



Creating Futures

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Winners of 2009 SSDEC Excellence in Education Awards Recognized

Recipients Announced at Annual SSDEC Staff In-Service

Fort Smith, NT – The South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC) is pleased to announce the recipients of the *SSDEC Excellence in Education Awards* for 2009:

Program Staff

- Lutsel K'e Dene School Leadership Team –Principal *Sheila Cavanagh*, Literacy Coach *Gail Sajo*, and Program Support Teacher *Kristin Nowak*

Partners in Education

- *South Slave Healthy Communities Partnership (SSHCP)* partners: Hay River Health & Social Services Authority; Fort Smith Health & Social Services Authority; South Slave Divisional Education Council; Aurora College – Thebacha Campus, and; Employment, Culture & Education – South Slave Region Service Centres

The purpose of the Excellence in Education Awards is to publicly recognize the sustained commitments and outstanding contributions made by staff, parents and/or community members in helping to create the best possible futures for South Slave students.

The Lutsel K'e Dene School leadership team was honoured for leading the school to significant improvements in student achievement and community support during the past two years. The South Slave Healthy Communities Partnership was recognized for its interagency communication and development of innovative and cost-effective joint initiatives of benefit to the health and welfare of residents in the South Slave communities.

Ann Pischinger, SSDEC Chairperson asserts, “This year’s award recipients exemplify educational leadership qualities that positively contribute to school improvement and student success. We are extremely proud of both their individual achievements and their collective contributions.”

The *SSDEC Excellence in Education Award* is awarded annually to a recipient(s) nominated by their peers and selected from the following two categories:

- *Program staff* – includes teachers, administrators, consultants and education assistants serving South Slave schools
- *Partners in Education* – includes support staff (eg. secretaries and custodians) parents, students, volunteers and other community members/groups or organizations that work in support of student learning

2008-09 SSDEC Excellence in Education Awards Recipient Biographies attached

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SOUTH SLAVE DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL
2009 Excellence in Education - Educator Award Recipient(s) Background

Lutsel K'e Dene School Leadership Team

The Lutsel K'e Dene School leadership team made up of the Principal, Program Support Teacher, and Literacy Coach, is being honoured for leading the school to significant improvements in student achievement over the past two years. The leadership team, with the ongoing support of the local education authority and several dedicated school staff, have embraced the community and worked to significantly improve community support and student achievement. The leadership team has transformed an already warm and caring staff into a highly effective professional learning community over the past several years. Coinciding with the Leadership for Literacy initiative, the school leadership team has established a continuity of vision that has created a stability and focus on results the school had not seen previously.

After the first year of the Leadership for Literacy initiative, almost every student experienced significant gains in reading achievement. Using data gathered by the standardized GRADE (Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation) test, more than 90% of the students achieved at least one stanine of growth in comparison to the Canadian norms. The majority of the classes met and exceeded Canadian National Growth Standards in reading by a significant margin. The second year of the initiative garnered similar results, such that for the first time, a significant portion of the Lutsel K'e students are functioning at or close to grade level.

Considerable and sustained efforts have engaged regional and community partners in support of the school and students. It is not unusual for literacy nights, community education planning (CEP) days, and parent-teacher-student three-way conferences to now garner over 80% parent attendance, where in the past these kinds of events would gather just a handful of community participants. Similarly, elders and traditional, cultural and on-the-land activities have been systematically incorporated into the school and the curriculum. Another partnership with Aurora College and the regional ECE Career Center has minimized overlaps and gaps in service between high school and adult programs. Building relations and setting up partnerships like these between the school and the partners in education has been an integral part of the efforts to foster a strong foundation and interest in student learning in Lutsel K'e.

Through the tireless efforts of the school leadership team and staff to partner with parents and others, and learn and systemically implement effective reading and intervention strategies, the students are quickly catching up. Continued staff retention, professional development and focused instruction and interventions holds further promise for improving the future prospects for these students, helping them meet not only success in reading but also in school and in life.

Additional background information attached:

- **Lutsel K'e Dene School Vignette**

SOUTH SLAVE DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL
2009 Excellence in Education - Partner Award Recipient(s) Background

South Slave Healthy Communities Partnership (SSHCP): Hay River Health & Social Services Authority, Fort Smith Health & Social Services Authority, Aurora College – Thebacha Campus, South Slave Divisional Education Council, and Education, Culture & Education – Career Centres – Hay River & Fort Smith

The goal of the partnership is to foster interagency communication and develop joint programs of benefit to the health and welfare of residents in the South Slave Communities. Key strategies are: Linkages; Child and Family Services; Human Resources and Cross Discipline Awareness and Training. Target client group for the partnership is at-risk young people aged 5 through 21 years. This group is the initial point of contact, and parents, siblings and caregivers of the prime target group are involved in (and benefit from) many of the programs. The creation of the partnership presaged the GNWT's recent focus on integrated service delivery, and as such was also recently honoured with the Premier's 2009 Collaboration Award.

The SSCHP and its off-shoots have been extremely successful with fundraising and incorporating the most up-to-date technologies available to reduce costs, increase accessibility and improve community services. One of the partnerships' projects, the Community Assets Database, is a state-of-the-art, online, and searchable database designed and maintained by northerners. It provides valuable data about services, organizations, businesses and recreational opportunities in South Slave communities. It is accessible to anyone with an Internet connection and can be used to promote sharing, networking, partnerships, business, tourism, and relocation to the region.

There are many other successes and projects which fall under the umbrella of the SSHCP. Projects that stand out are: the raising of third-party funds and hiring of Integrated Service Delivery Coordinators in Hay River and Fort Smith; the implementation of Drug and Alcohol Strategies for Youth and the related the Lights On program in Hay River; the partnership and hiring of a Crime Prevention Program Coordinator in Fort Smith to run cultural and various other activities for at-risk youth; nutrition events and breakfast programs; and an Education and Health Partnership Agreement between Diamond Jenness Secondary School (DJSS) and Hay River Healthy and Social Services Authority. Just recently, over \$1.4 million in federal crime prevention funding has been raised for the development and implementation of a Leadership and Resiliency Program (LRP) starting this fall at DJSS.

Many staff and partners have contributed to the success of this partnership initiative to date. Special recognition goes to the CEOs of the partner organizations as well as Paul Rosebush, Kathy Purchase, Sydney O'Sullivan, Brent Kaulback, Jill Taylor, Margaret Bell, Sheila Ryan-Hachey, Heidi Selzler and Jolene Bourque. It is indeed a pleasure to publicly acknowledge the remarkable contributions of our educators and education partners, such as yourselves, that enable our Council to maximize its contributions to the communities and residents.

Additional background information attached:

- **South Slave Healthy Communities Partnership backgrounder**