



# Voice, Vision and Leadership: *A Place for All*

**THE JOINT TASK FORCE**  
on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes  
for First Nations and Métis People

Final Report  
March 2013

# ***Voice, Vision and Leadership: A Place for All***

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Final Report of the Joint Task Force on Improving Education  
and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People

March 31, 2013



## *Table of Contents*

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	Page
Acknowledgements	4
Letter of Transmittal	5
Joint Task Force Members	6
Executive Summary	8
Introduction	10
Context	14
Consultation	19
Research	22
Findings and Recommendations	23
Overarching Foundational Understandings	24
Dignified Mutual Relationships	24
Poverty Reduction and the Prevalence of Racism	26
Recognizing First Nations and Métis Cultures and Languages	29
Four Mandated Areas	31
Early Childhood	31
Prekindergarten to Grade 12	39
Post-secondary	55
Labour Force Attachment	63
Working Differently: A Holistic Approach to Action	70
References	72
Appendices:	
• A: List of Meetings	77
• B: List of Submissions	80

## *Acknowledgements*

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The Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People would like to acknowledge respectfully the contributions of the hundreds of community members who provided their perspectives, stories and aspirations with such passion and heart for our consideration. Your commitment and vision inspired us.

Our sincere thank you to the individuals, community leaders, organizations, agencies and scholars who shared their vision, expertise and even cautions about the future directions set by any recommendations we might make. Your contribution is highly valued.

We acknowledge the support of the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU) team who provided organization, record keeping, writing and research support. We thank you for your patience and commitment.

Finally, without the generosity of time and spirit from everyone with whom we interacted, we would not have been able to fulfill the obligations of our mandate. This report exists as a result of your passion and graciousness to share with us and we are honoured to add our voice to yours.

## *Letter of Transmittal*

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To: Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations  
Province of Saskatchewan  
Métis Nation - Saskatchewan

From: The Joint Task Force on Improving Education and  
Employment Outcomes in Saskatchewan

Our task was to listen to the voices of the communities, to seek the vision for action, and to provide recommendations to improve the outcomes for education and employment for First Nations and Métis people.

Our readers should know that we participated whole-heartedly in the deliberation of preparing the final report. Our findings and recommendations do not stand alone, but rather are informed by the nuances of what we heard, and the best knowledge we could garner from reports and research undertaken in tandem with community consultations.

We acknowledge the need for long-term commitment in addressing and unmasking the larger systemic and structural issues that inhibit our collective well-being; but while doing so, we also recognize the importance of providing youth with skills they need “to survive” and “to succeed” in the present systems of education and economic opportunities. We have concluded, as many others have, that a path of *reconciliation* based on principles of mutual respect, recognition and reciprocity holds the greatest promise for a shared and prosperous future.

*How* we do business in Saskatchewan matters. It calls for policy directions and actions that are *farsighted* (with short- to long-term objectives) and *consistent* to allow for continuous learning and renewal to take hold, supported by research and the collection of data based on *mutual goals* set out by all parties in the relationship. We must establish a common foundation upon which the expectation and norm is to always seek each other’s views and to support each other to prosper.

We humbly submit our findings and our recommendations to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Province of Saskatchewan and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan.

Gary Merasty  
Chair

Rita Bouvier  
Panel Member

Don Hoium  
Panel Member



## *Joint Task Force Members*

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Gary Merasty is Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility at Cameco Corporation. He grew up in a small reserve community in northern Saskatchewan. Gary is a former Member of Parliament and former Grand Chief of the Prince Albert Grand Council. He is a board member of the NorthWest Company and has held numerous board positions including Chair of the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, Westwind Aviation, Prince Albert Development Corporation, and the Northern Lights Community Development Corporation.

Gary is known in the province for his community support, advocating for better public policies for First Nation and Métis issues, education, infrastructure and northern development. Gary has been recognized for his years of commitment to public service and business. In 2005, he received the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal and in 2006, the University of Saskatchewan named Gary as one of the Top 100 Alumni of Influence and he received an Honorary Diploma for Business from the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences. He holds a Master of Education and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Saskatchewan.



Rita Bouvier is a teacher who has served in leadership roles in education at home and abroad. Her lifelong interest in Aboriginal education and social justice have often spilled over to community volunteer and consultancy work, such as Saskatchewan's Northern Governance Task Force, Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, the Independent Oversight Committee on Métis Elections Saskatchewan,

and *Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik* - Women Working Together, Education International. After retiring from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Rita served with the Canadian Council on Learning-Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre partnership at the University of Saskatchewan.

She currently freelances as a researcher and community-learning facilitator. Recent projects include reviewing support for Aboriginal languages in the NWT, preparing a literature review on Indigenous bilingual [immersion] education, reviewing the Cree Bilingual Education

Program in Cumberland House, reviewing the Clearwater River Dene School Transitional Immersion Program and examining practices associated with Aboriginal student achievement. Her work has also included facilitation of a school board - tribal council partnership, co-facilitation of an initiative serving a high Aboriginal student population with Saskatoon Public Schools, and the development and delivery of a leadership program in Fostering Respect and Dignity for Relationships in the Workplace for the City of Saskatoon. Current work includes collaborative research and development for the Indspire Institute (formerly the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation) and Indigenous Voices, a staff and faculty professional learning program on Indigenous Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

Rita holds a Master of Education degree from the University of Saskatchewan. She was awarded an Eagle Feather by peers in 2006, the Arbos Award for her commitment to the profession by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in 2006 and the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Award (Practitioner Category) in 2010.



Don Hoium is serving as the Executive Director of the Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS). Don began his career as a teacher in 1979 with Saskatoon Public Schools, where he held increasingly senior positions. He was the Assistant Director of Education with Saskatoon East School Division before joining Saskatchewan Learning in 2000 where he held various senior positions. Don joined Regina Public Schools as Superintendent before assuming the role of Director of Education in 2007. Don retired from the director's role in 2011.

Don has served on the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education's Strategic Management Committee and as a Canadian representative on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Educational Indicators Networks for both regular education and special education. He serves as a board member of the Saskatchewan Health Quality Council and the Regina Trades and Skills Centre. He is a past president of the Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents.

Don is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan. He earned a Bachelor of Education degree with Great Distinction and a Master of Education with a specialization in the Education of Exceptional Children.



## *Executive Summary*

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In March 2012, the Government of Saskatchewan (Province) and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) established a three-member Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People in Saskatchewan (Joint Task Force). The Province also entered into a partnership with the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MN-S) to ensure the perspectives of Métis people were represented in the work of the Joint Task Force. These partnerships crossed jurisdictional boundaries.

Consultations conducted between May, 2012, and March, 2013, included 16 community meetings and 67 meetings with individuals, groups, organizations and institutions for a total of 83 meetings with over 1000 participants. Twenty-one submissions were received as well as many other informative documents. Social media remained active throughout the process. Over 100 seminal and research documents from the past two decades were compiled into an annotated bibliography. Research was conducted *with* First Nations and Métis people on their education and employment experiences; data was collected and used to describe existing ‘lighthouse’ programs and practices. These findings were then integrated with perspectives in the literature.

In this final report, the Joint Task Force describes three foundational understandings that connect and intersect with all components of the report:

- Dignified mutual relationships;
- Poverty reduction and the prevalence of racism; and,
- Recognizing First Nations and Métis cultures and languages.

Taken together, they form a lens by which the Joint Task Force judged the potential recommendations.

The Joint Task Force chose to focus on only 25 recommendations. Two recommendations are overarching – the recognition of First Nations and Métis languages; and, a holistic approach to actions and outcomes. Twenty-three recommendations are made across the four mandated areas – early childhood (2), prekindergarten to grade 12 (10), post-secondary education (6), and labour force attachment (5). Recommendations address a broad range and scope of issues including an early childhood strategy; literacy; funding; ancillary supports; First Nations and Métis content,

perspectives and ways of knowing; youth engagement; high school credits; technology; driver education; adult basic education; student supports; seamless credit transfer; leadership programming; education-labour alignment; inclusive workplaces; sector planning; and, quick skills training.

While it is typical to include a full list of recommendations in the executive summary, the Joint Task Force consciously did not. The recommendations should be considered in the context of the voices from the communities so the reader is able to appreciate the rich, thoughtful dialogue that preceded each recommendation.

There is urgency and an imperative to grasp this opportunity to hear the voices of the communities, to seek the vision for action, and to provide leadership for that action to occur. This attention to the voice, the vision and the leadership will create a place for all in the province of Saskatchewan.

## *Introduction*

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In March 2012, the Government of Saskatchewan (Province) and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) established a three-member Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People (Joint Task Force). The Province also entered into a partnership with the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MN-S) to ensure the perspectives of Métis people, communities and organizations were represented within the work of the Joint Task Force. This unique undertaking, which crosses jurisdictional boundaries, represented a bold step to positively impact the lives of First Nations and Métis children wherever they live, are educated and seek employment in Saskatchewan.

The partners expressed a shared vision of a prosperous province where all people have access to a high quality of life. The partners agreed that the current gap in education and employment outcomes between First Nations and Métis people and non-Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan is unacceptable. In undertaking the Joint Task Force, the parties agreed that the following were the desired outcomes:

1. Improved early childhood outcomes and the transition to school;
2. Improved high school completion rates;
3. Improved completion rates for post-secondary education;
4. Improved labour market participation and attachment;
5. Improved quality of life and enhanced self-sufficiency; and,
6. Stronger education systems with improved return on investment in prekindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education and training.

The mandate of the Joint Task Force was to provide a report and recommendations that identify evidence-based public policy, program and practical approaches that have the greatest potential for positive impact on education and employment outcomes on- and off-reserve. In addition, the Joint Task Force was to identify policies, programs and practices that were not having the desired impact and propose changes or elimination. In identifying approaches for implementation or elimination, costs and potential reallocation of spending are to be considered.

The terms of reference set out the following objectives for the work of the Joint Task Force:

1. To recommend and prioritize evidence-based public policy, program and practical approaches in relation to the themes articulated in the project scope. These approaches will positively impact education and employment outcomes and have the potential for province-wide application.
2. To identify current issues, barriers and/or ineffective approaches and recommend changes or elimination.
3. To identify investments, potential costs and savings associated with the recommended approaches identified in objective one and the changes recommended in objective two.
4. To arrange for literature reviews, analysis and advice that will inform the development of the recommendations.
5. Engagement in the process will extend beyond the parties (e.g. Métis Institutions, Tribal Councils, First Nation Band Councils [education portfolios], the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and First Nation and Métis Provincial Education Advisory Committee).

Although the Federal government chose not to participate formally as part of the process, the Federal mandate, programs and services which impact the lives, education and employment of Saskatchewan citizens, cannot be disregarded by the Joint Task Force. At the conclusion of its work, the Joint Task Force will provide a copy of this report to the Federal government for its consideration.

The role of the Joint Task Force was to plan the process, meet and hear from First Nations and Métis people and all the stakeholders in the education and employment sectors in the province, report on an interim and ongoing basis, and submit a final report to the Province, the FSIN and the MN-S in March, 2013.

Based on these premises, four areas – early childhood, prekindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary, and labour force attachment – were identified for consideration. To guide its work, the Joint Task Force aspired to the following principles<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Informed by work of the Canadian Council of Learning (CCL)-Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (AbLKC); Indspire – background papers; and, First Nations and Métis Education Provincial Advisory Committee (FNMEPAC).

- Conduct the mandate with communities, organizations, educational systems, employers, and governments using a gifts/strengths orientation and building on successes;
- Respect the diversity of First Nations and Métis in Saskatchewan and their right and responsibility for the education and well-being of their children;
- Embrace learning as lifelong, holistic, and experiential, strongly rooted in language and culture;
- Acknowledge that cultural/language communities have the right to define success and articulate their aspirations;
- Embrace the value of Indigenous knowledges (ways of being, knowing, valuing and doing);
- Promote a long-term view for capacity development and sustainability in governance and financing structures with well-defined mutually beneficial partnerships, roles and responsibilities; and,
- Strive for accountability as an ethical and shared responsibility to the students and their communities by teachers, schools, boards of education, departments of education and governments.

As the Joint Task Force began its work, it was clear that the task was very broad and daunting in the range, scope, entrenchment and history of the issues that are detailed in the literature review commissioned by the Joint Task Force.<sup>2</sup> Acknowledging that the task of making changes with lasting effect is complex, multi-faceted and requires a sustained long-term effort at all levels from communities to institutions and governments, the Joint Task Force hopes that the final report and its recommendations will resonate across the political spectrum and with current and successive governments at all levels. Creating the circumstances through policy and actions in which every person can thrive and benefit through education and employment not only makes economic sense, it makes good sense to the overall well-being of Saskatchewan citizens and a harmonious future. Our futures are inextricably linked.

The Interim Report, *Voice, Vision and Leadership*, was released in December, 2012. The Joint Task Force's task was to listen to the voices

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<sup>2</sup> Pelletier, T., Cottrell, M. & Hardie, R. (2013). *Improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people*. Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

of communities, seek the vision for action, and provide recommendations for leadership. The Interim Report provided a midpoint perspective on what the Joint Task Force saw, heard and read in its initial months. Clearly, some key recommendations were taking shape and there were high expectations for First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal people to find solutions, to partner and to do better. And clearly, all Saskatchewan residents want to see action.

The final report and its recommendations build on the work in the interim report with additional insights provided from the following sources:

- further consultations, dialogues and submissions;
- seminal documents reviewed for the annotated bibliography;
- the commissioned research report (Pelletier et al., 2013) that includes a literature review, examination of ‘lighthouse’ programs and the results from interviews and focus groups at the community/school level;
- the MN-S report following its consultation process;
- additional reports submitted by the FSIN; and,
- feedback provided by a community reference panel.

The Joint Task Force was asked to “identify investments, costs and potential reallocation of spending.”<sup>3</sup> The Joint Task Force did provide mid-point costing estimates of draft recommendations to the partners as they prepared their 2013 budget. To adequately build shared assumptions regarding the perceived and actual costs of the key items would require an iterative process far surpassing the capacity and time constraints of the Joint Task Force. Rather than risk censure or have the work dismissed for errors or omissions in researching and understanding the highly complex, multiple levels of funding, the Joint Task Force resisted the urge to include costing estimates in this document. In similar fashion to the interim report, the Joint Task Force prepared separate costing estimates for the partners with as much accuracy as possible, but they are not intended to be definitive without further research and analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> FSIN & Saskatchewan. (2011). *Agreement between Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Government of Saskatchewan to work together to establish a joint task force on improving education and employment outcomes in Saskatchewan*. P. 3.



## Context

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The Joint Task Force acknowledges that its work was not isolated nor insulated from historic and current community, provincial, national and even international events. This section seeks to convey aspects of the context that influenced its deliberations.

The Joint Task Force began with the assumption that First Nations and Métis people have not accrued the same or equitable benefit from the education systems for various systemic reasons, both historical and social, and as a result, have not been able to benefit from the economic opportunities existing and created.

The Joint Task Force reviewed the 1972 foundational policy paper, *Indian Control of Indian Education*,<sup>4</sup> which advocated for increased Aboriginal jurisdiction and control over education. It called for control of education on reserves and representation on school boards serving First Nations students off-reserve. In 2010, the Assembly of First Nations further entrenched the vision for First Nations education as follows:

*First Nations lifelong learning is a process of nurturing First Nations learners in linguistically and culturally-appropriate holistic learning environments that meet the individual and collective needs of First Nations and ensures that all First Nations learners have the opportunity to achieve their personal aspirations within comprehensive lifelong learning systems.*<sup>5</sup>

The Joint Task Force was aware of the many collaborative initiatives taken by both First Nations and Métis people *with* various provincial and municipal institutions, organizations and governments since the mid to late 60's that have netted positive results socially and economically. Some key examples include:

- First Nations Educational Authorities;
- Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College;
- First Nations University of Canada;
- Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research;
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies;
- Dumont Technical Institute;

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<sup>4</sup> National Indian Brotherhood. (1972). *Indian control of Indian education*. Policy paper prepared for presentation to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

<sup>5</sup> Assembly of First Nations. (2010). *First Nations control of First Nations education: It's our vision; It's our time*. P. 10.

- Teacher Education Programs ( NORTEP, SUNTEP and ITEP);<sup>6</sup>
- Northern Professional Access College (NORPAC); and,
- common regional working stakeholder tables for training and employment partnerships.

While the emphasis of the Joint Task Force’s work was on recommendations that could have the largest impact in the province, it was understood that in order to effectively propose and analyze future directions, it needed to acknowledge historical and current obligations that frame the relationships of Aboriginal peoples and governments.<sup>7</sup> It also needed to understand barriers and challenges that stand in the way of reaching equitable outcomes in education and employment for all of the province’s population.

People who live and do business in the province must understand that, just as part of Saskatchewan’s identity is based on European immigration and settlement, part of Saskatchewan’s identity is First Nations and, as a result of this shared history and relationship, the emergence of the Métis people. Fulfilling Treaty and historical rights and obligations recognized by the Constitution are the basis for a shared and prosperous future.

*“Part of  
Saskatchewan’s  
identity is First  
Nations and  
Métis.”  
- Participant*

The Joint Task Force is aware that there is a significant public policy challenge (but also opportunity) within the unique combination of three socio-political issues that create obstacles and impede progress in addressing economic and social disparities for First Nations and Métis peoples across Saskatchewan. The first is geographic marginalization. The majority of First Nation and Métis communities are situated in remote or rural areas with limited community development infrastructure. Over half of self-identified First Nations individuals live off-reserve and 75% of these individuals live in urban centers<sup>8</sup> – often in the ‘inner city’ which can be as isolating as remote or rural communities with limited community infrastructure.

The second is a demographic polarization. While the age distribution of the non-Aboriginal population of the province moves into an over fifty demographic, 55% of the province’s First Nations and Métis population is

<sup>6</sup> Acronyms for: Northern Teacher Education Program; Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program; and, Indian Teacher Education Program.

<sup>7</sup> Government of Canada. (1982). *Constitution Act, 1982*. Retrieved from [http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/English/ca\\_1982.html](http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/English/ca_1982.html).

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. *Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.ca>.

under age 25 as compared with 31% of the non-Aboriginal population.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the First Nations and Métis population is a minority at about 15% of the total population.

*“Jurisdictional issues abound...they are tiresome and appear endless.”*  
- Joint Task Force

The third issue is jurisdictional chaos. There exists an intricate and complicated set of relationships and jurisdictions among First Nations and Métis people and governments arising from historical agreements between Aboriginal people and the federal government, and between the federal and provincial government. These relationships and jurisdictions extend across many systems including justice, education, health, social services, economic development and environmental protection. They are often cited as the source of inability to respond to the needs of First Nations and Métis people.<sup>10</sup> Such a response is not helpful or useful in creating the transformative changes required. All parties with a stake in improving outcomes in education and employment, and therefore, the economic and social well-being of its citizens must be willing to come to common tables to put into action the accumulated wealth of directions that have been provided in numerous reports – including this one.

The Joint Task Force understands that these three issues, when taken together, create significantly more complexity and intense challenge for public policy design and application in addressing the disparities. But as the Joint Task Force heard, we are not without workable frameworks or models created by individuals in responsive institutions. Examples include creating ethical space (a way of engaging based on respect for each other’s history, knowledge, traditions, social, economic and political realities)<sup>11</sup>, First Nations and provincial school system partnerships, and multi-sector/party agreements for training and employment in health and resource sectors.

The Joint Task Force was cognizant of the recent work of a number of national organizations. A short description of several key works follows:

- In September 2007, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>12</sup> that set an international standard against which nation state behavior can be judged.

<sup>9</sup> Elliott, D. (2009) *Selected characteristics of the Saskatchewan Aboriginal population*. Retrieved from <http://www.sasktrends.ca/Sask%20Trends%20PARWC%20June%202.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Hence, the need for ‘Jordan’s Principle.’

<sup>11</sup> Pelletier et al. (2013). P. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, R. (2007). *Summary of the UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous people*. Sydney, Australia: University of Technology, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning.

Although Canada initially voted against the Declaration, in 2010 Canada endorsed it and reaffirmed commitment to build on a positive and productive relationship with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to improve the well-being of Aboriginal Canadians and a desire to move forward together.

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, enacted by the Supreme Court of Canada, recently released an interim report.<sup>13</sup> Its report provided a summary of community consultation activities, articulated the barriers to completing the commission's work in a timely fashion (by 2014) and made twenty recommendations in five areas: the operation of the commission, education, support for survivors, reconciliation and commemoration.
- The National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve released its report<sup>14</sup> in early 2012 offering principles and recommendations to guide improvements in education outcomes for children who live on reserve.
- Stating that the Chiefs had not provided a mandate to create the National panel, the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) of Quebec, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and Nishnawbe Aski First Nation (NAN) of Northern Ontario published a joint report<sup>15</sup> outlining an alternative view of the priority actions to improve First Nations education.
- The federal government has circulated a discussion paper proposing First Nations education legislation. Respecting the processes underway between the Prime Minister and First Nations, the Joint Task Force has refrained from commenting directly to this proposal.

*"We cannot visit the past and force mistakes onto the current generation. We need new story lines that started with Treaty which said we are equal."*  
- Participant

There are many elements affecting the quality of life for Saskatchewan people. Many documents are available which report and interpret particular data sets or indicators. Quality of life can include rates for poverty, housing availability, employment, violent crime, youth

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<sup>13</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2012). *Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Interim report*.

<sup>14</sup> National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve. (2012). *Nurturing the learning spirit of First Nations students*. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

<sup>15</sup> First Nations Education Council (FNEC), Quebec; Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN); Nishnawbe Aski First Nation (NAN), Northern Ontario. (2011). *Report on priority actions in view of improving First Nations education*.

incarceration, obesity, birth weight, childhood mortality, diabetes, infectious diseases, happiness, feeling safe, sport and recreational activities, arts and cultural opportunities, and many more. While there are many variances and nuances to how ‘quality of life’ is defined, in nearly every category First Nations and Métis people generally experience a lower quality of life which is often attributed to poverty and racism.

Saskatchewan is enjoying an economic boom. The Province released its vision for continued economic growth that “builds on the strength of Saskatchewan’s people, resources and innovation to sustain Saskatchewan’s place among Canada’s economic leaders.”<sup>16</sup> The Joint Task Force notes the Province’s intent to build on the recommendations of this report and welcomes the commitment to actions to improve quality of life and well-being for First Nations and Métis people.

Despite the economic boom, the Joint Task Force notes that poverty remains a reality for many people in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan’s economic growth has not benefitted everyone equally as it has brought with it rising costs making it more difficult for low-income families to meet their basic necessities. Saskatchewan’s poverty rate is higher than Canada’s overall poverty rate. Saskatchewan’s child poverty rate is the third highest provincial rate in all of Canada. In 2007, 16.7% of all children under the age of 18 were living below the poverty line.<sup>17</sup> It is estimated that 45% of those children are Aboriginal.

The Joint Task Force also heard that Saskatchewan has the highest youth incarceration rate of any Canadian province.<sup>18</sup> Children and youth who are convicted of crimes often have interruptions in education, increased exposure to illegal activities and desensitization to crime and violence. A criminal record affects their adult years and can limit opportunities. While Aboriginal youth comprises approximately 5% of the Canadian population, 33% of youth in custody are Aboriginal.

In summary, the Joint Task Force recognizes that the items in this section do not form an exhaustive list but they do provide a glimpse of some key considerations and factors that influence the complexity and content of the work undertaken by the Joint Task Force.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Saskatchewan. (2012). *Saskatchewan plan for growth: Vision 2020 and beyond*. Opening message: Premier Wall.

<sup>17</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca>.

<sup>18</sup> Government of Canada. *A one-day snapshot of Aboriginal youth in custody across Canada: Phase II*. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.gc.ca>.

*Saskatchewan's child poverty rate affects 35,000 children under the age of 18.*  
- Make Poverty History.ca

## Consultation

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The work of the Joint Task Force began with the assumption that “the current gaps in education and employment outcomes between non-Aboriginal and First Nations and Métis people are unacceptable.” The language of describing the existing situation simply as ‘gaps’ was quickly challenged and the Joint Task Force was invited to be mindful of the structural and systemic challenges that created the situation in the first place. The Joint Task Force further notes that the future envisioned for education and employment must also take into consideration First Nations and Métis visions, perspectives, goals and values for education and employment as an aspect of reconciliation. While the Joint Task Force’s mandate emphasized recommending and prioritizing evidence-based public policy, program and practical approaches in relation to the themes articulated in the project scope, the Joint Task Force recognized that understanding barriers and challenges was equally important for effectively proposing and analyzing potential future directions.

Recognizing the significant work that has been done in the province towards improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis, the Joint Task Force focused its efforts on a positive frame by looking for success stories at an individual, community and institutional level by inviting participants to share what is working. As the Joint Task Force grappled with the myriad of possible actions (both large and small) that needed to be taken, it also recognized the importance of focusing on key priorities to capture their momentum and to propel us to the next level of change.

Throughout the consultations, the Joint Task Force was sensitive to the fact that there have been many studies and reports completed on the issues and barriers facing First Nations and Métis people. The Joint Task Force realized that people might be hesitant to participate in yet another review and study process. This sensitivity was honored by an expressed commitment to work toward actionable outcomes from its work.

The Joint Task Force used strategies that ensured the consultation and research processes went ‘deep and wide’, were transparent, guaranteed confidentiality and encouraged the stories and experiences of the beneficiaries and stakeholders alike. A wide range of organizations, communities and individuals were invited or requested to attend various

*“Identification of ‘gaps’ is not as meaningful as the identification of barriers of Aboriginal learners to equitable access and benefit from the education system.”*  
- Participant

*“It is important to remember “First Nation” is a political term. There is a mosaic of First Nation’s cultures.”*  
- Participant



meetings and the open public meeting in each community. Flexibility and adaptability were key components of the consultations.

The Joint Task Force designed a community consultation to encourage stories and experiences – especially those that show promise and successful outcomes – from people and organizations across the province. Communications consultants worked to identify key groups in each community, advertise the consultations, and use community-based strategies to encourage a wide range of attendees. Local community media were encouraged to use the consultations as a news story.

Adopting a protocol of place, an Elder offered an opening prayer at the public meetings wherever possible. A presentation was then made by Chair Gary Merasty – or in his absence, by another member of the Joint Task Force<sup>19</sup>. The intent of the presentation was to briefly review the mandate, desired outcomes and scope of the Joint Task Force and to set the context for the discussion that followed. The consultations were guided by four questions in each of the four target areas – early childhood, preK to grade 12, post-secondary and labour force attachment:

1. What works or what's working?
2. What do you believe should be changed?
3. What do you believe *in your heart* will work?
4. What supports and environments are needed to create success?

In some communities, the questions were discussed orally only and recorders captured the essence of the comments. Sessions were audio recorded with permission from attendees for internal use to verify notes. Joint Task Force members often probed to elicit further discussion and deepen dialogue; efforts were made to ensure that everyone had the opportunity and level of comfort to speak or write their suggestions. A discussion guide<sup>20</sup> was prepared for use in more formal gatherings. Participants were encouraged to provide written responses to the questions and group processes were used to verbally share ideas. If participants wished to share their written material, their notes were gathered at the meeting, submitted through the website or emailed to the Joint Task Force. Some organizations or individuals used the discussion guide in advance of

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<sup>19</sup> Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People. (2012). *Voice, vision and leadership: An interim report*.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

the meeting to prepare responses. A number of groups prepared formal presentations for the Joint Task Force.

The Joint Task Force held 16 community meetings and 67 meetings with individuals, groups, organizations and institutions for a total of 83 meetings with over 1000 participants. (See Appendix A: List of Meetings). The Joint Task Force received 21 submissions (see Appendix B: List of Submissions) as well as numerous informative documents such as strategic plans, program reviews, annual reports, and project proposals.

The website, email address, Facebook page and Twitter account went active in April and remained active throughout. Public meeting information and ongoing Joint Task Force news was updated on the website, posted on facebook, or tweeted.

The Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MN-S) partnered with the Province to conduct a separate, parallel consultation process with Métis communities, students, educators, employers and stakeholders to provide input into and inform the Joint Task Force's work. The MN-S consultation process began in December 2012 and utilized its network to garner the participation of over 400 Métis citizens in 27 consultations. An Advisory Committee of Métis Educators was established to provide direction and advice to the MN-S. Feedback from the consultations was collated for a submission to the Joint Task Force.<sup>21</sup>

*"We want Métis students to be loud, proud and free Métis'!"*  
- MN-S Submission

Without the generosity of time and spirit from everyone with whom the Joint Task Force interacted, it would not have been able to fulfill the obligations of its mandate. This report exists as a testament to the passion and graciousness of participants.

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<sup>21</sup> Métis Nation – Saskatchewan. (2013). *Submission to the joint task force on improving First Nations and Métis education and employment outcomes*. P. 9.

## Research

The Joint Task Force determined two aspects for research and analysis as part of its mandate. One aspect was to gain understanding of the depth and breadth of previous research and reports. The second aspect was to conduct primary research to enrich and inform the mandate using an appreciative inquiry approach with a focus on the positive and building for the future.

The annotated bibliography<sup>22</sup> outlines over 100 seminal and research documents written over the past two decades that relate to the four target areas – early childhood, preK to grade 12, post-secondary and labour force attachment.

*“... Many participants expressed confidence that greater opportunities were currently available to Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan than at any other time since the creation of the province.”*  
- Pelletier et al.  
(2013)

The primary research had two purposes: to conduct research *with* First Nations and Métis people focusing on their experiences and ideas about education and employment; and to describe existing ‘lighthouse’ programs and practices and integrate those findings with current perspectives in the literature.<sup>23</sup> The primary researchers conducted on-site interviews and focus groups with twelve Directors of Education, ten teachers, one hundred and twenty-five students and fifteen parents. The researchers visited educational settings and institutions across the province including on- and off-reserve, rural, urban and northern First Nations and Métis contexts. They included First Nations and provincial schools, Adult Education centers, teacher education programs, a First Nations school division, and correctional centers. Students at various levels were interviewed as well as parents/guardians. Leaders of institutions that have partnerships with First Nations and Métis people were also interviewed. The researchers conducted a literature review examining provincial, national and international indigenous contexts to provide a context for the primary research.

The annotated bibliography and the primary research were used to support and inform the Joint Task Force final report. Both are available as companion documents.

<sup>22</sup> Myers, T. (2013). *Annotated Bibliography: Prepared for the joint task force on improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people*. University of Saskatchewan: Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit.

<sup>23</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 190.

## *Findings and Recommendations*

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The findings and recommendations of the Joint Task Force are described in the following section of the report. First, the Joint Task Force reports on its finding of three *Foundational Understandings* that overarch the other segment – dignified mutual relationships, poverty reduction and the prevalence of racism, and recognizing First Nations and Métis cultures and languages.

Then the report continues with an examination of the *Four Mandated Areas* – early childhood, prekindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary education and labour force attachment. Each of these areas includes the voices heard by the Joint Task Force during its extensive community consultations, some of the relevant research and the Joint Task Force’s recommendations.

## ***Overarching Foundational Understandings***

In its analysis of the consultations and research, the Joint Task Force determined three foundational, overarching ‘big’ ideas or understandings that connect and intersect with all components of this report. Taken together, these form a lens by which the Joint Task Force judged the efficacy of potential recommendations, in the context of its mandate and the principles adopted to guide its work. These overarching ideas apply across all the four areas – early childhood, prekindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary, and labour force attachment.

### ***1. Dignified Mutual Relationships***

*There are three “big” ideas which overarch this work:*

- *Dignified mutual relationships;*
  - *Poverty reduction and the prevalence of racism; and,*
  - *Recognizing First Nations and Métis languages.*
- Joint Task Force*

*The Joint Task Force recognizes the goal of equitable outcomes in education and employment is only possible through ‘reconciliation’ of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.*

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) issued its final report in 1996 with 440 recommendations calling for sweeping changes to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and governments in Canada. In its vision for the future, RCAP offered four principles of a renewed relationship – mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility – depicted in a circle, as the process is continuous without beginning or end.<sup>24</sup>

Recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) wrote, “Collective efforts from all peoples are necessary to revitalize the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society – reconciliation is the goal. It is a goal that will take the commitment of multiple generations but when it is achieved, when we have reconciliation – it will make for a better, stronger Canada.”<sup>25</sup>

As such, the Joint Task Force recommendations should not be interpreted in any manner as to infringe on Treaty or Constitutional obligations set out in Treaty or in the Constitution. The relationship embedded in Treaty for First Nations and the recognition of the Métis as Aboriginal people in the Constitution Act (1982) form the bridge to the future that will create a

<sup>24</sup> Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. (1996). *Looking forward, looking back*. Vol. 1. P. 677.

<sup>25</sup> As accessed at <http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=312>.

prosperous environment for all citizens of Saskatchewan. It creates an *ethical space*<sup>26</sup> for engagement guided by the precepts of dignified mutual relationships based on respect, reciprocity and good relations.

First Nations and Métis people have a strong history as nation builders. Even in tough times, they have worked to retain and regain the strengths and gifts to help build their communities, the province of Saskatchewan and Canada. Nor do they think that governments will solve all of their challenges; they recognize the importance of strengthening their own capacity as individuals and communities. However, there are times they need governments and institutions to respond in meaningful ways to their needs.

“... Ermine’s conceptualization of ethical space described a framework in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can exchange worldviews and achieve mutual cultural acceptance in an atmosphere of respect and trust.”  
- Pelletier et al.  
(2013)

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<sup>26</sup> Ermine, W. (2007). *The ethical space of engagement*. Retrieved from <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/17129/1/ILJ-6.1-Ermine.pdf>.



## ***2. Poverty Reduction and the Prevalence of Racism***

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***The Joint Task Force recognizes the importance of poverty reduction and anti-racism as complementary strategies to improve outcomes in education and employment for First Nations and Métis peoples.***

*“Don’t confuse the culture of poverty with the culture of the people.”*  
- G. Merasty

Saskatchewan is currently undergoing an economic surge; however, not everyone is benefiting and the gap is growing between the rich and the poor.<sup>27</sup> There continue to be pockets of high poverty in each urban centre and a large group of ‘working poor’ who struggle to support their families as the costs of living rise. Provincial indicators of poverty show that Saskatchewan has made little headway in reducing poverty, notably among Aboriginal people, single mothers and people with disabilities.<sup>28</sup> Pelletier et al. (2013) note that Aboriginal people living off-reserve are almost four times more likely to be living in poverty than non-Aboriginals. And child poverty is even more pronounced for Aboriginal families in Saskatchewan as a staggering 45% of Aboriginal children live in low-income families.<sup>29</sup> This deprivation is calculated as affecting 28% of Métis children and 59% of First Nations children.

This reality has significant implications for the future of the province and the importance of mediating and supporting transitions to education and employment through various interventions and learning opportunities. Disproportionate numbers of First Nations and Métis people are subject to economic exclusion such as labour market segregation, unequal access to employment, employment discrimination, vulnerability to unemployment and underemployment, income inequality, increased criminalization, poor health outcomes and dependence on social programming. Pelletier et al. (2013) contend that the social construction of prejudice leads to inequities; stratification based on wealth is further bolstered by racist attitudes [and institutionalized practices] that lead to further marginalization.<sup>30</sup>

To combat racism the Joint Task Force heard from many participants about the importance of learning a shared history as a starting point. St.

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<sup>27</sup> Poverty Free Saskatchewan. (2010). *Let’s do something about poverty!* Social Policy Research Unit: University of Regina.

<sup>28</sup> Holden, B., et al. (2009). *Poverty reduction policies and programs in Saskatchewan*. Community University Institute for Social Research: Canadian Council on Social Development.

<sup>29</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 11

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. P. 14.

Denis writes, “Far too many Aboriginal youth and adults have had to learn how to live in and with racism, often without support in naming this ‘Elephant in the room’.”<sup>31</sup> Critical anti-racist education is important to understanding the dynamics in operation; cross-cultural training and awareness may only serve to reinforce the belief it is cultural differences that are the problem. Racism is a deeper systemic challenge rooted in the history of colonization and it affects individuals and communities in real ways. It affects the sense of place and belonging.

A participant in the consultation shared the following observation with the panel: “I fear that racism will be there for a long time to come. The question is how do we live with it?” Part of the response might be that by learning to name it and by unmasking the origins of its logics, we no longer have to ‘live with it’. To this end, the Joint Task Force acknowledges the importance of educational institutions and workplaces creating learning opportunities and fostering inclusive climates.

*“We grow, learn and  
heal in the shelter of  
each other.”*  
- NITHA  
presentation

The Joint Task Force heard that Saskatchewan has a broad, but piecemeal, infrastructure for addressing aspects of the issue of poverty, involving multiple organizations and institutions, with a focus on supplementing income while encouraging job-readiness among individuals who receive income supports. There are provincial funding and partnerships with other levels of government and community-based organizations to provide programming geared to improve the quality of life for some people who are marginalized and struggling with poverty.

Poverty is a complex issue and requires leadership and engagement from community, civil society, government agencies, business and persons with lived poverty experience. A network of individuals and organizations from across the province are calling for a “Made in Saskatchewan” action plan.<sup>32</sup> Canada Without Poverty states that such a plan must encompass critical elements such as established targets and timelines, identifiable measurement tools, a community engagement process, mechanisms for accountability and reporting, adequate investment, and that it be set within a human rights framework or piece of legislation.<sup>33</sup> The Community University Institute for Social Research writes:

*“Poverty costs us all.”*  
- Poverty Free  
Saskatchewan

<sup>31</sup> St. Denis, V. et al. (2009). *Reclaiming the learning spirit*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Council on Learning. Retrieved from [http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/AbLKC/ReclaimingLearningSpirit\\_May2009\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/AbLKC/ReclaimingLearningSpirit_May2009_EN.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Poverty Free Saskatchewan. (2010).

<sup>33</sup> Canada Without Poverty. (2013). *Poverty progress profiles*. Retrieved March 2013 from <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty/poverty-progress-profiles/>.

*What is missing at this point in history [in Saskatchewan] is a common, comprehensive plan to provide focus for the effort to eliminate poverty. Innovative research, organizations, programming and collaboration at the local level could be tied into a provincial plan to address poverty that would include specific targets and monitor progress over the long term.*<sup>34</sup>

The Joint Task Force believes that actions and investments generated from the recommendations in this report reinforce critical aspects of a comprehensive plan to address poverty.

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<sup>34</sup> Holden, B., Chopin, N., Dyck, C. & Fraser, N. (2009). *Poverty reduction policies and programs in Saskatchewan*. Community University Institute for Social Research: Canadian Council on Social Development. P. 22.

### ***3. Recognizing First Nations and Métis Cultures and Languages***

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***The Joint Task Force recognizes the importance of language and culture as foundational to the well-being and success of First Nations and Métis peoples, and as a foundation of a shared Saskatchewan heritage.***

The aspiration of Aboriginal people to build capacity for sustainable organizations and healthy communities, with language and culture as the base and premise, is a matter of principle as stated in Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>35</sup>

The Joint Task Force heard repeatedly that first language and culture are foundational for programming at each of the stages – early childhood, prekindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary and labour force attachment. Similarly, the MN-S in their submission to the Joint Task Force identified cultural values, a sense of place, family and community, nationhood, language, lifelong learning, accountability, and relationships as critical to Métis identity.<sup>36</sup>

There is a consensus in the literature about the value and benefit of ‘mother-tongue education’. From an inter-generational perspective, it signifies the following:

- For First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth, it is the language they identify with whether or not they have learned to speak it;
- For adults and Elders, it is the repository of their collective histories and memories of place, their responsibilities, their connectedness and belonging as Dene, Cree, Dakota, etc., which reinforces their spiritual relationship to the universe; and,

*“Métis-specific curricula includes incorporating Michif language, art, music, storytelling, literature, dance, traditional knowledge and history.”*  
- MN-S Submission

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<sup>35</sup> United Nations. (2008). *United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Retrieved December, 2012, from [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Métis Nation - Saskatchewan. (2013). *Submission to the joint task force on improving First Nations and Métis education and employment outcomes*. P. 10.

- For the community, as a whole, it ensures transmission of Indigenous knowledge and nationhood, necessary ingredients for self-sufficiency and self-determination.<sup>37</sup>

In Canada, it is recognized that “the presence of Aboriginal cultures and languages is one of the key qualities that contribute to a unique Canadian identity and psyche....”<sup>38</sup> Unlike other minority language groups in Canada, Aboriginal peoples cannot rely on new immigrants to maintain or increase their population of speakers, passing on the language from parents to children is critical for the survival of all indigenous languages.<sup>39</sup> More importantly, they are the languages of this place.

The Northwest Territories and the province of Manitoba have adopted legislation that recognizes the value and importance of the Indigenous languages in their regions.<sup>40</sup> Internationally, other jurisdictions recognize the importance of unique Indigenous languages. For example, New Zealand proclaimed Maori as an official language along with English in 1987.

The Joint Task Force believes that within Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis languages should be given prominent status and recognition as they are a part of our unique Saskatchewan heritage. Such recognition will pave the way to reconciliation.

### **Recommendation 1 – Recognition of First Nations and Métis Languages**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province proclaim First Nations and Métis languages as the original languages of Saskatchewan. The government should enter into discussions with First Nations and Métis leaders to determine the most effective manner of implementing this recognition and support.**

*“Language and culture has permeated all four areas we are discussing. We are asking for a big bold step in this direction.”*  
- Participant

<sup>37</sup> Cottrell, M., Bouvier, R., Epstein, R., & Rohr, B. (2010). *Northern Lights school division #113: Cree bilingual program review final report*. University of Saskatchewan: Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit. P. 15.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. P. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Norris, M. (1998). *Canada’s Aboriginal languages*. Statistics Canada: Canadian Social Trends. P. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Retrieved from <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/a001-5e.php>; and, <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/live/pages/wpPages/olahome.aspx>.

## ***Four Mandated Areas***

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Based on the breadth and scope of the mandate, objectives and terms of reference, the Joint Task Force examined four mandated areas – early childhood, prekindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary and labour force attachment. Each of these areas is discussed in the following pages and includes the voices heard during the consultations, research and the recommendations of the Joint Task Force.

### ***1. Early Childhood***

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#### **The Importance of Place**

The Joint Task Force heard that all early childhood programming must recognize the importance of local knowledge to the development of a child's identity. The child must know about self, her/his place and culture before learning about others. Professionals and family should use child-centred partnerships in formal settings, in the home and the community. The Joint Task Force heard that language and culture are foundational for early years' programs. There should be better opportunities for language immersion; language development needs to start early.

Participants impressed on the Joint Task Force that Kokums, Moshums and Elders play an important role in teaching values and traditional skills in traditional ways (land-based teaching and learning). Care must be taken to define the role of these valuable people within the programming as there are too few available and much demand on their time.

The Joint Task Force heard of innovative programs such as Cree and Dene immersion programming, Summer Head Start camp, the Wraparound project, and other programming aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of First Nation and Métis culture and language in early learning programs.

The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (AbLKC) reports that the promising practices in Aboriginal learning legitimize “the voice of all Aboriginal people through *place* and culture, including the circle of

*“Create a holistic, high quality culturally responsive, community-based early learning and care system. It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken children.”*

*- Participant*



learning and respecting how one generation passes knowledge and culture on to other generations.”<sup>41</sup>

## Engaging Parents

*“It is tough for children to have dreams that you can be anything you want because people have lied to them throughout their childhood. They do not know that the world wants them to have dreams.”*

- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard that early childhood programming should include capacity building so that parents can be “teachers in their own homes” and should address issues that are barriers for parents such as:

- Locating daycares in or near schools or other educational settings to enable young parents to continue their education while maintaining close proximity to their children in a supportive environment;
- Providing housing appropriate to the circumstances of young moms/parents;
- Supplying transportation for young moms/parents and their children to attend not only the educational or early childhood programs, but also meetings, evening workshops or classes; and,
- Providing learning opportunities for parents to develop skills to be effective members of governance boards.

Research states that “the risk of aggression and opposition seems to increase exponentially with the accumulation of risk factors” and lists factors such as low income, parental antisocial behavior, low education, depression, risky prenatal health behaviours, and poor parenting skills.<sup>42</sup> It also recommends that early actions using programs that are evidence-based and proven to achieve positive results can have a significant impact on preventing later behavioural problems.<sup>43</sup>

Gunnar, Herrera and Hostinar (2009) state that chronic toxic stress associated with childhood abuse and neglect has a negative impact on brain development in young children.<sup>44</sup> Because parental substance abuse and mental illness are associated with increased risk of chronic stress

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<sup>41</sup> Blue Quills First Nations College. (2009). *Promising practices and programs in Aboriginal languages*. University of Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Education Research Centre, Saskatoon, SK and First Nations and Adult Higher Education Consortium, Calgary, Alta. Retrieved 11 Jan. 2013 from [www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca). P. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development and the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre. (2009). *Social and behavioural competence in young children: Briefing notes for policy makers*. Paper presented at the 40<sup>th</sup> Banff International Conference on Behavioural Science.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Gunnar, M.R., Herrera, A., & Hostinar, C.E. (2009). *Stress and early brain development*. University of Minnesota: Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development.

exposure for young children, these conditions and the economic circumstances associated with them are a major public health problem. Research also reveals that the child's access to supportive, attentive and sensitive adult care can buffer the impact. They conclude that there is a need to strengthen the range of formal and informal services to support parents including affordable expert assistance and increasing the availability of assessment and treatment.

Kraus (2013) notes that primary caregivers have the strongest influence on their children's early learning and development. She continues by noting that families live in neighbourhoods, "and the neighbourhood characteristics can either help or hinder the parents in providing an environment and experiences that support children's development."<sup>45</sup> Next to primary caregivers, high quality child care structures and early learning programs play a very important role in early learning and child development by reducing risk factors, improving access to special programming, improving educational outcomes in high school and post-secondary education and developing more positive self-esteem and coping skills.

*"We all have to care...  
it doesn't matter  
what nationality we  
are."*

*- Participant*

### **Funding the Early Years**

The Joint Task Force heard that important elements of early years' programming are not adequately recognized in the funding structures and cannot be left to current funding models. The federal-provincial jurisdiction issue was highlighted as the "single greatest impediment to progress in developing a modern set of institutions, programs and services" in early learning and childcare for Métis people.<sup>46</sup> Federal programming, when available, was ineffective in Métis communities in light of its pan-Aboriginal implementation approaches.

The Joint Task Force heard that on-reserve funding must be equitable with funding off-reserve for early childhood programming. Successful programming requires the funds to attract, hire and retain qualified professionals paid according to salary scales that demonstrate value for the work they do – working with young children in our communities. This

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<sup>45</sup> Kraus, S. (2013). *First Nations early childhood programs*. Prepared for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. P. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Gabriel Dumont Institute. (2012). *Improving education and employment outcomes for Métis people: Gabriel Dumont Institute submission to the joint task force*. P. 7.

would include funding to adequately provide the therapies (occupational, physical and speech-language) as required.

A variety of programs are available on-reserve for early learning, but most are proposal-driven which limits program duration and stability. Sustainable, long-term funding would reduce complicated, time-consuming application and reporting processes. Measuring the success of a program should be outcomes-based, reflecting common standards of well-being and the cultural base of the community's aspirations and goals, rather than centre on negative indicators and narrow definitions of success. Short-term funding does not build capacity nor enable long-term planning and the tracking of results over time. In many cases, it leeches away time better spent elsewhere in the agency or organization. This manner of funding is often counter-productive to the applicant and the funder's intentions.

*"The point isn't what portion of the cost ... governments each pay but, rather, that the wrangling stop so that the right care, at the right place, at the right times can be provided..."*  
- MacDonald<sup>50</sup>

The Joint Task Force heard and witnessed a lack of adequate and appropriate buildings for learning programs supporting the well-being of First Nations and Métis children. In addition, many on-reserve sites have limited or outdated technology, equipment or internet access. There are accessibility issues – roads and lack of public transportation between communities in Saskatchewan – that hamper many families from accessing the programs and services that do exist.

## Gaps and Transitions

The Joint Task Force heard that there are gaps in, or an absence of, supports that begin with prenatal care, and extend into the period between the birth of a child and that child entering pre-school. Mothers/parents of infants need services in their homes and communities in order to improve prenatal health, increase the early detection of developmental delays or language acquisition issues, and provide access to early interventions.

The Joint Task Force was told that attention is needed in the transitions – from home to early years programming, and from these to school programming, or between on- and off-reserve programming. Services should be linked to school in partnership with families and communities to ease transition for the child and to foster a good relationship between the parent/caregivers and the school. Schools, venues and programming must be family friendly to encourage smooth transitions for students.

## Integrated and Holistic Programming

The Joint Task Force heard that on- and off-reserve services, as well as services among agencies, can be better integrated and more holistic. Participants wanted coherence among programs such as the Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP), KidsFirst, Head Start, preK, and Families First and stated that universal access to early childhood programs is essential to improving well-being and learning.

The Joint Task Force heard that multiple jurisdictional arrangements further exacerbate and limit the sharing of information and data necessary for informed decision-making. The Canadian Council on Learning, in its overview of early learning and childcare programs, writes: “One of the main challenges facing these programs is that the administration and management of these programs is often caught between levels of federal and provincial or territorial governance. As well, the funding and application procedures may be cumbersome in nature, sorting through layers of government, which may deter program development.”<sup>47</sup>

Elders speak of focusing on the spirit first.<sup>48</sup> Kraus (2013) identifies that holistic, lifelong learning is one of the foundations for early learning and childcare from a First Nations’ perspective. Kraus calls for a “shift from a fragmented patchwork of early childhood services and programs to an integrated interagency model.”<sup>49</sup>

In recognizing the intent of *Jordan’s Principle*<sup>50</sup>, whereby no individual child should suffer due to jurisdictional issues, there should be a coordinated strategy and approach to early childhood services for all children in Saskatchewan. One way to begin this process is to ensure expanded and equitable on- and off-reserve implementation of ECIP and KidsFirst in Saskatchewan while respecting the diverse language and cultures that exist in community.

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<sup>47</sup> Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Aboriginal early learning and childcare: A Canadian overview*. University of Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Education Research Center. P. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Callele, M. (2012). *Action plan on education in the context of treaty (APECT): Community dialogues 2010-2011*. Saskatoon: Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

<sup>49</sup> Kraus, S. (2013). P. 35.

<sup>50</sup> MacDonald, N., (2012). *Aboriginal children suffer while governments ignore Jordan’s principle*. Canadian Medical Association Journal. Retrieved on Feb 2, 2012 at <http://www.cmaj.ca/content/184/8/853.full>.

The Joint Task Force heard that isolated Northern communities struggle with the lack of service options, suitable facilities and personnel. All the issues faced elsewhere in the province are exacerbated by factors related to the isolated locations.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) cited the critical importance of the early years and that children who participate in high quality early childhood development programs are more likely to finish high school and be employed. While it is the role of the family to pass on the knowledge and skills that support the development of a strong sense of self, many Aboriginal families struggle to provide the positive environment necessary for raising children. Research consistently notes the positive impact of high quality early childhood programs on the overall life outcomes for children.

*“Shift the language of schooling. ‘Kindergarten readiness’ vs ‘are the schools ready to teach all the children’ - no matter what skills they enter with?”*

- Participant

Canadian Council on Learning (2010) states, “Learning in the first five years of childhood has critical implications for well-being and later success in school, at work, in the community – more so than learning in any other stage of life. It involves the development of a range of skills, including physical, cognitive, language and communications, and emotional and social. Early learning is influenced by the quality of the education and/or care environment.”<sup>51</sup>

## Recommendation 2 – Early Childhood Strategy

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Province and the Federal government, working with First Nation and Métis authorities, articulate an integrated comprehensive Early Childhood Strategy both on- and off-reserve with attention to isolated communities. This Strategy would include the following actions:**

- a. **Examine existing services and programs to identify synergies, eliminate gaps and reduce barriers to access;**
- b. **Expand Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP) and KidsFirst to serve more Métis and First Nation children on- and off-reserve.**
- c. **Expand the Head Start program on-reserve.**

<sup>51</sup> Canadian Council on Learning. (2010). *State of learning: A year in review*. Ottawa. P. 4.

## Focus on Literacy in the Early Years

Literacy is a fundamental tool that is necessary for one's success, independence and mobility in society.<sup>52</sup> The Joint Task Force heard of the limited availability of reading material – books, newspapers, magazines and internet – and of programming to improve literacy in many First Nations and Métis homes, communities and schools. The lack of literacy skills impacts daily life, health and education outcomes and employment opportunities.

“The saddest casualty of illiteracy are the children who are affected by intergenerational illiteracy. Children of disadvantaged parents begin their school life behind their peers. Parents with minimal or no reading skills often cannot provide the kind of support their children need to do well in school. Analysis has shown a direct correlation between young people's test scores and the grade level attained by their parents.”<sup>53</sup>

*“It's shameful to admit in your community and to your family that you can't read - or can't read well.”*  
- Participant

The initial thrust for many family and intergenerational programs drew on research in emergent literacy that showed that parents' skills and practices influence the school achievement of their children. These studies examined early home experiences and suggested that they had a profound effect on development of cognitive skills. The notion of parent as first teacher grew from this body of research and influenced the growth of programs that focused on early childhood development.<sup>54</sup>

Ball (2008) focused on Indigenous children's emergent literacy in her research. She wrote:

*Carrying out a comprehensive early literacy strategy requires parent and community involvement; investment in training and service provision across sectors, and especially in the child care sector; targeted initiatives for children and communities identified as having greatest needs; coordination among federal, provincial and territorial government agencies; researcher engagement to evaluate intervention approaches; and appropriate funding.*<sup>55</sup>

*“One of the things that seems to be missing in this discussion is the parents. We talk over the fact that there have been a couple of generations lost to residential school abuse and social issues.... We have other issues we need to address beyond the funding and administrative issues.”*  
- Participant

<sup>52</sup> Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network. (2011). *Aboriginal adult literacy assessment tool: Saskatchewan AALAT provincial results*.

<sup>53</sup> Retrieved from <http://washingtoncountyliteracycouncil.org/>.

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/Famlit2.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Famlit2.html)

<sup>55</sup> Ball, J., (2008). *Promoting young Indigenous children's emergent literacy in Canada*. Canadian Child Care Federation. P. 2.

Libraries are community-based institutions that attempt to meet the information needs of local people. Community libraries have served as the repository for Indigenous knowledge and may house materials that represent a “tenuous thread that connects present generations to a traditional heritage.”<sup>56</sup> Australia recognizes that Indigenous knowledge contributes to the well-being via “cultural maintenance, and to produce social and economic benefits through innovation”<sup>57</sup> and thus a strong motivation exists to restore, maintain and protect Indigenous knowledge for cultural, educational and future generations. Using the local library as a repository for local knowledge and history provides a venue for those activities associated not only with cultural transmittal, but also with the development of literacy skills in one’s first language.

### **Recommendation 3 – Supporting Early Years Literacy through the Library System**

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Province utilize the provincial library system for an enhanced focus on literacy development in the early years with emphasis on Northern, rural and inner city communities with significant First Nations and Métis populations.**

**This focus would include:**

- a. Increased provision of parental literacy programming;**
- b. Enhanced availability and access to hardcopy and digital books including those with positive portrayals of First Nations and Métis people; and,**
- c. Ensuring collections include the First Nations and Métis language choices of the community.**

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<sup>56</sup> Nakata, M. & Langton, M. (Eds.) (2005). *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and libraries*. Sydney: University of Technology. P. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. P. 10.



## ***2. Prekindergarten to Grade 12 Education***

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### **Leadership and Governance**

The Joint Task Force heard that a shared vision for education among the educational leaders, the parents, community members and the school is important. The Joint Task Force heard significant support for ensuring appropriate representation and voice for First Nations and Métis people on the board of education in every school division where First Nations and Métis children attend school. In fact, First Nations and Métis people and voices are needed at all levels throughout the education system – from schools, to school divisions, to the Ministry level as teachers, administrators, chief executive officers, senior managers and elected officials.

Communities suggested that situating the governance of education at arm's length from the political entities was a best practice. Pelletier et al. (2013) state that the 'lighthouse' programs examined "demonstrate the importance of good governance and leadership in implementing change at the local level."<sup>58</sup> The research noted that leadership included the confidence "to allow professional educators and administrators to do the jobs they are trained to do without constant interference or micro-managing."<sup>59</sup> Health authorities and Child and Family Service Agencies are also using this best practice to keep a clear delineation between the elected officials and the management structures for services.

The Joint Task Force heard there is a need to provide professional development for educators, school-based administration and governance officials particularly when there is turnover of personnel and officials. Support was expressed for collecting, analyzing and sharing data in ways that provide for better decision-making. This is especially the case for First Nations schools and schools in the northern region of the province.

The Joint Task Force was informed that additional ways to include community voice are through Elders' councils, First Nations and Métis Advisory boards, or other supportive, meaningful structures. Leaders of education in First Nations systems and in the provincial systems need to be able to participate appropriately in educational decision-making using

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<sup>58</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 187.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. P. 187.



key information, community understanding and accurate data to inform those important decisions.

Students also need to have avenues for their voices to be heard within the school and the community. This could involve a variety of opportunities to develop leadership roles and skills within the school and within the community. Suggestions included using the arts (visual, literary and performing), sports, recreation and other clubs to develop lifelong skills and values.

Pelletier et al. (2013) derive a set of compelling characteristics from analyzing the ‘lighthouse’ programs:

*strong and shared governance structures; adequate and sustainable funding; integration of First Nations/Métis culture and worldviews into pedagogy and curricula; a holistic approach to student needs based on the integrated services model; broad, respectful and enduring partnerships; long-term strategic planning based on appropriate data collection and assessment; and authentic relationships with Aboriginal parents and communities grounded in a commitment to animating ethical space...*<sup>60</sup>

Other important aspects of successful leadership and governance noted throughout the research include items such as: planning to succeed; data collection, establishing a baseline and monitoring, establishing strategic partnerships (with other First Nation schools, provincial school divisions or other organizations that can bring funding, programs, services or supports to the table); sharing a clear vision; maintaining dedicated education funding (separate from Chief and council); second level services and supports for the school; and, providing multi-year teaching contracts to increase stability.<sup>61</sup>

### **Funding Disparity**

The Joint Task Force heard numerous statements regarding the disparities in the scope of educational funding between reserve schools and provincial schools, and it also heard that difficulties have been compounded by years of underfunding.

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<sup>60</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 107.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. P.

The Joint Task Force heard that too many critical support programs and services are forced to lobby for finite proposal-based funding pools predicated on identifying an existing deficit; in order to qualify, the applicant must demonstrate negative outcomes. This short-term funding exacerbates numerous issues including the program stability, staff retention, time allocated to proposal writing and reporting and the creation of competing programs funded through different channels (e.g. thirty-four federal funding sources each with different criteria).

Although disputed by Aboriginal Affairs<sup>62</sup>, expert reports repeatedly find that there is less funding for education on reserve than the provinces and territories provide for students under their jurisdiction. For example, Whyte (2012) summarizes: “The first important finding of the National Panel was that governmental funding of First Nations schools – both operating funding and capital funding – is inadequate and, more to the point, not comparable to provincial education costs.”<sup>63</sup>

Comparability however is not the only consideration or criteria. Ladson-Billings (2006) used the analogy of deficit funding in which the debt is the sum total of all the previous deficits as well as the accumulated charges which finance that debt. She states: “...The historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an education debt.”<sup>64</sup> Pelletier et al. (2013) note that these insights have “direct application to the intergenerational consequences of educational disadvantage and cultural and cognitive dissonance experienced by Aboriginal people in the Saskatchewan context.”<sup>65</sup> This education debt has profound implications for the province’s future given the well-documented links between educational outcomes and employment, income, and well-being.

*“We have wasted countless hours on trying to decide who is going to pay for what when we should be figuring out the best way to serve the education of our children.”*  
- Participant

## Recommendation 4 – Understanding and Addressing Funding

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province and the FSIN, along with First Nations education authorities, examine the level of prekindergarten to grade 12 funding provided for Saskatchewan**

<sup>62</sup> Canadian Press. (2012). *First Nations education not underfunded, figures suggest*. Retrieved October 5, 2012 from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/10/02/pol-cp-first-nations-education-figures.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Whyte, J. D. (2012). *First Nation education: Policy and political legitimacy*. University of Regina: Western Policy Analyst. P. 8.

<sup>64</sup> Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). *From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools*. Education Researcher, Vol. 35, No. 7, P. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 96.

**students educated in First Nations schools in comparison to funding provided to provincial schools.**

- a. Following this examination, it is recommended that the Province and First Nations authorities jointly engage the Federal government to resolve any identified funding disparities and, if necessary, seek mediation.**
- b. In the interim, it is recommended that the Province provide interim financial support to provincial school divisions to:**
  - **Reduce tuition costs charged to First Nations educational authorities pending conclusion of the preceding funding discussions; and,**
  - **Fund intensive supports for First Nations students attending school off-reserve who meet provincial criteria but are not recognized by AANDC<sup>1</sup> special education criteria.**

## **Second Level Support Services**

*“We need to have a more coordinated First Nation education system that is developed cooperatively and organically - rather than forced on us.”*  
- Participant

While acknowledging the need for additional sustainable support in secondary and tertiary services, the Joint Task Force heard about innovative approaches to provide these services through tribal councils and regional management organizations to First Nations schools. Participants expressed pride in, and support for, these foundational services – and they feared that the Federal government’s announced funding cuts do not recognize the essential nature of the services provided and will ‘gut’ the gains that have been made. As a result, the Joint Task Force was asked to consider the question, “What does ‘First Nations control of First Nations education’ look like in the 21st century?”

Any discussion on First Nations jurisdiction over education must have as its focus the fundamental reason for exercising jurisdiction – delivering high quality and relevant education to First Nations students.<sup>66</sup> Morgan notes that the “goal is clearly to provide a balance between family and community control over education, on one hand, and comparability and transferability, on the other hand.”<sup>67</sup> The Joint Task Force heard that high student mobility, often resulting from the search for affordable housing, employment or access to family support, impacts student success.

<sup>66</sup> Morgan, N. (2002). *If not now, then when? First Nations jurisdiction over education: a literature review*. Minister’s National Working Group on First Nation Education. P. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. P. 59.

One of the five key themes emerging from the research undertaken by the Joint Task Force was ‘governance.’ Governance includes establishing authentic partnerships, engaging in shared decision-making, establishing a common purpose, agreeing on common values and securing access to adequate funding. Pelletier et al. (2013) write that although the programming and curriculum vary among the ‘lighthouse’ programs, they all “evidenced within their governance a commitment to cooperate for a common purpose, to recognize common values, to engage in open and honest communication, to forge new ideas and secure adequate funding as a means of working towards a shared future based on reciprocity, respect and equality.”<sup>68</sup>

The Joint Task Force heard that First Nations and provincial schools and/or systems need to cooperate between and among themselves with sensitivity especially among those schools and communities where there is significant mobility of students between systems. Both provincial school divisions and First Nations education authorities need to provide regular professional learning supports to their staff and appropriate ancillary services for their students. First Nations education authorities and provincial school divisions can learn from, and share with, each other in the provision of these services. First Nations education authorities can provide particular expertise in First Nations’ ways of knowing and cultural liaison supports to provincial school divisions. A mechanism is needed to provide the effective linkages among education providers both on- and off-reserve.

### **Recommendation 5 – Second Level Support Services**

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Federal government work collaboratively with First Nations Authorities to build a comprehensive second level support system. This means that:**

- a) The Federal government would work with existing First Nations Education Authorities and Regional Management Organizations to enhance second level support services to on-reserve schools; and,**
- b) First Nations education authorities would continue to work together to consolidate and enhance services achieving economies of scale where appropriate.**

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<sup>68</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 187.

## **Recommendation 6 – Invitational Second Level Shared Service Initiative**

**Notwithstanding developments on the previous recommendation, the Joint Task Force recommends the Province establish an invitational Second Level Shared Services Initiative between provincial and First Nations authorities to provide incentives for cooperation across systems particularly in the areas of professional development for staff and ancillary professional services to students.**

### **First Language and Culture**

*“Education which values our languages, traditions, and values is what we want for our children. We must think - is this what they will teach our children to make them strong?”*  
- Participant

A strong, positive identity is key to academic success. The Joint Task Force heard that, as a foundation for school-based curriculum and programming, language and culture is a significant area for partnership among the parents, community and school. There are different needs in different communities as some have retained their language and culture and others have not – a fall-out of the residential school experiences and other historical policies directed at First Nations and Métis, all of which sought ‘to take the Indian out of the child.’ It is recognized that community support is vital for language and cultural development. It is also recognized that language and culture are not static but rather are continually evolving.

As well, the Joint Task Force heard that the curricula and teaching resources need to be responsive and acknowledge First Nations and Métis contributions to the province. Participants suggested that “Teaching Treaties in the Classroom” resource material has gained a level of acceptance in the provincial system, but it requires continued support and emphasis for all students to attain this critical knowledge. In addition, participants suggested the creation of a parallel “Métis in the Classroom” resource to acknowledge the history, culture and contributions of Métis people within the province. There is a need to develop relevant curriculum resources in all subjects that reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples and cultures.

To support language and culture within the school, various actions recommended by participants include:

- Hiring First Nations and Métis teachers and administrators, cultural advocates and Elders;

- Hosting events such as Elders' gatherings especially those that connect to land-based learning and community-specific ceremonial and spiritual events;
- Hiring of Treaty/specialist catalyst teachers;
- Establishing catalyst committees to support and provide advice to schools, teachers, and educational leaders;
- Creating a database of cultural resource people; and,
- Creating community-based Language and Cultural Centres or Institutes (sustainable economic ventures that benefit communities).

*"It's important for First Nations and Métis students to have heroes and role models in their schools. It's important that they see people in front of them every day who are First Nations and Métis."*

- Participant

The Joint Task Force identified language and culture as foundational to the success of First Nations and Métis students. The MN-S submission to the Joint Task Force reinforced that the "respect and support for the traditional languages of Métis people and recognition of the importance of language revival must be promoted."<sup>69</sup> The Joint Task Force was made aware of the developments regarding a First Language Strategy within the work of the Shared Standards and Capacity Building Council (SSCBC).<sup>70</sup>

The Canadian Council of Ministers of Education Symposium held in Saskatoon in 2008 concluded that for learners to succeed in education, "affirmation of their language and cultural identity is essential."<sup>71</sup> Thus, the retention, renewal and revitalization of Aboriginal languages is a moral imperative; and a concerted national-provincial-community based effort is required to ensure that Aboriginal languages continue to have a place and are retained in some form as a legacy for future generations.<sup>72</sup>

The Joint Task Force also recognizes that cultural competency "is a process that allows individuals and systems to develop capacity to work more effectively"<sup>73</sup> in multicultural settings. There need to be strong, on-going implementation and maintenance of the competencies in order to

<sup>69</sup> Métis Nation - Saskatchewan. (2013). P. 12.

<sup>70</sup> The Shared Standards and Capacity Building Council (SSCBC) is a technical working group between the FSIN and the Ministry of Education established by a Memorandum of Understanding in January, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Canadian Council of Ministers of Education. (2009). *Strengthening Aboriginal success – summary report of the CMEC summit on Aboriginal education*. Ottawa, Ontario. P. 10.

<sup>72</sup> Kirkness, V. J. (2002). *The preservation and use of our languages: Respecting the natural order of the creator*. Retrieved on March 3, 2013 from [http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/ILAC/ILAC\\_2.pdf](http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/ILAC/ILAC_2.pdf).

<sup>73</sup> Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. (2009). *Inspiring success: Building towards student achievement*. P. 11.

continue progress toward a goal of deepening understandings of worldviews.

*"Schools must have individuals in the classrooms who can reflect Métis perspective in their teaching within the content taught and in the teaching environment."*  
- MN-S Submission

### **Recommendation 7 – First Nations and Métis Content, Perspectives and Ways of Knowing**

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Province continue to strengthen its policies for First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing in curriculum, instruction and student assessment.<sup>74</sup> This would include:**

- a. Provide a First Language Strategy to create supports for all First Nations and provincial schools to make first languages of First Nations and Métis a priority. This would include the range of programming (core, intensive and immersion) and would include curriculum, instructional resources and assessment.**
- b. With Métis partners, create *Métis in the Classroom* resources parallel to *Treaties in the Classroom* resources to enrich the curriculum for all students.**

### **Recommendation 8 – On-going Professional Learning**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the educational partners work with First Nations and Métis cultural institutions to draw on their expertise for meeting on-going professional learning needs in the areas of First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing.**

### **Factors that Increase Student Engagement**

The goal of increasing parent engagement in the education of their children has many facets and challenges, but overwhelmingly, the Joint Task Force heard from parents, teachers, Elders, students and communities how key this involvement is to students who are and feel successful. Parents, caregivers and Elders are important role models, need to be involved in the child's education, and be able to teach and influence their children at home. The Joint Task Force learned about the province's innovative initiative to build a Holistic Assessment Framework that provides teachers, parents and Elders with timely information they need to support their child's learning. The assessment is delivered via iPad by

*"Nature has a beautiful way of teaching us. All we have to do is listen."*  
- Participant

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<sup>74</sup> Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. (2009). *Inspiring success: Building towards student achievement*. P. 11.

Askî, a turtle puppet, creating an opportunity for immediate feedback to teachers, parents and Elders with ways they can support further learning at home, in school, in community and on the land.

The Joint Task Force heard that sometimes parents and caregivers must overcome a negative view of education and school. They may require a personal approach to become involved through a School Community Council or other committees that provide them with voice and meaningful involvement. This can be complemented by other strategies such as:

- Providing a parental advocate to support interactions with the school including voicing concerns when conflicts arise;
- Providing transportation for parents or caregivers to be involved in school activities;
- Providing supportive programs and services that show parents how to engage with children and literacy which positively impacts family literacy and parenting skills;
- Providing adult mentors from the community to supplement parental support; and,
- Applying the components of the Community School Model which emphasizes strengths.

*"Parents have difficulty in school and their children have difficulty in school and you have to have some sort of plan to deal with that if you're really going to improve graduation rates or lessen the gaps in early education."*  
- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard the critical impact of the factors that impact teaching and learning for many students. These included racism (overt and institutionalized – such as a history that omits a sense of place and belonging for First Nations and Métis people) and stereotyping, poverty (housing conditions and crowding, inadequate water supply, poor nutrition), addictions and mental health issues, and family dysfunction resulting from these systemic social and economic conditions. The Joint Task Force heard that these factors need to be addressed in an integrated and holistic manner in order to affect positive change.

*"People need to be told their skills, talents, abilities and strengths so they can gain confidence to do well."*  
- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard that students benefit from school partnerships with the many existing post-secondary institutions (provincial, First Nations and Métis) in the professions and trades and with industry for trades and skills training, internships and apprenticeships.

The Joint Task Force heard there are many strategies that would improve the teaching and learning in the preK to grade 12 classrooms. Participants suggested the following:



*"I always tell the students that regardless of what happens in the rest of the course or what their grade is at the end, they need to know that their time in class made a positive difference in the community."*

- Participant

- Have high academic and behavioural expectations.
- Be innovative and flexible in the structure and design for the delivery of Saskatchewan's curriculum to meet the needs of First Nations and Métis students.
- Create transformative learning experiences by connecting learning to the land and to community.
- Enhance the delivery of mathematics and sciences instruction to maximize learning opportunities and broaden career options.
- Develop school improvement plans to encourage renewal and positive changes. Creating goals for improvement, taking actions, measuring progress and renewal based on the results creates significant awareness and potential for lasting change.
- Expand Practical and Applied Arts, with opportunities for work placements, to provide much-needed skill development, career exploration and work experience for many students who prefer hands-on learning.
- Ensure student assessment is holistic and meaningful for students, guarding against any practice that reinforces negative results or send a damaging message to the student. How success is measured should be a collaborative and transparent process.
- Create alternative avenues (and a policy change) such as offering a Core 12 for vulnerable 17-year-old students who require a significant number of credits to graduate. Under current policy they would have to leave school for a year in order to access an Adult 12 option.
- Use a modular credit system and block scheduling for the delivery of the high school curriculum to provide more flexibility than the present grades and credits system. More flexibility allows students to tailor academic schedules to build manageable programming, to balance parenthood, work or other responsibilities, and to succeed by utilizing more individualized program structures.
- Encourage the continued education of young parents by providing daycares linked to or in high schools. By providing safe, nurturing environments for babies and toddlers, the parents (particularly the mother) are able to maintain an educational focus. It also provides a venue for parents to develop parenting skills and to create supportive networks. These important supports are key for academic achievement leading to an improved socio-economic outlook for the family.

*"In the school right now, we have 56 young parents with 78 children under the age of 6...."*

- Participant

Based on personal experiences, participants suggested the following student supports:

- Ensure that early assessment and interventions in reading occur so that student's reading skill level does not impede school success.
- Employ appropriate English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teaching strategies as a transition for students who enter school with Dene, Cree, Michif or other languages as their first language or whose language is influenced by their mother tongue.
- Detect and intervene early for behaviours and learning difficulties that indicate potential issues. Clearly, unaddressed behaviour and learning difficulties create significant barriers to successful school experiences and contribute to school dropout rates.
- Celebrate each module of learning or achievement (i.e. Rainbow Youth's 'Road to Employment' program).
- Increase the number of First Nations and Métis teachers (particularly males) to serve as role models and mentors in middle years and high schools.
- Increase the important student support personnel and programming. This might include student advocates, attendance supports, special programming supports, job placement programming, re-entry programming and support, and outreach workers. These supports assist students to stay in school; however, if the student has disengaged, these supports reach out to invite students back into educational programming.

*"Most are nonparent students which means by grade 8 they are coming to school on their own, doing homework on their own. More supports such as tutoring and homework supports should be available."*  
- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard of Te Kotihitanga in New Zealand that enhances the engagement and achievement with Maori youth. Te Kotahitanga is described as a research-based professional development program to raise Maori educational achievement by supporting teachers and school leaders to become more culturally responsive.<sup>75</sup>

Ultimately, the Joint Task Force heard it is the quality and passion of teachers – the way in which they welcome First Nations and Métis children and youth, and the way in which they deliver the curriculum to create relevance and meaningful engagement in the lives of their students – that are keys to student success.

*"Ultimately, ...it is the quality and passion of the teachers...that are keys to student success."*  
- Participant

<sup>75</sup> Bishop, R. et al. (2011). *A summary of Te Kotahitanga: 2007-2010*. New Zealand: University of Waikato.

The depth of change required will challenge all those involved in Saskatchewan education. Educators need to confront the dominant assumptions about teaching and learning and challenge the established practices. First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing must be viewed as an integral aspect of Saskatchewan prekindergarten to grade 12. For this to happen, educators and policy makers *must* see “Indigenous peoples’ worldviews, social structures, and pedagogy as a legitimate foundation upon which to construct new meanings or knowledge alongside Western traditions and ways of knowing.”<sup>76</sup>

*“A crucial element for success in education of Aboriginal students is authenticity. The best learning occurs when it is connected with the real world in ways that are meaningful to the student in everyday life.”*

- Participant

There are a growing number of Saskatchewan examples where deep-rooted, locally-driven innovation is showing positive results. For example, Pelletier et al. (2013) describe eight ‘lighthouse’ programs within Saskatchewan “which are constantly evolving in response to local and global circumstances and are driven by a constant search for innovation and improvement.”<sup>77</sup> While each of the programs has evolved differently because of the unique local circumstances and relationships, the research finds there are fundamental commonalities.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education provided \$3.5M in 2012-13 to school divisions with at least 100 self-identified First Nations and Métis students that submitted a three-year First Nations and Métis Education Plan (FNMEP) as a component of the Continuous Improvement and Accountability Framework (CIAF).<sup>78</sup> This fund provides important support for school divisions to be innovative and to partner with First Nations and Métis people to improve outcomes for First Nations and Métis students.

The Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative brings together Aboriginal organizations, the business community, post-secondary institutions, First Nations schools and provincially-funded school boards to implement programs to support Aboriginal students.<sup>79</sup> The entrepreneurship program provides business experience through its content, case studies, hands-on activities, materials and mentors. Saskatchewan has two schools currently participating in five-year projects – Oskayak High School, Saskatoon, and

<sup>76</sup> Retrieved March 1, 2013 from [http://blogs.ubc.ca/ssed317/files/2008/08/bouvier\\_001.pdf](http://blogs.ubc.ca/ssed317/files/2008/08/bouvier_001.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 105.

<sup>78</sup> Retrieved February 2013 from <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/fnme/fnmeep-guide>.

<sup>79</sup> Retrieved November 2013 from <http://www.maei-ieam.ca>.

Scott Collegiate, Regina. The Joint Task Force heard there is an identified opportunity to expand the program in both provincial and First Nations schools.

There are exciting possibilities for innovative programs to drive sustainable change in Saskatchewan – change that engages First Nations and Métis youth and encourages them to stay in school where they can develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to achieve success in education and employment opportunities.

### **Recommendation 9 – High School Credit Attainment and Recovery**

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Province encourage innovation and flexibility in high school programming and scheduling. It should:**

- a. Develop modular high school curricula (i.e. quarter and half credit recognition) and flexible scheduling (i.e. quad and block schedules).**
- b. Establish a Core 12 program that provides vulnerable 17-year-old students with an option to attain graduation requirements without waiting to turn 18 years of age and remaining out of school for one year prior to accessing Adult 12 programming.**

*“This has happened.  
Let’s join together to  
make things better.”  
- Participant*

### **Recommendation 10 – First Nations and Métis Achievement Fund**

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Province increase funding for the existing First Nations and Métis Achievement Fund to further support strategies that are grounded in First Nations and Métis languages and cultures, and to enhance targeted literacy and numeracy programming.**

### **Recommendation 11 – Innovation in Youth Engagement and Entrepreneurship**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province, the FSIN and the MN-S encourage and enhance innovative programming and identify processes and sponsorship to pilot, monitor and adapt innovative programming to the Saskatchewan context. This includes the Province providing financial support for:**

- a. **The proposed sector-wide approach to engage with, and improve educational outcomes for, vulnerable First Nations and Métis youth as proposed by the educational partner organizations,<sup>80</sup> working with the FSIN and MN-S.**
- b. **The proposed project, *Getting back to Business: Engaging Aboriginal Youth in Entrepreneurship*, led by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, in partnership with the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative, the FSIN and MN-S, to engage First Nations and Métis youth and to improve their career options.**

### **Technological Literacy**

The Joint Task Force heard and witnessed that, from a capital and infrastructure perspective, many existing federal schools need to be replaced or upgraded and most need to be properly equipped to provide meaningful and relevant educational and learning opportunities to First Nations youth on reserves. Communities want to design, own and control their facilities. Reoccurring themes included: the lack of IT equipment or its outdated nature; the lack of supporting personnel, internet access or connectivity equitable to provincial schools; and, the lack of learning resources.

An earlier segment in this report spoke to the importance of a focus on literacy in the early years to lay the foundation for lifelong literacy (p. 37). This segment looks at the linkage between the broad definition of literacy and the other areas of the mandate of the Joint Task Force.

The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre identified best practices in the area of Aboriginal technology and learning across Canada. These best practices use technology to have a positive impact on social, cultural and economic issues both in their communities and nationally.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Comprised of: Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA); Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF); Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO); and the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS).

<sup>81</sup> Retrieved on February 7, 2013 from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/aboutccl/knowledgecentres/AboriginalLearning/Themes/AnimationThemeBundle6-BestPractices.html>.

The evolution of the workplace has made literacy – defined as including technological literacy – into one of the essential workplace skills. The Centre for Literacy of Quebec (2009) writes:

*The drivers behind workplace literacy and essential skills include: **workplace changes** (new work systems and processes such as technological and product innovations, the use of computers, e-mail communications and the Internet, team-working, more auditing, compliance requirements and quality control, greater concern over health and safety hazards); **demographic shifts** (ageing population, shrinking workforce); and **broader, worldwide developments** (the globalization of the economy and competition).<sup>82</sup>*

As our lives, communities and workplaces change in response to evolving technology and a knowledge-based economy, the skills adults need are wider-ranging today than they were in the past. In order to thrive in the rapidly changing world, a different set of literacy skills – including technological literacy – are part of the set of essential skills.

Essential Skills Ontario states: “Literacy has moved from a skill set that is *nice to have* to one that is *necessary to have* if a person wants to meet his or her personal and economic goals.”<sup>83</sup>

## **Recommendation 12– Technological Literacy: An Essential Skill**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province support the learning infrastructure needs of all Saskatchewan students and incorporate First Nations schools into the provincial prekindergarten to grade 12 Microsoft licensing agreement.**

### **Portfolio of Experiences – Driver Education**

The Joint Task Force heard that First Nations and Métis student’s education needs career laddering and career development action plans as a way of providing real life applications for classroom learning. This should include creating a portfolio of experiences including: work site expectations, resumes, employment forms and income tax filing. It might also include ‘life skills’ such as budgeting, meal planning and grocery

*“We need to create a level playing field for all the children to have the same benefits that are afforded children in higher income families.”*

*- Participant*

<sup>82</sup> Centre for Literacy of Quebec. (2009). *Workplace literacy and essential skills: What works? And why?* P. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Essential Skills Ontario. (2012). *Literacy and essential skills in Ontario.* P. 3.

shopping, and rites of passage such as obtaining a Social Insurance Number, a driver's licence, or a treaty card.

The Joint Task Force heard that obtaining a driver's licence, a typical aspect of 'coming of age' readily accessed by most Saskatchewan youth, is not so easily attained by First Nations youth. Post-secondary institutes noted that the lack of a driver's licence limited work placements during their education.<sup>84</sup> The lack of a driver's licence impacts job opportunities.

The mandatory driver education course is typically offered in provincial high schools by a certified driver educator.<sup>85</sup> Driver education services are not available for most on-reserve students. If a student pursues the driver's licence on his or her own, s/he is required to complete six hours of in-car and six hours of in-class instruction from a licensed driving instructor.<sup>86</sup> Not only is it difficult to find a licensed instructor outside of urban areas, the cost of the individualized training is prohibitive to many First Nations and Métis youth.

First Nations drivers pay licensing and registration fees to the Auto Fund (part of SGI) which supports the provision of driver education in provincial schools. The lack of a driver's licence impacts the ability to attend training, get to a job site, seek employment, attend appointments or maintain family connections when attending post-secondary institutions or working away from home. First Nations students should have the opportunity to be equipped with this life skill.

### **Recommendation 13 – Driver Education**

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Province fund driver education training for Saskatchewan students attending First Nations schools.**

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<sup>84</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 203.

<sup>85</sup> Retrieved on Feb 12, 2013 from [www.sgi.sk.ca/individuals/licensing/driverexams/drivered.html](http://www.sgi.sk.ca/individuals/licensing/driverexams/drivered.html).

<sup>86</sup> Retrieved on Feb 24, 2013 from [www.sgi.sk.ca/individuals/licensing/studyguides/drivershandbook/licenceprogram/mandatoryeducation.html](http://www.sgi.sk.ca/individuals/licensing/studyguides/drivershandbook/licenceprogram/mandatoryeducation.html).



### 3. *Post-Secondary Education*

#### **Adult Basic Education**

The Joint Task Force heard that Adult Basic Education (ABE)<sup>87</sup> is an important element for many First Nations and Métis people who have left school before graduation. ABE supports adult learners who are increasing education and/or certification levels; gaining prerequisites for further training or employment; enhancing life skills, independence and self-sufficiency; or learning skills in specific areas (such as technological literacy, communication skills, or portfolio development).

The Joint Task Force heard that the pilot initiative, *Adult Basic Education – Essential Skills for the Workplace* (ABE-ESWP), was successful in its completion rate and employment outcomes. In 2009-10, 95% of the participants were First Nations, Métis or Inuit.<sup>88</sup> The best practices include creating a partnership with First Nations; engaging with employers early; tailoring the program to focus on local job market needs and equipping learners for that job market; and, addressing barriers with holistic supports. In 2011-12, publicly funded post-secondary institutions delivered 24 similar ABE-ESWP pilot projects enrolling about 466 learners and providing 545 opportunities for enrollments.<sup>89</sup>

*“Colleges need to get into the communities they are serving to see what is going on.”*  
- Participant

In the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*,<sup>90</sup> the Province commits to eliminating the wait list for Adult Basic Education programs by the end of its current term. The Joint Task Force urges the Province forward in reaching this goal.

#### **Recommendation 14 – Adult Basic Education**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province continue to expand Adult Basic Education particularly on reserve.**

<sup>87</sup> Adult Basic Education (ABE) is an umbrella term that refers to a wide range of services, credit and non-credit programs designed to help adult learners.

<sup>88</sup> Amendt, T. (2012). *Forum of labour market ministers best practices workshop*. Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

<sup>89</sup> Retrieved on March 10, 2013 from <http://www.aeei.gov.sk.ca/abe-eswp>.

<sup>90</sup> Government of Saskatchewan. (2012). *Saskatchewan plan for growth: Vision 2020 and beyond*.



## Funding Higher Education

*"The cost of incarcerating one Aboriginal person for one year is \$100,000 - a total far greater than the \$13,200 it costs to send one Aboriginal person to university for one year."*  
- AFN 2010

The Joint Task Force reported in the Interim Report that the most prominent issue is inadequate funding for post-secondary education of First Nations and Métis students.

The perceived 2% funding cap on the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) is a barrier for many First Nations as it does not recognize the growing population nor the increased costs associated with post-secondary education. The current allocation of funding does not reflect the cost of living in cities (accommodations, food, utilities and transportation), travel, childcare and course needs (textbooks, computers and printing).

When the PSSSP was established in 1977 only 3,600 students received financial aid; that figure is approximately 20,000 currently. The PSSSP moved from a fully-funded model to an equitable distribution of available funds model which places more students on a waiting list each year. Opikokew (2012) notes that it is estimated that "10,000 eligible Status Indian and Inuit students have been waitlisted by their bands across Canada and cannot access post-secondary because of the annual 2% funding cap."<sup>91</sup> "By encouraging them to wait – and making them wait longer – many may never begin."<sup>92</sup>

*"As a single parent I was able to get bursaries applied to my student loads which gave me more motivation to stay in school."*  
- Participant

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* (1996) stated that "in all jurisdictions, spending on Aboriginal education is inadequate to reverse accumulated educational deficits."<sup>93</sup>

In calculating the rate of financial return on educational investment, Howe (2002) notes: "Income forgone to an individual represents a loss to society both in terms of what the individual would have produced to earn that income, and also any resulting expenditures on social assistance

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<sup>91</sup> Opikokew, C. (2012). *Failing the grade and passing the buck: Analyzing Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's post-secondary student support program* (PSSSP). P. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Howe, E. (2006). *Saskatchewan with an Aboriginal majority: Education and entrepreneurship*. P. 29.

<sup>93</sup> Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. (1996). *Gathering Strength*. Vol. 3. P. 434-584.

programs.”<sup>94</sup> Howe (2011) measures the impact of education on the lifetime earnings of non-Aboriginal, Métis and First Nations males and females and makes the business case for higher education. Howe suggests that a Métis couple who drop out of school will earn \$806,000 in their lifetime; if they finish high school, this doubles to \$1,600,000. If they both go to university, their lifetime income doubles again to \$3,200,000.<sup>95</sup> He also suggests that the educational decisions are often made long before adulthood.

*“The more you learn,  
the more you earn,  
especially Aboriginal  
people.”*  
- E. Howe (2011)

Kouri (2008) wrote, “In Saskatchewan ... it is relatively easy to make the business case for supporting First Nations employment and post-secondary education. The province is simultaneously experiencing a shortage of skilled labor and a rise in both the size and proportion of the First Nations population.”<sup>96</sup> In a recent publication Howe (2012) notes that although First Nations education levels are increasing, yet they are falling further behind non-Aboriginal attainment levels. “This relative decrease in the educational attainment of First Nations people came in the Information Age when education is critical for success in the labour market.”<sup>97</sup>

During the pursuit of post-secondary education leading to employment, First Nations and Métis youth encounter both barriers and supports. The factors are complex and inter-related, operating at different levels. For example, Métis and First Nations students are debt averse – often coming from poverty and lacking familial support to repay debt – and they want to avoid accumulating further debt. For those who access the Canada-Saskatchewan student loan programs as a main source of living income to attend a post-secondary institution, this compounds the situation.

*“Post-secondary  
education is  
important to  
everybody, but,  
having said that, it is  
difficult to  
accomplish when one  
is intimidated by the  
costs of school and  
childcare. Most  
people choose work  
over education.”*  
- Participant

## **Recommendation 15 – Funding Post-Secondary Student Supports**

**In order to keep pace with the rising costs of living and the increasing number of First Nations and Métis students, the Joint Task Force recommends that the Federal government increase funding for:**

<sup>94</sup> Howe, E. (2002). *Education and lifetime income for Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan*. P. 23.

<sup>95</sup> Howe, E. (2011). *Mishchet aen kishkayhtamihk nawut ki wiichiihtonaan: Bridging the Aboriginal education gap in Saskatchewan*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute. P. 10.

<sup>96</sup> Kouri, D. (2008). *Supporting employment and post-secondary education for Saskatchewan First Nations youth: Toward an inclusive economy*. P. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Howe, E. (2012). *Employment of First Nations people: Saskatchewan lags behind*. Saskatoon, SK: University of Saskatchewan. P. 5.

- a. **The Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) for First Nations students; and,**
- b. **Bursaries available to Métis students pursuing post-secondary education.**

### **Multiple Opportunities Close to Home**

*“Training in an environment that is familiar to northerners is necessary.”*

- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard many people speak of the need to offer post-secondary courses and training close to their home community to maintain the student’s family support and obligations, housing and childcare arrangements.

Participants asked that the courses and training fit the employment opportunities in their geographic area. Participants asked that courses be segmented and modular to allow students multiple opportunities to enter and exit training and academic pursuits. This supports the career pathing many participants felt they needed which allows them to work, access short training and education programs, and return to work. There need to be multiple opportunities for upgrading of current skill sets and education including opportunities in the mathematics and sciences to meet requirements for further education. More opportunities to complete high school through Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED programming are needed as these are basic building blocks for lifelong learning opportunities.

*“There is a myth that First Nation students do not have ability. ...but rather First Nations students do not have the same opportunities.”*

- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard requests for an integrated province-wide system for transferring credits among institutions (regional colleges, universities, trade and technical institutes) that does not penalize the learner who may access courses from multiple institutions.

### **Recommendation 16 – Campus Saskatchewan**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province establish a ‘Campus Saskatchewan’ to ensure seamless transfer of credits among provincial institutions so learners are not penalized when they transfer between institutions. It further recommends that the Province enhance recognition for credits achieved out-of-province including prior learning achievement recognition (PLAR).**

## Indigenization and Decolonization of Post-Secondary Institutions

The Joint Task Force heard there is a need for compulsory and recognizable learning opportunities to create awareness and responsiveness to the foundational premise of relationships based on the Constitution, treaties and other constructive agreements with Indigenous peoples, their aspirations and challenges faced across all programs at universities, trade schools and regional colleges. This would include increasing the numbers of Aboriginal teachers, professors and instructors in all areas of the institution's programs. Furthermore, the Universities, regional colleges, technical institutes and private trade schools must make learning opportunities regarding First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and history mandatory for every teacher, instructor and student.

Saskatchewan has a number of institutions that offer culturally affirming programming. Pelletier et al. (2013) note that the needs of First Nations and Métis students within post-secondary education mirror those of First Nations and Métis students in kindergarten to grade 12. "Cultural affirmation, sense of belonging, monitoring success and authentic partnerships are all critical components of successful Aboriginal post-secondary education."<sup>98</sup>

*"The Aboriginal employment level is 4% at the university so there might be a bias at the institutional level. Hiring practices need scrutiny."  
- Participant*

A framework is offered by the Association for the Canadian Deans of Education who signed an *Accord on Indigenous Education* to advance the vision that "Indigenous identities, cultures, languages, values, ways of knowing, and knowledge systems will flourish in all Canadian learning settings."<sup>99</sup> Goals include:

- Respectful and welcoming learning environments;
- Respectful and inclusive curricula;
- Culturally responsive pedagogies;
- Culturally responsive assessment;
- Affirming and revitalizing Indigenous languages;
- Indigenous education leadership;
- Non-Indigenous learners and Indigeneity; and,
- Culturally respectful Indigenous research.

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<sup>98</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 84.

<sup>99</sup> Association of Canadian Deans of Education. (no date). *Accord on Indigenous Education*. Retrieved March 20, 2013 at [http://educ.ubc.ca/sites/educ.ubc.ca/files/FoE%20document\\_ACDE\\_Accord\\_Indigenous\\_Education\\_01-12-10.pdf](http://educ.ubc.ca/sites/educ.ubc.ca/files/FoE%20document_ACDE_Accord_Indigenous_Education_01-12-10.pdf).

Additionally, the Joint Task Force heard that post-secondary institutions must be accountable with targets and measures for the success of their program and in meeting the needs of First Nations and Métis students.

### **Recommendation 17 – Indigenization and Decolonization**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the post-secondary institutions (regional colleges, universities, and SIAST) accelerate the indigenization and decolonization of all aspects of institutional life.**

### **Responsiveness, Smooth Transitions and Supports**

The Joint Task Force heard that transition and system navigation supports are essential between high school and post-secondary, and within the first year of a program. Participants noted that students were more successful where they had transition supports to help with housing, banking, application and registration processes, course selection, busing, transportation to work placements or practicums, the culture shock of a new community, seeking medical practitioners, or contract negotiation. Other supports might include: academic coaches, tutors, Elders and cultural advisors, and summer transition programs.

The Joint Task Force heard that successful programs build in career laddering or pathing opportunities by exposing students to multiple careers, jobs and professions through short-term practicums, work experience placements, trade and career expositions, job shadowing and mentoring programs. These need to be supported by guidance and career counselors who help students develop career portfolios, design resumes, analyze career aptitude tests with students, and develop interview skills. It was felt that every student would benefit from participation in work placements.

Because most people have multiple careers in their work life, many participants echoed the importance of lifelong learning. Post-secondary institutions, in partnership with business, provide important opportunities for enhanced career flexibility. The Joint Task Force heard that there is a need for First Nations and Métis managers, owners and entrepreneurs. Institutions are urged to expand programming beyond traditional career pathways.

There is general consensus that First Nations and Métis students need additional targeted supports in order to be successful. This need is attributed to “the legacy of residential schools, poverty, health and past and present colonizing educational practices.”<sup>100</sup> At present, many First Nations and Métis post-secondary students are somewhat older than non-Aboriginal students and they are more likely to have dependents. This creates barriers and pressures that need to be addressed with holistic supports.

There is also general consensus that publicly funded education is the best tool for promoting individual and collective well-being and sustaining social cohesion. Therefore, programs that respond to the needs of First Nations and Métis learners to ensure more equitable outcomes will lead to improved education and employment opportunities.

The Joint Task Force acknowledges the important role that First Nations and Métis institutions and initiatives have served in meeting the goals for strengthening the identity (history, languages and knowledge traditions) of First Nations and Métis people, and simultaneously addressing the education and employment needs for First Nations and Métis people. Their successes are well-documented.

Pelletier et al. (2013) write that the “global search for improved Indigenous education outcomes, in conjunction with the postcolonial turn in education, is an opportunity to fundamentally re-imagine how schools are constructed and operated and to reconfigure how schools relate to learners, their families and their communities.”<sup>101</sup>

To address the challenges for Indigenous people in the north, the International Centre for Northern Governance and Development (ICNGD) states in its submission that post-secondary opportunities have to demonstrate the following qualities: accessibility (face-to-face or advanced technology); rooted in community needs and aspirations with a tight connection to the job market; and, offer learning and training opportunities that are relevant and adapted to northern realities including family and community dynamics.<sup>102</sup>

*“First Nations youth should be professors as well as plumbers.”*  
- Participant

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<sup>100</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 88.

<sup>101</sup> Pelletier, T. et al. (2013). P. 104.

<sup>102</sup> International Centre for Northern Governance and Development. (2013). *Submission to the joint task force regarding post-secondary education in Northern Saskatchewan.*

### **Recommendation 18 – Leadership Programming**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that all post-secondary institutions (regional colleges, universities, trade and technical institutions) prioritize supportive leadership programming such as mentorship, internship and cooperative work options to transition First Nations and Métis instructors, faculty and staff into leadership positions.**

### **Recommendation 19 – First Nations and Métis Institutions of Higher Learning**

**The Joint Task Force recommends the Province engage with First Nations and Métis institutions of higher learning<sup>103</sup> to expand their capacity to deliver programming to meet the needs of the First Nations and Métis communities and the growing demands of the Saskatchewan economy.**

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<sup>103</sup> Comprised of: First Nations University of Canada (FNUC); Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT); Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI); Dumont Technical Institute (DTI); Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP); Northern Professional Access College (NORPAC); and Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP).

#### ***4. Labour Force Attachment***

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##### **Aligning Education with Labour Demands**

The Joint Task Force heard from the business community that it is having difficulty recruiting First Nations and Métis individuals into areas such as accounting, engineering, law and general business.<sup>104</sup> In addition, most of the positions filled by First Nations and Métis employees are entry-level and businesses report less success recruiting First Nations and Métis individuals into management roles. The Joint Task Force heard that post-secondary institutions, particularly in Northern Saskatchewan, must offer courses and training that align with job opportunities in that geographic region. The courses must result in work opportunities in the shortest possible timeframe in order to meet both the needs of the learner and those of employers.

*“The cost of doing nothing is the most compelling reason to change.”*

*- Participant*

Businesses which are successfully hiring First Nations and Métis employees often direct source candidates from the First Nations Employment Centre, Saskatchewan Institute of Indian Technologies, First Nations University of Canada, or Dumont Technical Institute. They also host student internships, provide scholarships, hire summer students, attend career fairs and work with Aboriginal organizations to advertise and source candidates.

First Nations University of Canada responded to industry’s demands by creating ITEAM (Institute for Tribal Energy Asset Management and Mining) which is ‘helping to rebuild Indigenous Nations through community and career driven higher education.’ The programming is ‘stackable’ which allows for credentialing and multiple avenues to access higher education so that graduates are connected immediately to jobs and careers.

The Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA) identified health professional needs that led to establishing training in the North. Students could stay in their home communities, continue to work and have supportive networks. Programming includes the Health Career Access Program and the distance-based Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program which respond to the needs of the north and to the needs of the people including remaining sensitive to First Nations and Métis perspectives.

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<sup>104</sup> SaskEnergy submission. November 2012.



Like other successful programming, it includes multiple entry and exit points to allow for career laddering.

Emery (2013) urges Saskatchewan to “better align the post-secondary system’s training capacity with projections for the province’s labour market needs.”<sup>105</sup> The government’s *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* also stated the need for: “... better connections between job seekers and job opportunities, as well as increased development within Saskatchewan’s workforce. Full engagement of First Nations and Métis people in the economy is top of the Conference Board’s list.”<sup>106</sup>

## **Recommendation 20 – Aligning Education and Labour**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that all post-secondary institutions (provincial, First Nations and Métis) continue to work closely with employers to provide better alignment between industry employment needs and program offerings.**

### **Inclusive Workplaces**

“Working parents believe that their children will follow in their footsteps.”  
- Participant

There is a need for First Nations and Métis role models in many careers, and particularly in management, ownership and entrepreneurial roles. Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Association, CAMECO and SaskEnergy were noted as having promising practices within corporate business for their program opportunities and supports for First Nations and Métis employees to more fully participate in the workplace.

The Joint Task Force was asked to consider ways to improve the communication between businesses with human resource needs and tribal councils/ Métis regional authorities/ employment services/ training institutions to ensure people are being matched with interests, training and real job opportunities. There were suggestions to develop a ‘case management’ process and system to enable willing employees and employers to find suitable work arrangements. The Joint Task Force also heard the value of companies recruiting by reaching out to First Nations and Métis communities.

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<sup>105</sup> Emery, J.C. (2013). *Labour shortages in Saskatchewan*. University of Calgary: The School of Public Policy. P. 1.

<sup>106</sup> Government of Saskatchewan. (2012). *Saskatchewan plan for growth: Vision 2020 and beyond*. P. 16.

The Joint Task Force heard that economic and social conditions warrant community and workplace supports to overcome barriers to employment and work placements. The barriers include: lack of transportation, a valid drivers' licence, Social Insurance Number, child care, appropriate work attire, appropriate nutrition, training certificates, budgeting and coping skills when workplace racism occurs. Other barriers noted for the Joint Task Force included the presence of addictions issues or criminal records, knowing how to live within pay cycles or even having lunch money. The Joint Task Force heard that successful programs are holistic in the way in which they deliver 'job-readiness' skills programming and supports .

*"I needed literacy skills to move forward in the company...."*  
- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard there is a benefit for employees who are able to access work experience placements such as job shadowing, practicums, and summer employment to allow potential employees to try a job. Additionally, the employer has an extended 'job interview' over the term of employment. Other positive strategies included:

- Employers and training institutions partnering to train people for meaningful, existing jobs;
- Supervisors and managers experiencing learning opportunities to increase their understanding of the advantages of employing First Nations and Métis people;
- Job-site mentors to advocate and mediate issues that impact the work and the workplace environment for First Nations and Métis workers to increase retention and job satisfaction;
- Workplaces providing 'health' services – counselling, addictions workers, and mental health programs;
- Employers providing transportation to the work site;
- Employers ensuring the work site is socially and culturally affirming and accepting, with enough fun and flexibility to accommodate employee needs; and,
- Employers assisting individual employees with advanced education, professional development opportunities and management experience.

*"Our success at our work is because our employer has lots of patience."*  
- Participant

The Joint Task Force heard that government must ensure policies are in place requiring businesses to involve the available First Nations and Métis labour force particularly on large projects such as potash or other resource development. The Joint Task Force heard that there is need for enhanced opportunities and incentives to develop management skills within the First Nations and Métis labour force. The Joint Task Force heard that people

want to shift from ‘survival’ jobs to attaining careers and meaningful employment.

*“The province is going through a boom but First Nations people have not participated in the booms of the past. How do we ensure the First Nations participate in this boom?”*

*- Participant*

There are many examples of businesses which have hired First Nations and Métis people for long-term, productive careers benefitting both the business and the individual. Unfortunately, there are also many negative experiences. The languages and cultures of First Nations and Métis people could provide valuable insights to ways of seeing, being and doing for employers. More workplaces need to assume a leadership role to create safe and inclusive environments.

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce notes that human resource managers must work not only to recruit but also to retain Aboriginal employees.<sup>107</sup> The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business supports the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program which recognizes the value of relationships and diversity of challenges that face companies that are committed to the Aboriginal community. PAR verifies corporate initiatives and outcomes in four key performance areas: employment, business development, community investment and community engagement.<sup>108</sup>

There are other examples of successful practices in Saskatchewan’s business community. Particular focus needs to be on moving employees past entry-level positions to management and executive careers. Because many of the successful businesses already employ leadership development practices within the corporate structure, work needs to be tailored to meet the demand for culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal employees.

There is a caution noted in the work of Howe (2012) that, although businesses claim to successfully employ Aboriginal people, the data would show that these are mostly “significant public relations efforts focused on lauding their own employment of First Nations people. It is obvious...however, that there can be a large gap between public relations and reality.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. (2012). “Let’s try that twice.” Draft pamphlet.

<sup>108</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.ccab.com/progressive\\_aboriginal\\_relations\\_par](http://www.ccab.com/progressive_aboriginal_relations_par).

<sup>109</sup> Howe, E. (2012). *Employment of First Nations people: Saskatchewan lags behind*. Saskatoon, SK: University of Saskatchewan. P. iv.

## **Recommendation 21 – Inclusive First Nations and Métis Workplace Framework**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with First Nations and Métis authorities, and the Province, develop an inclusive First Nations and Métis workplace framework that highlights essential characteristics for recruitment, retention and long-term employment of First Nations and Métis people.**

### **Emergent Employment Opportunities**

The Joint Task Force heard of successful practices, models and individuals and the desire for these to be showcased and celebrated. The Joint Task Force heard that one of the most promising practices is the recent emphasis on ‘quick skills’ training – a unique, industry-guided approach to enable entry into employment. This programming provides a short turnaround for students to train for specific emergent employment opportunities, does not require a lot of capital or infrastructure, utilizes personnel and supports from existing institutions, and is relatively portable. The Trades and Skills Centres and Northern Career Quest are examples of this approach.

*“We need to emphasize the importance of staying in school by developing programs that actually lead to employment.”*  
- Participant

Similarly, the Joint Task Force heard of the importance of mutually beneficial partnerships between high school and post-secondary institutions and between post-secondary institutions and business. These partnerships ensure that course offerings are directed by job market needs and allow training to be delivered on a job site (i.e. Brandt Industries welding course) negating the need for additional capital investment in infrastructure. The programming also needs to be structured to enable access to wage-based subsidies through Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services.

## **Recommendation 22 – Quick Skills Training**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province develop a Quick Skills Training Initiative accessible through partnerships of stakeholders (industry, training institutions, First Nations and Métis authorities/organizations) in the north, urban and rural areas of Saskatchewan, responsive to unique geographies or environments.**

## Resource Sector Employment Strategy

The Joint Task Force heard that the two special agreements between the Province and northern mines, the Mine Surface Lease Agreement and the Human Resource Development Agreement, provide a model for achieving mutually beneficial northern development. As part of these agreements, the Multi-Party Training Plan (MPTP) is coordinated by a regional workforce planning table of leaders in the mining industry, Aboriginal training administration, training institutions and government ministries.

*"We no longer just want to survive; we want to thrive."*  
- Participant

Specifically, every Northern mine operation enters into special agreements with the Province to maximize employment, training and business opportunities for residents of northern Saskatchewan at their project sites. As a result, during 2011, the northern mining industry was one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada – about 42% of the workforce.<sup>110</sup> In 2012, the mines indicated that they expect to fill a substantial number of entry-level positions with Northerners; however, the twenty-seven professional positions in engineering and geology will likely be recruited from outside the north. These areas provide potential career opportunities for Northerners who decide to pursue science-related degrees.<sup>111</sup> The MPTP partners apply local knowledge to identify labour force opportunities and align training with jobs.

### Recommendation 23 – Multi-Party Training Plan

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Province work with the resource sector to develop the equivalent of a ‘mineral sector’ steering committee to establish a multi-party training plan using Northern Career Quest and quick skills training partnership models.**

### The Impact of Policy on First Nations and Métis Employment

The Joint Task Force heard there would be benefits to ‘one stop’ employment resource centers in areas where multiple ‘employment’ programs exist and compete with one another. These include: Active Measures, Labour Force Development program, and Stabilization Career Centers.

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<sup>110</sup> Ministry of Government Relations, Municipal Relations and Northern Engagement. (2012). *2011 Northern socio-economic benefits summary*.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Consultation participants described the unintended impact of immigrant support programs which have caused the displacement of some First Nations and Métis people – not only in the workplace but also in housing and rental accommodations. The Joint Task Force was urged to consider how supports might be extended to First Nations and Métis people such as those accessible for immigrants as there are similar needs for access to information, resources and services.

Howe (2012) describes the decreasing First Nation employment rate between 2005 and 2012. He suggests that the extension of the Immigrant Nominee Program to include unskilled labourers has displaced a number of First Nations employees.<sup>112</sup> Emery (2013) also notes that the expansion of the temporary foreign workers program may fuel short-term growth but “was costly for the longer term” and recent consultations revealed that Aboriginal Canadians feel that high immigration levels, particularly of temporary foreign workers, discourage the integration of the young, Aboriginal population into the workforce.<sup>113</sup>

There is a labour shortage in Saskatchewan at the same time as there are many underemployed or unemployed Aboriginal people. The Province has articulated a strategy for immigration including supports through eleven ‘gateways’ that “facilitate access to information, resources and services, coordinate appointments for language assessment and settlement advisor services.”<sup>114</sup> The Joint Task Force concludes that the Province needs to articulate a strategy to support First Nations and Métis people who are seeking employment.

*“Do not short-change  
First Nations and  
Métis people through  
lower expectations.”  
- Participant*

## **Recommendation 24 – One-Stop Gateway Strategy**

**The Joint Task Force recommends that the Provincial and Federal governments articulate a strategy for First Nations and Métis people to facilitate one-stop access and supports for training and employment.**

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<sup>112</sup> Howe, E. (2012). *Employment of First Nations people: Saskatchewan lags behind*. University of Saskatchewan: Department of Economics.

<sup>113</sup> Emery, J.C. (2013). *Labour shortages in Saskatchewan*. University of Calgary: The School of Public Policy.

<sup>114</sup> Retrieved March 10, 2013, from <http://www.economy.gov.sk.ca/summaryofchanges>.

## ***Working Differently: A Holistic Approach to Action***

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### **Will this report gather dust on a shelf?**

As the Joint Task Force concludes its work of engaging individuals, communities, organizations and institutions with an interest in improving the quality of life and enhancing the self-sufficiency of First Nations and Métis peoples, it recognized, as many others have stated, the importance of taking action. The nagging issue – *will this report gather dust on a shelf?* – lingers as the Joint Task Force concludes its mandate. The Joint Task Force hopes that the willingness of so many voices sharing their successes, the supports needed and the visions of a hopeful future in this province will have resonance with the leadership of the government of Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan, education and business, and the Federal government.

Many provincial and national reports, supported by research, have made similar findings and conclusions. In the same vein, existing provincial and federal policies have expressed good intentions and ideals with respect to addressing the inequities that exist for First Nations and Métis people in early learning, prekindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary education, and labour force attachment. The economic case has been made repeatedly that equitable investments in both education and employment for First Nations and Métis people in this province will have a lasting impact and ‘return on investment.’ The social imperative of schooling and education to nurture a sense of place, belonging and self-sufficiency for First Nations and Métis people that reflects their goals and values cannot be lost nor forgotten. What, then, holds us back from taking bold actions?

*“How many times do First Nations people have to say, ‘This is what needs to be done’?”*  
- Elder

While there is no magic bullet, the answer lies in establishing an ethical space that promotes dialogue, a cooperative spirit and respectful relationships among First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal people. It is within this ethical space that they can discuss the *means* to achieve the ends or ideals expressed. This may have implications for rethinking policy directions. The foundational understandings outlined at the beginning of the Findings and Recommendations section of this report – *dignified mutual relationships, poverty reduction and the prevalence of racism, and recognizing First Nations and Métis languages and cultures* –



point and signal a way to change the relationships. The recommendations the Joint Task Force makes are beginning points to take us beyond the ideals of policy statements.

The starting premise for the work of the Joint Task Force was that the educational and employment inequities that exist for First Nations and Métis peoples are unacceptable. The Joint Task Force hopes that its modest number of recommendations, when acted upon, will take the province along the journey towards a shared future of economic and social prosperity and harmony envisioned in treaties signed between Canada and the First people.

*“Need to look at improving the situation as an investment rather than a bandaid.”*  
- Participant

The Joint Task Force understands that hopefulness is not enough. To create lasting change for children and youth in the province of Saskatchewan, the Provincial government created a Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth in 2011. Investments in that agenda were made to “continue a coordinated, cross-government approach to helping Saskatchewan children, youth and families with the complex issues they face.”<sup>115</sup> The report of the Joint Task Force needs to have not only a cross-government priority but also an intergovernmental priority among the partners (province, FSIN, MN-S and the federal government when appropriate) to create the actions that will lead to the systemic changes required.

Clearly, there is both urgency and an imperative.

### **Recommendation 25 – Holistic Approach to Action and Accountability**

**The Joint Task Force recommends senior elected provincial government, FSIN and MN-S officials establish an action-oriented table to consider and act upon this report. This would involve long-term, integrated, multi-year planning to systematically address actions, including the setting of outcomes and targets, creating measures and reporting on progress. The Joint Task Force believes that the federal government should participate in this process.**

*“There is an incredible will across the province to work together, better.”*  
- Joint Task Force

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<sup>115</sup> Retrieved September 2012 from <http://www.finance.gov.sk.ca/budget2011-12/SSBackgrounder.pdf>.



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## ***Appendix A: List of Meetings***

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Date	Groups, Organizations and Institutions
May 7 2012	Regina Trades and Skills Centre
May 10	Deschambault Lake School
May 14	Saskatoon Tribal Council
May 22	Meadow Lake Tribal Council Principals
May 22	North West School Division
May 22	North West Regional College
May 22	Meadow Lake Public Meeting
May 29	Yorkton Tribal Council
May 29	Parkland Regional College
May 29	Good Spirit and Christ the Teacher School Divisions
May 29	Yorkton Public Meeting
May 30	File Hills Tribal Council
May 30	Prairie Valley School Division
May 30	Fort Qu'Appelle Public Meeting
May 31	Regina Public and Catholic School Divisions
May 31	Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce
May 31	Treaty Four Success Program Inc.
May 31	Regina Treaty Status Indian Services Inc.
May 31	Regina Public Meeting
July 9	Nancy Carswell
July 9	Saskatoon Industry Education Council
July 30	Northern Career Quest (NCQ)
Aug 30	Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MN-S)
Sept 7	First Nations University of Canada
Sept 10	La Loche Public Meeting
Sept 11	Ile-a-la Crosse School Division Board of Education
Sept 11	Métis Local #21
Sept 11	Ile-a-la Crosse Public Meeting
Sept 12	Canoe Lake Cree Nation and La Plonge Band

Date	Groups, Organizations and Institutions
Sept 12	Beauval Valley View School Staff
Sept 19	First Nations and Métis Education Policy Advisory Committee (FNMEPAC)
Sept 19	CUPE Local 3766 Education Workers
Sept 24	Stony Rapids Public Meeting
Sept 25	Black Lake Denesuline First Nation
Sept 26	Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation
Sept 26	Father Megret Elementary and High School
Sept 28	FSIN Women's Commission
Sept 28	Gabriel Dumont Institute (SUNTEP, GTI)
Oct 10	Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP)
Oct 22	Prince Albert Grand Council
Oct 22	Prince Albert Chamber of Commerce
Oct 22	Saskatchewan Rivers School Division
Oct 22	Michael Gatin
Oct 22	Prince Albert Métis Women's Association
Oct 22	Prince Albert Public Meeting
Oct 23	NORTEP/NORPAC
Oct 23	Northern Lights School Division
Oct 23	La Ronge Public Meeting
Oct 25	Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF)
Nov 5	Cumberland House Public Meeting
Nov 6	Town of Nipawin
Nov 7	Battleford Agencies Tribal Chiefs and Northwest Nations Education Council
Nov 7	Living Sky School Division and Light of Christ School Division
Nov 7	Sakewew High School
Nov 7	North Battleford Public Meeting
Nov 8	Northern Labour Market Committee
Nov 15	League of Educational Administrators, Directors, Superintendents (LEADS)

Date	Groups, Organizations and Institutions
Nov 21	Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network (SALN)
Nov 21	Northern Leaders Table
Nov 21	Saskatoon Public Meeting
Nov 23	SIAST
Nov 26	Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA)
Nov 27	Treaty Table Officers
Nov 30	Shared Standards and Capacity Building Committee (SSCBC)
Dec 4	Elders' Council, Office of the Treaty Commissioner
Dec 6	Regina Faculty of Education
Dec 6	Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA)
Dec 11	Saskatoon Public School Division
Dec 14	Potash Corporation
Dec 17	Saskatchewan Government and FSIN officials
Jan 4 2013	Northlands Regional College
Jan 8	Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division
Jan 14	FSIN and Dr. E. Howe
Jan 14	Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT)
Jan 22	Dr. Larry Steeves – Te Kotahitanga Project
Jan 25	Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA)
Jan 29	Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC)
Feb 7	Credenda
Feb 13	Labour Market Task Force
Feb 21	Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MN-S)
Mar 4	First Nations and Métis Education Policy Advisory Committee (FNMEPAC)
Mar 11	Community Reference Panel
Mar 11	First Nation and Métis Teacher Focus Group
Summary	Between May 1, 2012, and March 11, 2013, the Joint Task Force attended 83 meetings with over 1025 participants.



## ***Appendix B: List of Submissions***

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Many documents have been shared with the Joint Task Force during the course of its consultations including annual reports, strategic plans, research, emails, presentations, and project proposals. Research documents are included in the annotated bibliography which is a companion document to this report. The individuals, groups, organizations or institutions that created submissions specifically for the Joint Task Force are listed below. All of these have helped inform the deliberations of the Joint Task Force as it wrote its final report.

Submissions were received from:

- Belhumeur, Chris
- Carswell, Nancy
- CUPE Local 3766 Education workers
- Fey, Cynthia
- Gabriel Dumont Institute
- Gatin, Michael
- Green, N.
- Hanson, Cindy
- Hesch, Rick
- International Centre for Northern Governance and Development, University of Saskatchewan
- Métis Nation - Saskatchewan
- NORTEP - NORPAC
- Prince Albert Métis Women's Association
- RealRenewal
- Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation - October 2012
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation - February 2013
- SaskEnergy
- SaskPower
- SaskTel
- Standingwater, Laurraine

