



LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND SERVICE FOR MANITOBA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

February 23, 2018

Mr. James Wilson
Deputy Minister
Manitoba Education and Training
Room 168, Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Mr. Wilson,

On January 9, 2018, the Manitoba School Boards Association received your correspondence concerning the wind down of funding in support of the Manitoba Education Research Network (MERN). For many years, MERN has provided a forum for relevant research on matters of value to the advancement of local education in our province. Whether it is public or private, secondary or post-secondary, First Nations or off-reserve schools, MERN has covered the true spectrum of education in Manitoba.

MERN has also recognized persons—both educators and non-educators—who have made valuable contributions to education in Manitoba through research or service. This has been an especially important feature of the annual awards luncheon that is hosted under its auspices. There has been no other event where such persons receive formal recognition for the important work that they have achieved and investments they have made in our community through education.

The entire loss of such a forum would, from our perspective, therefore represent a genuine disadvantage for the education sector in Manitoba, given comparable networks in other provinces. We would therefore request your consideration for re-profiling the overall scope of the MERN, by providing ongoing support for the hosting of an annual forum where Manitobans can continue to gather to share their research and where others can benefit from this shared knowledge. As part of the forum, the recognition element could also be continued to ensure that deserving persons are appropriately honoured for their contribution to education in Manitoba through research or service.

Such a forum would be akin to the *Shawane Dagoiwin Education Forum* that is hosted once annually by the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate, a forum that is greatly valued by all who have a stake in the future of Indigenous Education in Manitoba. *Shawane Dagoiwin* is made possible through a combination of provincial support as well as external fundraising. MSBA has been proud to act as a supporter of this forum through these fundraising efforts.

We feel that by re-profiling MERN as an annual one-time event, sufficient interest would continue in the work of the network to make this a highly meaningful event—a continuing platform that can serve to motivate researchers to continue investing their time in producing work of local application and relevance. We are certain that partners in education would contribute to making the continuance of an annual forum a success through a similar combination of provincial and external funding support.

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In closing, we would like to thank Dr. Heather Hunter for her ceaseless support of MERN and for the many years of service that she has invested in its success. MERN has helped to stimulate the conduct of local research for the shared benefit of education and a great deal of the outcomes that have been witnessed over the years has been due to Dr. Hunter's leadership and efforts.

We would also like to thank the Province of Manitoba for its past support of MERN and we would also like to thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Nathaniel J. Watt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Josh Watt
Executive Director
Manitoba School Boards Association

cc Dr. Heather Hunter, Director, MERN
Dr. David Yeo, Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Performance Division, Manitoba Education and Training