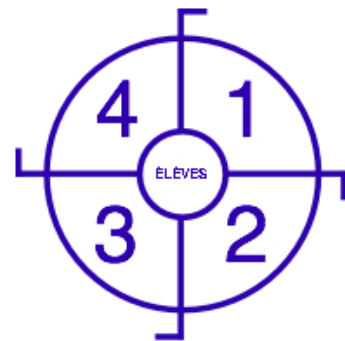
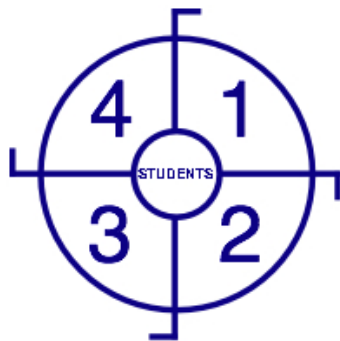


**Cree School Board  
Educational Review: 2007-08**



**Étude sur l'éducation : 2007-2008  
Commission scolaire Crie**

**C** Communication  
**A** Accountability &  
**F** Follow-Up for  
**S** School  
**I** Improvement

**Communication,  
reddition de  
comptes  
et suivi pour  
l'amélioration  
scolaire**

**Executive Summary**

*Communication, Accountability & Follow-Up for School Improvement (CAFSI): Executive Summary*, is one of a series of documents that make up the final report of the Educational Review: 2007-2008, prepared by members of the evaluation team:

William J. Smith;  
Mary Bear;  
William E. Corrigan; and  
Kimberly Quinn.

With corrections, October 27, 2008.★

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The complete series of report documents consists of the following:

- The CAFSI Report:
  - Part 1, Overview, Context & Mission;
  - Part 2, Educating Youth in the Cree School Board;
  - Part 3, Educating Adults in the Cree School Board;
  - Part 4, School Board Support for Learning;
  - Part 5, From Findings to Action;
- Appendices of the CAFSI Report;
- Highlights of the CAFSI Report;\* and
- Executive Summary of the CAFSI Report.\*
- A Spotlight on Youth Education.\*♦

★ No substantive changes have been made to the report originally published in June. The authors wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Kathleen Arsenault in the editing of this revised version.

\* **Disponible en français.**

♦ **Available in Cree.**

French translation by Kathleen Arsenault, Ottawa; Cree translation by Brian Webb.

The report and all related materials can be found on the CSB Educational Review website.

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[http://www.cscrec.qc.ca/Edreview/ed\\_review.htm](http://www.cscrec.qc.ca/Edreview/ed_review.htm)

[http://www.cscrec.qc.ca/Edreview/Fr/Etude\\_Ed.htm](http://www.cscrec.qc.ca/Edreview/Fr/Etude_Ed.htm)

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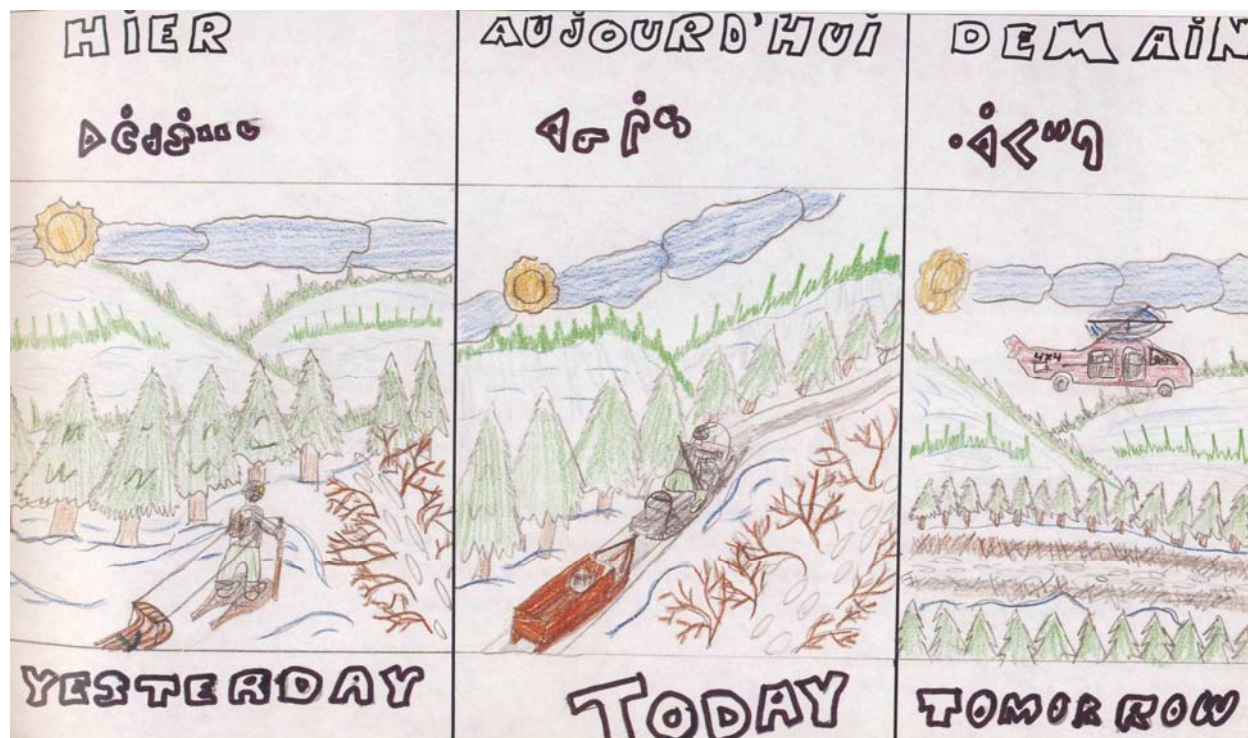


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## PREFACE

*To the Stakeholders of the Cree School Board*

This report of the Educational Review, 2007-08 is about many aspects of the Cree School Board but they all centre around its students. We therefore thought it appropriate to preface this report with an image created by a student to express what it is all about. As suggested by this drawing, done by Darren Moar, then a twelve-year old student at Wiinibekuu School in Waskaganish, education links the past, the present and the future.

Looking back, education can help preserve what is important in our **past**, celebrate our values and traditions, but it can also help us to overcome any past conditions that would hinder our development. Looking ahead, education provides the means to secure the **future**:

The greatest challenge facing the Cree School Board today is to improve the quality of the academic education received by the students and to maintain and improve the Cree content of the curriculum. In part, this effort will depend on the economic opportunities open to Cree students once they graduate. Students coming through the education system must have experience and knowledge of the many careers from which they can choose.”<sup>1</sup>

Education has the potential to provide students with these options but as this quotation suggests, options cannot come from the school or the school board working in isolation. Partnerships, networking and other forms of collaboration at multiple levels - community, the James Bay region and beyond - are required to ensure that students can be successful on whatever path they choose to pursue, be it in a Cree community or elsewhere.

In taking this long-term perspective, we sometimes forget that the **present** lies between the past and the future and education is equally important in the present. For students, a very large portion of their present life is spent in school or engaged in school-related activities. This

<sup>1</sup> The text and the drawing are from Michael Gnarowski, Ed., *I Dream of Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Celebration of the James Bay Crees* (Kemptville ON: Golden Dog Press, 2002), pp. 122-123.

'present' state stretches from early childhood to young adulthood and beyond, especially if we embrace the notion of life-long learning. The quality of education therefore includes the quality of the experience that students have throughout their school life, as well as the opportunities that it affords for the future. We owe it to them to make that experience as meaningful and enjoyable as possible.

Some of you, as you read this report, may be reminded of Henry Mianscum's report in 1999 to which we will refer throughout this Review. He captured the essence of the issues facing the CSB and its schools. In fact, if his recommendations had been followed, our report would be unnecessary. You will find that we too are very critical of the current delivery of educational services and that we argue, as he did, that **profound change** is required if students are to benefit from the education to which they are entitled.

***We want the school to be the best there is; however, the steps to make it the best are not taken (Stakeholder).***

Several people with whom we spoke talked about the fallacy of **wishful thinking** ("pensée magique") - that believing something will happen will make it happen. They realized, as we do, that such magic only works in fairy tales. Simply telling schools that student results must improve does not make it happen, nor will

it help schools to make it happen.

This report does not offer any 'magic bullets' or 'quick-fix' solutions because the route to improvement will be neither easy nor quick. Improvement will require serious attention by the leadership of the Board to build the **capacity** of its schools, centres and board offices. Most of all, it must build the capacity of its personnel to deliver quality education services. We do hope however, that this report will provide a solid basis for this long-term process.

Although we wrote this report and are solely responsible for its content, we could not have completed our work without the help of the students, parents, staff and other members of the Cree School Board community who participated in the Review. We thank you for your input to this work and regret that we did not have the opportunity to present this report in person in each community. We hope that you will hear your voices in our words, especially in Part 5 where we summarize 'what stakeholders want to see happen.' We are very conscious of your expectations from this Review: a marked improvement in educational service delivery for youth, adult and post-secondary students of the Cree School Board. **Stakeholders want to see action, not words.**

***Let us put what we are talking about as a priority. Let us really try to help these children. Let us not hide or sweep under the rug the things that we talked about today (Elder).***

This report marks the end of our work but it also marks the beginning of the next crucial step - **action planning** for improvement. It is now up to the leadership of the Cree School Board to ensure that this report is used to help transform the Board into a learning community where students come first, not just on a poster, but in reality.

William J. Smith,  
Mary Bear,  
William E. Corrigan and  
Kimberly Quinn

June, 2008

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report of the **Educational Review: 2007-08, Communication, Accountability & Follow-Up for School Improvement (CAFSI)**, has five parts and other documents, which can be found on the Cree School Board [CSB] Educational Review website:

[http://www.csree.qc.ca/Edreview/ed\\_review.htm](http://www.csree.qc.ca/Edreview/ed_review.htm)

### Part 1: Overview, Context & Mission

Our analysis began by placing the CSB in context, including its history and relationship with the wider education system. The analysis of the Board's mission stresses the importance of the promotion of Cree values, language and culture, and the provision of quality educational services to students. We recommend maintaining both halves of this dual purpose, arguing that the problem in the CSB is not with the mission, it is with the delivery of services.

### Part 2: Youth Education

#### Student Results

Many students are not actively engaged in learning or school life; attendance is generally very poor and a disturbing number never complete high school.

Standardized tests show that students in the CSB do not have the basic literacy and numeracy skills to be successful in school. Student learning of Cree and Cree culture is no better. At less than 9%, the graduation rate has almost ceased to exist.

Our recommendations focus on setting standards for academic, as well as social and personal learning.

#### Classroom Instruction

Classroom instruction in the CSB varies widely and in many cases is very problematic. Issues range from the teachers themselves, including unqualified substitutes, to a lack of *suitable* resources, including classrooms and teaching materials, but especially, curriculum and language of instruction.

The problem begins in the early grades with CLIP, the Cree Language of Instruction Program, where colouring seems to predominate over learning. Children enter grade 3 or 4 without having learned to read - in any language. No transition is provided to make the leap to instruction in English or French. The result is clear and predictable: students cannot cope with the material intended for their grade level.

The claim that the CSB follows the Québec Education Program is a myth. At best, teachers teach what they can, at worst, students are not even expected to learn, and, predictably, they live down to this low level of expectations, until they drop out.

We recommend a completely 'fresh start' beginning in kindergarten with English or French as the

language of instruction and a revitalized program for the mastery of Cree with *sequenced learning outcomes* from kindergarten to secondary V.

We recommend the progressive implementation of this new model beginning at kindergarten and moving forward one year at a time and a transitional regime for students currently enrolled in schools of the Board. These students must not be allowed to fall by the wayside while a new model is developed.

#### Complementary Services

Complementary services include special education, guidance and other services designed to directly support student learning. We were not able to adequately evaluate service delivery in this area but it appears that schools have too few resources and too little capacity to do an adequate job. We recommend that a thorough needs assessment for these services be conducted as soon as possible.

#### School Support for Learning

School support for learning includes school culture and organization, leadership and planning, allocation and management of resources, and monitoring and evaluation of school performance.

Generally speaking, schools of the CSB do not provide appropriate support for teaching and learning. Teacher supervision is almost non-existent, as principals have learned that meeting administrative deadlines is more important to the Board than what goes on in classrooms.

Splitting authority in the school between the principal and the CEA makes a bad situation worse and we recommend making the principal the sole point of accountability for the school.

However, this and other changes we recommend will never bear fruit unless considerable time and effort are spent building the capacity of schools to help teachers to teach and students to learn, including sustained professional development for all staff.

#### Home & Community Support for Learning

In most cases, home and community support for learning is very poor. A revitalized effort needs to be made by schools to reach out to parents. The School Committee has an important role to play in this regard but its mandate needs to be more sharply focused on supporting the school.

Schools are not seen as a community institution and linkages between school and community are generally weak. We recommend a comprehensive strategy to bring all members of the school community together to help *their* school to help *their* children to succeed.

### Part 3: Adult Education

We were only able to obtain minimal data about adult student results in **continuing education**. Service delivery in the nine continuing education centres and the Sabtuan Regional Vocational Training Centre [SRVTC] is problematic.

Except at the SRVTC, there is a serious lack of facilities and adequate support for students. Centre consultants do the job of a principal but are not recognized or paid as they should be.

There is a weak learning culture at the SRTVC. It does not assume a leadership role in vocational education in the Board. This hurts both adult and youth students for whom vocational training could be the pathway to success.

We had very few data on **post-secondary** student results or the services that the Board provides. We recommend that a thorough analysis of both results and services be undertaken as soon as possible.

### Part 4: School Board Support for Learning

In the CSB, board-level support for learning begins with the units that are concerned with educational services for youth and adults.

The **Office of the Supervisor of Schools** has line authority for schools. It is under-resourced and does not have the capacity to fulfill its important mandate. It does the best it can but this is not enough, especially when schools need so much direction and support. It must rely on Educational Services, which has many resources, but this informal arrangement does not appear to be very satisfactory.

**Educational Services** describes itself as a dynamic group of professionals, working tirelessly in difficult circumstances, to provide schools with support.

Schools have a totally different perspective, with two exceptions: student services, although criticized for managing activities independently from schools, and special education, which is well regarded. Schools tell us that Instructional Services and Cree Programs do not to spend much time on site, are not reachable by phone or email and do not provide useful material; in short, they add little value to schools.

We do not pretend to have been able to get to the bottom of these opposing views but we find the school view much more credible in terms of both the materials Educational Services creates and the services it provides. The Professional Development Unit does not live up to its name. It only conducts the Teacher Training Program, and the results of this effort are disappointing.

We recommend a complete performance audit of this Department and possible relocation from Chisasibi, where it seems to exist in isolation from the schools it is meant to serve.

**Continuing Education** does not provide adequate support or direction to its centres, nor does it take a leadership role to support regional development. We recommend a complete performance audit of this Department, which is an essential link in Board support for lifelong learning.

The **Post-Secondary Student Services Office** has a new director who is attempting to overcome years of administrative problems. Due to a lack of data, the Review was unable to contribute to these efforts.

**Administrative services** include four departments: human resources, finance, material resources and information technology. Our analysis of these units was limited to their role in providing direct support to schools. A more comprehensive analysis of these units will come from the Organizational Review.

We found that the **Human Resources** Department is barely functioning and recommend that the Board consider placing it under internal 'trusteeship.' If affirmative action appointments of Cree persons are maintained, then steps must be taken to ensure that candidates have the *potential* to do the job and measures are in place to ensure support.

Schools look to the **Finance** Department first to provide them with adequate resources and second to facilitate the purchase of materials. The Department was unwilling or unable to provide us with data about the former and the picture we have of the latter is confusing. Finance sees itself as a model of efficiency; schools see it as a 'blocker.'

The Council tries to manage the CSB rather than govern it. The Board administration is top-heavy and disconnected from the schools it should be supporting. We agree with the perception that **in the CSB, central administration, not schools, and certainly not students, comes first.**

**Leadership** and communication are lacking, as are accountability and follow-up. Too much time and money are spent in meetings and travel rather than productive work; too much concern with structures and not enough with who is managing them.

Our recommendations focus on the need for a drastic overhaul of the way the Board operates, beginning with the need to build an **organizational culture** that is reflective and supportive of its mission and purpose and provides the basis for the development of a collaborative learning community and accountability for performance.

### Part 5: From Findings to Action

Part 5 begins with a list our **115 recommendations**, followed by reflections on this Review, including what **stakeholders** expect to see happen in the immediate future. We provide input on three key issues for Board action planning and improvement: **communication, accountability and follow-up.**