EDMONTON RESEARCH PARK | **News Release**

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Edmonton company behind Aboriginal school software

A small IT company in the Edmonton Research Park's Advanced Technology Centre is helping to address one of the most pressing challenges in Canada's aboriginal communities: the chronic underperformance of students and schools on the reserves.

Intellimedia Inc., this month's featured innovator, has worked with the Ermineskin Cree Nation to develop a suite of software tools called the Dossier Education Management System, which helps school administrators interpret and respond quickly to data about students' performance.

Dossier was developed with input from Miyo Wahkohtowin Education Authority, which operates Ermineskin Schools at Hobbema. The software was designed specifically for First Nations schools, explains Intellimedia President Ahmad Jawad.

"Our role is to provide the proper data for school managers to make decisions about their systems, about attendance, special education, school planning and all issues related to schools operations" says Jawad.

Special education was the first need to be addressed by the company, which has nine employees. Ermineskin school employees were spending an inordinate amount of time collecting information and building spreadsheets for reports required by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for funding special needs students. Dossier was developed to take information from standard school information systems and compile the special needs reports to be sent to Indian Affairs.

Dossier has since added new modules to manage a number of information flows, including student achievement, human resources, staff evaluations and school bus transportation. In addition to generating reports for internal use, Dossier removes confidential information to generate "dashboard" reports that allow administrators to track and share information such as enrollment trends, student achievement analysis and attendance trends.

Current data from the school information systems appears in a dashboard-like graphic display on the laptops, iPads or iPhones of school managers. Trending — the ability to spot changes as they happen — offers important advantages. Teachers and principals can identify students with deteriorating attendance records and intervene quickly. Students near the pass-fail line can be given an extra push to succeed.

"They can look at the dashboard and know right away how many students they have, their basic demographics, the enrollment trends, that are all key indicators of future performance. In identifying these trends early on, the school can take proactive and corrective action more quickly," Jawad explains.

Dossier also meets the school system's need for timely and accurate performance measurement, a key component of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's initiative to reform education on the reserves, the First Nation Student Success Program.

Jawad believes Dossier tools can be useful in broader markets — including for other First Nations uses, special needs education in non-aboriginal schools and in human resources departments in small and medium businesses.

"Startups like Intellimedia are key to the Edmonton Research Park, which can help emerging companies grow by reducing risk and providing a conducive environment and connections to services and facilities," says Candace Brinsmead, vice president of technology advancement at Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, which manages the park. "In addition to growing successful startups, this is a great example of how locally developed technologies are making the city a better place to learn, live and work."

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