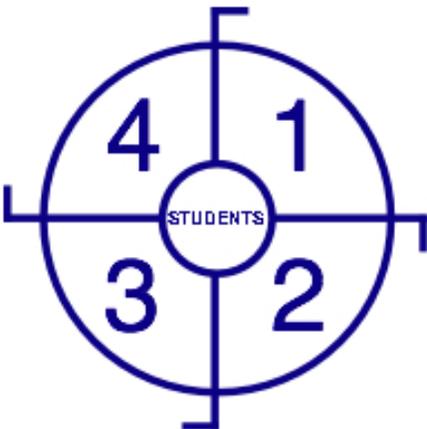# Educational Review: 2007-08

Charting the Course

"The most valuable resource that the Cree nation has is our children. Schools, teachers, students, parents and communities will always require more of the Cree School Board in regard to our children's education and well-being because in these children lay our dreams, hopes and aspirations for the future of the Cree nation."

The above quotation taken from the 1999 Mianscum report underscores the interests that the stakeholders of the Cree School Board have in knowing how well the School Board is succeeding at fulfilling its mission. Accordingly, the purpose of this document is to provide them with a summary of the major elements of the work plan for the **Educational Review** - the evaluation of educational service delivery in the Board.

The purpose of the work plan is to guide the conduct of the evaluation within the parameters set by the agreed-to terms of reference of the evaluation. A draft version of this document was circulated for feedback from stakeholders.

Very little feedback was received - only six submissions: one from a continuing education centre, one from a Community Education Administrator [CEA], three from various coordinators of administrative services, and one from another Board administrator. However, their input was much appreciated and was used in the revision of the work plan, as presented to the Council of Commissioners on September 20, 2007 and finalized with the Director General on September 25, 2007.

> **Cree School Board Mission**
> "To provide a high Eeyou/Eenou based, holistic education founded on our language and culture and consistent with our values and traditions as Eeyou-Eenou. This education will help prepare each person to make his or her journey as a valued contributor to our Eeyou-Eenou communities and Nation, and to society at large, now and in the future."

September 28, 2007

Purpose & Scope of the Educational Review

This educational review is intended to serve two complementary purposes:

- *accountability*, permitting the Board to *answer* to its stakeholders for the trust they have placed in it for the education of their children, youth and adults; and

- *improvement*, supporting the development of programs and service delivery in order to make its schools more effective places for teaching and learning.
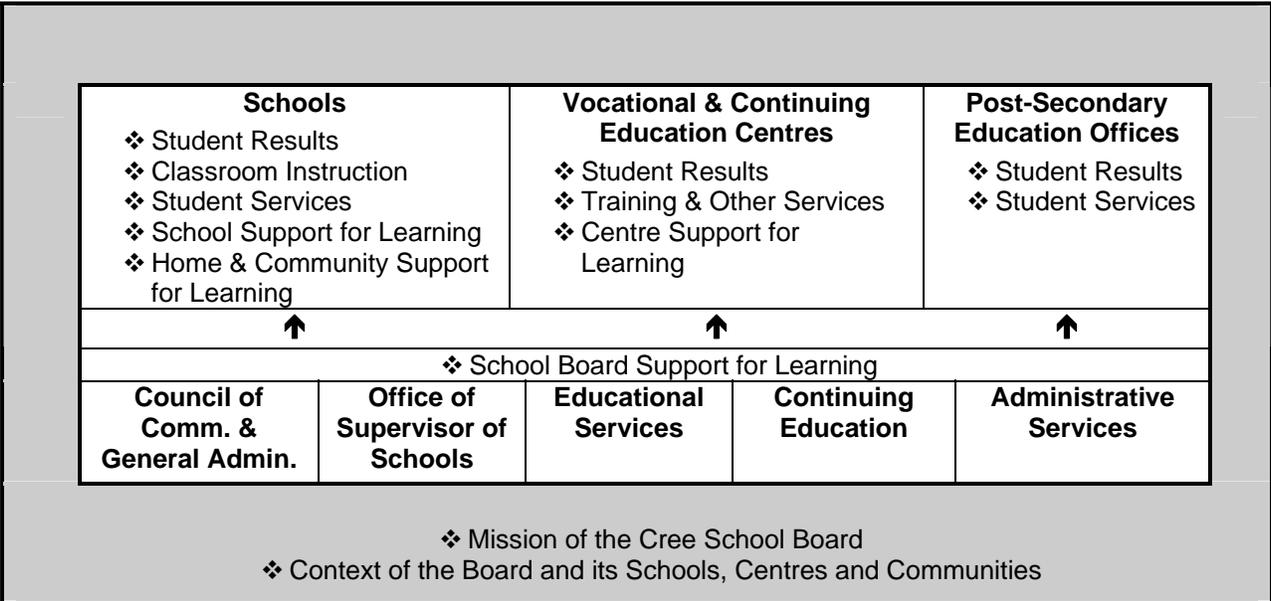
A focus on students: This Review will focus first and foremost on students:

- children and youth who attend schools operated by the Board;
- adults who participate in training offered by the continuing education centres operated by the Board; and
- community members who attend post-secondary institutions outside the Board.

Students enrolled in schools or adult centres rightly expect a great deal from these institutions and an evaluation should therefore concentrate on what matters most in the provision of quality educational services. That is why the performance themes chosen to guide the Educational Review begin with youth student results and move out from there:

➔ student results (youth);
    ➔ classroom instruction;
        ➔ student services;
            ➔ school support for learning;
                ➔ home and community support for learning; and finally
                    ➔ school board support for learning.

As also shown below in the graphic, we have adopted a similar approach for the evaluation of results and services for adult students and students enrolled in post-secondary institutions, for a total of eleven performance themes.

Schools	Vocational & Continuing Education Centres	Post-Secondary Education Offices
❖ Student Results ❖ Classroom Instruction ❖ Student Services ❖ School Support for Learning ❖ Home & Community Support for Learning	❖ Student Results ❖ Training & Other Services ❖ Centre Support for Learning	❖ Student Results ❖ Student Services
⬆	⬆	⬆

❖ School Board Support for Learning

Council of Comm. & General Admin.	Office of Supervisor of Schools	Educational Services	Continuing Education	Administrative Services

❖ Mission of the Cree School Board
❖ Context of the Board and its Schools, Centres and Communities

This graphic representation also shows that the Educational Review will be grounded in the mission and context of the Board. To evaluate an organization without considering its mission is to ignore its *raison d'être*. To evaluate it without reference to its context, is to ignore the realities of the environment in which it operates.

A synthesis: We realize that this review is not the first evaluation undertaken by the Board. It is important, therefore, to locate the Educational Review in relation to these other initiatives, both past and present. Accordingly, we will build on what has been learned from past initiatives and will incorporate the results from current initiatives, including the strategic planning exercise and the organizational review of board administration to provide a synthesis of all these efforts, as illustrated below.
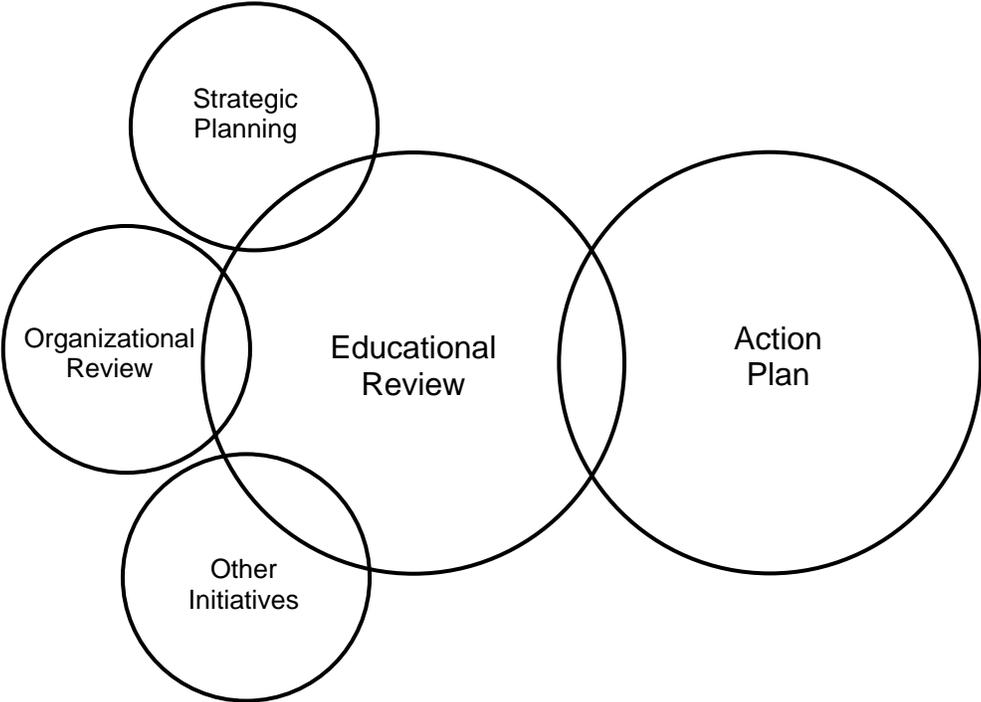
The Educational Review will thus provide stakeholders with a ***holistic*** portrait of the Board's ***performance*** - the extent to which it is achieving *results* and *operating* in accordance with its vision and purposes - and its ***capacity*** - the structures, systems, resources and any other related elements, that *enable* it to perform. As shown in the above graphic, this portrait will be used to develop an ***action plan*** to build capacity, enhance performance and, ultimately, help ***students*** to be more successful in school and beyond.

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
	The **evaluation** provides understanding of current challenges.	It first supports the building of the **capacity** of the School Board and its schools.	This leads to improved **performance** in the delivery of educational services.	The ultimate result is higher levels of **student success**.

Major Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions shape and guide the evaluation by directing the inquiry toward specific ends that are consistent with the above statement of purpose and scope. The major questions listed below provide the 'scaffolding' of the evaluation and were used to develop the 'objects' of the evaluation as described below. The major questions are therefore general in nature and intended to sketch out the 'big picture' that the evaluation aims to complete.

General (Non-Thematic) Questions
▪ Which organizational unit or position is accountable for the performance theme being evaluated and how, realistically, can improvement be achieved in the short, medium and long term?
▪ What evidence would be required to satisfy stakeholders that necessary and sufficient action is being taken to effect this improvement?

Schools	
Themes	**Questions**
A: Student Results	▪ What results does the school expect for its students and how effective is it in achieving them?
B: Classroom Instruction	▪ How successful is the school in providing quality classroom instruction to its students?
C: Student Services	▪ How successful is the school in providing other quality services to its students?
D: School Support for Learning	▪ How successful is the school in providing other means to support learning?
E: Home & Community Support for Learning	▪ How successful is the school in promoting home and community support for learning?

Vocational & Continuing Education Centres	
Themes	**Questions**
F: Student Results	▪ What results does the centre expect for its students and how effective is it in achieving them?
G: Training & Other Services	▪ How successful is the centre in providing quality training and other services to its students?
H: Centre Support for Learning	▪ How successful is the centre in providing other means to support learning?

Post-Secondary Education Offices	
Themes	**Questions**
I: Student Results	▪ What results does the office expect for its students and how effective is it in achieving them?
J: Student Services	▪ How successful is the office in providing quality services to its students?

School Board Units:				
Council of Comm. & General Admin.	**Office of Supervisor of Schools**	**Educational Services**	**Continuing Education**	**Administrative Services**
Theme	**Questions**			
K: School Board Support for Learning	▪ How successful is the school board in providing support for learning through its structures, systems and policies for the governance and management of education?			

Mission & Context of the Cree School Board	
Themes	**Questions**
L: Mission	▪ To what extent is the Board guided by a clear and commonly understood mission with respect to its principal beneficiaries: youth students; continuing education students; and post-secondary students?
M: Context	▪ What is the importance of the external environment to the Board's ability to serve its students?

Defining Performance

Defining the 'objects' of the evaluation requires the evaluators to specify precisely which aspects of the organization's performance and capacity are being evaluated.

Any evaluation is meant to determine *how well* the organization is performing in relation to the objects chosen. This requires the development of performance standards:

- **Performance standards** – specify the level(s) or degree(s) of desired performance, often using various *evaluation criteria* that enable us to observe and measure performance.

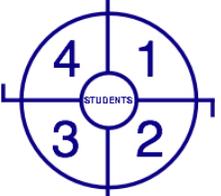The evaluation criteria used to define standards enable us to answer the following questions:

- How do we know whether the standard has been met?
- How do we differentiate an 'excellent' level of performance from an 'adequate' level, or 'satisfactory' from 'unsatisfactory' performance?

All objects chosen, as well as the standards adopted for each object, are provide in the Work Plan of the Educational Review, available on the Board website (**http://www.cscree.qc.ca/edreview/ed_review.htm**).

Generally speaking, we have based these standards on generally applicable norms of policy and practice in public education. They also reflect what we have learned about performance evaluation of schools and organizations generally. Ideally, these themes, objects and standards ought to have been developed with the participation of stakeholders to ensure that we are measuring 'what matters' to them. The lack of time prevented this from happening. Therefore, the themes, objects and standards chosen should be viewed as a 'working definition' that can be revised on the basis of this evaluation for future use by the Board.

The Evaluation Process

As summarized in the Information documents circulated previously, the evaluation consists of the four major steps shown below.

	1 **Planning & Preparation** (Aug 1 - Sep 30, 2007)	**2** **Data Collection** (Oct 1 - Dec 15, 2007)	**3** **Data Analysis** (Jan 1 - Feb 28, 2008)	**4** **Report Writing** (March 1-28, 2008)

For purposes of this document, we are assuming that stakeholders will be most interested in Step 2, namely:

- what are the sources of data that we intend to use; and
- how do we intend to collect these data?

Sources & Methods of Data Collection

The major sources of data for an organizational evaluation such as this one include:

- stakeholders, including students, staff, parents and others;
- programs, activities and facilities in schools, centres and board offices; and
- educational and administrative records and documents from the Board and other sources.

In this evaluation, data collected by and results obtained from other evaluative initiatives will also be used as data. In other words, we will look at what has been learned from other endeavours, rather than duplicate what has already been done. This approach will ensure that any apparent overlap between this evaluation and other initiatives will be limited to that which is necessary to accomplish the aim of this evaluation - a **holistic portrait** of the Board's performance and capacity, to the ultimate benefit of the Board's major beneficiaries - its students.

> With **OPENNESS AND RESPECT**: The entire evaluation process will be transparent and participatory, and conducted in accordance with the ***Ethical Guidelines*** contained in the general Information document.

We will use a wide variety of methods for collecting these data, including:

- non-personal interaction with people (e.g., questionnaire);
- personal interaction with people (e.g., interview);
- observation (e.g. classrooms); and
- examination of records and documents.

Data collection will take place at the Educational Symposium, 2007 in Montréal, and in structured visits to <u>every</u> school and centre, as well as to Board offices in Mistissini, Chisasibi, Montréal and Gatineau, as summarized below.

Site	Sources of Data	Means
Educational Symposium, 2007	Principals	Interviews
	Other administrators	Interviews
	Teachers	Focus groups[1]
	Sessions	Observation
Schools	Students	Focus groups[2]
	Vice-principal(s)	Interview(s)
	CEA	Interview
	School Committee Chair	Interview
	Commissioner	Interview
	Elders' Council	Focus group
	Band Council Education Rep	Interview
	Teachers	Questionnaire
	Other staff	Questionnaire
	Parents	Forum[3]
	Community members	
	Classrooms	Observation
	External agencies	To be determined
	School documents & records	-
Vocational Training & Continuing Education Centres	Students	Focus groups
	Director (Sabtuan VTC)	Interview
	Teachers	Questionnaire
	Other staff	Questionnaire
	Classrooms	Observation
	Commissioner (Local Cont Ed Committee)	Interview
	Documents & records	-
Post-Secondary Offices	Students	Focus group[4]
	Director	Interviews
	Other staff	Questionnaire
	Documents & records	-
School Board	Executive Committee members	Interviews
	Director General	Interview
	Secretary General	Interview
	Directors & Coordinators	Interviews
	Other staff	Questionnaire
	Documents & records	-
Other	Representative of Cree Regional Authority	Interview
	Director of Cree Youth Healing Services	Interview
	President, NQTA	Interview

[1] Teacher focus groups will cluster participants by level or type of instruction.

[2] Separate focus groups will be held for students from different levels of instruction.

[3] The 'forum' for parents and community members will take the form of a radio phone-in program.

[4] The focus group for post-secondary students and interviews of Executive Committee members will be held in Montréal in December to coincide with the annual student dinner and the meeting of the Council of Commissioners.

The Results of the Educational Review

An evaluation represents a considerable expenditure of effort and resources. Accordingly, it is important that this investment is worthwhile. At the end of the process, stakeholders should not be left wondering why the evaluation was undertaken.

The immediate result of the evaluation, which we are mandated to deliver, is a written report that will include:

- the findings of the evaluation;
- identification of any issues requiring further study; and
- recommendations for short term and longer term action.

The report is to be made public and we will provide a short version that will be circulated throughout the Board. In addition, other strategies will be developed to communicate the results to stakeholders.

However, no report, no matter how insightful, no matter how well written, is enough to justify an evaluation. **To be truly useful it must lead to meaningful change that ultimately will benefit students.**

Accordingly, the next result to flow from the evaluation is an **action plan** that the Board will use to make use of the findings of the evaluation and the recommendations it provides. No one can say at this early stage what the content of this plan will be. However, it should include:

- goals and objectives to improve the Board's capacity and performance to deliver educational services;
- the means selected to meet these goals and objectives;
- the resources required for this purpose;
- the planning of these improvement efforts, including a timeline for all aspects of the plan; and
- the means for monitoring and evaluating the results.

STUDENTS: The ultimate beneficiary of these efforts will be the students of the Cree School Board. **It was for them that this evaluation was undertaken and it will be their success by which the evaluation will be judged.**

NOTE. Very early in the planning process we became aware that many stakeholders were sceptical of yet another evaluation, wondering if it would truly lead to meaningful change. For this reason, we include the following question as an integral part of our data collection process: "This Educational Review is meant to lead to *action* to improve the quality of service delivery to students. What evidence would satisfy you that action is being taken to effect this improvement?" We will provide a summary of the answers received in our final report.
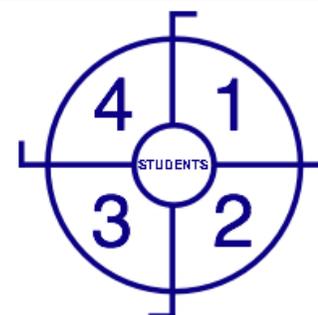
1   The **findings** of the evaluation will flow directly from the analysis of the data collected.

2   The **conclusions** of the report will be grounded in the findings, the empirical basis of the report.

3   Finally, the report will include **recommendations** that flow from the conclusions to guide future action.

4   The **action plan** demonstrates the *utility* of the evaluation to help improve service delivery for the benefit of students.