

FIRST NATIONS SUN



## DOTC-Ranger-DOPS Education and Sports Initiative for Youth

Anupam Sharma and Robert Daniels

The three partners – Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council (DOTC), Ranger Insurance and Dakota Ojibway Police Services (DOPS) have for the past three years offered this initiative as a pilot-project. The commitment and volunteer spirit of those involved with the program is supplemented by limited resources raised primarily from the DOTC Annual Golf Tournament. The tournament is well-known and attracts participants from the First Nations, corporate and educational sectors. The 2014 tournament will be held on July 10 at the Southwood Golf and Country Club.

The “education and sports initiative” has been open to students in the communities of Birdtail Sioux First Nation, Dakota Tipi First Nation, Long Plain First Nation, Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation, Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation, Swan Lake First Nation and Waywayseecappo First Nation. In addition, students/youth have been invited from Canupawakpa Dakota Nation, Dakota Plains and Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. These communities are proximate to Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Morden.

The program provides education and sports programming through the entire year. During the school year, focus is primarily on role-model, leadership, character-building and aspirations through visits to the schools by appropriate achievers and personalities. During summer months, focus is on sports such as golf, football and lacrosse. Adopting an integrated approach –body and mind- the program is about offering hope, possible road-map, making better choices and quality of life.

To date, DOTC-Ranger-DOPS Education and Sports

Initiative has convened sports camps in areas of golf, football and lacrosse. In education, it has engaged active and former players from the Winnipeg Blue Bombers to visit students in schools and, serve as role-models. These efforts have been appreciated by the educational and, sports and recreation entities and stakeholders within the communities and, seen as supportive and complementary to existing initiatives.

Relative to the educational component, to provide role models, aspiration and road-map towards better choices and quality of life. We need to expand this effort. We are working to bringing to our communities, leaders from the business, sports, educational/professional as role models and inspiration for the students - our leaders for tomorrow. Additionally, in line with the three priorities arising from the 2012-22 DOTC Strategic Plan -**Education, Employment and Economic Development**- the Tribal Council (its partners and communities) want to focus on the importance and necessity of **STEM- science, technology, engineering and mathematics**.

The Partners remain highly committed and excited to offering the proposed initiative. We plan to expand the initiative to include the larger communities from the proximate regional centres. For us, this is a stepping stone to better relationships and understanding between the First Nations and the larger society within Manitoba.