

School Health Promotion in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan in Profile¹

The name Saskatchewan is derived from the Cree word *kisiskâciwanisîpiy* meaning "swift-flowing river." Saskatchewan became a province of Canada on September 1, 1905. Saskatchewan covers 6.5% of Canada, an area of 651,036 square kilometres. Of this, 591,670 square kilometres are land and 59,366 square kilometres are covered by water.

The government of Saskatchewan has a productive relationship with our province's First Nations and Métis people and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). The FSIN was one of the first First Nations political organizations in Canada, and the government of Saskatchewan is proud to have played a key role in its formation.

The 2011 National Household Survey indicated that Aboriginals comprised 15.6% of Saskatchewan's population. Over the next 16 years, the regions with high concentrations of Aboriginal populations are projected to see an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal young adults (aged 20-29 years). Saskatchewan's Aboriginal communities are primarily children and youth. The median age of First Nations persons in Saskatchewan is 23 years compared to 41 years for the non-Aboriginal population.

Saskatchewan's Plan for Growth is to secure a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people by improving health care and education outcomes while building growing and safe communities and improving the lives of persons with disabilities in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan's population has been increasing over the past few years and has risen to 1,117,503 (2013). This population increase is reflected in Saskatchewan's student enrolment which has risen to 170, 582 students in 28 provincially-funded schools (2013).

Saskatchewan is the birthplace of Canadian medicare, with a 50-year history of innovation that serves as a model for health systems around the world. The province has 13 health authorities which are funded by and accountable to the Minister of Health for the planning, organization, delivery and evaluation of various health services provided within their region. The Ministry's key functions are to support service delivery and to create and manage healthy public policy, which provides guidance to regional health authorities.

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=f80c0ebb-f1c6-497e-8bc0-30c215a5441f>

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/about-saskatchewan/>

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-547-x/2005001/4072106-eng.htm>

<http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/pop/POP%20AGE%20GENDER%202006.pdf>

[Documents&MediaID=18069&Filename=About+Saskatchewan++2007.pdf](http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/Documents&MediaID=18069&Filename=About+Saskatchewan++2007.pdf). 2

School Community Councils

School Community Councils are working with parents and community members to develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth, and facilitate parent, community and youth engagement in school planning and improvement processes.

The establishment of School Community Councils across the province creates a firm foundation for building a local governance system to address current issues and meet our future needs in rural and urban communities alike.

Core Curricula

The Core Curriculum - an integrated framework of components and initiatives that work together within the classroom and school environment to support the learning - promotes the development of the whole child, intellectually, personally, socially, physically, culturally and spiritually. The learning expected of students in Saskatchewan is defined by high-level curriculum outcomes for each grade.

School Health Promotion

The Ministry of Education is focusing on creating safe and accepting schools for all students. On November 14, 2013, The Government of Saskatchewan released *Saskatchewan's Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying*, which provides students, families and schools with the knowledge, skills, resources and supports to help Saskatchewan children and youth feel safe and accepted at school, in their community and online. In addition, the Ministry of Education began working with schools and school divisions to implement the *Tell Them From Me* (TTFM) survey during the 2012-2013 school year, with full implementation by all provincially-funded schools scheduled for the 2014-2015 school year. The Ministry of Education is committed to collaborating with schools and school divisions to develop processes to respond to TTFM perceptual data on school climate, student engagement, school safety, student well-being and the drivers of schooling outcomes in order to raise the engagement and achievement levels of Saskatchewan students.

Priority areas for the Ministry of Health population health initiatives include a school food policy, increasing physical activity, the promotion of mental well-being and substance use and abuse prevention, including tobacco control. This work complements the traditional areas of public health, infection control, sexual health, immunizations and communicable and chronic disease prevention.

In an effort to create environments where it is easier for children and youth to choose healthier choices, several initiatives are underway:

- The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Services, introduced in 2009 *Nourishing Minds, Towards Comprehensive School Community Health: Nutrition Policy Development in*

Saskatchewan Schools. This document focuses on school division nutrition policy development and implementation consistent with CSCH guidelines resulting in partnerships, planning, promotion and provision of nutritious food in all Saskatchewan schools. It also serves as a template for other healthy living initiatives that may evolve over time.

- The Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport introduced in 2010 *Inspiring Movement, Towards Comprehensive Health: Guidelines for Physical Activity in Saskatchewan Schools* This document focuses on recommendations that go beyond the physiological aspects of implementing physical activity, is encompasses the psychological social and spiritual dimensions of incorporating physical activity in to school curriculum.
- Public health nutritionists in Saskatchewan's health regions work directly with schools/school divisions in the development and implementation of school nutrition policies.
- The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with public health nutritionists, developed a resource called *Healthy Foods for My School*. This resource is intended to support schools in reading nutrition facts labels to select nutritious foods and can be found at <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/healthy-foods-for-my-school>.

The Ministry of Health's school-based, youth-focused tobacco prevention program, *View and Vote*, is a component of the government's ongoing work to reduce tobacco consumption. *View and Vote* gives students in grades 6 to 12 an opportunity to view 12 of the world's best anti-tobacco television ads, and voice their opinion. Teachers guide students as they watch the ads, and encourage them to engage in discussion and think critically about tobacco use. Students select the ad they feel is the most effective in helping them to remain tobacco-free or make them think about quitting.

Another initiative to address youth tobacco use is the provision in *The Tobacco Control Act* that prohibits tobacco use in schools and on school grounds. This ban includes the use of smoked and smokeless tobacco products (e.g. cigarettes, chew, snuff, etc). The legislation applies to everyone, not just students and staff, and it applies everyday, at all times of the day, even when there is no school.

Challenges and Keys to Success

A major challenge in Saskatchewan is one million people living in a large geographic area. In 2013, Saskatchewan's population density was identified to be 1.86 people per square kilometer of land area, with the majority spread over the southern half of the province in small cities and towns. The populist nature of the province and commitment to maintaining strength in rural communities means that there is considerable effort spent in trying to maintain resources in or close to these communities. This has created systems with history of strong local control and high levels of autonomy within the health regions and school divisions.

The economic, social and educational prosperity of First Nations and Metis people is a priority for collaborative action in Saskatchewan. The percentage of people with an

education attainment of less than high school is much higher in Aboriginal populations than the general population. Saskatchewan's Ministry of First Nations and Metis Relations works with the province's Aboriginal peoples and other government agencies to advance common interests and improve social and economic outcomes for these populations. The ministry provides leadership within the provincial government to ensure First Nations and Métis priorities and issues are reflected in the development, coordination and implementation of government policies and programs. Both Health and Education have current initiatives to support culturally-responsive programming.

Benefits to JCSH Membership

- The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health continue to identify work priorities common among government ministries as a way to better coordinate efforts and to identify Joint Consortium for School Health activities that align with these areas. The school health coordinators meet monthly and there are quarterly meetings at the management level.
- The school health coordinators have established an electronic network to communicate with existing provincial health and learning networks to widely disseminate information about local and national comprehensive school health initiatives.
- Membership in the Joint Consortium for School Health has increased the accessibility and comprehensiveness of provincial and national information on health and learning. This has enhanced the quality of information provided to the Ministers of Health and Education and to people involved in policy, program planning and implementation.

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