



Students from Lac du Bonnet school's Aboriginal Academic Achievement program talk with representatives of the federal Business Development Corporation on Monday during the second annual Day of Inspiration event at the Keystone Centre. (Colin Corneau/Brandon Sun)

Day of Inspiration helps empower native youth

BY COLLEEN COSGROVE

Lessons of empowerment and inspirational stories of success dominated the halls of Westman Place yesterday.

Nearly 1,000 high-school-aged students from across Manitoba travelled to Brandon to participate in the second annual Day of Inspiration.

The two-day event is focused on empowering aboriginal youth through uplifting presentations and showcasing dozens of potential career paths and educational opportunities through presentations, information booths and inspirational concerts and speakers.

The keynote speaker, three-time Juno award-winning

singer Susan Aglukark, talked to the Sun last month about her role as a public speaker.

Aglukark talks about social problems on reserves and small towns across Northern Canada and of the importance of aboriginal youth re-awakening the confidence and positive self-esteem within them.

Pinpointing the obstacles youth face is difficult, especially when aboriginal youth must be separated into two groups — reserve and urban.

"I don't think there is a large or if any at all difference in problems," she said. "The root of it all is that we don't feel ... completely integrated ... and as such don't feel that (we) quite belong. We can't take

ownership of something we don't feel is ours."

Aglukark says youth have the advantage of learning from past mistakes, and hopes they take advantage of any and all opportunities presented to them.

"What we're discovering is that we have it in us to draw from the past and the mistakes of the past, and the advantage of education — not just conventional education, but parenting tools to bring to the bringing up of our children," she said.

The Day of Inspiration continues today with presentations from Aglukark and best-selling author Calvin Helin.

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