worked to facilitate the creation of Métis institutions and programs, which express and promote our vision.*¹¹

*Historically, Aboriginal people practised self-government and controlled their own economic destinies. Today, the process of renewal is leading to exciting possibilities. The Gabriel Dumont Institute understands that economic development is not possible without appropriate tools, and education is one such tool. Therefore, the Institute is developing education programs to support the economic development needs of Aboriginal people. The building of such an economy will have positive long-term implications for creating secure employment for Aboriginal people, for creating a capital base and for creating a human resource base with skills and abilities necessary to make economic development strategies and self-government successful.*¹²

Developing self-respect among the Métis people and strengthening Métis communities was the primary concern of the Institute in the early 1990s. With enhanced self-respect, it was hoped that the Métis people would become more self-reliant, like their ancestors – the “Free People.” “We cannot afford to become wards of the government, even if we have a legal right to do so. It requires too great a sacrifice of self-respect and political, temporal and spiritual independence.”¹³

Developing self-respect among the province's Métis people also meant embracing the Métis' traditional spirit of cooperation:

*...True communities are built through cooperation, shared values and strategic partnerships. The student must experience the school as an extension of the home and not as a rejection of the home and community....We are involved in a battle for cultural survival – survival as a proud and distinct people. Our right to education is being limited by our access to culturally relevant appropriate education and training and poverty...*¹⁴

*Education is the first step to self-reliance. We cannot share if we have nothing to give, we cannot communicate if we have nothing to say, we cannot cooperate if we have no respect for ourselves. We seek to be self-reliant in order to do these things. Each of us has the responsibility to develop ourselves to our full potential so that we can share, communicate, cooperate and respect ourselves and others.*¹⁵

¹¹ Towards Self-Government: A Mandate for the Nineties, p. 7-8.

¹² Education for Economic Progress: Human Resource Development: A Foundation for Building Aboriginal Economies.

¹³ Marion G. Romney

¹⁴ Executive Directors Report, 1990 Annual Report.

¹⁵ White SUNTEP booklet, p. 3.

However, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, while striving for self-government, individual self-reliance and group cooperation for the Métis people, has always been willing to co-exist within the larger society. Enhanced autonomy would allow for further self-reliance and a more equal partnership with non-Aboriginal society. In this context, self-determination does not mean separation as many seem to think. Rather it is a concept built on equality and partnership:

*The purpose of the institute is to respond to the problem of lack of achievement and proportional programs. In doing so, the Institute strives to heighten the self-identity within the Métis community and to develop, among all peoples, an appreciation and understanding of historical, cultural and contemporary Métis issues.*¹⁶

Despite the Institute's successes during the 1980s, the Métis people, while making considerable inroads, still faced much of the same problems as their ancestors. Even one hundred years after Louis Riel's execution, the Métis people were still second-class citizens in their own country. Moreover, the Métis people still struggled to receive an education and recognition for their contributions to the development of Canada. GDI's employees and students recognized that only through a commitment to long-term education would racism be defeated. However, since GDI was an Aboriginal educational organization, it had to prove its worth to its critics within the non-Aboriginal community:

*Attempts to erode our Nation have been made and continue to occur. Ten years ago the issue of self-government did not dominate meetings and discussions and today the Métis leaders see it as a way of regaining control over the social, political and economic order of our communities. Community people have been very strong Métis Nationalists for their entire life because they live a lifestyle that shows more control and less influence from the larger, mainstream society. This is the group that is emerging, leading the way.*¹⁷

*We are accepted as a legitimate educational institution by the universities, vocational institutes, colleges and, most importantly, by Métis and Non-Status Indians. We have confounded our critics by doing "better than good" work. This has helped us to live with 2 (sic) different provincial governments, and will enable us to live with others. Governments come and go but we shall live on.*¹⁸

¹⁶ Robert Armstrong, *Cultural Conference 1994*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Internal GDI Memorandum: Chris Lafontaine to Keith Goulet, December 2, 1985.

¹⁸ 1983 and 1984 *Annual Reports*.

*The Institute has come a long way over the past eleven years, but there is still a lot of progress to be made if we are to accomplish all the needs to be done. We are taught "where there is no vision, a people die."*¹⁹

The centenary of the Northwest Resistance and the execution of Louis Riel made the province's Métis people reflect upon their position in Canadian society. GDI also shared in this self-reflection and remained determined to ensure that the future would be brighter for the Métis people than the previous hundred years:

*This year of 1985 marks a century of effort by the Métis and Non-Status Indians of the province to establish themselves in a new society. We reconsider and evaluate our role as a people and we know that education is the key and what our people need the most to take advantage of the opportunities the future will bring...*²⁰

*Not everything has gone well. We still have not overcome 100 years of oppression. Racism is to be found everywhere. We have been unable to respond to all the needs and demands of the Métis and Non-Status Indians, and we get some "flack" for that...We have not totally convinced the governments of our worth despite our willingness and ability to turn things around. Perhaps we shall have to wait until we have achieved self-government through the Constitution before all Canadians will recognize our worth.*²¹

Former GDI Executive Director, and Saskatchewan's past Minister of Northern Affairs, Keith Goulet, discussed the desire of the province's Métis community to create an educational institute in order to manage their own affairs:

*It was only a few years ago that people doubted Métis and Non-status Indians could offer educational programs...But we had the political will to make these things happen and they did develop...We need people to work not only in the schools but in mechanics, agriculture, forestry...We can do it and we can do it in the best way possible. That's the challenge.*²²

While the raison d'être of the Institute was geared towards creating a cadre of educated and dedicated citizens of the Métis Nation in order to achieve self-government, the non-Aboriginal media tended to focus on the need for Métis and Non-Status Indians to educate themselves and thereby better integrate into the larger society. Jim Sinclair, president of the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, in the early 1980s, wanted

¹⁹ Introduction: *Annual Report 1990*, Subtitle, "Education and the Family," p. 1.

²⁰ July 10, 1985, Excerpts from *The Potashville Miner Journal*, Esterhazy, Saskatchewan. An interview with Christopher Lafontaine, former GDI Executive Director.

²¹ *Towards Self-Government: A Mandate for the Nineties*, p. 28.

²² December 14, 1983, *Regina Leader-Post*.

to use the Institute to prevent the assimilation of Métis and Non-Status Indians. One means to achieve this end was by developing sufficient curriculum and programs from an Aboriginal perspective:

*(T)he institute either is developing or has developed: a curriculum development program to produce native educational materials for use in native and non-native educational programs; a library-resource centre; a native studies program for possible introduction at the University of Saskatchewan; a field liaison service; a research program; a cultural education program; and various in-house training programs to be conducted by the institute itself. The provincially-funded program, which provides natives with a daily living allowance for taking upgrading and other courses at Saskatchewan's community colleges, has been criticized frequently for not meeting the needs of native adults.*²³

The Regina Leader-Post, in an article about GDI's founding in 1980, never mentioned that the concept of Métis self-government was the Institute's main tenet:

*The Gabriel Dumont Institute officially opened its new Regina offices in the old Queen Elizabeth School building at 121 Broadway Ave E. Tuesday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony...The institute offers university-level courses for natives and also has facilities in Lloydminster, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Ile-a-la-Crosse.*²⁴

Nor did the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*:

*Native and government officials look over an agreement they signed Monday making money available to Regina's Gabriel Dumont Institute for the next three years....The signing took place during the official opening of the institute, promoting the renewal and development of native culture, through a variety of programs. It features, among other things, a library-resource centre and a program to train Saskatchewan urban natives as teachers.*²⁵

It is interesting to note, that small town newspapers provided as much information about GDI's early years as the two larger dailies in Regina and Saskatoon. The process leading to self-government was also implicitly hinted at:

The Gabriel Dumont Institute...was formed in the early 1970s by members of the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan. The institute was seen as a vehicle by which Métis and Non-Status Indian people could develop and enrich the skills, identity, knowledge and programs

²³ "Far-reaching effects expected from native education meeting," date? source?

²⁴ October 28, 1980, *Regina Leader-Post*, "A school is born."

²⁵ September 20, 1980, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*.

*needed to strengthen their culture. The Institute's aim is to develop in native people a pride in their history and culture and a positive self-image, which could equip them with the knowledge, skills, and know-how to participate in a more meaningful way in the social, cultural, and economic life of the province.*²⁶

An Aboriginal newspaper in northern Saskatchewan was praiseworthy of the Institute's efforts to keep the Métis community aware of its development, and to encourage them to shape its direction:

*The institute is unique in that the "grassroots" membership has a real say in the goals and direction that the institution takes. The goals have been collectively and consistently put forward as recommendations by the Annual Assembly delegates beginning in 1976.*²⁷

Even with generally positive press reports about the Institute's founding and early development, GDI still had a long road ahead of itself to ensure that the citizens of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan would have the self-confidence necessary to bring about self-government. As well, despite an ingrained racism in Saskatchewan society towards Aboriginal people, GDI's staff remained optimistic about the future prospects of self-government:

*We have been entrusted with the task of overcoming years of oppression that saw most Métis and Non-Status Indians unable to make it through the educational system. We cannot change the past. What we can do is to work together now to make sure that the future is healthy. Individual improvement is not enough if we are to overcome 100 years of oppression. Resources are too scarce. To train 100 Métis and Non-Status Indians to be better individuals is not enough. To train 100 people each to share their learning with 10 others could produce a learning community of 1000. A better social order could result. Not only that, but it is cost effective...By helping one person to learn and share, we can touch 10 people. That might help us make one giant step over the next 100 years.*²⁸

In the late 1990s, these nation-building ideas were still held by GDI staff. GDI had developed expertise in delivering Métis-specific programs:

*There is nothing else like it in Canada. We are the only ones providing educational services that are specifically directed towards Métis people. Other provinces look to us in their programming and the development of similar services. We are actually nationally and internationally recognized.*²⁹

²⁶ July 10, 1985, *The Potashville Miner Journal*, Esterhazy, Saskatchewan.

²⁷ February 27, 1985, *The Northerner*.

²⁸ 1983 and 1984 Annual Reports prepared by Beverly Cardinal, Timothy Pyrch and Dennis Shatilla, p. 1-2.

²⁹ May 21, 1997, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* (Interview with Leah Dorion).

Section II: Reaching out to the Métis Community: The Annual Cultural and Education Conferences

GDI has always recognized that it would not exist without the support of the province's Métis people. Indeed, GDI's direction has always been from the community. For instance, the Institute was founded in 1980, after the idea for a Métis-run educational institution was first proposed in 1976 at a Métis Society of Saskatchewan Annual Assembly. In 1980, much of the groundwork for the founding of the Institute occurred at an Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) educational conference. In its first year the Institute held annual cultural conferences based on AMNSIS structures:

"Our direction has come and always will come from the grass-roots...The Institute always has and always will follow the advice of the people."³⁰

"We have all been drawn together by a common thread: the desire to improve the educational needs of the Métis and Non-Status people of Saskatchewan".³¹

*The Gabriel Dumont Institute is controlled by the Métis and Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan and is the only Institute of its kind in Canada. Aboriginal people strive for independence and self-reliance to avert the tragedy of under development and underutilization of their human potential...The Gabriel Dumont Institute is committed to providing educational opportunities to Aboriginal people...This responsibility has been give to the Institute by the Métis and the Non-Status Indian people of Saskatchewan. Since 1976, and continuing to the present, this mission has been collectively and consistently reflected in recommendations put forward by the membership...These recommendations form the basis of the policy direction of the Board of Governors of the Gabriel Dumont Institute.*³²

In order to give back to the community, the Institute conducted annual cultural conferences from 1980 until 1994. The original GDI constitution made these conferences mandatory because they were a tangible means to facilitate knowledge within the Métis community and to celebrate Métis culture. Funding for these conferences came from a variety of sources including the Institute's core budget, corporations and government agencies. GDI took about a year to plan each of these conferences, and was very concerned about its fund raising campaign. Each cultural conference had about 1000 participants, usually held in either Regina or Saskatoon.

³⁰ 1983 and 1984 Annual Reports prepared by Beverly Cardinal, Timothy Pynch and Dennis Shatilla, p. 3.

³¹ 1983 and 1984 Annual Reports prepared by Beverly Cardinal, Timothy Pynch and Dennis Shatilla, p.20.

³² 1987 Annual Report, p. 1.

Each cultural conference had a specific theme. For instance, the theme of the 1985 Cultural Conference, held on March 21 and 22, was "Education and Cultural Change: One Hundred Years and Beyond." In 1986, the theme of the cultural conference was "Our Children, Our Culture, Our Pride and Our Future." In 1991, "Education and the Family" was the theme for the 11th annual Cultural and Education Conference. The 1993 Cultural Conference entitled "Community Matters" celebrated the cultural heritage and the future of the Métis people and communities in Saskatchewan. In 1994, the theme of the annual cultural conference, held during Back to Batoche Days, was "Steps in Time: Education through the Generations" and its objectives were: "(t)o encourage and enhance the cultural knowledge and pride of Métis people through the generations; and (t)o make outside participants aware of the strong inter-generational dynamics of the Métis people."

The goals of these annual GDI cultural conferences were:

*To build and strengthen the cultural heritage and educational status of the Métis community of Saskatchewan by providing a forum which recognizes and reaffirms the grassroots' ownership and direction of the Gabriel Dumont Institute; and to raise the level of awareness of the general public on the cultural heritage of the Métis community.*³³ *The over-riding goal of the Conference is to provide participants with practical information and ideas, which will encourage local organization and cultural development, as Aboriginal people move to self-determination.*³⁴

The GDI cultural conferences also allowed the Métis community to indicate which direction it wanted the Institute to take. At the GDI cultural conferences, the family always took centre stage. At these gatherings, the Métis people themselves were considered one large extended family:

*The family is the centre of Métis culture. As such, the Cultural Conference is planned to encourage participation from the very young to the traditional elders. The important people at the Conference are not the Key Note speakers and presenters. On the contrary, the "important people" are the grassroots Métis people of Saskatchewan – a people steeped in cultural pride and determination.*³⁵

The annual cultural conferences also informed the Métis people about the Institute's efforts to serve the community. It also informed the Métis people where improvements were needed in society to meet their educational needs:

³³ *The 1994 Cultural Conference, GDI 12th Annual Cultural Conference, "Steps in Time: Education through the Generations," p. 1.*

³⁴ *Cultural Conference: Aboriginal Writers' Workshop, 1986.*

³⁵ *The 1993 Cultural Conference.*

*Beginning with a student population of 40, a staff of 20 and an operating budget of \$750, 000, Gabriel Dumont Institute has grown to serve a student population of more than 900 with an operating budget over \$6,000,000... GDI programs are...community-based. In essence, this means that courses leading to diplomas, normally attainable only by attending classes offered on the campuses of universities, colleges, and SIAST, are offered in towns and urban centres across Saskatchewan. Students are encouraged to live with their families in their own Native communities, to maintain political awareness and to become bi-cultural citizens.*³⁶

During these conferences, the Métis community felt a great need to increase the number of Aboriginal language retention programs. Due to a century or more of colonization, in which residential schools and other assimilationist aspects of state policy towards Aboriginal people were implemented, Native Canadians began to lose their ability to speak their Indigenous languages. In many ways, this process paralleled the assimilation of francophones outside of Quebec or of more recent "ethnic" immigrants to Canada. To many, losing the ability to speak an Aboriginal language is akin to losing the essence of being a Métis or First Nations person. For most Métis people, the inability to speak Cree, Michif-Cree or Michif-French has proven disastrous. Therefore, the Métis community consistently advocated for language retention programs at these cultural conferences. Perhaps the primary concern of the Institute has been to preserve Aboriginal languages, particularly Michif, the Métis language: "Many Aboriginal people see the loss of Aboriginal language as symbolic of the loss of values, practices and worldview that it embodies and a breach of faith with the Great Spirit."³⁷

*A Major challenge facing Saskatchewan's Métis peoples is the retention of their Native languages. In many Native communities only the Elders have the knowledge necessary to converse and function in traditional languages such as Cree and Michif...Native languages are an essential agent in the transmission of Aboriginal cultures. Knowledge and values are often passed from one generation to the next through traditional storytelling. The translation of these stories into English may mean that the essence of the lesson is lost.*³⁸

With increasing migration of Native people to urban centres and enrolment in mainstream educational institutes, the ability to communicate effectively in English has often taken precedence. Yet, many young Aboriginal people who are seeking to regain their Native heritage, values and self-esteem are tuning to spirituality, historical research and traditional celebrations. Without the

³⁶ *The 1994 Cultural Conference - GDI 12th Annual Cultural Conference, "Steps in Time: Education through the Generations," p. 1.*

³⁷ *Vision and Direction for the Education and Training of the Métis People of Saskatchewan: A Discussion Paper, p. 21.*

³⁸ *Keeping our languages Workshop, January 26, 1990, p. 4.*

*basic ability to converse in languages such as Cree and Michif, the full impact of many of these traditional pursuits will never be realized.*³⁹

*Experience has shown that formal classes of instruction in Native languages in a few chosen institutions is not enough. Dialects and particular word meanings are often specific to a locality or region. If steps are not taken to empower Aboriginal people to revive and retain Native languages at the community level, the use of our languages will continue to decline.*⁴⁰

Dennis Morin, a Cree language instructor, argued that GDI's Cree language program was needed because Aboriginal language retention rates were low:

*Less than one quarter of Native households in Saskatchewan speak an Aboriginal language. This is especially true among Natives under twenty years of age who barely understand, let alone speak, a Native language. This is evidenced by the fact that English is the first language of more than eight of every ten native children. If this trend of language loss is to continue we will face the death of Aboriginal languages within Saskatchewan within a few decades...We have an obligation for the future generations of the Métis people. Through the retention of the Métis languages we will provide future generations with a strong Métis heritage to grow with.*⁴¹

Section III: Research Department

Once it was decided that GDI would commit itself to developing an educational infrastructure, a research department was needed to see what programs were needed in the community. The Research Department conducted program assessments of various communities, in order to determine what programs were needed. In the process, Research Officers visited numerous archives and libraries, and conducted community assessment studies in Métis communities. Before a GDI program could be implemented in a particular locale, a thorough needs assessment was conducted, and almost simultaneously the Research Department would write funding proposals to various levels of government and corporate agencies. Without an active Research Department, the Institute likely would not have survived its earlier years:

The purpose of Research and Development is to provide policy development, planning, and research services to the Institute. Integral to these functions are program development, program evaluation, and short- and long-term planning to ensure the success of new initiatives with government and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ GDI Newsletter, VOL. 2, NO. 1, May 1988, Joan Dagdick and Gizelle Marcotte, co-editor, "The Cree Language Program" by Dennis Morin, p. 13.

*educational institutes.*⁴² *All programs offered are linked to the labour market, as identified through community and regional needs assessment...*⁴³

The Research Department also conducted research in order to develop Native Studies courses, a Métis-specific curricula and cross-cultural education programs: "(T)o conduct research of an historical and contemporary nature, towards the development of a factual record of native history and culture by designing, developing and maintaining a vibrant research unit at the Gabriel Dumont Institute."⁴⁴

The Research Department was an increasingly important component in GDI's early years. Research Officers conducted original research for Native Studies programs and publications, fundraised for the Institute, and wrote needs assessments for various communities and reports to various levels of government:

*...GDI has gained national recognition through its research and publications. The Institute serves to raise the level of public awareness to the needs, goals and aspirations of people of Indian and Métis ancestry, and represents a major step towards the realization of Aboriginal self-determination in education, training and educational development.*⁴⁵

The activities of the Institute's Research Department were an area of interest for the press. By the early 1980s, many in society recognized that the way in which Aboriginal people were portrayed in history and school books was outdated and racist. Furthermore, there was a recognition that Aboriginal people should be allowed to describe their historical and contemporary experiences. Occasionally, Curriculum Officers or Research Officers were interviewed. In this interview, Don McLean argued that the Macdonald government (1867-73; 1878-1891) colluded with the Prince Albert Colonization Company in order to ferment the 1885 Resistance:

*"We feel they had inside information on the location of the Canadian Pacific Railway Track," said McLean, explaining the company therefore expected the capital of the North West Territories to be at Prince Albert and for the land to become extremely valuable. He pointed out the Métis had lived on the land long before the colonization company got it, and yet the company would not give them any title to it.*⁴⁶

⁴² 1987 Annual Report, p. 14.

⁴³ 1987 Annual Report.

⁴⁴ Ibid., "Distribution and Communication," p. 13.

⁴⁵ White SUNTEP booklet, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Prince Albert *Herald*, 1984 or 1985?, Joscelyn Glen, "Institute researchers find land firm had federal ties."

While conducting a community assessment for the Institute, in the early 1980s, McLean remembered that visceral racism towards Aboriginal people was very pronounced:

*I remember big Calvin Racette and we would go up north. I'm the white-looking dude and he's big and he's Native. And so we would go up north and for a day or two there would be some resistance to myself. But the thing was Calvin and I had this dynamic of equality...and we had a message that they wanted to hear and we were good at putting it across. So we would leave a week, two weeks later and people would have presents for us, that swift a transformation. Now when we came back south, I would walk down a street here in Saskatoon with big Calvin and I would see the white hate stares directed at him. And so...this was an emotional experience like none other than I've ever had. This whole thing dropped right into the boiling cauldron of racism and experiencing it from both sides...You know it was certainly a lesson for all concerned because when we were working together as brother and sister in the Institute and somebody would come in, either white or brown, and deal with people in a racist way it was an utter shock. Cause what had happened to us in the ten years that I was there is that we had become totally colour blind, which might not be a good idea in a racist society.*⁴⁷

Section IV: The Curriculum Department and Library Resource Centre

One of the main concerns of GDI's founders was to address the biased historical record regarding Canada's Métis people. Generations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians were raised with a biased perspective towards Aboriginal people. The mission of the Curriculum Department was to address the racist historiography by producing historical works and other resources which were not only culturally affirming for Métis and other Aboriginal people, but were also a means to inform non-Aboriginal people about how Canada was built through the exploitation of Native people. In addition, the Curriculum Department began to explain the cultural traditions of Prairie Canada's Métis people. Even though many of GDI's founders were Non-Status Indians and members of the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS), very little First Nations curriculum has been developed at the Institute. The focus of the Institute – particularly after the split political between Saskatchewan's Métis and Non-Status Indians in the early 1990s – has been on Métis Studies.

When the Curriculum Department was founded in 1980, only Aboriginal people themselves – such as Maria Campbell and Howard Adams – were thinking and writing about the visceral racism under-girding Canadian society, and of our country's historical development from a Native point of view. Certainly, the development of an archives and book-making activities within AMNSIS gave the province's Métis people valuable publishing

⁴⁷ Don McLean's interview, April 1998.

experience. Nonetheless, GDI had to create the infrastructure for a curriculum and publishing department on its own. With an initial core grant, the Curriculum Department began producing educational materials to fill in this large void in the historical record. The Institute's founders recognized that educational writing and publishing were the best means to instil a healthy respect for the contribution of Aboriginal people towards Canada's development. Furthermore, Métis people would gain more respect for their heritage when provided with a history of their people without the biased filter of Eurocentric historians. Indeed, education is an effective means to combat racism.

Traditional historical accounts of Aboriginal-European relations in Canada were generally written from the perspective of the colonizing power. This problem was compounded by the fact that Aboriginal history largely comes from the oral tradition. Therefore, the primary documents of an Aboriginal historian are principally interviews with Elders. However, for Métis history, there is not a wealth of oral tradition for long-ago events like the 1816 Battle of Seven Oaks or the Métis Free Trade Movement of 1849. When writing about events, GDI Curriculum writers had to rely on monographs written by such Eurocentric academics as W.L. Morton, George F. Stanley, or Marcel Giraud. Not surprisingly, the Curriculum Department decided to conduct numerous interviews with Métis Elders in an attempt to create a collection of Métis primary sources. For instance, the 1885 Centenary Project consisted of many interviews with Elders regarding their life experiences.

In the early 1980s, numerous GDI employees, including Calvin Racette, Ken Carriere, Anne Dorion and Don McLean interviewed Métis veterans and asked them about their war-time experiences. Out of these interviews the Institute published its tribute to Métis veterans: *Remembrances: Interviews with Métis Veterans*. In 1997, Leah Dorion, the current Curriculum Department Coordinator, raised enough money to publish the book. In a series of launches in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina and Cumberland House, the book was presented to Métis veterans. The Métis veterans book is the only monograph which deals exclusively with the experiences of Métis people in three of Canada's 20th century wars. (Métis people also served in the South African War, 1898-1902, and in the Gulf War, 1990-1991, however, their experiences will have to wait for another book project). Other books and videos describe the experiences of "Native" or "Aboriginal" veterans in a generic format. Since the book is a series of extended interviews, it is a primary document for future academics; perhaps more importantly, *Remembrances* is an empowering gift to those Métis Elders who fought to ensure that Canada would remain free, and it is a poignant reminder that more could be done to better accommodate Aboriginal people. The Department has remained committed since 1997 to collect Veterans' stories, photographs and interviews.

The success and acclaim granted to *Remembrances* would not have been possible if it were not for the earlier work of many dedicated curriculum

workers. From 1980-1985, GDI scrambled to produce quality Métis-specific resources. Much of the Native Studies materials produced in this time period were used for internal use or for cross-cultural education programs. Often, the Curriculum Department relied on SUNTEP graduates to develop and write the curriculum, other times material was contracted out. Two SUNTEP graduates, Joanne Pelletier and Calvin Racette produced groundbreaking publications during the Curriculum Department's early years.

Joanne's *Métis Historical Booklet Series* (1985) – which includes biographies of Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont and accounts of Métis bison hunts and the Métis resistances at Seven Oaks (1816), the Red River District (1869-70), and the Saskatchewan Country (1885) – offer the first attempt by a Métis curriculum developer to analyse these aspects of the past from a Métis perspective. Joanne was one of the first Métis people to deconstruct the historical bias surrounding the 1816 Battle of Seven Oaks, which both popular and academic historians have long maintained was a “savage” massacre of “helpless” Selkirk settlers by the *bois brûlés*. Her booklet on the Métis buffalo hunts similarly provided young readers with insights into the socioeconomic lifestyle of Plains Métis people during the nineteenth century, including excerpts from the famous “Law of the Prairie.” Finally, her biography of Gabriel Dumont was only the second time in which the life of this great leader was portrayed in biography format. Currently, there are only three biographies, two plays, one video and one filmstrip, two sets of interviews, and a few articles about Dumont. Joanne, therefore, greatly contributed to our knowledge about this legendary man.

Calvin Racette's achievements as a GDI Curriculum Developer included researching and writing the *Métis Development in the Canadian West Series* (1985) and the *Flags of the Métis* (1987). The five books in the *Métis Development Series* were a bench mark for the Institute since they were the first GDI curriculum materials to be recommended on many provincial education department's reading lists. Calvin used a plethora of primary documents to illustrate that the Prairie Métis wrote dozens of petitions to the federal government and to the Governor General in order to address their long-standing grievances. It was only when it became clear that the federal government was not interested in addressing these grievances that armed resistance became an option for the Batoche Métis. Calvin demonstrated that the Métis people sought reconciliation for a dozen years before the 1885 Resistance and it was only after their numerous pleas fell on deaf ears in Ottawa that the Métis people of the Saskatchewan River Valley began their resistance. No Canadian historian made this claim and only foreigners, such as Auguste de Trémaudan and Joseph Howard, articulated this historical fact. As well, Calvin's *Flags of the Métis*, richly illustrated by Sherry Farrell Racette, is the only monograph which explains the historical development of Métis flags. No other monograph includes an analysis of Métis patriotic symbols, be they the fur trade sash or the Red River Cart.

In the early years of the Institute, there was a great deal of cooperation between various GDI departments in order to produce curriculum and literary titles. Out of this cooperation emerged the work of GDI research officer Don McLean. Don left a legacy of three books to the Institute: *Home From the Hill: A History of the Métis in Western Canada* (Volumes I and II) (1987), *Fifty Historical Vignettes: View of the Common People* (1987), and *1885: Métis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?* (1985). Although not an Aboriginal person, Don has always been sympathetic to the concerns of Canada's Indigenous people. A sociologist by training, he became interested in how the Métis people became a surplus population following the 1821 amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC). Don's MA thesis maintains that after most Métis fur trade employees were let go by the newly expanded HBC, they could only make an adequate living through direct competition with the fur trade giant. As a result of fierce competition between the HBC and the Métis fur traders, the Company orchestrated a racist campaign against the *gens du libre*.

This thesis of freedom loving Métis democrats in conflict with coercive European authority was woven throughout his three books; the HBC was merely replaced by the Canadian State in the 1869-1885 period, and afterwards. For instance, in *Métis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?* Don argues that the federal government, through such non-Aboriginal conspirators as Lawrence Clarke, fomented the 1885 Resistance in order to assist the Prince Albert Colonization Company's ongoing speculation of Métis lands and to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Aspects of this controversial thesis were taken up more recently by the Manitoba historian D.N. Sprague, although Sprague maintains that the Métis, while deprived of their land base in Manitoba, were not the victims of a "White" man's conspiracy. Finally, realizing that not everybody is comfortable with academic history and end notes, Don wrote *Fifty Historical Vignettes*, a popular history of the Prairie Métis people. This book, the Institute's first publication for a non-academic adult audience, contains vignettes from various aspects of the Métis people's past.

While writing informational titles for adults has been an important focus of the Curriculum Department, much of its recent emphasis has been to produce high-calibre children's literature. Since there was a real need for culturally affirming literature for younger Aboriginal children, the Curriculum Department published richly illustrated literary materials for younger readers. The first of these book projects was Sherry Farrell Racette's *The Flower Beadwork People* (1991). Sherry was a long-term SUNTEP faculty worker and curriculum developer. As a talented artist, her watercolour paintings accompanied numerous GDI reports, and were included in the *Flags of the Métis*, as well as the two popular posters, "Keep Your Spirit Free" and "A Nation is Not Conquered." However, *The Flower Beadwork People* is her most notable artistic and literary contribution to the Institute. The book is a brief social history of the Métis people of Prairie Canada and the American Plains states. Its title refers to the name which the Dakota, Lakota and

Nakota gave to the Métis people because of the elaborate and colourful flower beadwork embroidery and quill work on their clothing. Like Maria Campbell's *Riel's People: How the Métis Lived*, this book is an excellent introduction for young people to Métis history.

Carrying on a tradition of using GDI graduates to produce literary titles, the Curriculum Department hired the talented SUNTEP writer and artist, Darrell Pelletier, to produce the five books of *The Alfred Reading Series* (1992): *Alfred's First Day at School*, *Alfred's Summer*, *The Pow Wow*, *The Big Storm* and *Lisa and Sam*. These books, written for primary-aged children, tell the story of a young Aboriginal boy, Alfred, and his friends in Plains Cree, Michif, French and in English. For the Michif translation of the series, Chris Blondeau Perry, a Métis Elder from the Weyburn area, was consulted. In each book, an aspect of Aboriginal culture, such as pow wows, is highlighted. In 1998, the Curriculum and Publishing Department under the direction of its coordinator Leah Dorion produced a read-a-long companion to the *Alfred Reading Series* entitled "Come and Read With Us." Now on cassette, compact disc and in printed format, the Alfred Reading Series is the Curriculum Department's most prominent audio-visual project.

Part of the department's raison d'être is to produce audio-visual and now multimedia resources. In order to better demonstrate the rich material culture of the Métis people, the Curriculum and Publishing Department had to expand beyond the publishing of literary works, by producing audio and visual resources. Early on, the Institute produced a number of filmstrip kits including "Métis Crafts: Quill and Bead Earrings" (1985) and "Métis Crafts: Finger Weaving" (1985). At this time, there was a real need for resources such as these and since these resources demonstrated the traditional craft-making skills of the Métis people, they have been widely used since the early 1980s. Curriculum worker Lorna Payne worked on these two projects, along with Calvin Racette.

Another filmstrip, which eventually became a video was "Gabriel Dumont: Métis Legend" (1985). This project was a series of painted vignettes taken from various events in Gabriel Dumont's life. Peter Myo, an illustrator and curriculum developer, painted a series of watercolours for the project. In fact, the Curriculum Department has worked with many talented painters, illustrators and photographers including Peter Myo, Sherry Farrell Racette, Cliff Bunny, Charles Belhumeur and Michelle Isbister. Peter Myo also illustrated the book *A Métis Wedding/Le Mariage Métis* (1988). This charming little book, written by Christel Barber, described the preparations of a traditional Métis wedding and the festivities, including jigging and fiddle playing.

Métis culture is both rich and diverse: Métis people have always been fond of visiting, storytelling, singing, jigging and fiddle playing. The Curriculum Department has taken a lead role in producing resources which highlight traditional Métis folk culture. For instance, "Steps in Time: Métis Dance" is

an instructional video which demonstrates some of the basic steps for such Métis dances as the Red River Jig, the Duck Dance and the Rabbit Chase Dance. As well, the department produced, through a partnership with the Saskatchewan Music Educators Association, a Métis song book entitled *Métis Songs: Visiting was the Métis Way* (1993). This interesting book contains First Nations, Michif, French-Canadian, and French songs as well as songs written by Louis Riel, "*La métisse*" and "*Sur le champ de bataille*," and Métis love songs, Métis fun songs, contemporary Métis songs, instrumental fiddle tunes and spoken tales. From this anthology of Métis folk songs came the Curriculum Department's audio cassette and compact disc, "Singing to Keep Time – A Collection of Métis Songs" (1996). This compilation of songs was the Institute's first audio collection of traditional and contemporary Métis songs, and includes the ever-popular Michif song "*Kispin Kisakihin*." The promotion and preservation of Métis culture has been of great importance to the Curriculum Department. One of the first and most durable attempts to explain Métis culture for both the primary and secondary education systems was Sherry Farrell Racette's, Calvin Racette's and Joanne Pelletier's "The Métis: Two Worlds Meet" (1985), a compilation of 36 study prints. These study prints have long remained one of the most important projects developed by the Institute in terms of providing students with easily digestible thematic information. The study prints are broken down into seven themes: Home and Lifestyle, Clothing, Transportation, Work, Métis men, Métis women and political events. Many of the photographs used are of aspects of Métis material culture including the fur trade sash, a representation of a Red River Coat and beaded moccasins. These study prints have adorned many classroom walls.

Providing study prints and other materials for teachers has been an important area of activity within the Curriculum Department. For instance, curriculum developers provided a much needed resource for educators, *The Canadian Atlas of Aboriginal Settlement* (1993). This useful resource contains maps relating to the linguistic and tribal distribution of First Peoples in Canada, the Métis dispersals in 1869-70 and 1885, First Nations' Treaty Areas, reserves in Saskatchewan and the structure of Métis political structures in Canada. As well, the Curriculum Department has produced posters and large sized maps. Many educators and community people comment on how valuable GDI posters have been towards instilling an appreciation of Aboriginal culture in young people. Some of the Curriculum Department's more prominent posters include Sherry Farrell Racette's vibrantly illustrated "Keep Your Spirit Free" and "A Nation is not Conquered." These posters have long been popular not only because they are beautifully illustrated but because they each have a positive message: the former warns young people to live a healthy lifestyle by avoiding drugs, tobacco and alcohol, and the latter praises the strength of Aboriginal women. Other posters of note include: "Our Children: Our Future," which is a photograph of an Aboriginal baby in a traditional cradle board and moss bag, and "Oh my Métis Nation/*Ô ma nation métisse*," which is an illustration of the spirits of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont in the Batoche cemetery.

As a non-profit publisher, GDI has often had difficulty in obtaining funding for project development. As a result, the Curriculum Department distributes relevant educational and cultural materials produced by authors, filmmakers and musicians working outside the Institute. For instance, GDI obtained printing rights for Murray Dobbin's *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the 20 Century*. Other cultural and educational resources which GDI distributes include: *A Pictorial History of the Métis and Non-Status Indian in Saskatchewan* (The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, 1976), *Prayers of a Métis Priest* (Father Guy LaVallée, 1997), *The Bushland People* (Terry Garvin, 1992), "Fiddle About" (Bird Song Communications), "Batoche: One More Time" (Marjorie Beaucage), "Métis Summer" (Lorraine Freeman for the Métis Resource Centre), "The Road Allowance People" and "The Métis Scrip System" (Ken Shaffer – METCOM Productions, 1997), "Gabriel's Crossing: Aboriginal Fiddling" (Turtle Island Music, 1998), *"Métis and Old Tyme Fiddle Tunes"* (Volumes I-IV, John Arcand, 1996), "The Tunes of Red River" (John Arcand, 1998) and "La Celebration '92" (John Arcand, 1992). The Curriculum Department has also contracted work out to curriculum developers working outside of GDI such as Karon Shmon. Karon, the Institute's former Executive Director, developed an innovative simulation game entitled *La Mishow Wayayshhaywuk: The Big Rip Off* (1993), which allows teachers to simulate the dissolution of the Métis land base and identity following the 1885 Resistance.

As for the future, the Curriculum and Publishing Department is expanding the production of its multimedia resources. In early 1999, the department has produced, along with Arnold Publishing, a multimedia CD ROM entitled "The Métis of Canada." This is the department's most ambitious project to date and includes hundreds of screens of text, maps, music blurbs and video and audio clips. The future of education may not be in CD ROMs, but it will almost certainly be in multimedia formats. However, the department will remain committed to print, audio and visual formats. In 1999, current curriculum workers, Leah Dorion and Darren R. Préfontaine, in partnership with Lawrie Barkwell of the Manitoba Metis Federation, have written a bibliographical essay to accompany a bibliography of all known Métis resources. This timely resource is entitled *Resources for Métis Researchers* and will be available in early 1999. In addition, the department would like to produce more children's books and write a history of the Road Allowance experience for Saskatchewan's Métis people.

Some of the dedicated people who have worked in or with the Curriculum Department include: Keith Turnbull (1980-82), Cliff Bunny (1980), Peter Myo (1984-86), Christel Barber (1985, contractual), Charles Belhumeur, Lorna Payne, Calvin Racette (1984-92), Joanne Pelletier (1984-89), Don McLean, Sherry Farrell Racette (1984-1992), Anne Dorion, Alan Tremayne, (1992-94), Leah Dorion (1995-), Todd Paquin (1996-97) and Darren R. Préfontaine

(1996-). Each of these people, coming from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, has left a legacy to the Institute, to the Métis community, and to the province's education system. This department developed as a result of their vision, talents and efforts. This chapter is dedicated to each of them.

One means to achieve self-government and self-respect for individual Métis people was through the collection and development of Métis specific resources. GDI's founders recognized that there was a clear need for educational, literary and general information titles from a Métis perspective. This was especially needed since the education system perpetuated outmoded views and stereotypes of Métis and First Nations people. In the early 1980s, the Curriculum and Publishing Department wrote and published this Métis-specific material in order to ensure that Métis people could reclaim their history. However, prior to the actual writing of a Métis-based curricula, GDI's staff collected Métis-specific resources for a library and archival system. The final component of GDI planning was the development of a Native Studies program.

When young Métis people entered the education system they often did not receive positive portrayals of their people's history or culture. Therefore, the Institute strived to produce culturally-affirming literature, which would allow Aboriginal students to see their ancestor's past without the biased filter of Eurocentric historians or virulently racist text books. The end result would be enhanced self-esteem for Métis and other Aboriginal students:

*The formal education of Métis children is fraught with challenges and barriers. When young people enter the education system they are presented with curriculum that is inappropriate...The effects of institutional racism are far reaching and sometimes go unnoticed to some. When erroneous statements are made about the Métis it creates attitudes and beliefs about our people and our organizations that are unfounded. It puts false ideas into people's minds and destroys their trust in us. Actions such as those taken by media and government personnel to discredit the Métis, have resulted in harmful attitudes about the institute. Small institutions like ours cannot afford racist activities like these.*⁴⁸

*In the past, Métis and Non-Status Indian people have often been misrepresented or ignored in educational publications. One of the goals of the Curriculum Unit is to present historical and cultural information about the Métis and Non-Status Indians in a fair and accurate manner.*⁴⁹

Since the Métis people faced racism in all facets of their lives, the Curriculum Department and the allied Native Studies Program had to be very precise as to the nature of its mandate:

⁴⁸ *Education as Experienced by the Métis*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ 1984/85 Press Release.

*Under this mandate, the Institute developed a range of cultural services, including a library with outreach capacity, a curriculum development unit, languages resources, and a number of cultural courses for the enrichment of technical school and college-level training programs...Essential to the goals of self-determination are the support and continual expansion of a Métis-specific resource base. The Gabriel Dumont Institute must put as a priority the acquisition and accessibility of all written-knowledge of the Métis.*⁵⁰

Or:

*To develop and implement training programs, develop and disseminate educational resource materials, and to research and disseminate informational materials, which accurately portray our history, combat stereotypes and foster positive self-image among our people.*⁵¹

And:

*To disseminate cultural-historical and contemporary information by utilising modern communication methods, by developing curricula for use throughout the entire education system, by training teachers to use the new Native Studies and by "popularizing" Native Studies for use in both Native and non-Native communities.*⁵²

And:

*The purpose of the Native Studies Program is to enhance the self-identity of the Aboriginal student and community. This is accomplished by understanding one's self in relation to Aboriginal issues including history, culture, language, and contemporary concerns, within our society...The Native Studies Program includes historical research, indigenous language advancement, curriculum development, Native Studies course design and delivery, cultural events, and a publishing program.*⁵³

In time, the Curriculum Department had produced a body of high-calibre Métis-specific resources and had gained expertise in developing Native Studies curricula:

The Institute has compiled a substantial research resource base from which publications, curriculum and other materials are now being produced. These materials can contribute significantly to righting historical errors, to displaying the richness and diversity of Métis and Non-Status Indian culture

⁵⁰ *Towards Self-Government: A Mandate for the Nineties*, p. 6.

⁵¹ GDI Memo: Chris Lafontaine to Keith Goulet, December 2, 1985, "Purpose of the Institute."

⁵² *Distribution and Communication*, p. 13.

⁵³ "Native Studies," *1987 Annual Report*, p. 10.

*and thus, to the development of the Métis and Non-Status Indian People's potential.*⁵⁴

Positive self and community esteem, through a Métis-specific education, would also contribute to the achievement of self-government. It was hoped that this resource publication expertise would contribute to the self-determination process: "Essential to the goals of self-determination are the support and continued expansion of a Métis-specific resource base. The Gabriel Dumont Institute must put a priority on the acquisition and accessibility of all written knowledge of the Métis."⁵⁵

*The Gabriel Dumont Institute will take a lead role in educating for self-government and nation building. This will include developing, collecting and distributing materials pertaining to Métis languages, culture, history and self-government. Self-government will also allow Métis people to establish programs which would be useful for further development.*⁵⁶

However, the Institute realized that it had to live in a society where the majority of the population were not of Aboriginal ancestry. Therefore, it soon developed numerous cross-cultural education programs in the hope that non-Aboriginal children and adults would better understand the positive contributions of Aboriginal people to Canada's development. It was therefore hoped that by educating non-Aboriginal children about Native-Canadian culture, from an Aboriginal perspective, racism would eventually be defeated in Saskatchewan. Of course, cross-cultural education programs were in great demand since Aboriginal people became an increasingly large segment of the province's population:

*As an institution of the Métis communities, the Gabriel Dumont Institute reflects the traditional roles of the Métis as brokers, interpreters, couriers, and emissaries bridging the gap between the cultures...It is in this tradition that...the work of the Curriculum Division should continue.*⁵⁷

And:

The Métis people are dedicated to ensuring the survival of Métis culture in a world dominated by Non-Métis. In fact we have, through (the) Gabriel Dumont Institute of Métis Studies and Applied Research, developed curriculum for the schools, which are (sic) reflective of the cultural and social realities of both the Métis Nation and the First Nations in Saskatchewan. We

⁵⁴ 1984 Annual Assembly Report, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Introduction to the 1993-1998 Gabriel Dumont Institute Strategic Plan, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Exercising Self-government. *Métis Women in Saskatchewan: A Presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, GDI.

⁵⁷ 1991 Annual Report, "Native Studies and Curriculum," p. 7.

*have provided quality education not only to our Métis citizens but to First Nations and non-Aboriginal people as well.*⁵⁸

Or:

*Our hope is to get that curriculum into the educational system so that all citizens of Saskatchewan will come to learn something about Métis and Non-Status Indians, past and present, and our plans for the future.*⁵⁹

In 1985, as part of the centenary of the 1885 Resistance, a flurry of activity occurred at the Institute. A great deal of self-reflection about the place of Métis people in contemporary society occurred. Had things changed since the fall of Batoche in 1885? Were the Métis still fighting the same battles as their ancestors? After five years of resource collection and curriculum development it was time to answer these questions. After 100 years, the historical record regarding these long ago events remained skewed. Therefore, the Institute, through close cooperation with AMNSIS produced a series of materials to address this imbalance in the secondary literature regarding the Métis resistances in 1869-70 and 1885.

*The Batoche project is composed of a collection of primary and secondary documents which follow the sequence of action from the initiation of violence by a careless or provocative remark by a Hudson's Bay Company employee, to Louis Riel's capture, confinement and execution. The documents are arranged in such a way that the reader can alternately follow the chain of events through the eyes of constituted authority and through the eyes of the people, who, intentionally or unintentionally, were drawn into the armed confrontation...historians tried to argue from one perspective or another in an attempt to prove a thesis. As a result, the reader is influenced to think in a certain way and to view the past according to a particular historian's thesis. (I)t is the aim herein to provide a variety of ethnocentric documents to students in a cross-cultural setting and to have the students examine the material for the purpose of formulating a number of points of view.*⁶⁰

*We have written a book that tells the 1885 story in a new way. History is the interpretation of the past and we are writing our own as other people do. At the same time, we are learning more every day about the present conditions of Native peoples.*⁶¹

This project is made up of seven chapters, which recounted the major confrontations of the North West disturbances during the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is often assumed that the battles, skirmishes and

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ 1983 and 1984 Annual Reports, p. 16.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.28.

*murders committed during the three-month period from March to May 1885, make up the totality of what is commonly termed the "North West Rebellion." However, these armed encounters were only a part of a long drawn out struggle for self-determination on the part of Canada's Native peoples. In part this struggle involved a large number of non-Natives also. This factor complicated the task of the central Canadian authority in dealing with the widespread discontent in a swift and forceful manner.*⁶²

Education was, and is still seen, as a means to achieve equality for the Métis people. Education from a Métis perspective also could ensure a better future for the Métis people than the previous 100 years of oppression:

*1885 was an historic step in our people's struggle for self-determination. In 1985, on the 100th anniversary of the battle of Batoche, we were more determined than ever to move forward as equals, in Canadian society. Nowhere is this movement more important than in the areas of education, training for employment, and our cultural growth as a people.*⁶³

GDI has always been an integral part of Saskatchewan's education system. The Institute's main concern has always been that many of the province's Aboriginal students were not receiving an Aboriginal-specific education. Therefore, many GDI graduates and staff wanted to make the provincial educational system more accountable to Aboriginal people, an increasingly large, but ignored section of the population. Brian Foden of the Regina *Leader-Post* interviewed GDI curriculum worker and SUNTEP instructor Sherry Farrell Racette about her election to the Regina School Board. She wanted to make changes from within:

*A few years ago, Sherry Farrell-Racette came to the conclusion it's almost pointless to try to alter racist attitudes from the outside looking in. Today, as a new member of the Regina Public School Board, Sherry Farrell-Racette is in a position to work for changes as a member of the decision-making structure. "I think it's going to be quite a struggle, people resist change. I felt, coming from Winnipeg, that Regina seemed so far behind. It seemed cautious in the extreme...They just seemed to be reluctant to experiment...I think native people in this city have waited a long time to see significant movement. I've seen so many good teachers who are really doing good stuff transferring out of inner city schools because of burn out – they're just fried."*⁶⁴

⁶² *Batoche Project Preamble*, p. 19.

⁶³ *1985 Annual Report*, Alice Setka.

⁶⁴ *Regina Leader Post*, "Seeking change from within," by Brian Foden, no date.

Section V: Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP)

Once Métis-specific resources were created, it was necessary to establish education programs to instil self-esteem among Métis students. An increased appreciation of Aboriginal culture would also result as qualified Aboriginal student teachers entered the education system. One of the long-standing and glaring problems in society has been the relative lack of Aboriginal teachers in the provincial education system. Aboriginal people addressed this problem by developing Aboriginal teacher preparatory programs such as the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) and Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP). In response to these developments, GDI created its Aboriginal teacher preparatory program, the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). Its goals are:

*To ensure that people of Native ancestry are adequately represented in urban teaching positions and (t)o provide Native teachers who are more sensitive to the educational needs of Native students and who can be identified as positive role models for both Native and non-Native students.*⁶⁵

*The purpose of the institute is to respond to the problem of lack of reachievement and proportional under-representation of Native peoples in mainstream educational programs. In doing so, the Institute strives to heighten self-identity within the Aboriginal population and to develop, among all peoples, an appreciation and understanding of historical, cultural and contemporary Aboriginal issues.*⁶⁶

Since SUNTEP would produce more Aboriginal teachers, it was also hoped that these new teachers could incorporate Aboriginal ways of knowing in the larger education system. The end result would lead to self-government for the province's Métis people.

*The exploration of Indian and Métis history, values, and traditions continues to provide a focus for SUNTEP. The aim of providing education into Indian and Métis cultures rather than merely adding bits of these cultures to the education system will build a definition of the bicultural Métis Nation.*⁶⁷

*Post-secondary education for the Métis people would compensate for past inequities in the education of Métis people and could constitute part of the obligation to the Métis people owed by the governments of Canada. This investment in the human resource development of the Métis community would pay long-term dividends in more independent and self-sufficient individuals and communities.*⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Portraits of Progress*, 1987.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁷ *1991 Annual Report*, "SUNTEP," chairperson's report: Max Morin, p. 12.

⁶⁸ *A Post-Secondary Education Strategy for Métis*, p. 7.

Furthermore, more Aboriginal people were needed in the educational system to inform non-Aboriginal people about the history and culture of Native Canadians.

*SUNTEP makes a unique and valuable contribution towards meeting the educational needs of the Métis and Non-Status people of Saskatchewan. Education provides a means to create and determine a society, and the building of a way of life as exemplified by Gabriel Dumont's struggle in early Saskatchewan history. SUNTEP today exemplifies the preservation of a culture and a way of life. It will enable our Native teacher graduates to combine technical and professional expertise with their intimate knowledge of cultural and community identity and respect in the community they will teach in.*⁶⁹

*It is also noted for its unique cross-cultural focus, which benefits all Saskatchewan students. The Gabriel Dumont Institute is proud of the level of professionalism attained by SUNTEP graduates...Not only do SUNTEP graduates find secure employment across Western Canada but, they are also in a position to demonstrate a positive image of Native people. Through this good role modelling, both Native youth and mainstream society have a brighter picture of Saskatchewan's Native community.*⁷⁰

However, while instilling a healthy appreciation of Aboriginal culture for primary and secondary students was an important consideration, so too was the desire to ensure that the SUNTEP graduates themselves could develop into caring and knowing representatives of the Métis community.

*SUNTEP must continue to meet the needs of its students and foster a greater sense of belonging. SUNTEP students are from a wide range of groups. Regardless of their background, however, all students in the four year transformation from student to student-teacher to teacher move from some level of ignorance and denial to validation and affirmation...The growing diversity of students in SUNTEP reflects the pluralism found in today's schools, in Indian and Métis communities themselves, and in society at large. Such diversity is at odds with any narrow ethnocentrist view and provides a compelling rationale for a rich cross-cultural definition of the Métis nation.*⁷¹

And:

The students of the Gabriel Dumont Institute and of the institutions contemplated in its education network have the same vocation, and that is,

⁶⁹ 1983 and 1984 Annual Reports, prepared by Beverly Cardinal, Timothy Pynch and Dennis Shatilla, "What SUNTEP teachers and students said about SUNTEP," p. 11.

⁷⁰ 1989 Annual Report "SUNTEP," Grace Hatfield, p. 15.

⁷¹ *Native Education in Saskatchewan: A Summary of the Proposed New Mandate for the Gabriel Dumont Institute*, January 1987.

to be citizens capable of governing themselves in a democratic state; and therefore all should receive the best education that will prepare them for citizenship as well as for leisure and for making a living. In terms of development, these three aims may be restated as the aim of healthy Native communities and of Native self-determination, the aim of renewed and strengthened Native culture,⁷² and the aim of employment, and of economic development and well being.

Or:

We believe that education should be responsive to the social, cultural, political, and economic realities of our communities, Saskatchewan, Canada, and the world; preparing Métis students to assume productive and responsible roles. In doing this, the Métis education system must prepare its students to participate with competence and confidence in both the Métis and non-Métis worlds, and to appreciate the merits of both. This task can be accomplished in an environment that reflects the integrity of the individual, the involvement of the Métis community, the cooperation of parents, mutual respect between staff and students, and the principles of free enquiry and expression.⁷³

SUNTEP graduates were not only good ambassadors for GDI, they were also fine role models for Aboriginal youth. It was hoped that the presence of SUNTEP graduates in classrooms would encourage Aboriginal students to become educators or other professionals.

SUNTEP teachers would...act as role models, resource people, counsellors, as well as teachers to children and adults of the Native and non-Native people of Saskatchewan...Native students will be inspired to emulate their Native teachers, and Native parents will identify much more strongly with school teachers and school systems that reflect their culture and their aspirations. No longer will schools be able to pawn off the Native student populations as being inferior or second-class.⁷⁴

The SUNTEP graduates were a success story because they went back to their communities and encouraged other young Métis and First Nations students to pursue a university education. "In addition to being good teachers, the graduates are making a difference to the Indian/Métis students in the schools. They are also making a difference to the way in which at least some of the parents view the educational institution their children attend."⁷⁵

⁷² GDI, June 7, 1993, *Philosophy of Education Aims*, p. i-iii.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Rita Bouvier, *Focus on the Unique Training Received by Students*, 1984, p. 1.

As SUNTEP's student body changed, it became obvious that the program was having a great impact upon the Aboriginal community.

*When SUNTEP began in 1980 a "typical" student was a female over 30 years of age with two or three dependents. Today, a SUNTEP student is just as likely to be a single male under the age of 25 with no dependents. Increasingly our students are choosing diverse fields of study, in middle years and secondary programs, as well as in vocational, special and French education. Each year three or four graduates elect to pursue their master's Degree in Education at the graduate level.*⁷⁶

GDI has always been proud of its SUNTEP graduates for they were not only role models to be emulated by other Métis people, they would also be the future leaders in the community.

*The Institute is proud of its staff and its graduates. Graduates who enter into professional careers become our public relations people. They serve as visible examples of our success and will, in time, change the prevailing attitudes toward Native people.*⁷⁷

And:

*Our greatest strength is the commitment, dedication, and hard work of the Gabriel Dumont Institute students and staff. The staff have successfully met the challenge of providing effective, expanded services with fewer dollars. The students have met the challenge and have put forward the effort to develop professionally.*⁷⁸

And:

*Our programs provide students the opportunity to grow and reach their potential. We have challenged the status quo with our vision...The educational model of the Gabriel Dumont Institute transcends the traditional narrow definition of education. The Institute strives to educate and build both individuals and communities. We are setting a national standard by doing ordinary things well.*⁷⁹

With more and more SUNTEP graduates teaching in the education system, it was hoped that further cross-cultural education programs would be developed.

⁷⁶ 1990 Annual Report, "SUNTEP," p. 11.

⁷⁷ 1988 Annual Report, "Executive Director's Report," p. 2.

⁷⁸ 1987 Annual Report.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

*We have to accept a diversity of cultures in our society, and the cultural mix of our society today would appear very strange to some of our forebears. Many of our city schools today contain barely one-third of what used to be the dominant culture, and the remainder are of Native, Oriental, and other cultures. This makes it of paramount importance to include cross-cultural education for all prospective teachers...*⁸⁰

A consistent concern of GDI was the need to address the heavy debt-loads incurred by students. In response to the plight of student financing, GDI developed the Napoleon LaFontaine Economic Development Scholarships in the early 1980s. However, heavy student debt was seen as an obstacle to students receiving a post-secondary education.

*Most GDI students were unemployed in the year before their entrance of the program. 99% relied on student loans to finance their education. 68% of the students were parents; after graduation 84 % were either employed or were taking further education.*⁸¹

There was, at times, opposition from government officials who did not understand why Aboriginal people wanted to be involved in education. In particular, many non-Aboriginal people had difficulty in understanding the concept that increased educational opportunities were a means to achieve self-determination for the Métis people. The logical extension of this thinking was the development of a Métis education system consisting of primary, secondary and post-secondary components. Indeed, a long-held dream of the Métis people of Saskatchewan was the development of an autonomous Métis-specific education system. Governments, however, proved reticent about implementing this dream. By the late 1990s, this dream was abandoned.

*...in seeking for itself a function similar to that of a provincial ministry of education, the Gabriel Dumont Institute neither seeks to intrude on the prerogatives of Saskatchewan Government Departments responsible for education, nor does it seek a legislated system of education.*⁸²

*Métis-controlled...schools must be developed as practicum centres for teacher trainees and as research centres for teacher trainees and as resource centres for evolving Métis-specific teaching materials and pedagogy...The Métis Nation is at a turning point. The opportunity is here to re-establish the self-government exercised by our forefathers. We must prepare. We must work together to create a Nation of caring, competent, creative people.*⁸³

⁸⁰ Rita Bouvier, *Focus on the Unique Training Received by Students*, 1984, p. 13.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸² *Native Education in Saskatchewan: A Summary of the Proposed New Mandate for the Gabriel Dumont Institute*, January 1987.

⁸³ *Towards Self-Government: A Mandate for the Nineties*, p. 14-17.

Once SUNTEP students graduated and became teachers, they still faced many problems. Many non-Aboriginal people believed that the SUNTEP students were “given” their educations, and therefore did not earn them. Furthermore, GDI graduates occasionally encountered racism and hostility from other teachers, and since they received an Aboriginal-specific education, they were often responsible for implementing Native Studies courses for whole schools.

*Our graduates are often quite unreasonably expected to be the experts on all Indian and Métis educational issues. The climate in today's schools – often antagonistic, aggressive, and even violent – strikes discord with the SUNTEP philosophy of child-centred, cooperative learning and sharing which reflects values of intellectual clarity and emotional honesty espoused by elders.*⁸⁴

Unfortunately, there was, at times, still tension regarding the hiring of SUNTEP graduates by some school systems. However, most non-Aboriginal teachers also respected the professionalism of SUNTEP graduates.

*Discussion and implementation of Education Equity Programs are surfacing some hostility and racist remarks, but having SUNTEP graduates on staff has also fostered a lot more understanding. All the people interviewed said that they felt accepted by their fellow staff members.*⁸⁵

The dissemination of information about GDI from the mainstream press was also a key development in the Institute's early years. A vital aspect of GDI's mandate has always been to inform the non-Aboriginal population about the Institute's role in fostering an Aboriginal education system in Saskatchewan. These press reports were generally sympathetic to GDI's goals. However, underlying currents of the same paternalism, which has long dogged Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian relations were also evident. For instance, reporters were quick to indicate which student had an alcoholic parent and or what opposition a GDI student may have faced from their community when they announced their intent to obtain an education. As well, the media certainly did not shy away from addressing some of the more controversial aspects behind SUNTEP's founding. For instance, in 1984, an early press clipping, from the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* demonstrates that the non-Aboriginal media was quick to inform the general public about GDI's affirmative action policies.

The Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) is an affirmative action program aimed at partially correcting this chronic shortage of active teachers, but its first graduates will not be in the job market for at least two years. While the Native Studies aspect of the course centres on Métis culture and history as opposed to that of treaty Indians, admission is

⁸⁴ 1991 Annual Report, SUNTEP, Chairperson's Report: Max Morin, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Rita Bouvier, *Focus on the Unique Training Received by Students*, 1984, p. 19.

*not restricted to urban Natives...“Half of our people came from isolated northern communities. The students spend up to one day a week on the job, and will teach for three weeks in April.” Another goal of the Dumont Institute is to support cross-cultural education, which will prepare SUNTEP graduates to work within the majority.*⁸⁶

In the early 1980s, the press also interviewed GDI students and asked them about their experiences. Many students, particularly during the Institute's early years, had a difficult time in obtaining their education. They faced many obstacles from within the Métis community, and from the non-Aboriginal population. The personal testimonial of the GDI graduate or student was a popular means to demonstrate how empowering a Métis-specific education was for a Métis person. Here's an excerpt from a GDI newsletter:

*Kevin believes SUNTEP is the beginning of something better for Indian and Métis education. The knowledge and professionalism he gained in the program strengthened the confidence and assurance given to him by his family. Trusting in himself and the training he is receiving Kevin vows never to let the stereotypes and prejudices about Indian and Métis people and programs get in the way of his goal to become a teacher.*⁸⁷

An early SUNTEP graduate, Brenda Kinnon, struggled to receive her education, but felt that it was worthwhile. Notice how the newspaper reported all the negative influences in Kinnon's life:

“It was a lot of hard work. There were a lot of late nights and fast food. I'm in terrible shape and I'll blame SUNTEP for that. But it was worth it. There's a lot of pressure put on you. It's like everyone wants a piece of you and there's not enough to go around...I think that it is a common problem because we're out there learning and talking at a different level. A lot of us used to get together and talk about our problems.” Kinnon's mother, an alcoholic, did not value education. When Kinnon was in Grade 9, her mother pressured her to stay home and look after her younger brothers and sisters. Education is so misunderstood by some Indians and Métis. She has even been accused of “selling out” to white society for finishing her education...Debt-ridden and jobless, Kinnon doesn't know how she's going to pay back her loan. Still looking for work as a teacher, she has no choice but to apply for welfare or take a new job. “Optimism: I've been down that road before. My education, they can't take that away from me.”⁸⁸

Calvin Racette, another early SUNTEP graduate, relates how trying to receive an education played havoc with his first marriage:

⁸⁶ Jan. 23, 1981, Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, by Paul Morgan.

⁸⁷ Newsletter, January 1989, “A profile of Kevin James George Parisien,” by Joan Dagdick.

⁸⁸ July 6, 1984, *The Regina Leader-Post* “Getting a degree a lot of hard work”

*I grew up and she did not. This program is very hard on marriages...I went at it full bore and made it a full time job. I worked two hours a night whether I had work or not. It paid off. My dad was never high on school. He said not to worry about it, that I wouldn't learn anyway, so he did not really push education.*⁸⁹

He further stated that young Aboriginal people had a difficult time in attempting to obtain education:

*"I'm not intimidated by where they're coming from, of uncovering vicious scars. I've seen these bad situations myself because I've been in them myself...I have an understanding of what these kids have gone through and I can relate some of my own personal attributes to them. I am not trying to be a self-centred professional. I have my own kids and I have a fair understanding of what kids are about."*⁹⁰

Brenda Kinnon believed that as they left their home communities, many Aboriginal students had a difficult time adjusting to university life. The non-Aboriginal environment proved daunting for many:

"A lot of them, adults and children, are not prepared to live in the city. Some of them are judged by that. That's a terrible injustice to the child." She believed that many students were afraid or are insecure: "I had that myself. The bad thing about residential schools is that it made you, your attitude very submissive. I fought that to become as outspoken as I have become. At the age of 17 I couldn't even use a telephone. I had to make a doctor's appointment to have a physical examination, but I did not know how to do that....My own little daughter, it was almost like she didn't believe what I was saying was true. A lot of Native children don't have faith in their own people."

The news reporter wrote that there was a real need for Aboriginal teachers in the education system, particularly in the two larger centres in Saskatchewan:

*The SUNTEP program cost \$829,000 in that year. About 10 percent of the 64,000 students attending public and separate schools in Regina and Saskatoon are of Indian ancestry. But only three of Regina's 1,800 teachers and six of Saskatoon's 1,530 teachers are Native.*⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ibid., with Calvin Racette.

⁹⁰ "Native teachers graduate," Regina *Leader-Post*, Ed Schroeter.

⁹¹ Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, July 16, 1984, "Getting a degree 'a lot of hard work,'" Ed Schroeter.

Section VI: Vocational, Adult Basic Education, Technical Programs and the Dumont Technical Institute

Of course, not everybody is inclined to university programs. Furthermore, many Métis people need educational upgrading in order to allow them to receive a post-secondary education. Other Métis people tend to gravitate towards technical or vocational programs. As a result, programs catering to these community needs were established. Initially, this meant developing relationships with federal employment agencies, but gradually a more enduring partnership developed between the Institute and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). These programs, with an emphasis on Native Studies, and intellectual, spiritual and emotional development, would ensure that Métis students would not only learn a trade or upgrade their education, but they also would become a group of thinking and community-minded activists, a group needed for self-government. This holistic approach to learning separated these early vocational, Adult Basic Education, and technical programs from their non-Aboriginal counterparts in the SIAST and community college system.

The early mandate of these programs was to make:

*(A) variety of vocational education and technical training opportunities more accessible to Métis students; delivering training in a culturally sensitive environment; providing all Métis students access to courses relevant to the history and social/cultural development of the Métis Nation; to delivering a high quality of vocational and technical training to Métis students; and ensuring students graduate with academic and personal qualifications which will enhance their entry into the appropriate labour market.*⁹²

And:

*The approach taken considers the spiritual, mental, physical, social and economic factors of the citizen's life, from early childhood to senior years. This integrative approach seeks to develop a strategy to gain, manage and sustain control over the services which affect their lives.*⁹³

Once these programs were established and as the number of Métis graduates of these programs increased, the process leading to Métis self-government would only be enhanced.

For self-government to be successful there must be a cadre of trained bureaucrats...to implement the policies and programs of self-governing institutions..."We are advocating an inclusive and positive action oriented and realistic process that is community-based. Under this model, control and

⁹² *Métis Employment Equity Development Plan: Final Report*, Community-Based Programs and Services Summary, December 1993, Dumont Technical Institute, p. 15-16.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

*decision-making power rests in the community. There is a major role for non-Métis people, however, in the area of technical, political and economic support and participation.*⁹⁴

This program also had a Native Studies component, as part of the Institute's holistic approach to education, to complement the more technical aspects of the curriculum.

*Native Studies and Applied Research essentially means allowing students of Native ancestry to access education, while at the same time helping them learn more about their culture. This program supports our beliefs that we can be successful, productive members of our communities while gaining and/or maintaining a certain pride in our cultural community.*⁹⁵

In 1994, this process to develop Adult Basic Education (ABE) technical and vocational programs for Saskatchewan's Métis people culminated in the creation of the Dumont Technical Institute (DTI). DTI took over all of GDI's Native Studies Division – SIAST, technical, vocational, and ABE programming and combined them in one administrative structure. DTI became an affiliate of SIAST at its inception. Even before DTI was founded, GDI strived to ensure that the province's Métis community would have its technical, vocational and ABE needs met. This meant the development of a decentralized structure with programs strewn in centres throughout Saskatchewan. Most of these programs are short-term and often there is a high frequency of particular programs in certain communities. For instance, the Native Human Justice Program was located in Prince Albert and ABE upgrading or pre-nursing courses would be offered in small Métis communities such as Buffalo Narrows. Since the late 1990s, DTI has been the largest affiliate of GDI. DTI's goal, like GDI's over-all goal, has been to educate a cadre of Métis people for self-government.

*The Dumont Technical Institute (DTI)...will develop and deliver, in collaboration with the Métis communities and other Métis self-governed structures, those courses which are deemed essential for the goals of Métis self-government and the development of strong and independent individuals and communities.*⁹⁶

*Dumont Technical Institute's purpose...(through ABE, vocational and technical training)...is to provide Métis students with a high quality of vocational and technical training which will prepare them to pursue employment and career goals on an equitable basis with other citizens in Saskatchewan...*⁹⁷

⁹⁴ 1993 Annual Report, p. 6.

⁹⁵ GDI Newsletter, VOL. 2, NO. 1, May 1988, Joan Dagdick and Gizelle Marcotte, co-editors, Report from La Ronge, p. 6.

⁹⁶ *Towards Self-Government: A Mandate for the Nineties*, p. 11.

⁹⁷ *Métis Employment Equity Development Plan: Final Report*, p. 5.

Prior to DTI's founding, GDI had already adhered to this mandate. In 1984, with the opening of a farm mechanics program in Melfort, Saskatchewan, Dona Desmarais, a GDI Board member, indicated that students entering this program were about to make a large step towards improving their lives:

*You are training to be competitive in the market place and training for real jobs...You also have a voice in the direction the program takes and a voice and some control over your lives. You can learn to change your lives around.*⁹⁸

DTI was meeting these same objectives in the late 1990s:

*We are mandated to serve the adult educational needs of the Métis people in Saskatchewan. Most of the ABE programming is offered through the Community Colleges and SIAST Institutes, but in the future we are looking at offering the programs ourselves.*⁹⁹

*We looked at the lack of success Métis people have in the regular school system and asked what could be done about it. We realized that it was not just enough to have programs delivered by Aboriginal people. It was necessary to adapt the curricula to make it culturally relevant. So, we bring in cultural programming whenever we can. It is an integral part of the courses that are offered...We are really an information broker. We play a key role in information distribution. We have curriculums (sic) from the university level to children's material.*¹⁰⁰

Contributors to GDI newsletters often wrote about various DTI, ABE or vocational programs. For instance, for the Native Forestry Worker Program, one student was praiseworthy of his work practicum:

*One unique aspect of this program is the practical element. We learn to test our forestry skills in the bush. Accompanied by our instructors, we operate and maintain small engines, chain saws and thinning saws. Attending field camp was an exciting learning experience for us all. While in camp we were required to spend the night in the bush to test our survival skills.*¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Dec. 12, 1984, *The Melfort Journal*, Carol Pollock, "Gabriel Dumont Institute: Official Opening." Regarding the Agricultural Mechanics Course, Dona Desmarais, then Chairperson of the GDI management board, was happy that the program in Melfort was truly provincial.

⁹⁹ Wednesday May 21, 1997, Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, interview with DTI principal Peter McKay.

¹⁰⁰ Wednesday May 21, 1997, Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, interview with Michael Relland, GDI Program Coordinator.

¹⁰¹ GDI Newsletter, VOL. 2, NO. 1, May 1988, Joan Dagdick and Gizelle Marcotte, co-editors, Report From La Ronge Radio/TV Electronics Program report by Rick Flamont, p. 6.

Section VII: The Gabriel Dumont Institute as Social Justice Advocate

The Gabriel Dumont Institute is not only an educational organization, it is also a social justice advocate for the Métis people. From the beginning, GDI has written various reports highlighting the living conditions of the province's Métis people to various levels of government. Obviously developing programs, collecting resources and writing Métis-specific curriculum only went so far in erasing the litany of negatives plaguing Métis society. Systematic racism towards Aboriginal people, economic under development, social ostracism, high rates of incarceration and low levels of academic achievement within Métis society had to be addressed. The Institute was the perfect vehicle to represent the Métis community in dealings with government officials and bureaucrats. GDI's Research Department conducted the research necessary to write these reports, and offered solutions, through the development of timely programs, which address the socioeconomic causes leading to high rates of Aboriginal poverty and incarceration.

One of these was programs was the Community Training Residence Program (CTR), which was a means to reintegrate female offenders back into the community at the conclusion of their sentences. Its mandate was to address those mitigating factors which lead some Aboriginal women to offend. By emphasizing the development of the offenders' spiritual, emotional and intellectual growth, it was hoped that these women would gain better acceptance of themselves and would live a healthier lifestyle. This would serve to assist the women with their reintegration in society. GDI's Native Human Justice graduates often obtained practical work experience in this program.

CTR came into existence as a partnership:

*The Gabriel Dumont Institute Community Training Residence (CTR) Inc., signed a contract with SK Justice and the Solicitor General of Canada to provide education, training, supervising, counselling and residential services to female offenders. The last bit of their sentences were to be served in this half way house.*¹⁰²

Its official mandate was:

*(t)o facilitate the successful transition of female offenders back into society by providing a safe environment and supportive program designed to promote and re-establish independence, self-respect, the renewal of family ties and the acquisition of productive skills.*¹⁰³

¹⁰² 1990 Annual Report, "Native Human Justice Services, "Community Training Residence Inc." p. 14.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Each client was considered unique, was to be provided with the means for their self-improvement using community resources to support these women and their families, and it tried to create a positive environment for inmates.¹⁰⁴ There were a number of program goals for this project:

*CTR opened on November 15, 1987, with 64 women staying at the residence...CTR was created in order to give housing, education and training, counselling and supervisory services to minimum security offenders. The program tried to deal with a number of problems in women's life; much emphasis was placed on positive and healthy lifestyle.*¹⁰⁵

*To assess each new client as a unique individual and to devise, in consultation with that client, a CTR Plan and a Post Release Plan...(T)o provide opportunities for education, training, employment and treatment according to individual needs and desires; to promote knowledge of community resources appropriate to the needs of the women and their families; to provide on-going opportunities for learning and practising responsible behaviour including the provision of identifiable role models; to encourage the establishment of positive and supportive ties with the client's family, friends and chosen release community.*¹⁰⁶

GDI believed that its CTR program offered female offenders a chance to reintegrate into society, without the fear of re-offending. The Métis community itself would provide healing for these women and their families.

*The CTR offers the women a very low security place to go so they can re-enter society with a stronger base. Through the CTR, women offenders can access counselling focusing on personal, educational, health related or job related issues. During their stay, residents have the option of going to school, participating in classes offered at the residence or working on the outside. Another advantage to the CTR is that children and family members are encouraged to visit. The CTR experience allows the resident a period of adjustment where they can make the necessary preparations for their return to their community.*¹⁰⁷

*The new fourteen bed facility provides residential, counselling and support services such as alcohol and drug treatment, education, training and employment to women who are serving sentences such as alcohol and drug treatment, education, training and employment to women who are serving sentences under provincial jurisdiction.*¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ File Folder #29, "GDI Strategic Planning," August 1990. Document: "Strategic Planning Exercise to Be Completed by All Directors and Coordinators, p. 2-5.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ 1991 Annual Report, p. 23.

Only by reaffirming traditional values with individual self-respect and respect for their culture could Aboriginal inmates escape the vagaries of the Canadian Criminal Justice System. Clearly, the criminal justice system had failed Canada's Indigenous people. GDI, like numerous other Aboriginal organizations, was bent on changing this course of events. Unfortunately, this program lasted for only a few years. Government retrenching made funding for it increasingly difficult. Nevertheless, the guiding principles for the CTR program were in place well before the program was actually implemented. GDI had long advocated for changes to the Canadian criminal justice system, which would meet the specific needs of Aboriginal inmates. The concept of inmate healing, through the use of Native spiritualism, was advocated by the Institute as a means of easing an Aboriginal offender's stay in prison.

*For thousands of years before the coming of Europeans the Indian peoples of this continent practised and still continue to practise sweat lodge ceremonies. The sweat is for religious and spiritual purposes. By this religious rite such a program will assist those Native inmates who practise there (sic) religious beliefs to continue to do so. It will aid in bringing into focus valuable knowledge to those Native inmates unaware of their Native culture...The specific objective is to enhance the spiritual needs for the betterment and rehabilitative stature for the Native inmates at Saskatchewan Penitentiary. The religious rite of a sweat lodge ceremony can be equated with similar rites of the Christian churches, i.e. communion, confirmation or praying for the forgiveness of sins etc.*¹⁰⁹

It was also hoped that Aboriginal-specific programs delivered within prisons would positively alter Canada's troubled justice system. "The Métis' struggle for control of our destiny has never been stronger than it is today. Specifically, we are committed and determined to achieve a non-racist, non-discriminatory, culturally-relevant justice system."¹¹⁰

Within the justice system, particularly in prisons, the Institute wanted to develop cross-cultural education programs in order to curb racism within the offending population and among staff. It was an onerous task, but one which the Institute felt that it was well-suited to deliver.

It's important to remember, too, cross-cultural training cannot be taught or learned overnight. It is not an isolated event or a one-day workshop – it's a lifelong learning process. As well, cross-cultural training should be delivered by experts – by specially qualified Aboriginal people rather than staff currently inside the justice system. Above all, if we really want to eliminate

¹⁰⁹ Curriculum Report Meeting, p. 65.

¹¹⁰ Sweat Lodge Proposal to Saskatchewan Penitentiary, May 14, 1985, prepared by Beverly Cardinal, Timothy Pyrch and Dennis Shatilla.

*racism and intolerance, comprehensive cross-cultural training has got to start right now.*¹¹¹

*From traditional to modern times, children are the most revered resource in the Métis community. Unfortunately, life has not always allowed Métis families to remain together. Circumstances such as poverty, underemployment, ill health and other stressful events have left a legacy of child welfare issues, which the Métis community is grappling with today.*¹¹²

The Institute argued that only through education and the amelioration of social conditions among Métis people, could the high rate of incarceration of Métis and other Aboriginal people be reversed. Education would not only increase the self-esteem of "at-risk" offenders, it would, at the same time, dispel much of the prejudice directed towards Aboriginal people from the non-Aboriginal community. Moreover, a holistic approach to make Métis individuals, families and communities healthier and positive was needed. Once these culturally-affirming and positive lifestyles were embraced, Métis communities would become self-governing and self-reliant entities. "...We must take the next step and recognize the value of having Métis people in the front lines of combating one of the most insidious, vicious and destructive social ills afflicting Saskatchewan society: racism."¹¹³

The breakdown of many families and communities also played a role in the high rates of incarceration of Métis people, which in turn led to hopelessness and addiction. For many Métis, a return to more traditional values along with a healthy understanding of today's society was also needed. GDI hoped that through this process, the criminal justice system would become more humane and more accountable to Aboriginal people.

*As we Métis move toward taking control of our destiny we must ensure that our children have every opportunity to be reared in safe and nurturing environments. The advancement and survival of the Métis people will be assured through children who grow up confident, educated, healthy and culturally rich. When all Métis families have the means and opportunity to rear their children in conditions favourable to enhancing and teaching Métis tradition and values and a holistic way of life, this goal will be achieved.*¹¹⁴

In traditional times Métis had specific roles within their families and community. Métis women were often the backbone of the family assuming responsibility in all areas of daily life. Métis men were the nominal head of the family unit, providing food and lodging. Grandparents were the role

¹¹¹ Presentation to the Métis Justice Department Conference.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Presentation notes, September 11, 1993 Isabelle Impey.

¹¹⁴ Discussion Document: Development of Regional Authorities, Métis Family and Community Justice Services, April 1, 1994, p. 2.

*models and teachers. Children learned by watching their elders and imitating them.*¹¹⁵

GDI has always maintained that the solutions to the social problems plaguing Métis communities are best addressed by the Métis people themselves. Not surprisingly, the Institute advocated for the creation of a wholly Métis education system. This new education system would use the community to literary "educate a child." Specifically, it meant encouraging young people to use the human resources in their communities, such as Elders, to learn more about the past, spiritualism and other aspects of Métis culture. Elders are a particular resource which would be utilised.

*The Métis population of Saskatchewan is a human resource that has been undervalued and underutilized for generations. The demographic, educational and socioeconomic profiles of the Métis population of Saskatchewan warrant for a more responsive system of education.*¹¹⁶

*(M)ajor advancements will also occur for the Métis people as we become economically self-sufficient through the development of our own resources and increased meaningful employment within mainstream society. We must nevertheless begin the process of finding solutions to the immense justice and social issues facing our people.*¹¹⁷

By giving Métis people more autonomy and through increased educational and professional opportunities, a better future for the Métis people would be ensured. This "good society" had to be constructed since the poverty of the past and present still existed; therefore the Métis people needed to overcome marginalization:

*Research supports the view that when Aboriginal peoples control their own programs more effective programs result. Community controlled, designed, initiated, developed and delivered programs are the most effective. A broad definition of community is needed to meet the needs of all Métis and Non-Status peoples. In the exercise of Métis government and our inherent rights to self-determination and equity, we embrace the goal of excellence in education. Our people will prepare, with confidence, for the challenges and opportunities of the future, through an educational system that is accessible, community oriented and technologically relevant. In the tradition of our ancestors, we will forge a new path while holding to the principals of cooperation and respect.*¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *Gender and Role: The Changing Face of the Métis Family*, July 22-23, 1994, Batoche, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ *Plans for Métis Education: From Vision and Direction for the Education and Training of the Métis People of Saskatchewan: A Discussion Paper*, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ *Discussion Document: Development of Regional Authorities, Métis Family and Community Justice Services*, April 1, 1994.

¹¹⁸ *Vision and Direction for the Education and Training of the Métis People of Saskatchewan: A Discussion Paper. Vision statement for Métis Education.*

And:

*We are advocating an inclusive and positive action oriented and realistic process that is community based. Under this model, control and decision-making power rests in the community. There is a major role for non-Métis people, in the areas of technical, political and economic support and participation.*¹¹⁹

And:

*Education should be a community-guided effort that builds upon strengths... it should be accountable to the Métis community...Regardless of jurisdictional considerations, the creation of an environment where Métis can enjoy equal education, social and economic opportunities will continue to be our top priority"...To compliment and strengthen the existing educational system with guidance, support and feedback on matters pertaining to the Métis and the promotion of Métis culture.*¹²⁰

*The Métis system of education will need to expand the role of the Gabriel Dumont Institute to heighten self-identity within the Métis population and to develop among our people an appreciation and understanding of historical, cultural and contemporary Métis issues. One of the most important outcomes of inter-cultural education will be a change in attitude about the value of the Métis culture and the importance of a culturally sensitive approach to education and training.*¹²¹

*(A) Métis education system was needed because the Métis...have a great deal of social suffering. The social costs associated with Aboriginal people's poor socioeconomic and low education attainment are pervasive...in Aboriginal communities, the alarming incidence of family violence, suicide, and incarceration may be attributed to poor employment opportunities and a lack of proper education and training...It is not enough to undertake a review of Métis education, training and employment. Given the continuing disparity of education, training and employment opportunities experienced by Métis today, it is imperative that real changes begin to occur.*¹²²

These programs were needed at the time because "No where does there appear to be a formalized acceptance of the right of Aboriginal peoples to

¹¹⁹ Presentation to the Métis Justice Department Conference.

¹²⁰ Vision and Direction for the Education and Training of the Métis People of Saskatchewan, p. 8-13.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Métis Women of Saskatchewan, Vision and Direction for the Education and Training of the Métis People of Saskatchewan: A Discussion Paper, p. 15 and 17.

control their own programs nor a commitment to affirmative action in the hiring policy for programs."¹²³

And:

*GDI programs are, for the most part, community-based. In essence, this means that courses leading to diplomas, normally attainable only by attending classes or campuses of universities and technical colleges, are offered in towns and urban centres across Saskatchewan. The programs so far selected are all connected in some way with the skills necessary for self-government.*¹²⁴

As if reporting the needs of the Métis community to government were not enough, the Institute had to dispel a great number of preconceived notions of Aboriginal culture from the larger society. Often, the Institute has had to demonstrate that, while obtaining formal education is necessary for the Métis people, it is also necessary for Métis people to remain true to Aboriginal knowledge and oral tradition. Since it used European and Aboriginal knowledge systems, GDI sometimes had to justify this practice to non-Aboriginal people:

*We must not confuse being non-literate with being illiterate and label our Elders as unknowing because they are unread...Aboriginal cultures are non-literate cultures. Aboriginal languages have been, for the most part, preserved as oral languages. What is important to be remembered, is said. The Elders were and still are among other things, the keepers of the spiritual knowledge, the historians, legal advisors, counsellors, tellers of tales, moral teachers, medical researchers, and guardians of corporate memory.*¹²⁵

Or:

*The programs are unique in that they offer classes in Native Studies and provide strong support services in counselling, tutoring and guidance. A supportive environment is fostered where students and teachers can work together when difficulties arise.*¹²⁶

The idea of employment equity has always been controversial. The Institute has always believed in this concept, and has presented papers before corporations and government agencies arguing that employment equity for Métis and other Aboriginal people actually strengthens society, not divides it.

¹²³ *Literacy for Métis and Non-Status Indian Peoples: A National Strategy*, p. 5.

¹²⁴ Métis Women in Saskatchewan: *A Presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, GDI 4, 2.1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹²⁶ *Career Candidates 86: Early Childhood Development*, p. 2.

*The Métis people recognising that education and secure employment is vital to the goal of self-government is working on developing an Employment Equity Development Plan. The primary concern is that well-qualified Métis people be employed in direct proportion to the number of Métis served by the employer.*¹²⁷

*No where does there appear to be a formalized acceptance of the right of Aboriginal peoples to control their own programs nor a commitment to Affirmative Action in the hiring policy for programs.*¹²⁸

In the 1990s, government fiscal retrenching had a great impact upon GDI. Needless to say, the Institute often had a difficult time trying to maintain or increase its core grant from the provincial government. Like other educational organizations across Canada, GDI was expected to do more with less. This caused serious problems when GDI attempted to implement programs. GDI has consistently sought to increase its core budget from the provincial government, and it has sought to raise its financing through fund-raising. In the end, the Institute could only describe this frustration to the community and hope that government funding would be more forthcoming.

*Recently, the institute has endured some hardships due to delays in funding from provincial and federal government sources. The process the Institute must engage in to provide services to our people ensures that we will always incur a deficit. What happens is that the institute begins delivery of education programs before the money arrives. After we pay the expenses, GDI sends invoices to the government for those expanses...which sometimes runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. We must then wait for the money to arrive and we are, therefore, always running a deficit. When governments delay refunding us (we have been forced to wait sometimes for up to four months), we are placed in a serious situation which makes it difficult for the institute to meet payroll and pay other creditors.*¹²⁹

Section VII: Student and Staff Reflections

GDI has always encouraged its staff and students to be creative. In particular, students were encouraged to contribute poetry and other forms of creative writing for GDI newsletters and other forums. Much of the prose and poetry by Métis students and staff was based on personal reflection on what it was like to be Aboriginal.

In this instance, a GDI student discusses the healing process:

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Report on GDI, July 1994.

*Acceptance is saying it's right /your future can be bright/ to help you to be happy/ instead of always snappy.
Acceptance is letting go/because it helps you grow/not thinking about the sorrow/but living for tomorrow.
Acceptance is forgiveness/not minding others business/because if you give into pain/ it will always come again.
Acceptance is remembering/the joy you used to bring/but now I can accept today/I need to live life, my way.¹³⁰*

The healing process, for some, involved coming to terms with one's Aboriginal heritage:

*I am Native and alone,
Knowing I am one at home.
To understand why I am this way
You are born native will always be
A person of ancestry, happy and free...¹³¹*

Healing also involved embracing traditional spiritualism:

*O Great Spirit forgive me for what I done in the past
Teach me to forgive my brothers and sisters
Help me to grow old and wise so I can teach
my children the right or wrong way to do things
So when I die let my soul go to the eternal resting
place where my forefathers told me in my dreams
So when I cry let my tears cleanse the souls of
my brothers and sisters
Let me cry a thousand tears
Let me show love to someone who will show love to me
Let this world die from all the hate and hurting
that's going on
Let the world thrive on one thing everyone can
feel in their hearts: "LOVE."¹³²*

Or an interest in life's journey was reflected upon:

*To improve one's aspects and goals in time/A person needs a chance in fulfilment of mind/To realize his or her objectives in academics of life/
Evaluating what one must do/Is hoping your dreams and aspirations come true to do.../The days here are fun days/We have group discussions/Share one another's thoughts and ideas/Share what each of us had done*

¹³⁰ July 1988 Newsletter, 12, Poetry Corner, "Acceptance," by Darlene Delorme.

¹³¹ "Native and Alone," Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue No. 3, November 1988.

¹³² Lorne St. Pierre, "Oh Great Spirit," by Dean Kequahtoway, Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue No. 3, November 1988, p. 8.

*throughout the day, this is what is called a circle check/There are twelve students who participate each day/This is only part of what is done.*¹³³

Or:

*In the seasons there is change,
within the rippling waters a current sleeps...
early morning shadows bring to
me a stillness, for behind the darkness comes
forth the light...
there is change...
Shimmering comes the star, dreaming peacefully
my family sleeps...
A warrior, a struggler of life,
a young man, an old man, he as his grandfather
before him rides a painted mare, he feels the distance...
there is change...
A child, an instrument of love,
a free-giving soul, a pure heart...
One with nature, his laughter,
her tears, her laughter, his tears, a river
of learning they must do...
changes...*¹³⁴

At other times, students would write about the people who were sources of great strength in their lives:

*My father's name is Amos and he is seventy-six years old. He is still trapping and hunting. He hates the fact that he was forced to retire from his job of fire-fighting. He is a special man; a unique person because he raised me, my brothers and my sisters all alone. My dad never received a formal education but it did not stop him from encouraging us to continue with ours. Six out of ten children in my family have graduated from grade twelve and the rest have some high-school education.*¹³⁵

GDI students and staff were also encouraged to write about issues which affected them as Aboriginal people, specifically prejudice in the education and justice systems. Lynne Daniels, a GDI student, was particularly interested in analysing the sociological underpinnings of racism:

The concept of ethnocentrism...charts the various stages members of minority groups move through in growing to accept their own culture and

¹³³ Ibid., p. 11, by Vera Wohporehjan and Lorna St. Pierre.

¹³⁴ Poetry Corner, "Changes," by George M. Awasis, Human Justice student, Prince Albert, Gabriel Dumont Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue No. 3, November 1988, p. 16.

¹³⁵ GDI Newsletter, VOL. 2, NO 1, May 1988, Joan Dagdick and Gizelle Marcotte, co-editors, "My Father," by Caroline Ratte, p. 15.

that of the majority group... (M)any minority group members start out with no real sense of identify (sic). At the lowest level of the ethnocentric scale minority group members believe all the stereotypes about their culture, and as a consequence reject that culture and try to become assimilated by the white community. This process goes in stages where people begin to believe that their own culture is superior and that all the stereotypes are wrong, then the student will begin to critically assess all cultures. The final stage is bi-ethnicity where a person can live in both cultures. The ultimate goal is to become multi-ethnic. Students who belong to a majority culture have much more support from their family and from society in general to get to that ethnocentric level.

Daniels argued further that "The values of traditional Indian culture are more of cooperating and getting along with people...The things that they...are learning in school are not relevant to their culture."¹³⁶

Win Sebelius, a GDI staff member, analysed how the country's various education systems failed to accurately portray Aboriginal people:

*Education in Canada is firmly entrenched in Eurocentric beliefs. Schools, their environment, and the materials used, play an important role in how students perceive themselves. Institutional racism existing in the current structure undermines many students' self-esteem and leads to their failure. Educators must critically analyse the authenticity of the materials they use, and teach their students to do the same. Once critical thinking skills have been taught, they must be nurtured and encouraged to grow. Teachers must play a leading role in changing some of the attitudes that society has towards other cultural groups.*¹³⁷

Colonialism also left GDI students with an appreciation for the family and extended family as the centre of Aboriginal history and culture. This was a sharp departure from Eurocentric history, which traditionally focused on the "great" men.

*WE MUST DEFINE OURSELVES BASED ON OUR OWN UNDERSTANDINGS OF OUR FAMILY HISTORIES. It is extremely important to also remember that if we deny a part of our history, we disrespect and dishonour that part of our family. As a Métis and an Anishanabe, I find it very frustrating at times because our own peoples strongly encourage us to choose between our parents.*¹³⁸

Indeed, the pressure to conform and to assume one specific identity has always been a concern for Métis people. Such self-confidence of their

¹³⁶ "Native students may experience stages of ethnocentricity," *The Bulletin*, November 25, 1983. The story is the experiences of Lynne Daniels.

¹³⁷ *Education in Literature*, by Win Sebelius.

¹³⁸ *The Dumont Connection*, Premier Issue, 1985, p. 18-19.

ancestors' struggles indicates that early GDI students and staff were still searching to mould their identity.

*Ever wonder what really caused the rebellion? Did you know Gabriel Dumont was probably the greatest hero Canada ever produced? Did you know the Métis struggle for human rights and right of a people to survive with dignity is one of the proudest stories in Canadian history?*¹³⁹

GDI HISTORY CHRONOLOGY

1976-1980 - Initial preparation for the founding of the institute

1980-1985 - Implementation of initial programs

1985-1993 - Development of first phase of program expansion

1992-1994 - Period of retrenching at the Institute

1995-2000 - The Institute's renaissance

1980-1987 - Cultural Programming was implemented

1987-1992 - Expansion of programs

This Chronology includes:

- GDI's publications and reports to government
- the implementation dates for various GDI programs
- outside factors in society and government structure that had an impact on the Institute
- relationships with the MSS and the MNS
- events of importance in Métis society
- all cultural conferences and other public events

A Chronology of the Gabriel Dumont Institute

1976 A Métis cultural conference is held after extensive lobbying by the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS). Once the delegates were assembled, active planning for a Métis and Non-Status Indian educational institute began in earnest.

1976-1980 All levels of government are lobbied for funding for the creation of the Gabriel Dumont Insitute (GDI).

1980, January 21 GDI comes into formal existence in a formal signing ceremony with the Saskatchewan Department of Continuing Education.

1980, June 1 The Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) begins operations.

1980, June 8 The Key Lake Inquiry meeting is held at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

1980, July 30 SUNTEP is formally launched.

1980, August 16 The official declaration of Métis rights is released.

1980, October 27 GDI is granted official status by the provincial government during opening ceremony.

1980 GDI's first cultural conference is held.

1981 to 1982 The Training on the Job Program is launched.

1981, January 30 The Métis are recognized as an Aboriginal people when the Constitution is repatriated.

1981, September 14 SUNTEP classes begin in Prince Albert Centre.

1982 Federally-funded Preparatory Credit Skills Training and University Program is initiated.

1982, January A Cultural Conference is held at Prince Albert.

1982, January 28 The SUNTEP Centre in Prince Albert is opened.

1982, February 23 Aboriginal People at La Loche discuss strategies for economic development.

1982, June Conservative MPs vote against granting Louis Riel a posthumous pardon.

1982, November A cultural conference is held in Saskatoon.

1983, March 16 A constitutional conference is held to identify and define Aboriginal rights.

1983, March 17 Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announces the establishment of the Office of Aboriginal Constitutional Affairs.

1983, April 19 SANLG holds a press conference and calls for a public inquiry into Cluff Lake, Phase 2.

1983, April 29 Parliament approves an accord which recognizes certain Aboriginal rights.

1983, August 22 Human Resource Development Programs begin in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Lloydminster.

1983, August 23 The Recreation Technology Program begins in Regina.

1983, August 29 The South East Métis Local protests funding cuts to Kapachee Centre at the Saskatchewan Legislative Building.

1983, August 31 A gathering is held in Regina which discusses the impact of Non-Status Indian and Métis funding being removed from AECs.

1983, September 7 STEP classes begin.

1983, December 13 GDI relocates its main office to 121 Broadway Avenue East in Regina.

1984, March 8 The federal government introduces Bill C-31 in order to grant "Indian" status to many disenfranchised Aboriginal people. Many Métis people become Status Indians as a result.

1984, March 9 A First Minister's constitutional conference is held without Aboriginal consultation.

1984, March 13 The Aboriginal community proposes to create a K-12 Aboriginal school in Regina.

1984, April 1 The Native Elders Program begins at the Prince Albert Penitentiary.

1984, April 27 The first SUNTEP graduation is held at the Saskatoon Centre.

1984, June 16 The first Regina SUNTEP graduation is held.

1984, October 9 Early Childhood Development Program begins at Saskatoon and Buffalo Narrows.

1984, October 29 The Farm Machinery Mechanics Program begins at Melfort.

1985 The GDI report "Seventh Direction" is released.

1985 The Napoleon Lafontaine Economic Development Scholarship was initiated.

1985, January 8 Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum Advisory Committee holds its first meeting. This meeting had a great impact on the development of curriculum writing, particularly at GDI.

1985, February 3 The Radio Television and Electronics Program begins, and concludes on March 10, 1987.

1985, February 4 The GDI publication, *A Métis Wedding*, is released.

1985, March 2 The GDI publication, *The Skirmish at Seven Oaks*, is released.

1985, March 5 The GDI publication, *Métis Crafts: Quill and Beadwork Earrings Kit*, is released.

1985, March 12 The GDI film strip, *Gabriel Dumont: Métis Legend*, is released.

1985, March 21 The Radio Television and Electronics Program begins at Esterhazy.

1985, April 4 Métis Crafts: Finger Weaving Kit is released.

1985, May The Early Childhood Development Program begins in Saskatoon and Buffalo Narrows.

1985, May The Business Administration Program begins at Fort Qu'Appelle.

1985, June 3 The Alberta government transfers control of the Métis settlements to the province's Métis people.

1985, June 5 A constitutional conference is held and Prime Minister Mulroney agrees to discuss land claims with the Métis.

1985, June 11 The GDI publication, *Métis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?*, is released.

1985, July 9 A gathering is held at Batoche to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the North West Resistance.

1985, July 31 The GDI publication, *The Red River Insurgence*, is released.

1985, July 28 The GDI publication, *The North West Resistance of 1885*, is released.

1985, August The Native Management Training Program starts in Prince Albert, and concludes in November 1988.

1985, September 5 The GDI Social Work Program begins at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and concludes on April 30, 1987.

1985, November 5 The constitutional conference held by Canada's First Ministers abandons its commitment to Aboriginal rights.

1985, November 29 A meeting of AMNSIS is held in order to determine if a split between the Métis and Non-Status Indian membership would be more

beneficial to each group's move toward recognition and self-government. The membership decides to stay together.

1985, December 9 The Senior Citizens Provincial Council meets with a minister regarding the social plight of Aboriginal Elders.

1985, December 20 The GDI publication, *Louis Riel*, is released.

1986 Three Human Resource Development Programs begin in late 1986 in Meadow Lake, Cumberland House and Archerwill. The Saskatchewan Training for Employment Program, an agreement between GDI and SIAST begins. Four preparatory programs begin in Meadow Lake, Cumberland House, Archerwill, and Buffalo Narrows. Other programs in 1986 include the Radio, Television and Electronics Program and Programs for employment with affiliation with the Canadian Jobs Strategy in Yorkton, Regina, Ile-a-la-Crosse and Esterhazy.

1986, January 20 Community consultations are held at Prince Albert regarding land claims and self-government.

1986, February 21 The GDI poster, *Our Children: Our Future*, is released.

1986, February 26 The GDI study print series, *The Métis: Two Worlds Meet*, is released.

1986, March 24 The GDI publication, *Buffalo Hunt*, is released.

1986, April 23 The GDI publication, *The Métis Development in the Canadian West Series*, is released.

1986, August 18 The Lebret Métis farm is returned to the Métis people by the Saskatchewan government.

1986, September 15 The Gabriel Dumont Institute Scholarship Foundation is established.

1986, November The Native Social Work Program begins in Meadow Lake, and concludes on July 1988.

1986, November 3 The Science Skill Development Program, or Health Services Preparatory Program, begins at Buffalo Narrows, and concludes on March 31, 1997.

1986, November 15 The second intake for the Business Administration Program begins at Fort Qu'Appelle, and concludes on August 19, 1988.

1986, November 18 The Pre-Social Work Program begins at Cumberland House and Archerwill, and concludes August 1988.

1986, November 19 The Early Childhood Development Program begins in Saskatoon, and concludes on August 19, 1988.

1986, November 25 MEDFO begins operation with \$3.6 million in start up capital from NEDD or NEPP?

1987 The Institute arranges for co-management of the Native Studies Division within the SIAST system. The institute also signs an agreement with the federal government known as the Canadian Jobs Strategy Access Program. Other programs include Academic 12 Upgrading in Regina, the Native Social Work Program at Meadow Lake, handicraft Training at Archerwill, and Cabinet making.

1987, February 1 The seventh annual GDI Cultural Conference is held in Saskatoon.

1987, February 13 The second intake of the pre-forestry Program begins at La Loche.

1987, February 17 The *Look and Listen* poster is released.

1987, March 27 The Meech Lake Process completely shuts out Aboriginal concerns.

1987, April 7 The Saskatchewan Minister of Justice terminates the Native Court Workers' Program.

1987, May 14 MEDFO and SNEDCO are officially opened in Regina.

1987, May 23 The GDI publication, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, is released.

1987, June 15 The Job Readiness Training Program begins at Yorkton.

1987, July 2 The Academic XII Program begins at Yorkton.

1987, July 11 The GDI publication, *Fifty Historical Vignettes*, is released.

1987, July 13 The Pre-Nursing Program (Community Health Workers) begins in Ile-a-la-Crosse.

1987, July 23 The Métis Society of Saskatchewan is born and AMNSIS is abandoned; Non-Status Indians were left out of the new Métis organization.

1987, September The Native Human Justice Program begins in Prince Albert, and concludes in May 1989.

1987, October 1 The GDI publication, *Learning To Speak, Read and Write Cree*, is released.

1987, October 12 The GDI publication, *Atlas of Aboriginal Settlement*, is released.

1987, October 15 The first intake of the Human Justice Program occurs at Prince Albert.

1987, October 17 The GDI publication, *Home From the Hill*, is released.

1987, October 22 The GDI publication, *Flags of the Métis*, is released.

1987, October 24 The second intake of The Radio, Television and Electronics Program begins at Esterhazy.

1987, November 23 A contract between GDI and SIAST creates the Native Services Division.

1987, November 29 The Business Management Program begins in Regina and Prince Albert and lasts until July 1988.

1988 A zero funding increase comes from the Core Budget is announced.

1988, January The Pre-Management Training Program begins at La Loche and lasts until July 1988.

1988, January 11 The Probusiness Program begins at La Loche.

1988, January 12 The Pre-Forestry Program begins at La Ronge.

1988, February 28 The Community Development Training Program begins at Archerwill and continues to the end of the year.

1988, March 28 The Business Administration Program begins at Buffalo Narrows and concludes in February 1989.

1988, April The Business Administration Program at Buffalo Narrows starts and concludes in February.

1988, April 28 The Job Readiness Training Program begins in Moose Jaw.

1988, May 26 GDI sponsors a Conference on Aboriginal People and the Justice System.

1988, May 27 GDI purchases a building in Prince Albert for its operations there.

1988, July The Pre-Nursing Program concludes at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

1988, July 16 The opening day of the first annual Lebret Métis Heritage Days occurs.

1988, August 20 A court-ordered referendum vote, which would determine the political structure of the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, is held. Saskatchewan's Métis people vote in favour of a political split with the province's Non-Status community.

1988, September 2 The second intake of the Human Justice Program begins in Prince Albert.

1988, September 8 The GDI Board reaffirms its commitment to both Métis and Non-Status Indian clientele.

1988, October 7 A provincial court rules in favour of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan as a recognized political structure.

1988, November The Native Business Management Program begins in Saskatoon and concludes in October 1989.

1988, November 6 The Native Business Management Program begins in Saskatoon, and runs until October 1989.

1988, November 30 The Saskatchewan government announces the sale of its Métis farms at Green Lake and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

1988, December 4 The GDI poster, *Keep Your Spirit Free*, is released.

1988, December 11 The Métis Society of Saskatchewan holds its first annual assembly in Saskatoon.

1989 The Institute begins publishing the *Journal of Indigenous Studies* and Saskatchewan Justice and GDI create the first Community Training Residence (CTR) for female offenders in Saskatchewan.

1989, January 6 The first Métis Society of Saskatchewan annual assembly is held.

1989, January 9 The Pre-nursing Training Program begins at SIAST, Wascana Campus in Regina, and lasts until August 18, 1989.

1989, January 14 The Job Readiness Training Program graduates 12 students.

1989, January 16 The Pre-Health Program begins in Regina.

1989, January 17 The Pre-RCMP Program begins at Fort Qu'Appelle.

1989, January 28 The Radio Television Electronics Training Program in Esterhazy ends.

1989, February The Early Childhood Development Program begins in Prince Albert.

1989, February The Pre-Forestry Technician Program starts, and ends in August 1989.

1989, May 1 The Native Management Studies Program begins in Regina, and the students graduate in June 1991.

1989, May The Forestry Technician Program begins in Buffalo Narrows.

1989, May 11 CTR for women offenders begins in Saskatoon.

1989, May 15 The Pre-Chemical Dependency Program begins at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

1989, May 16 The Pre-Forestry Program, with 20 students, begins at Prince Albert, and concludes in the Spring of 1990.

1989, May 26 The GDI report *Native Women in the Work Place: Job Re-entry Program* is released. The report is a funding proposal presented to the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Social Assistance Recipient Training Program.

1989, July 17, The Pre-Management Program begins at Cumberland House, and is completed in February 1991.

1989, August 1 The GDI traditional dancing video, *Steps In Time*, is released.

1989, August 12 Thirteen students complete their studies for JRTP (?) in Yorkton.

1989, August 28 The third intake of the Human Justice Program begins at North Battleford.

1989, Fall A full-time Native Services Counsellor is assigned to the Wascana Campus of SIAST in Regina.

1989, September The Native Human Justice Program starts in Prince Albert; its first class graduated on May 14, 1989.

1989, September Nineteen students enrol in the High School Completion Program at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

1989, 25 September The Business Administration Program is initiated in North Battleford.

1989, October 1 The 0-5 Basic Literacy Program begins and lasts until June 30, 1990.

1989, November 15 CTR opens its residence in Saskatoon for female offenders.

1992, February 1 The GDI report, *Towards Self-Government: A Mandate For the Nineties*, is released.

1993 The Métis Employment Equity Development Program begins.

1993, 28-30, January The 13th annual GDI Cultural Conference is held.

1994 The Dumont Technical Institute begins operations.

1994, January The GDI report, *Vision and Direction for the Education and Training of the Métis People of Saskatchewan*, is released.

1997, September 2 GDI holds a book launch in Prince Albert for its new book, *Remembrances: Interviews with Métis Veterans*.

1997-1998 The Métis Social Work Program is offered in North Battleford.