



**SIAST**

SASKATCHEWAN INSTITUTE OF  
APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SIAST Aboriginal student receives Learner Award**

*SIAST Woodland Campus student recognized for commitment to education*

**May 26, 2010** – SIAST Adult Basic Education student Denise Choumont received the Learner Award at the fourth annual Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Awards ceremony last night. The award is presented to Aboriginal learners who have demonstrated exceptional dedication, commitment and personal growth in their learning and their lives.

In 2008, as a single parent, she enrolled in the Grade 10 Basic Education program at SIAST in Prince Albert. "By going back to school, I can show my children the path to follow to succeed in life; furthermore, I can show them the importance of education," Choumont says. After being out of school for 20 years, she succeeded and moved on to completing her Grade 12.

Choumont has been through harrowing family and life experiences. She lost both of her parents at a young age, lived in foster homes and eventually moved in with her aunt and uncle, Helen and Earnest Morin. She left school with only a Grade 8 education, married and had three children. She managed to make it through a divorce and learned to parent on her own.

While enrolled at SIAST, Choumont endured another horrific loss. Her brother, her last adult surviving family member, died, and she has taken on the responsibility of raising his two children. With great determination, one month after his death she came back to school.

Choumont believes the pain she has experienced can be used to strengthen her and to give her the ability to help others who have experienced similar loss. She plans to pursue post-secondary education and train as a youth care worker, and eventually to study human justice at university.

Basic Education instructor Kim Kuzak says, "We are honoured that Denise has received the award. Among the thousands of students I have taught, she has risen to the top in terms of being someone whose personal strength, courage, commitment and will to survive and succeed have inspired me and other students."

The Learner Award is presented by the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network. SALN works with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal people and communities to promote and support Aboriginal literacy.

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. More than 14,000 students were enrolled in SIAST programs in the most recent academic year; additionally, the organization drew almost 30,000 individual course registrations. Through program and course registrations, SIAST served almost 26,000 distinct students with programs that touch every sector of the economy. SIAST operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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