



# Métis Education Report

*A Special Report on Métis Education Prepared by the Métis National Council for the Summit on Aboriginal Education  
February 25, 2009*

*Ka tipaymishoyak: Tapitow aen notay kishkaytamuk!*



MÉTIS NATION -  
SASKATCHEWAN



*We are owners of our own destiny: We are always wanting to learn!*

## **MNC REPRESENTATIVE MESSAGE**

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It is my pleasure to present to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and the Summit on Aboriginal Education this special report on education on behalf of the Métis National Council (MNC). The Métis have long held that education is an imperative aspect of self determination. The right of self determination is guaranteed through international, national and provincial laws, policies and practices, and includes the right to determine how our children are raised; how our children are educated. The Métis Nation asserts this right based on the customs, traditions and practices of Métis people themselves.

In 2004, the CMEC declared Aboriginal education a priority that deserves targeted activity, including a strategic approach that involves all levels of government. Despite a number of gains in Aboriginal education, there remain many challenges. This report illustrates the particular and unique challenges faced by the Métis in seeking equitable education outcomes and suitable education experiences for our people.

Jurisdictional issues continue to be the number one obstacle to developing and implementing successful education policies and programs for the Métis. The Métis Nation believes that Métis governments/institutions have jurisdiction and responsibility to address the social and economic needs of our people, including current learning and education initiatives. Any further expansion of those services must be undertaken directly with representative and accountable Métis governments/institutions rather than on a pan-Aboriginal off-reserve basis. It is the longstanding position of the MNC that the federal government



has primary responsibility for Métis under s.91 (24) of the Constitution Act, 1867, and that both levels of government can and should use their spending powers to address the education needs of Métis people. The MNC believes a cooperative approach, through federal/provincial multilateral forums in social and education programming areas, is the most conducive way to make progress.

I look forward to participating in the CMEC Summit on Aboriginal Education, and to a lively and engaging dialogue with our education partners.

*Merci Cho,*

**Robert Doucette**

*President, Métis Nation—Saskatchewan.*

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The Métis National Council (MNC) represents the historic Métis Nation at the national and international levels and has developed a national position on Métis education. The Métis, as one of three Aboriginal peoples identified under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, hold certain rights under national and international laws, not the least of which is the right to self-determination, including the right to determine how our children are raised and educated.

The many ways that mainstream education has failed Métis people are well documented. From early childhood, through elementary and secondary schooling systems, and onto post-secondary and skills training and development programs, it is evident that the Métis have fared poorly in relation to outcome measures affecting other Canadians. The gap in education achievement rates affects all aspects of Métis peoples' lives, both individually and collectively. The Métis hold broad goals for education that include both cultural renewal and economic renewal. Indeed, for the Métis, culture is intrinsically bound to our educational endeavours and sense of self-determination.

This paper examines many of the challenges facing Métis education in Canada today. Challenges identified in this report are: Jurisdiction and Control; Economic and Social Disparity; Access and Integration; and Sustainability and Capacity Building. These issues are examined in the context of lifelong learning and education from early childhood through school age, transitions to post-secondary education, and transitions to the labour market and ongoing skills development.

The unresolved issue of jurisdiction and control is at the heart of the breakdown in Métis education. The MNC recognizes that the unresolved jurisdictional issue has been the single greatest impediment to progress in developing a modern set of institutions, programs and services to meet the needs of the Métis. It has been and remains the longstanding position of the MNC that the federal government has jurisdiction and responsibility with respect to the Métis Nation by virtue of section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. However, years of jurisdictional wrangling has meant that Métis concerns have not been dealt with effectively by either level of government. The MNC is prepared to proceed on a cooperative basis to ensure that the needs of Métis people are met through modern and efficient delivery structures that are respectful of the rights and interests of Métis people and their governing institutions. The Métis Nation asserts that distinct and targeted program and policy development must occur under a multilateral approach that respects Métis jurisdiction and control for Métis education rather than on a pan-Aboriginal off-reserve basis.

Other challenges facing Métis education include economic and social disparity including lower than average education and employment levels and resultant increases in poverty, poor health, inadequate housing, and other negative social indicators. Broad goals for Métis education take into account the link between educational achievement and economic potential. It is recognized that education is a significant tool for the Métis to escape economic and social marginalization. Access and integration are further challenges addressed in this report, specifically as they relate to early childhood education and daycare, the K-12 system, post-secondary support services, and on-going skills development. Access to all levels of the learning continuum is limited and is based largely again on the jurisdictional issue. For instance, in the area of early childhood development, it is beyond question that early childhood is now recognized as the most important developmental stage in the learning cycle. The large number of Métis children and the preponderance of poverty in Métis communities point to early childhood development programs as critical developmental measures. Métis have not shared equitably in the allocation of early childhood development resources that the federal government has transferred to the provinces through the Canada Social Transfer.



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Moreover, in early childhood learning, supports and resources for childcare have been limited to First Nations and Inuit, while excluding the Métis from these resources under the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS). The Métis are seeking the establishment of an integrated Métis early childhood development and childcare initiative using the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) platform as the basis for its program and service infrastructure. Building upon the successful Métis AHRDA infrastructure will provide the necessary aggregation of administrative capacity and maximize benefits for Métis children and families, promoting Métis culture, languages, values, and responsibility.

Similarly, the Métis have been excluded from the post-secondary supports and services otherwise provided for First Nations and Inuit learners, thus limiting university access and achievement rates for the Métis. The Métis seek to expand access by way of direct student support in the form of bursaries and through the expansion of current Métis post-secondary institutions. Furthermore, the tendency to include the Métis in programming that has a pan-Aboriginal or off-reserve approach has resulted in a relative dearth of Métis-specific data regarding successes and achievement rates. In turn this lack of information has led to a lack of accountability regarding access and outcomes for Métis, and has contributed to a general lack of understanding of the Métis population.

Finally, challenges of sustainability and capacity are addressed as they apply to all levels of Métis education—both informal and formal education and from early learning through the lifelong learning continuum. Despite a commitment in the Kelowna Accord (2005) to close the high school completion gap in a decade, no strategy accompanied that goal. The MNC asserts that the development of a national strategy to address the current crisis in Aboriginal education is a first and necessary step. Furthermore, there is a need to build capacity to collect Métis-specific data and develop and implement curricula and programming on this basis, and to implement accountability measures to the Métis Nation.

Métis are seeking greater participation in the K-12 school system to develop capacity to support the needs of Métis children at the elementary and secondary levels. Métis believe that this can be accomplished in part through

establishing specific Métis curriculum, developing Métis authorities, respecting and instilling Métis knowledge, values and skills, creating pedagogical environments that respect this authority, and developing the capacity of the Métis community to engage in long-term strategies and visions.

Métis provincial education commissions should be established to work with provincial education authorities and with public, separate, and private school boards to meet the needs of Métis children. To facilitate leading edge educational initiatives, Métis are seeking a Métis Education Active Measures Program that can be used to support innovative measures to improve the quality of Métis education and to achieve better educational outcomes. This will enable Métis to generate best practice models that can be applied more broadly where proven effective.

There is also a need to build on and develop existing capacity in Métis education. Successful programs and models exist and there are natural extensions that could be built on those programs. For instance, the development of Métis delivery sites for elementary (K-3) education is a natural extension of existing capacity in Métis teacher education such as the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) at the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI). Further to this, the SUNTEP program offers a model for Teacher Education Programs, and may help address the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) Aboriginal Education Action Plan long-term outcome measures for teachers.

The Métis also seek increased capacity development in post-secondary education and training. Métis people want and deserve opportunities to choose from and participate in a full range of educational options.

Despite the many challenges outlined in this report, the Métis have built a certain amount of capacity for Métis education development and delivery over the past thirty years. Examples include GDI in Saskatchewan, the Louis Riel Institute in Manitoba, and a national Métis delivery structure for employment and training programs and services under the AHRDAs. It is imperative that this capacity be recognized and built upon in future developments in Métis education.



The opportunity for Saskatchewan to host the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) Summit on Aboriginal Education provides the chance to highlight Métis education in the province by focusing on the pioneering example of the Gabriel Dumont Institute—the most established Métis educational and cultural institution in Canada. Saskatchewan provides the Summit with the opportunity to hear not only the challenges in Métis education from a national perspective, but also to observe the province's many achievements in this area.

The release of Statistics Canada's 2006 census data on Métis education achievement rates and unemployment rates brings increased attention and urgency to the need to address the disparity of education and employment outcomes for the Métis in comparison with non-Aboriginal Canadians. These census data show broad spectrum information such as that the Métis population is highly urbanized (69%), concentrated in the westernmost provinces and Ontario (87%), and one quarter (25%) of the Métis are children (Gionet, 2009, p.20).

Education data reveal that of Canadians aged 20 to 24, the Métis lag behind the non-Aboriginal high school completion rates by a nearly fifteen percent (15%) gap. Of those who have completed post-secondary education, the Métis are most likely to have obtained a college diploma or trades certificate. The percentage of Métis with a University degree is nine percent (9%) as compared to twenty-three percent (23%) of the non-Aboriginal population (Richards, 2008, p.4).

Nationally, unemployment rates for Métis adults are 8.4%; for those in the non-Aboriginal population, unemployment rates are 5.2% (Gionet, 2009, p.22). The 2006 census data show the Métis making gains in educational achievement rates and employment; however, the data also show that these rates are not keeping pace with increases among other Canadians. The gap in education levels between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is one of the major social policy challenges facing Canada. The 2005 Kelowna Accord proposed to close the high school completion gap within a decade, but it proposed no administrative reforms to achieve such a goal (Richards, 2008, p.i). The disparity in education and employment rates continues to lead to limited social and economic participation and benefits for the Métis.

### **1.1 THE MÉTIS**

In Canada, the Métis are one of three Aboriginal peoples identified under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When using the term Aboriginal it is important to understand that the word Aboriginal denotes distinct groups of people, including Métis, First Nations, and Inuit.

### **1.2 THE MÉTIS NATION**

The Métis National Council (MNC) represents the historic Métis Nation in Canada at the national and international level. At a regional level, the Métis Nation is represented through democratically-elected, province-wide Governing Members from Ontario westward who come together to form the Métis National Council. The Métis Nation's Homeland includes the three Prairie Provinces and extends into parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States.

### **1.3 BROAD GOALS FOR MÉTIS EDUCATION**

Mainstream education systems have failed the Métis on a number of fronts. They have not only failed to foster Métis cultural pride or identity, but high school completion rates continue to lag for Métis students in comparison to the non-Aboriginal population. Those who leave high school early are not able to fully participate in employment and the economy. As noted by the right-of-centre C.D. Howe Institute social policy report, *Closing the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal Education Gaps*, "Successful participation in the modern Canadian economy requires that Aboriginal education levels converge with non-Aboriginal levels. It is almost universally the case that low education levels condemn people to fail in a modern industrial economy" (Richards, 2008, p. 1).

Broad goals for Métis education include both economic and cultural renewal for the Métis. Education must prepare Métis people to fully participate in the economy of our communities and Canadian society. Education must also be holistic, develop Métis cultural competence, and foster Métis cultural pride and identity. It is incumbent upon federal and provincial governments to work multilaterally to develop and implement policies to address Métis goals for education.

#### **1.4 EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

For decades Aboriginal people have identified control over education as a pressing priority. Education is a vehicle for enhancing the life and opportunities of individuals as well as a means to achieve collective goals. Métis education represents the opportunity not only to achieve economic renewal but also cultural renewal. As the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), notes, the destiny of a people is intricately bound to the way its children are educated. “Education is the transmission of cultural dna (sic) from one generation to the next. It shapes the language and pathways of thinking, the contours of character and values, the social skills and creative potential of the individual” (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Part 5, Education).

Since the development of Métis-directed education, this understanding of the importance of perpetuating Métis culture has been evident for the Métis and is no less relevant today. Métis children and youth must engage in education that prepares them to be Métis citizens, “linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nation. Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity” (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1996, Part 5, Education). Métis education must focus on more than simply replicating the status quo. Métis education must be firmly grounded in Métis culture as a best practice to ensure success and instil cultural pride and perpetuity.

Furthermore, the importance of educating the non-Métis population about the Métis cannot be underestimated. It is imperative that all Canadians have the opportunity to learn about Métis culture, history, and aspirations. Broad-based development and application of learning materials, curriculum, and pedagogical approaches that reflect Métis culture, traditions and values is an undertaking that cannot be ignored. Developing this awareness, knowledge, and understanding in the mainstream population will help ensure well-informed future generations of leaders.

#### **1.5 CURRENT CAPACITY IN MÉTIS EDUCATION**

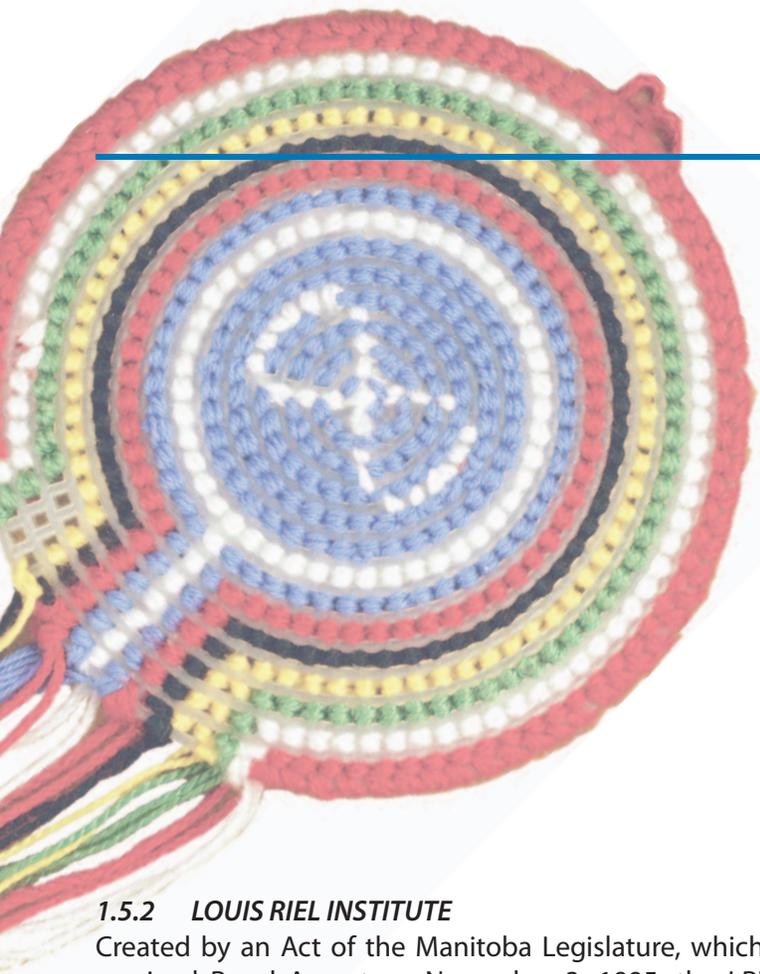
Métis education has evolved differently from province to province. In Saskatchewan, the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) operates as the arms-length education provider for the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan (MN—S). In Manitoba, the Louis Riel Institute (LRI) offers education opportunities to the Métis under provincial legislation. Finally, the single consistent factor for Métis education and training nationally has been the federal government’s Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS). In all provinces with a Métis governing body, the Métis hold agreements under the AHRDS. These three Métis education structures are outlined below.

##### **1.5.1 GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE**

GDI was incorporated in 1980 to serve the educational and cultural needs of Saskatchewan’s Métis community. GDI offers community-based accredited programming in communities across the province. The Institute holds affiliation and federation agreements with various educational institutions in the province such as the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology.

The Institute offers a wide range of programs and services, including:

- A Publishing Department, which creates Métis-specific historical, cultural and learning materials;
- Dumont Technical Institute (DTI), which provides Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Skills Training to over 700 students each year in communities across the province;
- The Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), a four-year Bachelor of Education degree program located in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert;
- Gabriel Dumont College, which offers Arts and Sciences programming to Métis students;
- A Graduate Studies program for Métis graduate students;
- Gabriel Dumont Scholarship Foundation which administers GDI’s scholarships; and
- GDI Training & Employment, which provides programs and services to help Métis people prepare to be fully competitive in the labour market.



### 1.5.2 LOUIS RIEL INSTITUTE

Created by an Act of the Manitoba Legislature, which received Royal Assent on November 3, 1995, the LRI has an important purpose. As a charitable non-profit organization, the Institute promotes the educational and cultural advancement of Métis people. The LRI is also responsible for promoting awareness of the values, culture, heritage and history of the Métis people of Manitoba.

The mission statement of the Louis Riel Institute is as follows:

*The Louis Riel Institute believes in the unique identity of Métis people and works with others to serve Métis people in the areas of education and culture.*

### 1.5.3 MÉTIS ABORIGINAL HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS

The single consistent factor for Métis education and training nationally has been the federal government's Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS). In all provinces with a Métis governing body, the Métis hold agreements under the AHRDS.

The Métis Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs) provide necessary resources to address the post-secondary training and employment aspirations of the Métis. The AHRDAs have proven to be a significant tool in combating the educational disparity

between the Métis and other Canadians. During the years that the AHRDS has been in place, the Métis have built capacity and structures to effectively deliver labour market programs and services, including innovative means and ways to improve education attainment for Métis.

The AHRDAs are scheduled to expire in 2010 and the federal government has indicated the AHRDS will be replaced by a successor strategy. The successor strategy to the AHRDS has yet to be determined.

### 1.6 LIFELONG AND CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

Conceptually, the stages of the lifelong learning continuum involve:

- Early childhood development (including prenatal) to ensure that Aboriginal children entering school are ready and able to learn;
- K-12 schooling with support for Aboriginal children to stay in and succeed in primary and secondary school so that they can proceed to post-secondary or trades education if they so choose;
- Post Secondary Education including (university, colleges, technical and apprenticeship training) to ensure that Aboriginal people can access professions and vocations of their choice; and
- Ongoing education and skills development to ensure that Aboriginal people can access learning supports to compete in the Canadian labour market (including work-based learning and active measures under social assistance).

This paper examines each of those four areas from a Métis perspective particularly the implications affecting: Jurisdiction and Control; Economic and Social Disparity; Improving Access and Integration; and Sustainability and Capacity Building (Métis National Council, 2005, p.1).

### 2.1 JURISDICTION AND CONTROL

Prior to addressing the issues of Métis education per se, it is important to address the larger issue of who has jurisdiction and responsibility for Métis. The jurisdiction issue has been the single greatest impediment to progress in developing a modern set of institutions, programs and services to meet the needs of the Métis. Coming to an understanding of this issue will enable all parties to set in place the appropriate planning and developmental initiatives so that we can achieve transformative positive change in the lives of Métis people.

*It has been and remains the longstanding position of the MNC that the federal government has jurisdiction and responsibility with respect to the Métis Nation by virtue of section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. With this jurisdiction comes an obligation to act.*

The federal government maintains a legal position that Métis are not included within s. 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867, and that provinces have primary jurisdiction and responsibility for Métis. At the federal level four major departments deliver programming for life long learning, through thirty four programs or initiatives. The majority of these programs are directed at First Nations and Inuit. Although the federal government does provide some modest programming to the Métis it has done so under status blind pan-Aboriginal program authorities, the results of which remain unaccounted for. Therefore, the current range of programs and services directed to Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal people is driven by existing federal policy considerations rather than from any specific legal obligations to the Métis as an Aboriginal people. As a result of this approach, the federal government provides a limited number of programs and services to Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal people, scattered across several areas of the lifelong continuum primarily on the basis of their status as economically disadvantaged Canadians.

Provincial governments take an opposing position with respect to responsibility for off-reserve Aboriginal peoples. By and large, all provinces maintain the position that the federal government continues to have full jurisdiction for all Aboriginal peoples, while maintaining education as a provincial authority.

Flowing from this interpretation, there has been ever-increasing pressure from among the provinces for the federal government to assume financial responsibility for off-reserve Aboriginal peoples, including program and

service delivery. The Report to Premiers by the Ministerial Council on Social Policy Reform and Renewal reiterated the traditional provincial position that the federal government assume “...full responsibility for all programming for Aboriginal people, both on- and off-reserve.”

Canada claims that it provides indirect support to Métis through fiscal transfers to the provinces under the Canada Social Transfer (CST). The CST consists of both cash and tax transfers to the provinces and territories. Payments are made under the authority of the Fiscal Arrangements Act and target specific areas: post-secondary education, early childhood development, social assistance and social services. The CST is a block fund that allows the provinces and territories to spend freely in these areas largely as they see fit. In some areas like early childhood development, the federal government has imposed reporting requirements to ensure these resources are spent in agreed upon areas.

Unfortunately, few if any provinces use these CST resources for programming targeted at the Métis. Moreover, Métis governments from Ontario westward are currently disregarded as possible program delivery partners to improve the lives of their people and are relegated to the status of possible “organizations” that may be eligible to apply for or to act as an agent for provincially-designed initiatives.

While provincial and federal leaders often say they want to “move past jurisdictional wrangling” until recently there has been no basis for multilateral discussions to address Métis jurisdictional issues. Further, over the past decade, many well-intentioned initiatives have quickly deteriorated into posturing exercises leading to the status quo. (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.2-3). The Métis National Council recently (September 2008) concluded a Métis Nation Protocol with the Government of Canada. The protocol, effective for a period of five years, envisages multilateral discussions between the federal government, the five westernmost provincial governments, and the Métis National Council to address Métis Nation education and training. The Métis National Council, through the Métis Nation Protocol, will seek Métis-specific discussions with federal and provincial Ministers to address the most serious impediments to progress in the field of Métis education: jurisdictional barriers and funding and capacity constraints on Métis education authorities.

### **2.1.1 RECOGNITION OF MÉTIS JURISDICTION AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Over the years, Métis have made it clear that any further expansion of programs and services must be undertaken directly with the representative Métis governments and their respective institutions rather than on a pan-Aboriginal off-reserve basis. That is not to deny support for other Aboriginal people off-reserve, only that Métis believe they have the jurisdiction and responsibility to address the social and economic development needs of their people.

The Métis take this position because they believe that it is the most efficient and accountable way to make meaningful changes in the life chances of Métis people. Accordingly, Métis believe that the best way to proceed on the issue of jurisdiction and responsibility is to proceed on the basis that Métis have the jurisdiction and responsibility for the provision of education and training services to Métis people (Métis National Council, 2005, p.3).

### **2.1.2 NEED FOR COOPERATION AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF ALL JURISDICTIONS**

Métis also recognize however, that the federal and provincial (including their municipal orders of government) governments play a meaningful role in improving the lives of Métis people. Métis believe that the federal and provincial governments can use their spending power to assist the Métis meet their social and economic needs. The MNC is prepared to proceed on a cooperative basis to ensure that the needs of the Métis people are met through modern and efficient delivery structures that are respectful of the rights and interests of the Métis people and its governing institutions. Métis believe that the current array of programs and services must be adjusted, strengthened, and as necessary expanded or augmented to address Métis needs. The Métis call upon other levels of government to make key strategic investments in the Métis people (Métis National Council, 2005, p.3).

The following consensus statement, adopted by the Métis Life Long Learning planning session, captures the Métis position on lifelong learning:

*We, the Métis Nation, are a distinct Nation among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and as such our Aboriginal rights are recognized and affirmed under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. We, the Métis Nation have the inherent right of self-determination and self-government, which includes the right to drive the propagation of the Métis way of being in all sectors. Learning is the most relevant way to protect and propagate the Métis identity, therefore it is necessary that the Métis community through its governance structures leads the decisions and implementation at every level regarding life long learning (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.3-4).*

### **2.2 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DISPARITY**

It is widely recognized that education levels and economic potential are fundamentally linked. For instance, employment rates demonstrate the relationship of high school completion to success in the labour market. Statistically, the Canadian employment rate nearly doubles with high school certification (Richards, 2008, p. 16). Furthermore, statistical data illustrate differences in the Aboriginal population and the non-Aboriginal population in terms of education attainment and earning potential up to the university level. Achievement of university education evens the playing field and differences in income levels for the most part disappear, further illustrating the important role of education equity in achieving goals of economic and social equality.

Statistics Canada notes that Aboriginal people are not on par with the general population in a number of areas. For instance, Aboriginal people in Canada have lower average annual incomes, higher rates of unemployment, and increased rates of disenfranchisement from the labour market. Furthermore, health and well-being are known to be affected by poverty. Kerr, Frost, and Bignell (2004) note the relationship between poverty and health:

*The relationship between income inequalities and health inequalities is well established. Poverty shortens life expectancy, leads to poorer health status, and increases the likelihood of disease. Poverty affects many aspects of health (p. 5).*

There is evidence to suggest that the increased rates of poverty and poor health suffered by Aboriginal people may be alleviated by the improvement of labour force participation and education and training programs that have the potential to improve economic status. Donner (2002) notes, “research shows that medical care is less important in ensuring the well-being of the entire population than economic security, social support and a more equitable distribution of income” (para. 10).

### **2.3 ACCESS AND INTEGRATION**

Issues of access and integration are woven throughout this report, particularly in the areas of early childhood learning and childcare, K-12, post-secondary support services, and ongoing skills development.

Early childhood learning supports have been applied in an uneven manner, both in terms of quality and availability. To a certain degree jurisdictional issues have come to bear on early childhood learning and childcare. For instance, the AHRDS excludes the Métis from federal childcare resources and early childhood development resources otherwise provided for First Nations and Inuit.

Furthermore, a tendency to implement a pan-Aboriginal approach to funding and programming has meant that accountability for Métis access to programming is virtually non-existent. The Métis comprise one third of the off-reserve Aboriginal population in Canada; however, modest funding and limited or nonexistent targeted Métis funding means that the Métis remain under-served (Métis National Council, 2005, p.5). The K-12 system is also plagued by a lack of data. Data has not been collected in any coordinated way between systems and provinces resulting in a lack of quality Métis data in the K-12 systems to speak to the specific education results of Métis students. It is understood that data collection is a complex matter and some gains have been made in this area in individual provinces. Added complications are noted by the Manitoba Métis Federation (2009), which indicates that collecting Métis-specific data is a sensitive issue for a number of legitimate reasons and work to address these concerns will be needed.

In the K-12 systems, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) has noted in its draft Métis Education Action Plan (2008), that generally, any successes to date in educational outcomes achieved by Métis students appear to be due

to specific intervention programs, usually pilot projects. There is a paucity of wholesale or system-level successful models or practices. Programs typically supplement and/or are built on mainstream efforts to meet specific needs of individual learners. The MNO notes, “Some of this work has been successful but there is simply not enough and access has been limited to a small number of students, not nearly enough to allow educators to come to generalizations that can be routinely utilized in mainstream classrooms” (p.3).

Student supports for Métis post-secondary education are lacking. Métis seek to expand access to post-secondary education by way of direct student support in the form of bursaries and through the expansion of current Métis post-secondary institutions (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.7-8). Chronic under funding in Métis educational institutions has led to limited program access and barriers to participation for Métis people.

In the area of ongoing skills development, the Métis seek enhancement of workplace skills necessary for labour market participation. In an ever-changing economy and labour market, Métis people require opportunities to participate in lifelong learning initiatives to meet emerging labour market needs (Métis National Council, 2005, p.9).

### **2.4 SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

The Métis seek increased capacity to facilitate the educational needs of Métis children. A key objective is to improve results in all areas of Métis education, including early childhood learning, K-12, post-secondary and beyond. The development of a national strategy to address the current crisis in Aboriginal education is a first and necessary step (Métis National Council, 2005, p.7). As has been pointed out, the 2005 Kelowna Accord proposed to close the high school completion gap in a decade; however, no administrative reforms or strategic plans were attached to that goal (Richards, 2008, p.i). Any plan should include capacity development for consultation on educational initiatives. There is a need to provide support and resources to build capacity. As it is now, education consultation and initiatives utilize existing staff and are absorbed into existing budgets. It is felt that considerable progress could be made if Métis authorities had capacity to fully engage on all issues of education, and be an active participant in

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policy making, program development, delivery, and so on. Similarly, no meaningful system of accountability has been introduced to answer to the abysmal results achieved by mainstream systems. Accountability to the Métis community is an important aspect of any policy direction.

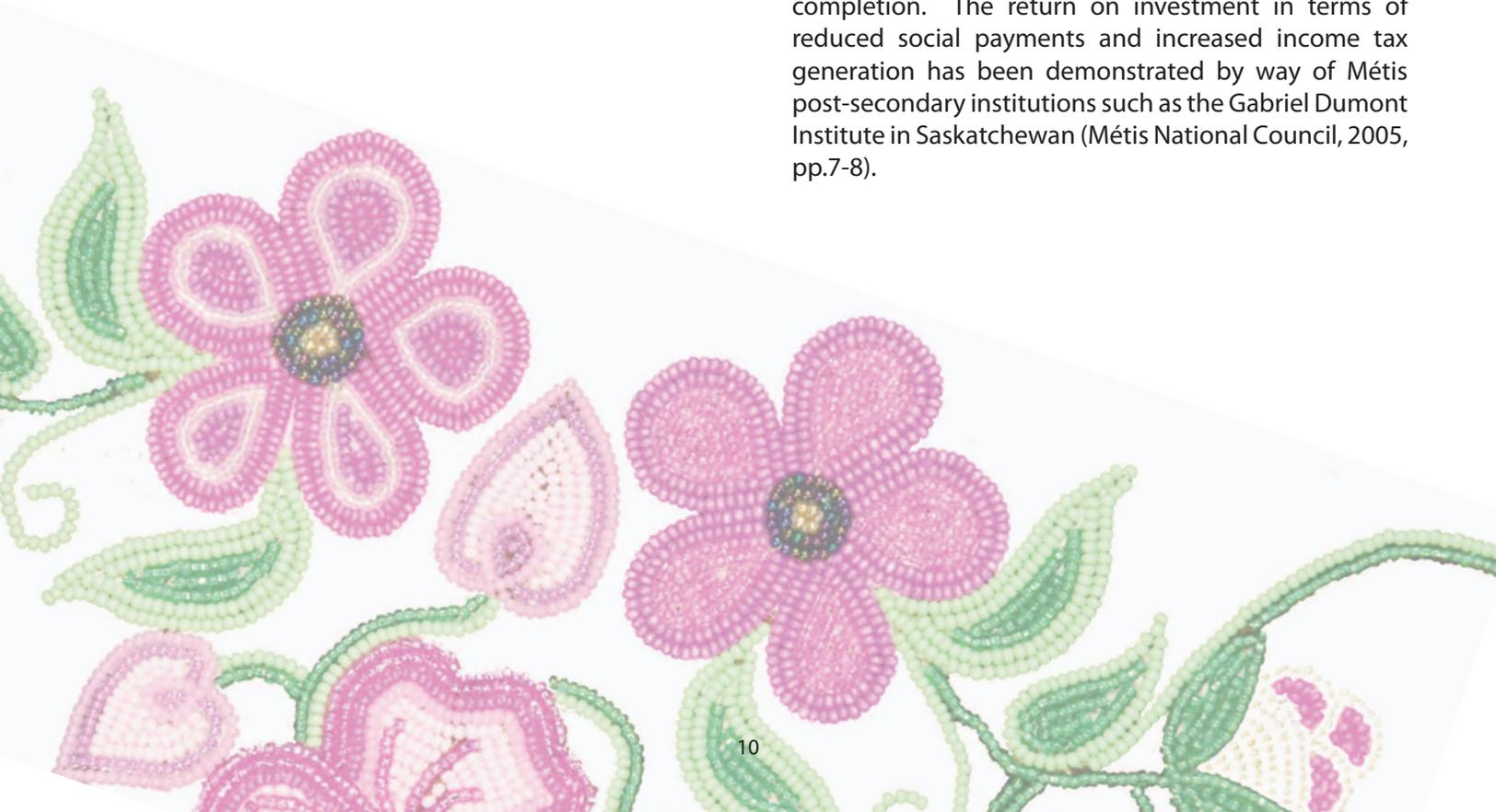
One area the Métis seek to build capacity is in the K-12 delivery system. While the Métis largely seek to work in conjunction with the provincial education authorities, there is a desire to develop the capacity to pilot Métis delivery sites for elementary (K-3) education, building on existing capacity in Métis teacher education such as GDI's teacher education program, SUNTEP (Métis National Council, 2005, p.7).

Furthermore, it is critical to build capacity for evidence-based decision making. In cases where data is collected in the K-12 system, the data is most often identified as Aboriginal and does not specify Métis, First Nations or Inuit. There is a preconception that by and large, the

Aboriginal student population is First Nations. As a result, this has been the basis for program development and delivery, and school district priorities in education. As the Manitoba Métis Federation (2009) points out, "Métis children belong to a 'minority within a minority' (i.e., within the Aboriginal population). The information about Aboriginal people they encounter in public schools is likely to have more to do with First Nations culture than their own" (p. 3).

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) notes a considerable lack of resources that deal with the Ontario Métis experience and history. While valuable Western-based Métis resources exist, similar resources for Ontario are lacking. It is critical that capacity be developed to produce such resources and materials in recognition of regional differences. In recent years the MNO has been moving this agenda forward within the province's Ministry of Education.

The Métis also seek greater capacity in post-secondary systems including equitable funding resources to develop appropriate culturally-relevant, Métis-specific programming—a proven best practice in Métis education. Furthermore, the enhancement of established scholarship and bursary endowments would facilitate greater post-secondary access and completion. The return on investment in terms of reduced social payments and increased income tax generation has been demonstrated by way of Métis post-secondary institutions such as the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.7-8).



### 3.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT and DAYCARE

International Law, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 30) states:

*In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practices his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.*

There is now an overwhelming consensus that early childhood development is considered the most important stage in building a learning foundation for all later learning. Studies indicate that early intervention is a much better investment than remedial or compensatory interventions in human capital later in life. The federal government acknowledged in 2001 that early childhood learning supports and services were uneven in quality and availability in its consultations on the Innovation Agenda. Métis AHRDA holders voiced similar concerns in the AHRDS Renewal Process and universally called on the federal government to address Métis childcare needs. The Life Long Learning policy paper acknowledges that:

*Parental and community supports are equally important factors in ensuring the developmental foundation needed in early childhood. There is abundant evidence that children who have experienced high quality early childhood development programs learn better in school. Early childhood development programs, such as prenatal health programs, Head Start programs and quality childcare programs (among others) are highly effective means of ensuring children get the best possible start in life, and ensuring school readiness, by addressing developmental and cultural needs in the early years, if administered in culturally sensitive and targeted ways.*

*The research and statistical evidence available suggest that the overall regime of federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal services and programs currently supporting Aboriginal learners is not producing acceptable results. While significant progress has been made in improving life chances for Aboriginal children and youth and Aboriginal educational attainments in general, it is not occurring at a pace comparable to that*

*of non-Aboriginal Canadians nor in a way that meets the cultural and other learning needs of Aboriginal peoples. This suggests that a concerted coordinated effort by all partners is required to ensure consistent access to culturally relevant quality programs and services and improved learning outcomes throughout the continuum.*

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has also joined the chorus of voices suggesting that Canada's future competitiveness was threatened by its inability to address the learning needs of Canada's children. The OECD called early childhood initiatives as a "seriously under-funded patchwork quilt of money wasting programs that provide little more than glorified babysitting." This stinging rebuke has created greater urgency around the issues of early childhood learning and other child care initiatives (Métis National Council, 2005, p. 4).

The Manitoba Métis Federation (2009) notes not only the importance of early childhood education, they also bring into focus the unique Métis perspective on early childhood learning, stating, "Métis people want to prepare their children for stronger academic performance, but their concerns go beyond a singular focus on cognitive development. They see early childhood education as a means of reinforcing Métis identity, and instilling the values, attitudes and behaviours that give expression to Métis culture." To fully appreciate the Métis perspective on education it is essential to understand that a holistic, culture-centred approach to Métis education is desirable and necessary.

#### 3.1.1 MÉTIS EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT and DAY CARE SERVICES

The lack of a consensus on jurisdiction for off-reserve Aboriginal people has to some extent restricted the federal government's willingness to address the needs of Métis children and families. This is reflected in the AHRDS where federal childcare resources and early childhood development resources are devoted exclusively for First Nations and Inuit.

The federal government takes the position that provinces are responsible for off-reserve children, and that the joint implementation of the National Children's Benefit with the provinces has freed up savings which provinces should invest in off-reserve childcare. The

federal government also takes the position that off-reserve Aboriginal children have access to funds already allocated to provinces under early childhood development and early learning agreements. Although the federal government has placed reporting conditions on the provinces to account for this money (moved through the CST), no one at the federal level monitors whether Aboriginal people off-reserve, or specifically the Métis, are obtaining an equitable allocation (Métis National Council, 2005, p.5).

However, in spite of the federal government's narrow view on its jurisdictional responsibilities, Health Canada does provide funding to support off-reserve Head Start initiatives. This early development initiative was lauded by Métis on its introduction, but its reliance on a pan-Aboriginal implementation approaches has restricted its effectiveness and introduction into the Métis community. Moreover, the modest size of the program has limited its availability to Métis who make up over a third of the total off-reserve Aboriginal population (and in excess of 50% in the Prairie Provinces). Even by its own admission, Health Canada has indicated that the current off-reserve program only addresses 7.6% of 3-5 year-old off-reserve Aboriginal children (114 preschool centres servicing some 3,500 children).

It is not known the extent to which Métis participate in the existing programs. Statistics Canada has indicated however, that "increasingly Aboriginal children living in non-reserve areas are attending preschool programs specifically designed for Aboriginal children. Among those six years old at the time of the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 16% had attended a preschool program specifically designed for Aboriginal children, which is four times the proportion of the fourteen year olds. However, even among the six year olds, it is still only a small minority who attended a preschool program specifically designed for Aboriginal children" (Métis National Council, 2005, p.5).

### 3.2 KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RRCAP), 1996, notes,

*Rather than nurturing the individual, the schooling experience typically erodes identity and self-worth. Those who continue in Canada's formal education systems told...of regular encounters with racism, racism expressed not only in interpersonal exchanges*

*but also through the denial of Aboriginal values, perspectives and cultures in the curriculum and in the life of the institution (Part 5, Education).*

Mainstream education systems typically do not foster Métis cultural pride or identity. Métis high school completion rates continue to lag behind non-Aboriginal rates. Those who leave school early are not able to participate fully in employment and the economy.

Métis children are not succeeding in the K-12 system to the same extent as other Canadians. While Métis educational attainment is better than for First Nations on reserve and Inuit, Statistics Canada has indicated that in 2001, 48% of Off-reserve Aboriginal people aged 20-24 did not finish high school compared to 26% of non-Aboriginal youth. There can be no question that the dropout rates of Métis children can be traced back to:

- The failure to recognize the unique experience and cultural knowledge of the Métis people and the contribution of the Métis Nation to the Canadian state;
- The absence of Métis-specific curriculum and pedagogy which promotes and enhances general learning through the inclusion of Métis knowledge and tradition;
- The absence of adequate learning supports in the pre-school years (early childhood development education and dedicated supports);
- The preponderance of poverty that many Métis people find themselves in (there is a positive correlation between low educational attainment and poverty with Statistics Canada showing that children of persons living below the low income cut off are more likely to repeat a grade than those above the cut off);
- A lack of a learning culture and parental attachment to the school system (this includes the lack of parental achievement within the school system and the attendant lack of emphasis parents put on reading and instilling the value of education in their children); and
- The absence of community supports to facilitate the transitions for children moving from elementary to secondary school environments (Statistics Canada has identified that the majority of off-reserve Aboriginal students are dropping out in grades 9 and 10) (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.5-6).

Internal Métis consultations reveal the importance of Métis involvement in the area. The following consensus statement adopted by the MNC LLL planning table reflects the importance of nation, community and family in this area:

*We don't want to just exist; we want to flourish. The community must be involved in every aspect of children's learning; that means the Nation as a political entity, the grassroots people, everybody. We want to have that control. We want to have our own say. We want to deliver our own programs. We want to perpetuate Métis culture and Métis being.*

The background paper produced for the roundtable underscores the importance of family and community. It notes that:

*The roles of family and the community are known to be important factors influencing learning outcomes for children. In many Aboriginal societies, the involvement of parents and community are considered essential in the development of intellectual and cognitive abilities, the transmission of Aboriginal languages and cultures, the full emotional and spiritual development of the child and for the child to learn how to behave socially.*

It is clear that not enough is being done to address the educational supports of Métis children. Métis are not by and large seeking to replace the existing K-12 school systems, although the creation of alternative systems may be required to make substantive movement on this matter. Increased accountability to the Métis community may reduce the need for creation of alternative systems, although a system of accountability to the Métis community must be implemented as part of any policy direction. They do however; want to see existing systems achieve positive results. Métis are seeking to increase their capacity in facilitating the educational needs of Métis children. Métis seek to do this in concert with existing provincial educational authorities. Encouraging parental and community involvement in pursuing greater results is an important objective. The Métis National Council believes a good starting point would be the establishment of province-wide adequately funded Métis education bodies, accountable to and formed by the MNC provincial governing bodies, which are charged with the responsibility of pursuing better quality education for Métis children.

In existing systems, Métis also seek greater participation both by way of greater input into the work of school boards, and also with a capacity to facilitate best practice approaches for keeping kids in school and improving the quality of education accessible to Métis children. To facilitate leading edge educational initiatives, Métis are seeking a Métis Nation-specific Education Active Measures Program, which could be used to support innovative measures to improve the quality of Métis education and to achieve better educational outcomes. The fund would enable the Métis Nation to develop and implement strategies to address Aboriginal elementary and secondary education concerns and to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness over time. It would also enhance the relationship between existing institutions and increase accountability of those institutions to the Métis community (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.6-7).

In terms of future systems development, the MNC seeks a national strategy to address the current crisis caused by the specific failures of provincial educational authorities through the establishment of pilot K-3 schools in specific Métis communities, under the control of Métis community educational authorities across the Métis Homeland. These pilot schools should be built upon demonstrated success and need, and in conjunction with existing Métis teacher education programs, such as the GDI Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program.

At the federal/provincial/territorial levels, the MNC seeks to engage in an ongoing dialogue with Federal/provincial/territorial Ministers of Education to seek collaborative measures and strategies to address Métis educational issues and solutions through a national Métis-specific multilateral process (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.6-7).



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### 3.3 MÉTIS POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Métis do not have access to the post-secondary education support services provided to First Nations and Inuit. The combination of rising tuition and the fact that majority of Métis income levels are lower than those of other Canadians, has created severe impediments to Métis participation in post-secondary institutions. The implementation of the AHRDS has not done enough to address this issue as these resources are not targeted to support the post-secondary needs of Métis people. Métis seek to expand access by way of direct student support in the form of bursaries and through the expansion of current Métis post-secondary institutions.

The Métis Nation is currently involved in post-secondary education through the existence of Métis-specific institutional development, through the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan and through the Louis Riel Institute in Manitoba. These two institutional models set the stage for future involvement of the Métis Nation which seeks to ensure that a lack of financial resources will not be allowed to deny, to those with the motivation and capacity, the opportunity to learn and aspire to excellence in pursuing a skilled trade, a diploma, or university degree. The success of these two institutions cannot be matched by any other institution in Canada, in terms of addressing Métis-specific educational issues.

The limitation of programming options available to Métis students through these successful models is part of the on-going issues facing the Métis Nation. GDI needs to expand, through the Gabriel Dumont College, into Arts and Sciences and Graduate Studies programming, setting the stage for Métis students to enter specific professional colleges, and complete graduate level accreditation and research in a highly supportive and culturally-appropriate curriculum and environment. Furthermore, issues of under funding, particularly in relation to mainstream education counterparts, have plagued the Métis educational institutions. GDI's skills training provider, the Dumont Technical Institute (DTI) remains significantly under funded in its core operational grant. In fiscal year 2007-2008 DTI received thirty cents in its core operational grant for every training dollar it received, whereas the similar colleges in the provincial system received on average one dollar and thirty six cents in core operational grant funding per training dollar. Inequities such as these must be rectified.

Likewise, the Louis Riel Institute has been seriously under funded since its inception. Originally funded in 1995 at a level of \$200,000 per year, the only increases in its funding have occurred in two of the last three years. This chronic lack of support has resulted in an inability of the Louis Riel Institute to carry out its mandate set out in the Louis Riel Institute Act. Although vastly under funded, the Louis Riel Institute has managed to deliver programs in the areas of early childhood learning, family literacy, and elementary level curriculum development. This work, however, is restricted geographically based on lack of resources. Programming occurs mainly in the south and largely in Winnipeg due to inadequate resources. Successful programming, such as the Standing Tall program and Little Métis Learning Circles, needs to be delivered broadly in communities across the province.

There are a number of significant factors influencing the lack of involvement of Métis people in university education and those levels of skill development set out in Canada's Knowledge and Skills agenda. Lack of access to post-secondary funding, and conflicting or lack of funding arrangements and underlying assumptions of the Canada Students Loans program are two core issues.

### 3.3.1 EXPANSION OF MÉTIS BURSARIES BY WAY OF CANADA ENDOWMENT

With respect to bursaries and scholarships, each MNC Governing Member has established scholarship & bursary trusts at varying levels from Ontario westward.

These include:

- **Ontario**—Métis Nation of Ontario Trust: \$4.2M in trust and provides bursaries annually to Métis student at thirty-two different colleges and universities in Ontario. Since its inception, the MNO's bursary trust has awarded approximately 1000 students with bursaries totalling close to one million dollars;
- **Manitoba**—Louis Riel Institute Scholarship and Bursary Fund: The MMF, in partnership with Brandon University, Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg now has over \$8M in the trust and is a national leader in this area;
- **Saskatchewan**—Gabriel Dumont Institute: As a part of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Gabriel Dumont Scholarship Foundation administers several scholarship funds to help Métis students in various programs to cover their educational costs. The Scholarship Foundation has \$2.5M in investments with interest awarded as scholarships and bursaries. There is a need to establish a post-secondary fund within GDI specifically for undergraduate and graduate levels to ensure Métis participation in university programming, with scholarship amounts in keeping with tuition and living costs;
- **Alberta**—Belcourt—Brousseau Trust: A trust in the amount of approximately \$8M has been established which Métis students can apply to for attending educational institution in Alberta. The trust has a good relationship with the Métis Nation of Alberta; and
- **British Columbia**—No existing trust at this time.

The Métis Nation is requesting that Canada enhance these trusts by way of an endowment to generate increased Métis access to post secondary institutions (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.7-8).

### 3.3.2 NEED FOR FUNDING FLEXIBILITY IN A POST-AHRDS STRATEGY

Currently, Métis students have access to limited support to obtain a university education. This limited access is demonstrated by the statistics: only 9% of Métis hold a University degree compared to 23% of the non-Aboriginal population (Richards, 2008, p.4). The AHRDS provides opportunity in some provinces to provide support for students in their last year of studies or partial financial support in their final year of studies, having set a policy of funding only those programs of fifty-two weeks or less. Further, funding obtained under the AHRDS conflicts with the criteria of the Canada Students Loan program, instituting a dollar for dollar reduction in allowable loans. The Canada Student Loans program is designed as a supplementary loans program, which at its core is a fundamental flaw as it relates to access by Métis students. Most Métis students do not have other financial support to contribute to their education. Canada Student Loan becomes the primary financing for Métis students. Further, Métis students who begin their studies from a position of poverty, end up with student loans in excess of \$40,000, impeding the transition to employment and ability to break the poverty cycle. Métis students with a university degree in education become working-class poor. Canada Student Loan program needs to be redesigned to reflect the financial reality of Métis students, and new policy and program directions, such as a post-AHRDS strategy, must be complementary to and supportive of one another. The Métis Nation looks forward to meaningful participation in a post-AHRDS strategy with a desire to expand the model to include Métis university education funding (Métis National Council, 2005, p.8).

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### 3.4 **MÉTIS ON-GOING EDUCATION and SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

The federal government has recognized that individual Canadians need to be equipped with the tools necessary to participate in an ever-changing workforce and to develop a culture of lifelong learning. The economy of the future will, by all projections, require an ever increasing and changing level of skills from the workforce. Workers must be given the opportunity to adapt to changing technology and skill requirements, through adult learning. Canada's Innovation Strategy calls for a collaborative approach between all sectors of society to ensure Canadians have the tools they need to participate in Canada's workplace, thereby keeping Canada economically strong and socially sound. A series of national goals and milestones for children and youth, post-secondary education, the adult labour force, and immigration are outlined as part of the Innovation Strategy.

The federal government has also recognized that Canada's demographic profile is that of an aging population. The post-war baby boom came to an end in the early 1960s, and the Baby Boom generation is now approaching retirement age. Without immigration, Canadian population growth is not sufficient to even replace the existing generation of retiring and near retiring workers. Therefore, indications are that labour shortages will develop as the Baby Boom generation retires from the labour force.

Métis and other Aboriginal peoples have pressed the federal government to work with Aboriginal peoples to meet these emerging labour market needs through additional, Aboriginal-specific labour market assistance. Although the AHRDA program provides financial assistance to assist Métis to obtain the necessary training to enter in the labour market, the program has not kept pace with the growth of the Métis population or with the inflationary factors that have over time eroded the program's financial base. Moreover, the AHRDA program was never designed to assist working Métis populations to make lifelong or career adjustments to keep pace with the ever changing Canadian economy. Nor was it designed to assist Métis obtain post-secondary assistance. Consequently, any new focus on ongoing education and skills adjustments must take place in the context of new program elements. For Métis, these additional program elements should be built on the anticipated Métis post-AHRDS platform.

However, Métis need not only be streamed into training sectors. Métis people should have access to a full range of educational options, including support for people with disabilities, and those who seek high technology education and long-term professional colleges and professions, such as those set out in Canada's Innovation Strategy. The skills agenda is now reaching into K-12 to promote the transition from high school to skills training. We must ensure that Métis students are counselled into a full range of options, including university education. Funding must be in place to ensure that this option is attainable, not just a poster and a promise.

In terms of adult upgrading education and literacy, many Métis adults make the decision to return to the classroom after being out of school for some years; a big step for students who may have had negative school experiences. In addition, these mature students also struggle financially to make ends meet. Practitioners and delivery agents who work in adult education and literacy face an on-going struggle to obtain adequate financial resources for Métis curriculum, instructors, facilities, and for transitions from school to work and school to post-secondary education and training (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2009).

Literacy initiatives are significant in furthering the education of Métis people. Although Métis have limited access to resources provided by the National Literacy Secretariat, these resources are not sufficient nor is the secretariat equipped to deal with the deep-seated literacy problems that are present with the Métis community (Métis National Council, 2005, pp.9-10).



## 4 SUCCESSES IN METIS EDUCATION

Despite the many challenges facing Métis education in Canada, there are examples of Métis educational successes (previously briefly outlined in Section 1 of this paper). The three successful models for Métis education are the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan, the Louis Riel Institute in Manitoba, and the Métis Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs) in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. This section will provide highlights of the three examples of successful Métis education institutions and will illustrate that capacity does exist within the Métis Nation and that it can be built upon, given the right climate and resources.

### 4.1 GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE

GDI was created in 1980 by members of the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan. The creation of GDI is the end result of planning initiated at the Métis Cultural Conference in 1976 and its stated mission is:

*To promote the renewal and development of Métis culture through research, materials development, collection and the distribution of those materials and the design, development and delivery of Métis-specific educational programs and services.*

The Institute is unique in Canada in providing a Métis-directed educational and cultural experience for students. Since its inception, GDI has evolved from an institution focused primarily on cultural education and renewal to include a dual focus on employment training and cultural education. Distinguishing features of GDI programming include:

- Largely community-based programs;
- Some courses offer preparatory phase of training or concurrent update courses with regular programming when the course begins;
- All courses offer Métis Studies programming and are sensitive to Métis culture;
- Comprehensive academic and personal counselling support to students;
- Whenever possible, an applied practicum phase is included as an integral part of all programs;
- All training and professional education is fully accredited and recognized; and
- Instruction and programming is of the highest quality.

### GDI's Organization

GDI is an affiliate of and the official educational affiliate of the MN—S. GDI is structured as a parent company that owns five incorporated, non-profit companies:

- Dumont Technical Institute (DTI)
- Community Training Residence (CTR)
- GDI Scholarship Foundation
- Gabriel Dumont College (GDC)
- GDI Training and Employment Services

These companies are governed by a Board of Governors that, along with overseeing the operation of these entities, is responsible for the development of GDI policies and programs; the development and approval of programs; and GDI's strategic direction. The Board of Governors is comprised of 12 representatives from each of the 12 MN—S Regions of the province, plus an elected official from the MN—S (Minister of Education) who sits as the Chair of the Board.

GDI is affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina for the purpose of delivering the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) program, while DTI is academically federated with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST). The DTI-SIASST Federation Agreement, originally signed in 1994 and renewed in 2000 and again in 2006, provides a foundation for collaborative planning, and facilitates the delivery of SIASST certificate and diploma programs by DTI to Métis people. DTI also enters into partnerships with Regional Colleges and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology (SIIT) for delivery of selected programs.

### Programs and Services

The main programs and services offered by the GDI include:

- SUNTEP
- Gabriel Dumont College (GDC)
- Dumont Technical Institute
- GDI Training & Employment
- Library Information Services
- Publishing Department
- Scholarships and Awards

GDI offers a model for Métis education and the opportunity to capitalize on existing capacity. For instance, the SUNTEP program offers not only a successful model for Aboriginal teacher education but also an opportunity to address the Council of Ministers

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of Education, Canada (CMEC) Aboriginal Education Action Plan long-term outcome measures for teachers, including increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers and incorporating Aboriginal perspectives and content into education materials and teaching methods.

#### 4.2 LOUIS RIEL INSTITUTE

In December of 1985, the Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. (MMF) appointed a working group to study the feasibility of establishing an Institute which would serve as a vehicle to deal with the educational concerns and aspirations of the Métis people of Manitoba. The Institute would be known as the Louis Riel Institute. After several years of hard work and negotiation, the Louis Riel Institute was created by an Act of the Manitoba Legislature, which received Royal Assent on November 3, 1995 (Louis Riel Institute, 2009).

The mission statement of the Louis Riel Institute is as follows:

*The Louis Riel Institute believes in the unique identity of Métis people and works with others to serve Métis people in the areas of education and culture.*

The Louis Riel Institute is named in recognition of the unique and historic role of Louis Riel as a founder of Manitoba and his contribution in the development of the Canadian Confederation and also in recognition of the Métis people who were among the first citizens in Manitoba and who played a significant role in the founding and development of Manitoba and of the West (Government of Manitoba, 2009).

The purpose of the Institute is to serve as a Métis educational and cultural institute that will promote the advancement of education and training for the Métis people in Manitoba and foster an understanding and appreciation of the culture, heritage and history of Manitoba and of the Métis people in Manitoba for the benefit of all Manitobans (Government of Manitoba, 2009).

Under the Louis Riel Institute Act, the Institute may undertake the following in order to promote its purpose:

- promote, undertake and support research into Manitoba history and into the culture, education and languages of the Métis people;

- establish, conduct and support educational and training programs;
- act as an advocate for the Métis people and others in the area of education and training;
- establish and administer scholarship programs for Métis students;
- provide advice and reports to the Government of Manitoba about education and cultural matters relating to the Métis people, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Government;
- act as a resource centre and archives for written and other materials concerning Métis education, history, heritage, culture and languages and provide and publish written and other materials relating to education curriculum development;
- further the educational and socio-economic development of the Métis people in Manitoba (Government of Manitoba, 2009).

Although the Louis Riel Institute has been chronically under funded and has gone unfunded in many of the above areas in which it is legislated to act, the structures are in place and the capacity exists to develop and deliver on Métis education initiatives. The Louis Riel Institute welcomes the opportunity to act on its legislated purpose including curriculum development, resource centre capabilities, language initiatives, publishing, research, culture, and archives, all areas which remain unfunded at this time.

Current initiatives of the Louis Riel Institute include:

- Delivery of Adult Learning and Literacy programs;
- Delivery of educational programs: Power-Up Computer training for women, Little Métis Summer Learning Circle, Fort Whyte Summer Day Camp, Little Métis Learning Circles;
- Administering the Louis Riel scholarships and bursaries in partnership with the three universities;
- Providing a Métis perspective to the Province in the development of the Grade 12 Social Studies curriculum (Louis Riel Institute, 2009).

The Louis Riel Institute has established the internal structure necessary to build for the future and deliver the services approved by its Board of Directors. The Institute is currently embarking on a variety of service initiatives to implement the activities, which will benefit Métis people (Louis Riel Institute, 2009).

#### **4.3 MÉTIS ABORIGINAL HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT (AHRDA)**

The Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) is designed to expand the employment opportunities of Aboriginal people across Canada. Under this Strategy, Aboriginal organizations design and deliver employment and training programs and services best suited to meet the unique needs of their communities.

Currently, there are 79 Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs) in place across Canada. In all provinces with a Métis governing body, the Métis hold agreements under the AHRDS (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2009).

The Métis AHRDAs provide necessary resources to address the post-secondary training and employment aspirations of the Métis. The AHRDAs have proven to be a significant tool in combating the educational disparity between the Métis and other Canadians. During the years that the AHRDS has been in place, the Métis have built capacity and structures to effectively deliver labour market programs and services, including innovative means and ways to improve education attainment for Métis.

The AHRDAs are scheduled to expire in 2010 and the federal government has indicated the AHRDS will be replaced by a successor strategy. The successor strategy to the AHRDS has yet to be determined.

The Métis Human Resources Development Agreement (MHRDA) Technical Working Group has prepared a discussion paper (2008) on the development of a post-2010 Aboriginal labour force development strategy. In this discussion paper it is noted that the policy context has changed significantly since the original AHRDS was implemented, shifting from the past issue of improving Aboriginal access to federal training and employment programs, to today, where the principle issues are to ensure that Canada's fast-growing and youthful Aboriginal population obtains the skills required to mitigate emerging labour shortages and to address chronic under-representation of Aboriginal people in the labour force (p.2).

The MHRDA Technical Working Group looks forward to the opportunity to address the new context for the post AHRDS strategy and also to address many

of the inadequacies of the existing program design (pp.2-3). Any new strategy must take into account the contemporary realities and challenges facing Aboriginal human resources development.

Because there is very little information forthcoming regarding the successor strategy for the AHRDS, the MHRDA Technical Working Group has expressed anxieties over suggested changes to the existing AHRDA delivery architecture. Specifically, Service Canada documentation from November 2007 suggests a radical restructuring of current AHRDA delivery, including a potential pan-Aboriginal approach that ignores the structure of existing Aboriginal communities and organizations (p. 4). Such radical restructuring of AHRDA delivery is ill advised given the successful co-existence and partnership with Aboriginal community-based organizations. The Métis have never been well served under a pan-Aboriginal approach to programming and to rationalize delivery architecture under pan-Aboriginal service providers on a geographic basis would inevitably jeopardize access to employment and training programs on the part of one segment or another of the Aboriginal population (MHRDA Technical Working Group, 2008, p.5).

Most AHRDAs have been in operation over a decade and during that time have successfully built capacity to administer labour market programs and services to their respective constituencies. The Métis have generally been well served by existing MHRDA delivery structures which have been conducive to the success of the program. Any new strategy or initiative should seek to build on existing architecture rather than dismantle it (MHRDA Technical Working Group, 2008, p.5).

## 5 CONCLUSION

Challenges facing modern Métis education include issues of jurisdiction and control, access, equity, and capacity, to name a few. This report attempts to put these issues into the context of the lifelong learning continuum as it relates to prevailing systems and structures. Paramount to this discussion is the unresolved jurisdictional issue, which is foundational to the education challenges facing the Métis. As the MNC notes, it is the single greatest impediment to progress in developing a modern set of institutions, programs and services to meet the education and training needs of the Métis.

While some gains have been made in Métis education in the past decade, it is clear that Métis access, achievement, and participation rates are not meeting the same standard as the non-Aboriginal population. It is imperative to move the Métis education agenda forward through multilateral discussions to address the most serious obstacles to progress impeding the growth of a newer, innovative and more effective Métis education system: jurisdictional barriers and funding and capacity constraints on Métis educational authorities. In order to address the education completion gap in the K-12 system, the MNC calls for the development of a national strategy to address the current crisis in Aboriginal education.

Other pressing constraints in Métis education include the lack of:

- data to support evidence-based decision making;
- an integrated Métis early childhood development and childcare initiative; and
- Métis education commissions or other such authorities;

And the need for:

- Métis-specific funding transfers;
- equitable access to post-secondary education including university;
- appropriate, culturally-relevant, Métis-specific curricula, programming, and pedagogical approaches;
- targeted Métis capacity building;
- need for a Métis Education Active Measures Program; and
- accountability to Métis authorities for education outcomes.



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These pressing concerns may be addressed not only through a national strategy but also by multilateral discussions between federal, provincial, and Métis governments.

The Métis have the capacity—by way of established education institutions, existing AHRDA infrastructure and framework, and Métis governing bodies at the provincial and national levels—to develop and deliver appropriate, accessible, culturally-relevant Métis education initiatives.

We are Métis, ka tipaymishoyak: we are owners of our own destiny.



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### **ALBERTA:**

Métis Nation of Alberta  
Suite 100, 11738 Kingsway Avenue  
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Métis Settlements General Council  
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### **SASKATCHEWAN:**

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