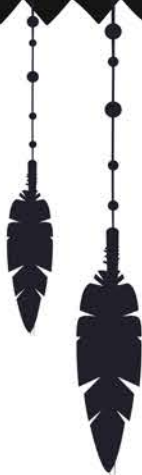




East Central First Nations Education Partnership

May 2023

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Partnership signs Education Services Agreements with nearby Public School Divisions

On Treaty Six Land at the Bernard Constant Community School in the James Smith Community, representatives of three education organizations formally signed two Education Services Agreements on May 25, 2023, that creates the structure for the three education entities to provide a quality education for all children that meets their needs. Witnessing the signings were members of the James Smith Community, guests and members of the media.

The signings are historic for the East Central First Nations Education Partnership (ECFNEP), the North East School Division (NESD) No. 200 and the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division (SRPSD) No. 199 as these are the first comprehensive Education Agreements signed by each party. For the Partnership, the day represents a significant accomplishment for the organization since its creation in 2017.

Officials of the ECFNEP, the NESD and the SRPSD signed Education Agreements that provide a framework to facilitate the exercise of jurisdiction concerning the Spirit and Intent of Treaty, reconciliation and the right to a quality education regardless of where the student and their family resides.

The Education Agreements were previously approved by the Board of Directors of the ECFNEP and the School Trustees of the two Public School Divisions.

Signing the Agreements were Camillia Sanderson, Chairperson of the ECFNEP Board of Directors, Kevin Graham, Chair of the Trustees of the NESD, and Darlene Rowden, Board Chair of the Trustees of the SRPSD, the Directors of Education, Randy Constant of ECFNEP, Stacy Lair of NESD and Robert Bratvold of SRPSD and the staff responsible for finances, Faye Head of ECFNEP, Wanda McLeod of NESD and Jerrold Pidborochynski of SRPSD.

Camillia Sanderson is the Board Chairperson on the ECFNEP's Board of Directors. Regarding the Partnership signing the Education Agreements with the NESD and SRPSD, Ms. Sanderson said, "As the Board Chairperson, I believe these signings are great. I see it as quite an accomplishment and it shows how far the Partnership has come as an organization since its inception. In the true spirit of reconciliation, I believe that having the three parties sign such Education Services Agreements are a step forward in the right direction. The board believes the Agreements will benefit students and parents who are being taught by the three parties. There is still much to be done in the spirit of reconciliation."

Darlene Rowden is the Chairperson for the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Board, one of two public school divisions which are signing an Education Services Agreement with the ECFNEP on May 25.



Camillia Sanderson

Regarding her thoughts on the benefits of the Agreement from the standpoint of the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division, she states, "This Agreement is a tuition agreement when you boil it all down, but it is much more than just that. For education, we rely on sufficient funding, but this agreement also includes student services, partnership work, and the School Community Council, which is your parent group. It involves our Elder's Council, those kinds of things that are beyond tuition items. It's allowing us to learn more about each other, it's going to provide us with a solid foundation to work more closely together and build connections with our First Nations and the provincial school system. It hits on the reconciliation piece, the 63rd call to action. Doing what we can to move forward locally."

"The North East School Division Board of Education is grateful for the opportunity to work in partnership with the East Central First Nations Education Authority," said



Darlene Rowden



Kevin Graham

Inside

Partnership signs Education Services Agreements.....	1
Benefits of the Education Agreements.....	3
New Board Chairperson for the Board of Directors.....	4
Bernard Constant Community School Grade 12 Graduates 2023	4
For further information	4



Kevin Graham, Chair of the Board of Education. "The tuition agreement formalizes our collective commitment to ensure we create sustainable and mutually equitable funding structures, while supporting the education of students on and off-reserve. The NESD appreciates the shared experiences and understandings that result from the relationship built through this partnership."

Randy Constant is the Director of Education for the ECFNEP, which is signing an Education Services Agreement with two public school divisions.

Regarding the signing of the Agreement, Mr. Constant said, "These Education Service Agreements are the first of their kind between our First Nations and the surrounding public school divisions. This Agreement highlights the relationship between our Partnership and neighbouring public school divisions and outlines the roles and responsibilities when it comes to supporting our children in each system. This process was a line-by-line activity that had leadership, senior administration, school administration and finance administrators at the table addressing pertinent or specific scenarios relating to students attending all three systems. At the end of this process, all three legal teams reviewed the documents, ensuring each perspective was well represented within each document."

Continuing, Mr. Constant stated, "Ultimately, by all three systems reaching an agreement, we can sign the document today and move forward in our renewed relationship, addressing education for all our students living on the First Nation and attending BCCS." The Agreement will also adjust how the First Nations and public school divisions communicate, with Mr. Constant saying, "This new relationship allows for the three parties to address their issues and their perspectives, annually and as required."

Stacy Lair is the Director of Education for the North East School Division (NESD) No. 200, one of two school divisions signing an Education Partnership Agreement with the ECFNEP. Commenting about the NESD's prior Agreement with the Kinistin Saulteaux Nation created on November 29, 2007, Ms. Lair said, "We have a long-standing significant Partnership arrangement with Kinistin; however, we do not have a comprehensive tuition agreement. The new Agreement with ECFNEP is both a Partnership and a tuition agreement."

Regarding the benefits to the NESD from signing the Agreement, she said, "While the agreement will support student learning, the NESD benefits significantly from the relationship with the East Central First Nation Education Authority (ECFNEA), allowing our leaders to learn and develop a more holistic world view. We have and will continue to benefit significantly from the shared work and recognize that there are lots of understandings and opportunities for us to better know what we can do as an organization through some time spent and some shared work with our First Nations partners."

Part of the Agreement involves the creation of a First Nations and Métis Advisory Council, or an Elder's Council. While there is presently no such formal Council in place at the NESD, she explains, "We have advisement, we have a First Nations Teacher Advisory Group, but in terms of an Elder's Council, or something formally set up at the board level, we don't currently have that yet, so that's something we are excited to get started with."

Robert Bratvold is the Director of Education for the SRPSD, one of the two school divisions signing an Education Services Agreement with the ECFNEP. This will be the first time there is a formal agreement between the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division and a First Nation, with Mr. Bratvold saying, "We have lots of strong informal partnerships,



Randy Constant

but no formal Education Services Agreement like this one. We have had long relationships with other First Nations, but they evolved as a matter of practice and process, without being formalized to this degree."

Regarding the benefits of the Education Services Agreement, he said, "I think there are many benefits, starting with processes and a focus on supports for students. This Agreement has been a way to get to know each other better and build good connections, a good relationship, and these relationships will provide stronger support for students. I think it's also a mechanism to build from. There are some things in this agreement that we haven't fully explored before and now there are some opportunities to do that."

The SRPSD currently has a First Nations and Métis Advisory Council (Elder's Council), but there are no members yet from the three First Nations that are a part of the ECFNEP. "This will change with the Education Services Agreement," said Mr. Bratvold.

Faye Head is the Manager of Finance for the ECFNEP. Concerning the signing of the Education Agreements, Ms. Head, talking from a financial point of view, said, "The Agreements will provide certainty, it will let us know how much the Partnership has to pay to the school



Stacy Lair



Robert Bratvold



Faye Head



Wanda McLeod

divisions, as well as how much we will get from them for students coming to our school from other communities. I think this is a win-win scenario for all, as all the costs are clearly defined.”

Wanda McLeod is the Superintendent of Business Administration and is responsible for finances at the NESD.

Ms. McLeod said, “The Education Agreement with the ECFNEP is comprehensive, ensuring East Central and North East have an opportunity to equitably access and provide educational services for all of our shared students.”

Concerning the finances, Ms. Lair, the Director of Education at the NESD says, “The opportunity to work with the ECFNEP on this Agreement has brought us together to create an equitable and respectful partnership. Beyond the tuition

agreement, we hope future possibilities will consist of shared and collaborative plans to support learners in our area.”

Jerrold Pidborochynski is the Chief Financial Officer for the SRPSD, which will be signing an Agreement with the ECFNEP to improve the quality of schooling for their students.

Regarding what he believes the Agreement will mean for the SRPSD, Mr. Pidborochynski said, “It’s a huge step. In my mind, I see it as a Partnership Agreement. The Education Agreement outlines the cooperation between Saskatchewan Rivers and the Partnership around funding core educational services. So I see this as a great first step in a Partnership and we are all working together to do the best for our students, whether they come from on-reserve or off. The Agreement outlines the amounts to be paid and by which education entity, so it brings financial clarity to all partners.”

Part of the Agreement is providing services and supports for students with special needs, if a First Nations student attending a SRPSD school such as Kinistino Public School requires special needs services, they will be provided as needed and the cost will be paid back by the Partnership. This will help ensure no child is left behind.

The ECFNEP currently operates the Bernard Constant Community School (BCCS) located on the James Smith Cree Nation

reserve. During the 2022-2023 school year, the enrollment at BCCS is 384. The majority of the students are from one of the three First Nations at James Smith, the Chakastaypasin Band, James Smith Cree Nation and the Peter Chapman Band.

The NESD is a rural division with 22 schools located in 13 communities. During the 2022-2023 school year, in Grades K to 12 the enrollment is 4,901 students. The schools operated by the NESD are located within the Treaty 5 and 6 areas of Saskatchewan.

The SRPSD has 33 schools in various communities with a total enrollment of about 8,900 students. The schools are located in the Treaty 6 area of Saskatchewan.



Jerrold Pidborochynski

Benefits of the Education Agreements

The benefits of the Education Partnership Agreement are many, with the first being an increase in the quality of education for students both on and off-reserve. The two school divisions have agreed to provide quality education to all First Nation students attending their schools, taught by qualified staff. This quality education will also include all extracurricular and education services that are normally provided at the schools in the school divisions. What this means is that the school divisions are now locked in on giving the same quality of education to First Nation students as to the other students in their schools.

The Agreement also opens up an easy path of communication for education issues or events between the ECFNEP and the two school divisions. In the Agreement, the parties need to meet at least once a year to go over subjects such as graduation rates, reading, writing and math stats. Discussions will include the budget for the school divisions and a review of tuition fees, school programs and plans for the next school year. This is also a time when the groups can bring up any issues they want to talk about. This will let

the ECFNEP have a lot of insight into what is going on at the school divisions and give a reliable method of contacting the two school divisions to discuss changes to education or funding. Due to the Agreements, the parties will have discussions concerning student progress and financial issues.

Part of the Agreement concerns the costs of sending students to each other’s schools, and how the finances will work for those students. Essentially, First Nation students from the James Smith community attending schools run by the two school divisions will get a quality education with support for special needs students, and the fee will be paid for by the school divisions, and they will send a bill for reimbursement to the ECFNEP. The amount of this bill will be based on calculations done by the ECFNEP and the two school divisions on their average cost per student. The reverse of this is also true, if off-reserve students attend a school run by the ECFNEP, they will be reimbursed by the school divisions. The Agreement also has a section detailing that if the cost per student changes, the parties involved have to show the calculations for why the cost is changing.

Another benefit is the addition of special needs care being contained in the Agreement. Students that need extra help, be it technical aids, a special program or transportation costs, will all be covered by the school divisions, which will get funding from places like Jordan’s Principle and the federal government. The school divisions and the ECFNEP will work together to apply for additional funding as needed. In the Agreements is also the statement that if, for whatever reason, the school divisions can’t get assessments done for Indigenous students with intensive needs in a reasonable amount of time, the ECFNEP can get a third party out to perform the assessments more quickly.

The two school divisions are also going to be creating a formal First Nations and Métis Advisory Council or an Elder’s Council that will have representatives from the James Smith community. These councils will have input into the programs and practices at the schools and how they affect First Nations students, giving the ECFNEP further input into the education their students will receive.



First Nation resident students cannot be expelled or suspended without the ECFNEP Director of Education being part of that discussion, and the ECFNEP will have a voice via the Advisory Council to address issues and promote change in the school divisions to help Indigenous Students, with the school divisions having to re-

port to the Advisory Council on what they are doing to implement the suggestions. This all leads to a better quality of education and experience for the First Nation students attending schools run by the two school divisions.

Regarding having First Nations staff working in the school divisions, the school divisions will have to report on progress made towards hiring First Nations staff, provide a copy of its inclusion-related

hiring policies and have an annual review of these policies. This review session will include the ECFNEP. ECFNEP staff will have access to schools or facilities used by the school division to monitor, assess and support the progress of students.

These Agreements can be changed at any time as long as all parties consent to the change.



Camillia Sanderson is the new Board Chairperson on the Board of Directors of the East Central First Nations Education Partnership.

New Board Chairperson for the Board of Directors

Camillia Sanderson was appointed as the Board Chairperson for the East Central First Nations Education Partnership on April 25, 2023, via votes by other members. Ms. Sanderson is one of two representatives of the Chakastaypasin Band on the board.

Looking to do more for the ECFNEP, she said, "I wanted to try and fill the lead-

ership role as board chair, I have always been interested in Education and I wanted a more fulfilling position on the board. All board members are looking forward to working together so the board of the ECFNEP can work towards more developments and improvements in the area of education for students and parents."

Bernard Constant Community School Grade 12 Graduates 2023



Back Row (left to right standing and sitting) Sundance Stonestand-Checkosis, Tracy Murray, William Stonestand Jr., Damon Burns, Trinity Sanderson, Tavian Head, Corianne Taypayosatum, Samara Stonestand, Rachelle Moostoos.

Middle Row (left to right standing): Tanner Sanderson, Nathan Sanderson, Avery Head.

Front Row (left to right) Kashtin Sanderson, Dano Stonestand, Thian Burns, Hunter Sanderson, Torrance Sanderson, November Twist, Amber Constant, Scarlett Head.



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