

## PROJECT TO BENEFIT ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC BOARD

November 12, 2008: The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has launched a new project called *Making Good Tracks*. The project, which is funded by the Ministry of Education, is aimed at improving learning environments and outcomes for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. It will also raise awareness about Aboriginal culture, languages, history and perspectives in Catholic schools throughout Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka.

The Board is working closely with the Aboriginal community to develop a strategy that will help students realize their full potential. The plan includes developing a Voluntary Aboriginal Student Self-Identification policy. This policy will ensure the Board collects accurate data for Aboriginal students in Kindergarten through to Grade 12 in order to track student progress and help evaluate the effectiveness of new student success initiatives.

“Research tells us that recognizing Aboriginal cultures, identity, values and needs is a great benefit to students in school and we look forward to working with the communities we serve to help bring Aboriginal perspectives into our classrooms,” said Linda McGregor, the Aboriginal Education Specialist with the Board. “Consultation is a very important part of this project and we appreciate the advocacy of the Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle as we look to enhance the success of Aboriginal students in our school communities.”

Darren Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools added, “The voluntary self-identification policy will be the foundation of this exciting project because it will help us gather data to assess the progress of Aboriginal students and the success of our new strategies. We’re also excited about bringing new resources into our classrooms that focus on Aboriginal perspectives and cultures.”

The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board is committed to providing quality education to approximately 22,000 students in 52 schools: 9 secondary and 43 elementary. The Board’s theme for the 2008-09 school year is “Rooted in Faith, Hope and Love” – which is fitting as we work together to advance educational outcomes for Aboriginal students and create supportive learning environments.

For more information, please contact Linda McGregor, Aboriginal Education Specialist at (705) 722-3555 ext. 367 or Darren Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools at (705) 722-3555, ext. 272.

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