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## **Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes starts in Meadow Lake**

The Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan is set to begin its community consultations around Saskatchewan. The first stop will be in Meadow Lake on May 22. Task Force panelists will be encouraging First Nations and Métis people from Meadow Lake and surrounding communities to join the discussion and share their stories of success for employment and education with Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan.

“We know there are gaps in First Nation and Métis education outcomes and we know this issue has been studied extensively,” said Task Force Chair Gary Merasty. “But those studies often focused on what was going wrong. We want to look at the successes that are happening so when we make our report, we can focus that forward and make real change. It is important that the solutions come from the community, the families, the educators and the students.”

While in the Meadow Lake area, the Task Force will hold a community meeting and meetings with school boards, business groups and Aboriginal organizations. The Community Meeting will be in the Meadow Lake Civic Centre, May 22 at 7 P.M.

“Everyone will benefit from improving education and employment outcomes for Saskatchewan’s First Nation and Métis people,” added Merasty, who is also a Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility for Cameco. “With Saskatchewan’s growing labour market and prosperity, there are opportunities for everyone. This Task Force will address the current gaps and ensure an equal playing field for Aboriginal people.”

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For further information, please contact Task Force Chair Gary Merasty at: (306) 956-6379

[www.jointtaskforce.ca](http://www.jointtaskforce.ca)

## **Background**

The Government of Saskatchewan and the FSIN recognize that current gaps in education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan are unacceptable. The Joint Task Force will undertake an extensive community consultation throughout the province to learn about education and employment successes. Following this review, the Joint Task Force will present a report with recommendations of collaborative actions and identify public policy, programs and practical approaches that have the greatest potential impact to improve education and employment success for First Nation and Métis people of Saskatchewan.

Joint Task Force panelists include Gary Merasty, Vice President Corporate Social Responsibility of Cameco, Rita Bouvier, researcher/writer and community-learning facilitator and Don Hoium, Educator and former Director of Education. The joint task force will focus on several key goals including:

- Improved early childhood outcomes and transition to school;
- Increased high school and post-secondary completion rates;
- Improved participation in the labour force and employment;
- Greater quality of life and enhanced self-sufficiency; and
- Stronger education systems with improved return on investment in PreK-12 and postsecondary education and training.

The task force is beginning broad public consultations in spring 2012, with the task force report to be complete early in 2013.