

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education: *Promising Practices in Fort McMurray*

November 2013

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Introduction

The 2012 Accountability Online Reporting Initiative (APORI) measures of Fort McMurray Catholic Separate School District and Fort McMurray Public School District indicate that First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students in Fort McMurray are doing well compared to First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in the rest of the province in the following areas:

- High school completion rate;
- PAT: acceptable;
- Diploma: excellence; and
- Transition rate.

Fort McMurray Catholic School District out-performed the First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in the rest of the province in the following areas:

- PAT: excellence; and
- Diploma exam participation rate.

Fort McMurray Public School District out-performed the First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in the rest of the province in the following areas:

- Diploma: acceptable; and
- Rutherford Scholarship rate.

Most compelling is the fact that the drop-out rate for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students is lower in both districts than the overall provincial drop-out rate for **all** students.

Four FNMI and Field Services Education Managers were sent to Fort McMurray to uncover promising practices that could be shared with the rest of the province. Data was collected through the following:

- Discussions with superintendents and associate superintendents;
- Meetings with Aboriginal liaison staff;
- Attendance at a district-wide First Nations, Métis and Inuit planning session;
- Observations of lessons and school events;
- Conversations with students, principals and teachers;
- Walk-throughs of elementary and high schools; and
- Examination of district documents .

Summary of Themes

Why

Before one can understand the ‘what’ and the ‘how,’ it is necessary to understand the ‘why.’ In the work supporting the success of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Fort McMurray, the ‘why’ is central to every decision made. The ‘why’ informs ‘what’ is done and ‘how’ they do it¹.

During the visit to Fort McMurray Public School District and Fort McMurray Catholic School District, three ‘whys’ were identified. They are the beliefs that:

- Every First Nations, Métis and Inuit student will complete high school.
- Knowing about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people is important to all Canadians.
- Data reflects work of the district, not the ability of the students.

A number of fiscal decisions, initiatives, teaching practices and partnerships flow out of these beliefs.

Every First Nations, Métis and Inuit student will complete high school

Believing that every student will complete high school is the first step to making it happen. This belief needs to be held jurisdiction-wide, by staff, by parents and by the students themselves. It is also important for the community members, including business and industry to share this belief. The shift in mindset needs to be led by the jurisdiction leadership, and it needs to permeate everything done in the jurisdiction and its schools.

A number of important factors need to be in place in order for students to complete high school. These include regular attendance, a feeling of connectedness and a belief that graduating from high school means something. For the schools in Fort McMurray, these factors command attention.

Attendance is a factor in achievement, not whether the student is First Nations, Métis or Inuit

If you have their feet, you can do something with their head.

Trudy Dwyer, Principal, Sister Mary Phillips School

Both jurisdictions devote considerable resources to increasing the attendance of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, and the results show the investment is worthwhile.

¹ Simon Sinek provides a useful lens through which to view this idea: the Golden Circle. Sinek explains that starting with ‘why’ requires one to think, act and communicate very differently from the way others might view the same situation. Starting with ‘why’ necessitates identifying underlying purpose and beliefs and using them to guide both what we do and how we do it.

http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html

The first step is getting staff to change their beliefs. Kim Jenkins, Superintendent of Fort McMurray Catholic Schools shares the following story:

We used the achievement scores of the low attenders, both FNMI and non-FNMI to show that it was attendance that was making the difference, not if the student was First Nations, Métis and Inuit. This caused a mind shift from 'they (FNMI) can't do it' to 'getting kids to attend'. For the staff, this was a tipping point for their belief systems.

For both jurisdictions, attendance is a matter of connectivity: each student needs to be connected with the school and with an educational program that is meaningful. School staff members develop relationships with students and their families, and notice when students are not attending. Every effort is made to work with students and their families to bring the students back to school and help them find reasons to stay. Prolonged or persistent attendance issues are addressed through an attendance support circle network. It provides solutions and support for students in a non-threatening manner.

Although not an attendance strategy, the yearly Regional Aboriginal Recognition Awards (RARA) provides an opportunity to recognize First Nations, Métis and Inuit students who are leaders in their school and community. These awards reinforce the value of staying in school and of sharing one's gifts and talents.

Other strategies that have shown positive impact on attendance and high school completion results in Fort McMurray schools include:

- Establishing an Elder-in-Residence program with ways to intervene with First Nations, Métis and Inuit students that are considered at-risk;
- Working with local Elders to establish an Attendance Circle, under the direction of the deputy superintendent, to intervene with students experiencing school attendance issues;
- Establishing a Families and School Together program for Grades 5 and 6 families; and
- Ensuring there are no financial barriers to full participation in school life. This includes school fees, instrument rental, field trips etc.

Connecting with each student

In his book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, Martin Brokenleg reminds his readers that:

In traditional Native society, it was the duty of all adults to serve as teachers for the younger persons. ... From the earliest days of life, the child experienced a network of caring adults. ... each child belonged to both a certain family and to the band; wherever it strayed it was home for all claimed relationship." (pg.46)²

² Brokenleg, Martin, Larry K. Bendtro and Steve Van Bockern. *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. Indiana: Solution Tree, 2002. Revised.

This nurtured spirit of belonging is critical to the success witnessed in both school divisions. Students feel more than a welcoming, caring environment when at school; in reality they feel a comfort level akin to being at home.

Staff members track vulnerable students and provide immediate supports when necessary. As a result, students in both school divisions know that the people in their schools care about them and that someone will notice if they leave.

Connecting with students, and with their families, is done intentionally and in many ways, especially through **liaisons and mentors**.

Every school in the two school divisions has liaison staff. Many of them are either First Nations or Métis and have experience and connections to the nearby First Nation communities. Liaisons have a level of education specific to their work, which may be a diploma or certificate for working with Aboriginal youth, a degree in native studies or a degree in social work. In Fort McMurray Public School Division staff that act as the liaison may have dual roles. Some are also teachers, vice principals or principals.

- At the elementary level, school First Nations, Métis and Inuit liaisons work with families and students with an increasing focus on literacy support. The liaisons receive additional training in this area, in order to maximize their abilities in literacy instruction.
- At junior high and high school, the liaisons advocate for students and look for ways to bring the Aboriginal community into the school through speakers, conferences and career fairs. They also open up connections to careers through field trips to post-secondary institutions, business and industry sites, and First Nations communities.
- Teachers are presented with division-wide professional learning opportunities to enhance their knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture and history. By deepening their historical and cultural understanding, teachers are better prepared to form meaningful relationships with the students.
- Liaisons may be school-based but their work is also district-driven. They have opportunities to meet regularly, support the work of one another and work on district-wide initiatives.

Other strategies that increase connectedness for students in Fort McMurray schools include **mentors**. These mentors may be: district administration, members of business and industry, Elders and the school liaisons. These individuals mentor First Nations, Métis and Inuit students at varying points in their high school completion journey. Some mentorships are formal programs, others are designed more informally to pick up children that are following through the cracks.

The superintendent of Fort McMurray Catholic School District believes that the majority of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students now have chosen to self-identify as a result of the efforts to connect and build relationships with them.

The push for highlighting cultural beliefs and practices in both districts also helps to connect with students.

Students really want to share because the door has opened for them.

Anne-Marie Szenti, FNMI Liaison, Fort McMurray Public School Division

Planning and celebrating graduation as a milestone toward a career

At Fort McMurray schools, students are connected to more than people. There is a concerted effort on the part of staff in both jurisdictions to connect students to career pathways. The seeds are planted as early as elementary school. However, at the crucial stages in junior and senior high school additional staff and resources ensure all students will make this important high school completion milestone.

While in high school, students in Fort McMurray work with a learning coach or school counselor to identify their career goals and develop plans for themselves.

The staff seeks to ensure that students leave high school with the requirements they need to follow their chosen career path, with doors open to future possibilities.

Each student has a learning plan

Kashalea Ward is the First Nations, Métis and Inuit counselor at Father Mercredi High School. She tracks 250 students. By the end of Grade 11, each student has a learning plan. All staff members are involved in identifying students that begin to slip and following up to make sure that Kashalea has the necessary information. Students that are at risk soon begin making headway again.

Business and industry in Fort McMurray work as partners with the divisions to support high school completion. Through a ‘gentlemen’s agreement,’ industry does not hire students who do not have a high school diploma. Instead, they look for ways to work with the schools to show students the promise that awaits them once they have a high school diploma. This agreement is recognized as being a factor in the low drop-out rate and the above average high school completion rate in both jurisdictions.

In addition, industry is working with the Fort McMurray divisions to increase the number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students who graduate and move on to post-secondary studies in the area of management. Like the districts, business and industry see the potential of Aboriginal students to contribute to the success of Fort McMurray.

As high school completion rates increase and drop-out rates decrease, and with the implementation of dual-credit programs, the focus is shifting to increasing the numbers of students who transition to post-secondary programs, particularly at Keyano College, where students can continue their education in their home community.

Other strategies that increase graduation in Fort McMurray schools include:

- Providing Registered Apprentice Programs (RAP);
- Providing Career Prep and Health Services for Grades 10 to 12 students, with a focus on expanding the programs through the Science and Technology Centre and the Centre for the Performing Arts; and
- Inviting division staff to participate in, or lead education sessions with First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents, grandparents and community members concerning academic requirements, issues relating to high school completion, post-secondary registrations, and transition into the world of work. Counselors focus on career exploration programs for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

Celebrating Graduation

Graduation, as well, is now an important community celebration. For many First Nation students, completing high school and celebrating graduation is a way of reclaiming education for their communities. Their experiences contrast to the experience of residential school survivors, whose culture and history were not valued and, in fact, were absent in the residential school experience.

Graduation – for over 100 students!

In 1997, the two divisions combined efforts to hold the First Nations traditional celebration of achievement (graduation) for FNMI students. It marked the beginning of an intentional journey to increase success for their FNMI students and the beginning of recognition in nearby First Nations communities that this was something worth celebrating. There were 12 students and their families in attendance. Today, the traditional celebration of achievement is a regional event driven by the Aboriginal community, with over 100 students participating and parents and community members supporting the event.

Knowing about our First Nations, Métis and Inuit people is important to all Canadians

As a nation, Canada prides itself on being multicultural. As its workforce is drawn from other continents – Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia, South America, and Europe, Fort



McMurray shares the changing demographics of the major cities in the province. The diversity of students attending Fort McMurray schools provides plenty of opportunity to learn what it means to be Canadian, living in Canadian society. The messaging begins as soon as one enters a school building through the visual acknowledgement of fundamental beliefs. It continues through the high rate of cultural

infusion directly linked to core curriculum and through a carefully designed calendar of school/family events.

Visual acknowledgement

Through the doors of any building in these divisions, the multicultural nature of school is clearly visible:

- Name of school and level of education provided;
- School division;
- Canadian flag;
- Picture of the Queen; and
- In some cases, the vision of the division and the school.

The buildings also display, in varying degrees, acknowledgement that this is the country of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Either at the entry or office are positioned eagles, dream catchers, flags, posters, or cultural items such as sashes.



St Martha Catholic School



Ft McMurray Composite High School

This visual messaging relates the purpose of education in Alberta and of our relationship to the British monarchy. It also implies that, of all the people who make up the diversity of Canada, the role of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples is unique and, in fact, given primacy.



In the Catholic system, faith is an additional key message highlighted at entry through spiritual icons, photos of the local priest, bishop and the Pope. Alongside we find acknowledgment of First Nations spirituality.

Image: Sister Mary Phillips Catholic School

By highlighting the coming together of culture in faith as well as in education, the Catholic system supports the messaging that the First Nations and Métis contributions are essential to the school.

Infusion of the curriculum

This visual messaging is not done in isolation. It is connected to learning either through the work of the teachers, or through the work of the liaison staff, the resident Elder, or through information posted on bulletin boards.

While the social studies curriculum in Alberta contains a strand related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, both divisions move **beyond** this one subject. They look for opportunities to infuse other programs of studies, and into the general school calendar of events. The partnership with the Royal Conservatory organization *Learning Through the Arts* (LTTA) has been vital to this process.

LTTA specially trained artists into schools. In partnership with teachers they use arts-based activities to teach core curricula. The program is composed of four threads:

- **Partnership** as manifested through the collaborative work of teacher and artist
- Outcome-based, integrated **curriculum**;
- **Professional learning** for teachers and administrators through in-class sessions along with regional workshops;
- Embedded differentiated LTTA instruction through student engagement; and teacher transformation so that program becomes **sustainable**.

Arts as a way to engage

The arts have traditionally been woven through Aboriginal life and are an essential and highly effective means of successfully reaching, engaging and nurturing FNMI youth— FNMI LTTA integration project overview

Learning Through the Arts has advanced teaching and learning in both divisions. Teachers involved in the project have acknowledged their lack of background knowledge about our indigenous peoples, and have begun filling in the gaps. Instructors in the project have brought information, both current and historical that may have been overlooked, misinterpreted or ignored. This has added a richness and depth to the programs of studies for the students. All participants have benefitted from the learning, but also from the diverse ways of acquiring and representing that learning.

The importance of the partnership cannot be overstated. For both divisions, this partnership does the following:

- Builds community both in and outside the school division;
- Involves First Nations and Métis communities of students, families and liaisons; and
- Accesses community resources.

Supporting Infusion

I realized that individual teacher passion for specific subjects could best pave the way for infusion. I asked the teachers in school for their favorite teaching subjects. Once the list was submitted, I gathered materials and resources, activities and links – all connected to infusing that subject with FNMI culture and knowledge – to give back to each teacher. At the end of the first year, 30 per cent of the teachers had taught the infused unit, and were committed to doing it yearly. I returned to the remaining teachers to have a conversation regarding what had prevented them from following through so that any barriers could be removed. At the end of 2012, I had one teacher at each grade level with a high quality unit that infused traditional teachings and stories. During 2012-2013 these teachers are working in grade level teams to plan and share this infusion work with the remaining teachers.

Garrett Tebay, Vice Principal and FNMI Liaison, Westview School, Fort McMurray Public Schools

Role of Liaison Staff

Liaison staff in each division are charged with integrating First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum. Some work directly with teachers on unit planning or offer suggestions on activities that would infuse specific knowledge once the units are planned. Some do the activities with the teachers, others lead the class. Some run clubs to extend the opportunity for students. In Fort McMurray Public Schools, the liaison team contains principals, vice-principals, teachers and youth workers. What they are able to do is also defined in part by the credentials they hold.

Special events designed for teaching and learning

Regularly scheduled school events deepen understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture. Winter carnivals, featuring Arctic games, for example, are used to

teach the way that traditional skills were taught, but also as a way to provide mentorship. First Nation and Métis students from the high school are invited to run centres or activities. Students are notably proud to attend and there is lots of community involvement. The jurisdictions elect to provide these learning opportunities because they add value to the school community.

They are seen as part of creating a deeper understanding of the cultures in the schools. Both districts make a concerted effort to invite motivational speakers that have First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestry and to take their students to other parts of the province to gain additional knowledge and experience.

In the spring for example, students from Father Mercredi will be going to Osoyoos to meet with Chief Clarence Louie.

Other strategies that increase knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are:

- Aboriginal Day celebrations
- family culture nights
- literacy nights that include Elders engaged in oral storytelling
- after-school programs that share culture with community
- youth drum groups that perform in the hospital

Residential school and its impacts must be addressed

Both districts realize that residential school has left a legacy that must be addressed openly and honestly. Most First Nations, Métis and Inuit students educated in Fort McMurray are only the second generation that has not been forced to attend residential school. The events are all too real, particularly with the recent discussion and outpouring of stories during the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings.

The districts are committed to showing families that school is no longer used as a tool of enculturation. They do this by ensuring the school environment is safe, and that staff are gentle. They demonstrate that indigenous languages and both past and present cultures are valued. It means that schools work with parents, not the other way around.

Many liaison staff go to homes, call with good news stories, make personal invitations and do everything possible to share the “new school.” For Fort McMurray Catholic

Parents are not always comfortable

Parents are not always comfortable, so I go to them. The relationship with school may have been broken, and we need to heal that relationship.

Sometimes we talk on the doorstep, until they get comfortable with me.

Teresa Rowland, FNMI Liaison, St Martha Catholic School

Schools, it also means bringing Elders back into the educational lives of the youth.

Traditionally Elders were the community teachers, and Elders in the schools mean that schools recognize this very important role. Isaapaki, Resident Elder of *Learning Through the Arts*, shares her story of residential school with groups of children and teachers. This opens the conversation and allows children and youth to see the

signs of the impact, and not be led by assumptions or stereotyping.

Strategies that are being used in both jurisdictions to address the legacy of residential schools include:

- Professional learning opportunities for administration and teachers on the impact and legacy of residential school;
- Principals and district learning coaches who provide professional development for teachers and First Nations, Métis and Inuit people aimed at understanding treaties;
- Assistance from liaisons with the integration of First Nations, Métis and Inuit issues and perspectives into the delivery of curriculum; and
- Posting in a frame the apology made by Stephen Harper in Fort McMurray Public Schools.

Data reflects the work of the district, not the ability of the students

Jurisdictions and schools collect a variety of data to inform their work and make decisions about next steps toward continuous improvement. Sources of data include PAT and diploma exam results, dropout rates, attendance rates, formal and informal assessment tools, and *TELL them FROM me* survey results. It's important for jurisdictions to look at this data for what it tells them about their work, not what it tells them about the students. The data tells schools and jurisdictions about the areas in which they are doing well, which of the actions are making a difference, and where there is room for improvement.



*If we can keep them until grade 10, we know they will graduate.
George McGuigan, Associate Superintendent, FMRCSD*

In Fort McMurray Public School District and Fort McMurray Catholic School District, there is little difference between the performance of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and the provincial average for all K-6 students. Based on their data, both jurisdictions implemented and continue to have a strong literacy focus, including early-entry programs available to all students who have language and literacy delays. These early-entry programs help students be ready for learning when they enter Grade 1.

Both jurisdictions use their data to inform decisions on initiatives, programs and the flow of support.

Early Support

As a result of looking at the K-6 data, Fort McMurray Public Schools developed a full-day kindergarten program, and Fort McMurray Catholic School District implemented an Early Entry Program (EEP) designed specifically for students with language and literacy delays. The EEP program provides language and literacy support for children beginning at three years of age. Both programs help ensure that young children are ready for success when they enter school.

The continued gap in First Nations, Métis and Inuit student success at the secondary level has meant a shift in priorities for 2012-2013. Students who drop out of school during the transition from Grade 9 to Grade 10 often make that decision as early as Grade 7. With data to support the importance of keeping students in school through junior high and the transition to Grade 10, both Fort McMurray Public School District and Fort McMurray Catholic School District are currently focusing attention on Grades 6–9. They are doing this using a variety of resources, including:

- Intervention counselors at Grades 7–9 or 7–12 to support students at risk of dropping out;
- Making high school span Grades 7–12 within Fort McMurray Catholic Schools so there is more opportunity to develop long term relationships with students *Learning Together Through the Arts* programming; and
- *TELL them FROM me* student survey data, which provides schools with information they can use to make changes designed to increase student engagement

Final Comments

This is an overview of two school jurisdictions, located in the same community. While many of the strategies are similar in both jurisdictions, it should be noted that differences are also evident.

These differences can be summed up as the depth of uptake regarding the beliefs articulated throughout the document. Leadership plays a fundamental role in this process.

In Fort McMurray Public School District, all staff members are chosen carefully. Leadership positions are open to attract the best talent and therefore recruitment for these positions is done nation-wide. Internal opportunities for leadership development are provided, and the district's Aspiring Leaders program includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit staff members.

In Fort McMurray Catholic Schools leadership positions are part of a greater succession plan. Newly hired staff who only give lip service to the “why,” “how” and “what” of the district are not retained past the point of probation. Permanent staff members are given many opportunities to be mentored, coached and steered into leadership if they so choose and demonstrate potential. Leadership positions are not filled from outside the jurisdiction, but are instead filled from within, so that a coherence of belief is nurtured. It also means that the First Nations and Métis communities have ample opportunity to build relationships with the leadership staff who remain for extended periods of time.

Notwithstanding the above difference in philosophy, both districts commit to greater students success through collaboration, partnership and relationship building. Every opportunity is seized to develop and nurture relationships with the neighbouring First Nations and Métis communities. Fort McMurray Public Schools commits to continuing work for First Nations, Métis and Inuit student success through networking with local First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations, like the Athabasca Tribal council, emphasizing academic achievement as the key to overall success.

Both the superintendent and deputy superintendent of Fort McMurray Catholic Schools spoke of the committees, gatherings, meetings, coffees, visits and shared events they attend. This has resulted in greater trust, increased reciprocity (e.g., funding by the bands for events and opportunities for all students), and a gradual shared vision for education.

This uptake is evident at the schools by the degree in which there is:

- A visible First Nations, Métis and Inuit presence throughout the school and particularly in school entryways and gathering areas;
- Learned staff, including Elders, liaisons, teaching assistants and counselors, in every school, many of them from First Nations and Métis communities;
- Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture and history to students and teachers;
- Positive First Nations, Métis and Inuit role models in literature, in the classrooms and in the schools;
- A mindset of continuous improvement and finding ways to seize opportunities:
 - A principal in Fort McMurray Catholic system shared that when the buses going to the bands are late, all the children designated to the bus are given a snack and then homework and academic support is provided so that when the students do arrive at home, the homework is completed, and some gaps in learning have been addressed.
 - Fort McMurray Public Board has developed an Elder Protocol to enrich classroom learning experiences for all students; and
- Celebrations of success.

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Appendix 1: Using the Collaborative Framework model to capture FMCSO

Collaborative Framework
Collaborative Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ FNMI parents/community: Métis Association, Athabasca Tribal Council, Individual bands➤ Education/research/community support: Attend Treaty days, Aboriginal Day➤ Business and industry: Paul Martin Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program/NAABA/oilsands industry
School Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Safety and belonging: Welcoming schools, etc.➤ Student and family support: Liaisons home/community visits, Elders in Residence,➤ Community engagement: Family feasts, literacy and numeracy nights, parent programs, cultural workshops➤ Advocacy: Attendance circle programs
Capacity Building <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Staff recruitment: Recruit excellent Aboriginal teachers➤ Staff development: Winter carnival, cultural trips, conferences, speakers➤ Research and orientation
Adaptive Organizational Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Systemic leadership commitment: Attend community events, honor all invitations, 3-year plan focus, deputy superintendent mentoring of students, regular meeting with principals on FNMI success, liaisons meet monthly with deputy superintendent, school-based FNMI teams➤ Clear and articulated vision: On Parish Team School Administrators agenda
Culturally Responsive Educational Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Instructional practices: Aboriginal Studies Courses, cultural events,➤ Curriculum and content: Infused curriculum, LTTA➤ Learner Assessment: Tutorial Fridays➤ Learning resources: Resources centre➤ Celebrating Success: FNMI traditional celebration of achievement, RARA awards

Appendix 2: Compilation of all strategies from Results review

- Established a First Nations, Métis and Inuit Attendance Circle and an Elder-in-Residence program as a means to intervene with at-risk First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
- Established an Elder-in-Residence program to raise awareness of staff, through cross cultural training sessions, about issues facing First Nations, Métis and Inuit students/families.
- Established education sessions with First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents, grandparents and community members concerning academic requirements, issues relating to high school completion, post-secondary registrations and transition into the world of work.
- Established a First Nations, Métis and Inuit counselor position to improve career exploration programs for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
- Established schools events focused on having First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents and grandparents feel at home in their schools.
- Developed partnership with stakeholders such as the Athabasca Tribal Council, Northland School Division, Nistawoyou Friendship Center, Fort McMurray School Districts, Métis Association and Keyano College.
- Provided professional development for teachers and FNMI liaison staff to assist with the integration of FNMI issues and perspectives into curriculum.
- Increased to 8.0 FTE FNMI family liaison workers plus 1.0 FTE counselor and a 1.0 FTE intervention worker with the direction to identify FNMI students, improve attendance, academic achievement, career planning and school completion rates.
- Supported a deeper understanding, through reading, or professional development opportunities with local First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, of the profound effects of the residential schools on our families.
- Established a mentorship program comprised of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Intervention Worker, Counselors, the LTTA Coordinator, and the middle school vice-principal; in conjunction with the LTTA Youth Empowerment Project, to increase the attendance and academic achievement of First Nations, Métis and Inuit at-risk students.
- Established counseling services to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit students to complete applications for post- secondary entrance, scholarships, awards, bursaries and applications, which will allow them access to further education and/or transitioning into the world of work.
- Hired early intervention support staff of 3.0 FTE at targeted elementary schools to improve literacy and numeracy skills of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students with academic delays.
- Explored the need and possibility of developing Indigenous language programs with partners such as the Athabasca Tribal Council, Métis Local, Fort McMurray Schools and Northland Schools.

- Participate in the partnership with the Youth Justice System and the Royal Conservatory FNMI Youth Empowerment Project. (LTTA)
- Implemented the Paul Martin Foundation Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
- Established school-based FNMI liaison staff focused on providing teacher support, support for literacy/numeracy and differentiation of instruction to respect First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and languages.
- Supported pedagogically and financially the *Learning Through the Arts* for FNMI students.
- Collaborated with Alberta Health Service to provide mental health support to FNMI students completing high school and transitioning to post-secondary studies. Hired a mental health therapist.
- Promoted and provided professional learning opportunities for staff aimed at a better understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit languages and cultures.
- Invested in Aboriginal Human Resource Council's Leadership Circle training.
- Implemented First Nations, Métis and Inuit mentor program to support youth in school and workplace.
- Infused Learning Through the Arts into learning supports and mental health and wellness of students who are First Nations, Métis or Inuit.
- Adopted Reclaiming Youth at Risk philosophy across school district.
- Support annual Regional Aboriginal Recognition Awards and Traditional Celebration of Achievement.
- Hip hop infusion group for students and transportation is provided.
- Support student and staff attendance at key events (e.g., Indspire Awards, Janvier Exhibit at the Art Gallery of Alberta)