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Aboriginal Student Achievement Forums Continue in 2011

YELLOWKNIFE (January 17, 2011) – Strengthening ties between communities and education boards, as well as supporting students in getting a good education while retaining their Aboriginal language and culture, was the focus of the recent Dehcho Aboriginal Student Achievement (ASA) Regional Forum in Fort Simpson.

“We are looking at the education system in a different way,” said the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Jackson Lafferty. “During these Forums, we keep hearing about the importance of integrating Aboriginal language and culture, and the communities need to have an active role in this alternative approach to education in the NWT. If we work together, we can rebuild the foundation that is the voice of the NWT.”

“The passion and suggestions from participants to increase Aboriginal graduation rates in our schools was phenomenal,” said Mr. Kevin Menicoche, Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Nahendeh, who joined Minister Lafferty at the Forum. “I look forward to us working together for an educated North.”

During the Forum, Dehcho First Nations Grand Chief, Sam Gargan, spoke to the importance of cultural balance saying that knowing your culture, language and traditional skills fully can make an individual “strong like two people.”

Dehcho Divisional Education Council Chair, Martina Norwegian feels involving students in identifying learning needs and planning school programs is an important aspect of education. “This Dehcho ASA Forum is just one of the initiatives that can make this possible. With the participation and partnerships of the leaders, we can only succeed as we move forward.”

Jim Antoine, Liidlii First Nations Chief, mirrored Ms. Norwegian’s sentiments. “It is good to hear the voices of our youth asking for more involvement from our adults. The forum was a gathering of positive ideas for our future. Elders, Chiefs, education board members, teachers, and youth shared their feelings, ideas and experiences of current education realities of Dehcho communities. From the forum, we have renewed hope and a desire to get things done.”

Media requests for interviews with Members of the Executive Council may be directed to:

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The next Regional Minister's Forum is for the Yellowknife, Dettah and N'dilo schools, and will take place in Dettah, January 18 – 20. Discussions will focus on the ASA priorities of early childhood education, family and student supports; Aboriginal language and culture; and literacy. Feedback collected at the Forums will be incorporated in the development of territorial, as well as community specific, education plans.

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