

## ECOLE CONNAUGHT



BRYAN SCHLOSSER/Leader-Post

An employee from Monty's Design and construction works on the Connaught Friendship Circle Project in the schoolyard Monday.

## New friendship circle to soon greet students, teachers

By KERRY BENJOE  
Leader-Post

Students at Ecole Connaught will be greeted on Thursday with a cultural addition to their playground.

"It's a friendship circle, to represent a cross-section of North American cultures and concerns about home and their relationship to environment," said Dena Hudson, a member of both the playground and parent councils at the school.

Hudson said the structure is about 4.8 metres wide and is divided into four quarters. It is to feature three cement pillars set at an incline to represent teepee poles. The inner circle is to be slightly raised from the level playing field of the schoolyard, said Hudson.

The large flat stone in the middle is to be surrounded by boulders for seating. The idea is that the centre will be where the teacher or storyteller can sit

surrounded by a student audience.

"Hopefully it's going to become an interesting educational tool for all the teachers, staff and children at the school," said Hudson.

The structure is part of the junior side playground.

Planning for the project began over a year ago when a member of the playground committee applied for a Saskatchewan centennial grant for the project.

Because the structure is part of the playground, Hudson said the school had to ensure it would be safe for children, which is one of the reasons why it took longer to build.

Hudson credits architect James Youck, who helped the committee realize its dream by designing the friendship circle. Youck designed the structure in his spare time to the specification of the school board and the playground committee.

Hudson is hoping workers will complete the project by Wednesday in time for the first day of school.

Hudson said the second phase of the structure will be completed with the assistance of local artist Damon Badger-Heit. He is to work with the students to tile the cement pillars and ramp in mid-September.

"When it's complete, it's going to be quite a beautiful structure," said Hudson.

Hudson is looking forward to the reaction of the students and teachers. She hopes to one day have a portable teepee enclosure to complement the existing teepee poles the structure possesses.

The committee began working on the playground renovations about three or four years ago when the wooden structures were replaced by new playground equipment. The Friendship Circle is in addition to previous renovations the groups have completed.