



*The GDI Communicator is an internal newsletter intended to increase communication between management and staff of the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research*

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## Community Profile: Northern Region I

By James Oloo

This article explores the demographic and economic profile of the Métis population in the MN-S Northern Region I (NRI). It uses the 2006 Canada Census data. Each month during 2012, a different MN-S Region will be profiled.

NRI has a Métis population of 930, or about two percent of all Métis people in Saskatchewan, making it one of the smallest Métis communities in the province. About half (47%) of the population is under 25 years old. NRI region office is in La Ronge with local offices at Stoney Rapids, Timber Bay, Uranium City, and Weyakwin. The region is represented at the GDI Board of Governors by Glenn Lafleur, who is also the Vice Chair of the GDI Board of Governors.

With respect to educational attainment, 35% of the NRI Métis individuals between ages 15-24 years had Grade 12 diploma while 50% had no high school diploma, and 15% had completed non-university postsecondary training. Among the general population in the same age group in Saskatchewan, 53% had high school diploma and

43% had not completed high school.

There were 475 Métis people aged 25-64 years. Educational attainment for this group was as follows: 26% had no high school diploma (compared to 19% of the general population of Saskatchewan in the same age group); 17% had high school diploma as their highest level of education (compared to 27% for Saskatchewan); 14% had a postsecondary diploma or certificate in apprenticeship or trade (compared to 14% for Saskatchewan); 22% had a non-university certificate or diploma from a college (compared to 18% for Saskatchewan); and 18% had a university certificate, diploma or degree compared to 22% for the general population in the same age cohort in Saskatchewan.

Thus, 14% of the Métis population aged between 25-64 years in NRI and 14% of their counterparts in the general population of Saskatchewan had a certificate or diploma in trade. Also, on average, more Métis people in NRI (22% versus 18%) had a non-university certificate or diploma than their counterparts in

Saskatchewan. In other words, education gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and between NRI and Saskatchewan is closing in the areas of trades and skills training. This could be attributed to the work being done by GDI and its counterparts. GDI often partners with other educational institutions in the region to provide training opportunities for Métis people.

Among the Métis population aged 25 years and over in NRI, labour participation rate was 70% with employment rate of 61% compared to 72% labour participation rate and 65% employment rate for total Métis population aged 25 and over in Saskatchewan. Unemployment rate for Métis population aged 25 and over was 13% for NRI and nine percent for overall Saskatchewan Métis.

For the general population of Saskatchewan in the same age group, labour participation rate was 70%, employment rate 66%, and unemployment rate was four percent. Thus, labour participation rate (70%) was similar for both NRI and Saskatchewan.

For more information, please contact James at [james.ooloo@gdite.gdins.org](mailto:james.ooloo@gdite.gdins.org)



## GDI Acquires New Artefact

By Lisa Wilson



Photo by Mark Taylor



Photo by Mark Taylor



Photo by Mark Taylor



Peter C. Fergusson, c1930s, in the suit recently acquired by GDI. Photo submitted by Kenneth Fergusson

GDI has acquired a white doe-skin suit to add to the Institute's collection of artefacts. The suit is adorned with Métis-style flower embroidery. The suit was brought to the Institute's attention by Gregory Scofield, who has a keen eye for all things Métis and noticed the suit for sale online. Scofield's outstanding beadwork design and instruction has become part of one of GDI's latest publications, *wâpikwanîy: A Beginner's Guide to Métis Floral Beadwork*, which he co-authored with Amy Briley.

The suit comes from Manitoba and had been in Kenneth Fergusson's family since about 1920. Fergusson provided a written account, as told to him by his father, of how the suit came to be made for his father. The account indicates that his father, KC Fergusson ("KC") worked for the Winnipeg Electric Company and was stationed at Great Falls generating station on the Winnipeg River in 1920. The people of the Fort Alexander First Nation lived in the area and traditionally travelled the Winnipeg River for annual wild rice harvesting. The 90-mile journey required the

people to portage around no less than five waterfalls.

During the construction of Great Falls, KC made arrangements to help the travellers from Fort Alexander by rail so as to avoid three portages, after which the people continued on their annual journey to the wild rice lakes. The same transportation arrangements were made by KC for the return trip in the late fall.

Fergusson notes, "The Native people were very appreciative of this service and approached KC and offered to make him a hunting suit. KC was to provide about three doe skins for this project." The custom-suit was then made for KC by a group of Aboriginal people, headed up by Mrs. Butcher Kent of the Fort Alexander First Nation. The suit remained in the Fergusson family since it was made in the 1920s.

"This splendid Métis artistry gives GDI a unique, well-cared for example of the design and skill that went into his form of Métis artistic expression," said Karon

Shmon, GDI's Publishing Director. "While many artists still bead, only a few carry on the tradition of silk embroidery in the Métis floral pattern, and because we know so much about it, including information about the artist, the owner, and the significance, makes it even more interesting and adds to our knowledge about our heritage and traditions."

The suit consists of a number of pieces, including a jacket, pants, belt, knee-high mukluks, and a hat. All are adorned with immaculate floral silk embroidery similar to the style of the Métis. Usuline nuns taught the floral silk embroidery to both Métis and First Nations girls and women in the seventeenth century. Once the Grey Nuns came to the Red River and began teaching at the Catholic mission schools, the art form was taught to Métis and First Nations girls as part of their instruction in domestic activities. The floral embroidery inspired the Métis flower beadwork patterns for which the Métis have become known as "the flower-beadwork people."

(Source: 'Métis Embroidery,' *Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture*. Available online at <http://www.metismuseum.ca>)



## Gabriel Dumont Annual General Meeting

By Lisa Wilson

GDI will be holding its Annual General Meeting on February 11, 2012 at Saskatoon Inn in Saskatoon from 9 a.m. to noon. The Institute will also launch a

new history book, *An Institute of Our Own*, by Lisa Bird-Wilson, as well as hosting a special announcement about the renewal of the DTI-SIAST

Federation Agreement. Please direct any questions to Geordy McCaffrey, GDI Executive Director at 242-6070 or toll free at 1-877-488-6888. 



## GDI Acquires New Building in Regina

By Lisa Wilson

Gabriel Dumont Institute Executive Director Geordy McCaffrey has been working for the past several months on a plan to purchase a new building in Regina. The Regina Métis Sport and Culture building, located at 1235 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, has been in need of an organization to take it over for some time. The Institute was approached and began discussions on the building. A number of tasks had to be

accomplished by both parties before the sale of the building could become a reality, not the least of which was the removal of a "first right of refusal" clause on the property held by the City of Regina.

After a number of meetings with the City of Regina's audit and finance committee and with Regina City Council, the purchase of the building

by GDI was given the green light on January 23, 2012. Final arrangements are being made and the sale will be finalized in early February.

Gabriel Dumont Institute looks forward to hosting its programs and services in a building familiar to the Métis community in Regina, and also hopes to maintain some of the community-use aspects of the building. 



The new building in Regina

## New Year's Resolutions Easier to Keep with Aboriginal Police Preparation Program

By Daniel Downs

January is a time for many new beginnings... Some choose to engage in resolutions of health and fitness; some choose volunteerism; some make new friends and take new challenges; while others decide to pursue a change in life through education and training. All of these resolutions are achievable within the Aboriginal Police Preparation program.

The third installment of Dumont Technical Institute's Meadow Lake Aboriginal Police Preparation program is helping the students keep these New Year's resolutions. The program began in January 2012 with 14 eager and enthusiastic students. Under the instruction of Pat Devin and Lisa Burry, students started out on an adventure not only to enter into future careers in policing and security, but also to be positive role models to friends, family, and the community at large.

Physical and mental health is an important component of the Aboriginal Police Preparation program. Apart from the many important skills students learn in modern policing, students are instructed in intense fitness routines, which prepare them for the physical demands of police work. As well, students are given the proper mental conditioning to deal with the emotional fatigue that they will encounter in their chosen careers.

Community volunteerism is an essential part of the Aboriginal Police Preparation program. Students, under the direction of Pat and Lisa, are often seen all over Meadow Lake doing garbage cleanup, marshalling the Meadow Lake Canada Day parade, and mentoring students at the Meadow Lake

Transition Place Education Centre (TPEC) school.

As ambassadors for DTI within the community, students in the Aboriginal Police Preparation program wear matching uniforms any time they are out in the community. Whether they are running to get the mail, or taking a jog to Flying Dust First Nation to build up their cardio, the students are recognized as a team everywhere they go.

So the next time you are visiting or driving through Meadow Lake on your way to a northern meeting, make sure to look down the streets and corridors for a troop of students decked out in black; running in formation toward a goal that may only be several weeks or months away... They may not be able to stop and chat, but a friendly wave of acknowledgement and encouragement would be very highly appreciated. 



Photo by Peter Beszterda



## Accountability Key to GDI's Growth

By Cory McDougall

The continuing growth of GDI as an organization is something we have all contributed to and can be proud of. In 2011, GDI achieved another record year for expenditures, revenues, programs delivered, number of employees and partnerships.

The \$30.3 million in programming delivered by the GDI group of companies last fiscal year included important partnerships with: Service Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Heritage Canada, Parks Canada, Health Canada, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, SaskTel, SaskCulture, SaskEnergy, Saskatoon Health Region, the University of Regina,

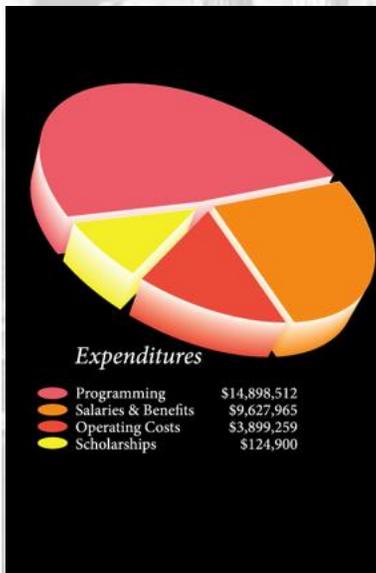
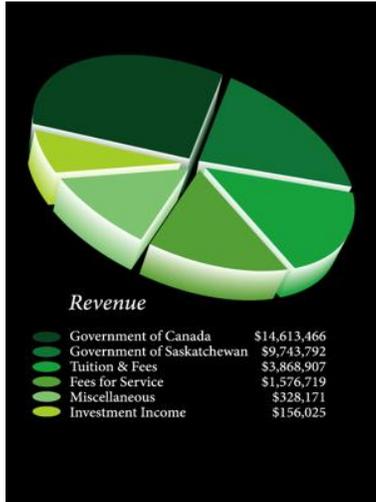
the University of Saskatchewan, SIAST, various Regional Colleges, Cameco, Saskatchewan Publishers Group and, of course, our Métis membership and affiliated organizations.

Meeting the requirements of all of these funding arrangements is a tall task. Each partner requires specific information and presentations that fit within their existing framework. Suffice it to say that rarely do these frameworks align across provincial and federal departments. However challenging this might be, it is a small price to pay to ensure that our Métis membership receives the best opportunities possible.

To ensure that our stakeholder organizations

get the information they require in a timely fashion, finance and operations will be launching new internal accountability tools across the organization in the coming months. These will include redesigned monthly financial reports, new support functions and service level agreements. The aim is to improve organizational accountability in every facet of the company so that the information provided to our stakeholders is timely and accurate.

Your support of these initiatives is key to their success. Please send any inquiries or feedback to [finance@gdins.org](mailto:finance@gdins.org)



## GDI Receives Top Score on Risk Assessment

By Lisa Wilson

In November 2011, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians (OFI), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), concluded a risk assessment of GDI and provided the Institute with a copy of its findings. The report was done as a means of assessing potential risks to the federal department associated with funding provided to GDI for projects and initiatives.

The report was prepared expressly for purposes of communicating to a recipient of AANDC funding the assessment and risks

associated with such transfer payments and any potential risk mitigation activities. In all areas considered by the report, including governance, performance history, financial stability, and planning and project complexity, GDI consistently received a "low" risk rating by the OFI assessment.

Of 180 such assessments conducted, GDI fell within the top five in terms of the associated low risk. In the report, the Institute is praised for its strong contingent of staff who have demonstrated experience in successfully delivering on projects. It is

noted that GDI has a long record of delivering results and meeting our organizational objectives, and that the Institute is considered "very stable" and has a "very strong" management team.

Over the past several years, GDI has enjoyed good relations with the OFI. Examples of projects funded, either in whole or in part by OFI, include the GDI history book, a HR capacity building project, and components of past cultural conferences. GDI looks forward to continued positive relationships with the department and to carrying out future worthwhile projects.



## SUNTEP Faculty Publishes Research

By Lisa Wilson

SUNTEP Saskatoon Faculty member, Skip Kutz, recently co-authored an article with Joanie Crandall, the Principal at Quqshuun Ilihakkvik School in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, which appears in the journal *Our School Our Selves* (v. 21 n. 1 Fall 2011), a journal of education published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The article, entitled "Ranking and Sorting and Labeling: Driving Aboriginal students out of schools," takes issue with standardized testing and points out the ways in which this on-going practice in K-12 classrooms across Canada is damaging to Aboriginal students.

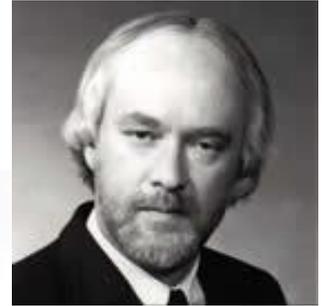
In the past decade Saskatchewan has seen a number of positive policy changes in Aboriginal education, perhaps one of

the most visible being the introduction of mandatory Treaty education into the K-12 system. Many in education, with the hope that more will come; have welcomed advances such as this. However, Kutz and Crandall note that, "even the most progressive and inclusive schools possess taken for granted practices and pedagogy that, to some extent, alienate Native learners" (p. 58). The authors note, "Small gains made by embracing Aboriginal culture have been quickly undermined by our need to sort and rank children, teachers, and schools" (p. 58).

The article provides a number of interesting insights as to what is going wrong in mainstream classrooms and schools for Aboriginal students, and provides alternative concepts such as those

offered by cooperative learning models. The article includes three narratives from Métis teacher candidates in the GDI SUNTEP program at the University of Saskatchewan. These narratives provide important and interesting perspectives, from Métis points of view, as to what it is like to be an Aboriginal teacher within an education system that expects its teachers to play an important role in stemming Aboriginal "drop out" rates and at the same time toe the line with respect to standardized testing and other alienating forms of assessment.

If you are interested in reading this informative and easy to read article, it is available by contacting Kim Kovacs at the Regina GDI Library: 306.347.4117.



Skip Kutz  
Photo credit:  
Canadian Conference of the Arts  
(<http://ccarts.ca>)

## Collective Bargaining Update

By Geordy McCaffrey

On January 9, 2012 representatives from the GDI Management Committee and the SGEU Bargaining Committee signed a new Collective Agreement for unionized Institute employees. The new agreement covers the period April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2013.

Some of the more significant items included in the new agreement are as follows:

- Replacement of the current four increment dates per year to 12;

- Deferred salary leave plan;
- Streamlined language around article 11 – Probation;
- Enhanced article 20 surrounding dispute resolution;
- Matching pension increase of 0.5%; and
- Wage increases at 1.5%, 2%, and 2% over the three years.

Accounting Department staff worked diligently to process retroactive pay and in-scope employees received their retroactive pay in early January.

At GDI we work with our employees to foster and create a productive and positive work environment. This work environment has developed over our 30-year history and is nurtured, in part, by our common purpose and background as Métis people and as those interested in advancing the interests of the Métis. The Institute can also be proud of our record of positive union-management relations.



GDI Board member Michael Bell (L) and SGEU Bargaining Committee Chair Russell Fayant (R) signed the agreement  
Photo by Peter Beszterda



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Back issues of this newsletter  
can be obtained at:

[www.metismuseum.ca/brows  
index.php/833](http://www.metismuseum.ca/brows/index.php/833)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.gdins.org](http://www.gdins.org)



**GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE**  
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#### **GDI Mission:**

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



**GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE**  
of Native Studies and Applied Research