



## NEWS RELEASE

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### New school will get a new name

Approximately 500 students, parents, caregivers, community partners, and staff gathered to share a meal and be present to hear, for the first time, the new name for St. Frances Cree Bilingual School's replacement facility that is currently under construction at 2010 7th Street East.

"The new school represents a new beginning in so many ways," said Diane Boyko, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools' Board of Education Chair. "Cree language and cultural programming at St. Frances has been part of our division's journey toward reconciliation for years. The new building will be a very real representation of our commitment to helping Indigenous students and staff reclaim and rebuild their language, culture and heritage. It just seems right that the school's name would reflect those realities."

The consultation process began almost a year ago. Elders, parents, caregivers, students, staff, and community members shared possible names and provided feedback. Throughout the process, traditional nēhiyaw (Cree) protocols were honoured and respected. In all, 135 names were proposed. From those, themes were identified, and options were narrowed down to six potential names. Two of the six were combined for the new name:

**awâsisak kê-nîmîhtocik – St. Francis School**  
(pronounced: a-wah-sih-suk gha-knee-meet-oh-chik)

The name means "children who dance" and reflects the nurturing of children's spirits, their connection to ancestors, and their journey into the future. The name honours traditional teachings and cultural knowledge passed down through the generations.

"The name is not only about those current students, but for us to think about those who came before us, and especially about those who went to residential schools and never came home," said Elder Mary Lee. "It's through the spirit of dancing that current and future students will be able to honour them. It reminds us about what the children will have and that they be able to talk about things we once were not able to talk about. It's an opportunity for healing."

The school's patron has been changed to St. Francis of Assisi whose well-known care for nature and interconnectedness with all living things aligns with Indigenous values. (The current school was named after St. Frances Cabrini, a religious sister who opened schools, orphanages and hospitals around the world.)

Cree language and cultural programming at St. Frances began in 2007, with a partnership with Saskatoon Tribal Council. It has grown to the largest Indigenous language program in Canada with over 600 students from over 50 neighbourhoods and communities. Funding for a replacement school was announced in 2018, and construction began on the corner of 7th Street East and Grosvenor Avenue in the summer of 2023. The new school is expected to open in the fall of 2025.

With 50 schools and over 23,000 students, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools is Saskatchewan's largest Catholic school division, providing Catholic faith-based education from pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 in Saskatoon and area, Biggar, Humboldt, Martensville and Warman. We are rooted in faith, growing in knowledge and reaching out to transform the world.

- 30 -

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