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Pride Perseverance Possibilities



# GDI Communicator

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

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## How Valuable Are Employee Benefit Plans?

By Jim Edmondson

If someone asks you how much you get paid or when wage levels are compared over a beer, it's important to realize that remuneration or compensation is not simply what the wage per year or hour is alone. Employers do not compensate their employees only in paycheque. They also do so with non-monetary payments. These are often referred to as "in kind" or "fringe" benefits. They include some of the legally required benefits such as workers compensation, CPP, and EI, as well as other voluntary benefits such as paid leaves, health and life insurance, and pensions.

Employee benefits are important for several reasons. First, they can help offset the costs of necessary services, such as medical insurance, that an individual might otherwise have to pay for out of their pocket or even be unable to afford.

Second, employment benefits help promote and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Employees often feel stressed from juggling their jobs and everyday life, and benefit plans can either relieve or offset some of the adverse health and psychological effects of the stress.

Third, benefits enable employees to prepare for the future. Whether it is subsidized training or professional

development that could lead to a promotion or higher pay, an employee assistance plan that helps individuals cope with day to day issues that can adversely affect their home and work life, or a pension plan that will eventually constitute the individual employee's retirement income, benefits are set up to reward employees for their time and effort with the organization by making their present and future better and more secure.

GDI provides all of the above benefits to its employees. Regarding voluntary benefits, the GDI plan is considered the "Cadillac" standard. The GDI benefit plan through Great West Life covers a multitude of areas and the majority of the premiums are borne solely by GDI. The result is a very high quality benefits plan at a relatively affordable cost. A key benefit that is often overlooked is the flexibility an organization offers its employees. At GDI, this includes paid time off at Christmas, and the culturally affirming and relaxed work environment. These must carry value because they are a rare commodity in other organizations.

Various methods have been used to determine the value of employee benefits. These include the market value

approach in which the value of benefits to the employee is determined by comparing the amount that the employee would have spent to acquire and maintain the same benefit that the employer provides.

This way of valuing has its merits but can be somewhat deceiving when the costs are directly compared. This is because employer's costs and employee value are divergent because 1) the benefits are not subject to personal income taxes, 2) in large groups, the benefit is provided uniformly to all participants (employees), and 3) the employer's cost of providing the benefit is often lower than the market price of the benefit for an individual.

It is apparent that any method of measuring the value of employee benefits is subjective, and depending on the individuals circumstance or life situation, would come to vastly different conclusions. However, it is obvious that all the benefits and perks provided by GDI to its employees, no matter what approach used to determine value, is significant and must be taken into account when total compensation of our jobs is reflected upon. The benefits, both mandatory and voluntary, must be considered as a whole and every aspect of what the Institute provides, represents and stands for are factors that contribute to making GDI an employer of choice and a great place to work!





2015 YWCA Saskatoon  
Women of Distinction Awards

## GDI Director Receives Women of Distinction Award

By Lisa Wilson



Karon Shmon, the Director of GDI Publishing was the Woman of Distinction Award (Education) recipient at the May 28, 2015 gala. Congratulations Karon!

In 2014....



Lisa Wilson, Director of GDI Training & Employment won the Women of Distinction Award (Arts, Culture and Heritage).



Renee Mueller and Jilla Veltkam  
Photo by Chantelle Julé

On May 28, 2015 GDI Publishing Director, Karon Shmon, was honored with a YWCA Women of Distinction Award in the Education category. The award recognizes exceptional educators in schools, institutions, or community programs who are role models in their profession and the community.

Karon has worked in the field of Aboriginal education for her entire career. As an Aboriginal teacher, Karon is a role model and advocate for Aboriginal students and their families, and also a role model for non-Aboriginal students—as a means to demonstrate a competent and accomplished Aboriginal professional. Karon has said, “When we are professional and thorough in our work, others will see us as capable achievers. More importantly, we believe it ourselves. Cycles of colonized thinking can be broken when this happens.”

Karon’s entire career has been connected and concerned with Aboriginal education. Her early experiences as a teacher have informed her work as a cultural

resource producer. Over time, Karon’s work has evolved into a legacy model - the information, artefacts, and cultural knowledge preserved today become tomorrow’s history - gifts that will endure.

In 2011, Karon added to the Métis legacy by securing the donation of the *Fisher Collection* to the Institute. This donation was made based on Karon’s ability to foster good community relationships. *The Fisher Collection* includes hundreds of artefacts from the 1885 Northwest Resistance and the Batoche battlefield, which are of importance locally, provincially, and nationally. The Institute has never before received a donation of this size from a private donor. These artefacts will be housed and shared by GDI for the benefit of future generations.

Karon works at GDI because of her own pride in being Métis. She honours her mother by doing work that will reduce the hardship her mother, and our ancestors, endured. Karon says, “Anything I can do to make people more aware of our true

history will keep one less student from feeling ignored, discounted, or ashamed. Removing obstacles and providing opportunities means more Métis will lead fulfilling lives, achieve their potential, and live their dreams.”

When congratulated on her achievement, Karon made a point of mentioning the eight other esteemed nominees in the Education category and acknowledged the winners in the other categories. She also notes, “One particular highlight for me was that the stage had both the Métis flag and the Treaty 6 flag alongside the Canadian and Saskatchewan flags.” Karon mentioned the significance of this in her acceptance remarks, as well as noting the two themes of diversity and resilience that were expressed throughout the evening.

The Annual YWCA Women of Distinction Awards® are a celebration of the best in women’s achievements, across industry, culture and public service, honouring ordinary women for their extraordinary contributions to the Saskatoon community. 🌐

## Dreams Come True for 25 DTI Nursing Students

By Chantelle Julé

When a person decides to become a nurse, they are making one of the most important decisions of their lives; namely, to dedicate themselves to the care of others. Dumont Technical Institute Practical Nursing (PN) students all made this decision. For many of them, this was a childhood dream, for some it became a dream later in life, but this spring the dream has been realized.

DTI has been offering the PN Program brokered from Saskatchewan Polytechnic since 1999 with the first PN program offered at our Prince Albert Centre. Today, the DTI PN program offered at three locations: Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon. To date, DTI has graduated a total of 241 Practical nurses, and remains the second largest PN training provider in Saskatchewan.

In September 2013, 28 students joined the PN program at our Prince Albert and Saskatoon Centres (14 in each location). In May 2015, 25 of the 28 students graduated after successfully completing the two year PN program (a completion rate of 89%). Hard work, sacrifice, self-denial, and perseverance have seen the dream turn to a reality.

Continued on Page 3





## SUNTEP Explorers Set Off to Discover Their Heritage

By John MacDonald and Janice R. Thompson

On April 13, 2015, a group of 'Métis explorers' set off to discover part of their heritage and extend their science learning outside the classroom. The 'explorers' included Chelsie Sinclair, Alicia Reiss, and Hannah Thrun who are Year Three SUNTEP Regina students.

The students were in search of maple syrup and interpreting knowledge about the traditional Métis giving tree; as well as the historical significance of trees in the prairies. The Assiniboine River Taps has been collecting sap and producing maple syrup for 20 years in the Kamsack area.

Allen Bennett, the owner, and his son served as very capable hosts and guides.

The duo discussed the history of Kamsack and the process of harvesting sap from the trees and turning it into syrup. This year marks a turning point for the operation in two main ways: the introduction of a vacuum system to aid in collection of sap, and the beginning of the production of birch syrup.

The production of maple syrup in Saskatchewan holds some promise on both the historical and educational fronts for SUNTEP students. For anyone with a sweet tooth, maple syrup and associated products will be on sale at a new store in the Old Elks Hall in Kamsack this summer. Not to mention, the opportunity to learn from a family who has been tapping maple syrup for twenty years.

Modern syrup collection techniques have simplified the process. Today, tubes are

connected to taps in the trees and used to collect the sap in to a central collection vessel aided by vacuum pumps. To make it thicker and sweeter, sap is evaporated in the sugar shack evaporators until it is reduced from 40 gallons of sap to one gallon of syrup.

The trip gave the students an opportunity for land based learning and hands on learning. It also highlighted the connection to Métis history. This experience became evident with Leah Dorion's book, *The Giving Tree* (GDI Publishing), and tied into practical student learning opportunities. Upon their return from Kamsack, the students appreciated the trip and spoke about the First Nation content and Métis learning styles for weeks. In the end, SUNTEP Regina continues to support and enhance 'lifelong learning' experiences. 🌍



SUNTEP Regina students  
Left to right: Chelsie Sinclair,  
Hannah Thrun and Alicia Reiss  
Photo by Chelsie Sinclair

## DTI Practical Nursing Graduation ... *Continued from Page 3*

The May 22 weekend was a good one for our PN students and the Gabriel Dumont Institute family as we celebrated 25 PN graduates who will be joining the nursing profession. The first celebration took place on May 22 at the Nordale Hall in Prince Albert where over 200 special guests, family, students, and well-wishers gathered to celebrate the 12 graduates for the Prince Albert Centre. A delicious meal, presentations, slide shows and speeches concluded the wonderful evening sending off our graduates to their new and exciting careers.

On May 23, the celebrations continued as the Saskatoon

Centre held its graduation ceremony. Family, friends and special guests gathered to congratulate the 13 students who had successfully completed the PN program. It was an enjoyable afternoon of celebration, speeches, presentations, and a light lunch.

We are so proud of these amazing students' achievements. This is not an easy program to say the least. It is fast paced and challenging, especially as many of our students were balancing their daily lives, families, and jobs. But no matter what came up and how hectic life got, these students kept moving forward. The smiles on their faces as they received their diplomas proved they were proud of their accomplishments.

Thank you to the staff for your continued commitment and dedication to our students and program, and also to GDI Training and Employment for your program and student support. Your contributions have helped to make these students and this program a huge success once again.

Note that because of the way the PN program is structured, Regina Centre had its graduation last November. According to the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (SALPN), there are about 3,400 PNs licensed to work in Saskatchewan (including those who got their education outside the province). 241 or seven percent are graduates of GDI. 🌍



Cheers to Nicole DeGagne (left)  
and Christine Fiddler for the  
hardwork at the GDSF  
Golf Tournament  
Photo by Bonnie Hryciuk





## GED Students Celebrate Graduation

By James Oloo

The new General Educational Development (GED)-Apprenticeship program is developed and delivered through partnership between GDI Training and Employment and Dumont Technical Institute. The program is offered in two cohorts with the target of graduating a total of 50 Aboriginal individuals with GED diploma. The first cohort of 28 students started the program in Saskatoon in January. Of the 28, 22 graduated last week after successfully completing the program, a 78% graduation rate.

Eighteen of the 28 (or 64%) were male and 10 (or 36%) were female. The fact that there were more male than females was surprising because in most GED and ABE programs across Saskatchewan there often tends to be more females than males. The higher male enrolment could be due to the fact that the program is linked to apprenticeship training.

A second cohort of students will be admitted in the coming months. The Institute continues to support the graduates regarding their transition to employment or further training. Many have indicated that they

will enroll in the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project, and one of the graduates is working towards joining Saskatoon police force.

Like all GDI programs, the GED impacted individual lives. One graduate said that he has never received a certificate of any kind and that earning the GED diploma was very important to him. Three of the graduates said that they are the first in their immediate or extended families to earn a high school diploma. Further, two of the graduates had scores of 800, that is, scores in the 99 percentile rank – not just at GDI, but across Canada.

Some of the comments made by the graduates included: "In high school, I took modified math. I did not know that modified math would affect my chances of going into apprenticeship. I joined this program to work on my math; and today I have attained that goal, plus I have safety tickets." The client continued, "But it was not that smooth. I almost quit because of challenges. I had to take care of a loved one who had health issues, but I got support and encouragement. When I told Dwayne (Docken, Employment Counsellor at GDI Training and

Employment) that I was quitting, he came to my place, spoke with me, and offered to drive me to school."

The comments also included, "I have always had difficulty with school. It is good to take 'earning GED' off my to-do list. Teachers have been very helpful." Another one was, "I'm glad that we have GED now, it will certainly open some opportunities for us."

The students liked that they had good teachers, Cheng Teh and Mark Boyer; the classroom environment was safe and welcoming and the student felt respected and appreciated. The students also liked the fact that they had opportunities for hands-on learning such as visits to Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centre, and heard from guest speakers from the industry. In other words, the program was relevant to the students' future plans. They also had access to employment counselors. Michelle Suteau, the program coordinator in charge of the GED, stated that the program has been very successful despite being new. Michelle is enthusiastic about the future and the opportunities that the Institute continues to offer our students and clients.



## GDSF Golf Tournament a Success

By Laurie Bouvier

The Gabriel Dumont Scholarship Foundation's (GDSF) Fourth Annual Golf Tournament was held on May 29, 2015 at the Moon Lake Golf and Country Club, Saskatoon. The Tournament was very successful raising \$38,111 (compared to last year's record of \$32,036). The amount will be matched by the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Fund for a total of \$76,222.

A full tournament of 138 golfers, numerous sponsors and volunteers came out and helped raise money that goes toward scholarships to Métis post-secondary students in Saskatchewan. Many Métis students, including those attending the Gabriel Dumont Institute, often face numerous barriers. Financial assistance enables such as students to meet their educational goals.

Since 2012 when the inaugural GDSF Annual Golf Tournament was held, a total of \$185,900 has been raised towards scholarships for Métis students.

GDSF has been administering scholarships for the Métis of Saskatchewan since 1980s. To date, it has awarded \$1.65 million in scholarships. We look forward to the Fifth Annual Golf Tournament next May.



Left to right: Mark Boyer, Kelly Burns, Cheng Teh, And Chantelle Julé  
Photo by James Oloo



Erin Miers  
Admin Assistant at DTI  
Saskatoon at the GDSF  
Golf Tournament  
Photo by Bonnie Hryciuk



# Heavy Equipment Truck & Transport Mechanic Graduation

By Tammy Cummins and James Oloo

It was on a cold January day six months ago when 10 individuals (nine Métis and one First Nations) started the Heavy Equipment Truck & Transport Mechanic program offered by Dumont Technical Institute (DTI) in partnership with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure in Prince Albert. After six months of training, nine of the clients graduated on June 26, 2015 (90% graduation rate). The remaining student is in the process of meeting the requirements of the program before being able to graduate.

The ten are Jason Bonneau, Cole Chamberlain, Aaron Laprise, Marcus Linklater, Kris Mckay, Zach McPherson, Daniel Painchaud, Brendan Pederson, Darryl Pratt, and Cory Ross.

In attendance to congratulate the graduates were dignitaries from DTI, the Ministry of Highways,

Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and Gabriel Dumont Institute Training & Employment.

DTI Instructor Richard Bremner was the Master of Ceremonies. Mike Relland, Coordinator of Gabriel Dumont College and the GDI Master of Education head, brought blessings. DTI Program Coordinator Daniel Downs welcomed the guests, and thanked the partners for their support.

Aaron Laprise spoke on behalf of the students. He expressed his appreciation to the Institute and to the businesses that assisted with their practicums, as well as to everyone who helped to support and assist them in achieving their goals. All the graduates are working with Tammy Cummins, Employment Counsellor at the GDI Training and Employment in Prince Albert under the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program. Four have employment

placements with the Ministry of Highways and two with Maxim Trucking.

The program focuses on two high-demand trades. Heavy duty equipment technicians work on large mobile equipment such as bulldozers, cranes, graders, and earthmovers used in such diverse areas as construction and mining. Truck and transport mechanics work on trucks, buses, and highway transport vehicles. Opportunities are also available in forestry, oil field, marketing, and self-employment. Our clients have hands-on training which could count towards their journeyman certification.

DTI is in the process of starting a Heavy Equipment Truck & Transport Mechanic program in Moose Jaw. For more information please visit [www.gdins.org](http://www.gdins.org) or Daniel Downs at 1-877-488-6888. Follow us on Twitter for updates at [@gdins\\_org](https://twitter.com/gdins_org).

## Payroll Cutoff Calendar – July 2015

By Carmala Thiessen and Veronica Verzonowski

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
			Canada Day Stat Holiday	Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Cutoff @ 3:00 for Stop Payments on Student July 10 Direct Deposits		A/P Cheque Run Cutoff @ 4:30 for TMS & Payroll Revisions for July 15 Payday	Student Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Cutoff @ 4:30 for July 24 Student Payroll		Staff Payday	Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
		Cutoff @ 3:00 for Stop Payments on Student July 24 Direct Deposits		Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Student Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	Cutoff @ 4:30 for TMS & Payroll Revisions for July 31 Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for Aug 7 Student Payroll			Accounts Payable Cheque Run	Staff Payday Cutoff @ 4:30 for A/c Payable Invoices	





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Back issues of this newsletter  
can be obtained at:

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

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

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



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