



Making
Good
Tracks

Community Members Speak

First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education

Kindergarten to Grade 12



SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD





**Community Members Speak
First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education
Kindergarten to Grade 12**

Prepared for
the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
in response to the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework

Written by Linda McGregor
Manager, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Initiatives
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
2009

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Thanksgiving

Let us take the time to honour and give thanks to all who've contributed to this project for the betterment of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students – and for all students. This report represents heartfelt discussions, thoughtful input and a steadfast belief that we can make changes that need to take place by working together.

Special thanks to students, parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, frontline workers and community members for sharing points of view about education as well as solutions. Often, discussions were filled with emotion - but always respectful with the best interests of students in mind. And, it was rewarding to know that community members felt heard during consultations and safe enough to be candid.

Finally, special thanks to the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, Communications and Public Affairs Department, Trustees, Elders' Advisory Council and Internal Working Group. The on-going support and sincere desire to make this process meaningful was truly inspiring.



Linda McGregor
Manager, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Initiatives
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

*“As individuals we can make a difference in a student’s life,
together we can make a difference in the lives of students
for the next seven generations.”*



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Welcome to “Community Members Speak”

A Message from the Director of Education
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB)

In 2008, our board launched a new project to improve learning environments and outcomes for First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students. Funded by the Ministry of Education, our board is one of 72 school boards in the province involved in this important initiative.

To facilitate our process, Darren Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools was assigned as project lead and Linda McGregor was hired as our Aboriginal Education Specialist. From the start, we wanted to involve the community in a meaningful way and proceeded to establish an Elders’ Advisory Council to help guide and advise us.

A community consultation plan was developed and over an eight month period a variety of activities took place. Community members, Elders, parents, students and faculty offered invaluable insight regarding First Nation, Métis and Inuit student success. And, we are pleased to present the consultation findings in this report – *Community Members Speak*.

The Year-at-a-Glance section showcases projects our board implemented as a direct result of input gathered during consultation activities. Special thanks to everyone who took time to support our initiative. This is an exciting time for our school board as we strive to serve our communities and help each student work toward their full potential. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

In the spirit of faith, hope and love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O'Keefe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael O’Keefe
Director of Education
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board





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Community Members Speak was designed to engage stakeholders in meaningful conversation in order to identify challenges, lessons learned, best practices and next steps as we support the success of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students - with benefits for our entire school community.

For detailed data and statistical information pertaining to the First Nation, Metis, and Inuit in the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board region, please refer to the *2007 Urban Aboriginal Task Force: Barrie/Midland/Orillia Final Report*.

Boozhoo

Tansi

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Greetings





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Executive Summary

Community Members Speak

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB)

When our board became involved in this province-wide Ministry initiative to improve learning environments and outcomes for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, it was clear that community consultation would play a vital role. Without question, Canada's original people have endured historic injustices outlined in great detail in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. And, with the past impacting the present, we needed to have conversations with the people in our community. For the first time in our board's history, this project allowed us the opportunity to carry out consultations with First Nation, Métis and Inuit community members to increase our understanding as we support student success.

Approximately 300 participants of all ages took part in our consultation events. A variety of opportunities were open to everyone with 25% of participants being former or current students with our school Board. The remaining 75% were affiliated with other school boards in the region and in some cases had attended school out-of-province. Interestingly, the range of experiences shared by participants echoed findings in the Royal Commission. However, discussions also brought a greater understanding of the issues, challenges and solutions unique to our school district in the delivery of education to First Nation, Métis and Inuit students.

The community consultation process was an educational experience in itself. It was moving to witness the presence of fear and mistrust among participants - mixed with hope for the future. Fear and mistrust still flow from a broken historical relationship. In spite of this, hope for the future and a strong commitment to education were heard loud and clear. And, the presentation of hand-made gifts to our Board reassured us that community members were appreciative of our efforts and initiatives.

This report represents our commitment to supporting student success. With 60% of First Nation, Métis and Inuit under the age of 25 and representing the fastest growing demographic in Canada, we need to take meaningful action in meeting their education needs. These findings will help our Board with long-term planning and benefits for our school community as a whole.

In appreciation,



Darren Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
Aboriginal Education Project Lead, SMCDSB








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Community Members Speak Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

Backgrounder





The Ministry of Education initiative to improve learning environments and outcomes for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students was launched province-wide in 2007. In 2008, our Board became involved in the process with three main goals providing direction to all school boards:

-  High levels of student achievement
-  Reduce gaps in student achievement
-  High levels of public confidence.

As a starting point, our Board sought community input on the development of a project theme, logo and consultation plan. An important outcome during this initial stage was the development of *Making Good Tracks*. This user-friendly information kit helped create awareness about the project, which represents the importance of working together in support of student success for current and future generations. The community consultation phase was seen as critical in the promotion of a greater cross-cultural understanding in order to plan for the future.

Community Consultation

Consultation activities were well attended and community members appreciated the opportunity to share their input and ask questions about the project. These events provided the basis for a new relationship between the community and the school board. Sessions were designed to accomplish the following:

-  Create an understanding about the province wide education initiative
-  Gather input on the First Nation, Métis and Inuit student challenges
-  Seek direction on ways to support student success
-  Obtain feedback and direction in regards to the implementation of a Voluntary Self-Identification policy.





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To obtain this information, a questionnaire was developed with input gathered through a variety of activities over an eight month period. The activities included one-on-one interviews, large and small community gatherings, group presentations, home visits and an interactive display booth. This approach encouraged maximum participation with larger events presided over by an Elder and included a community feast as well as a community drum.

The following reflects input gathered during community consultation and is presented in point form for easy reference. The findings include written and oral responses to reflect the voice of the community to the best of our ability. For errors or omissions please contact Linda McGregor at lmcgregor@smcdsb.on.ca.





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Community Members Speak Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle (AEAC)

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

Summer/Fall 2008

Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle (AEAC) Barrie, Ontario

The AEAC was formed in 2007 consisting of representatives from Aboriginal groups and stakeholders responsible for the delivery of education within the region. At the request of these stakeholders, both school boards (Catholic and public) were asked to meet regularly for input and direction on this education initiative and to avoid duplication in meetings/consultation activities. To draw on the expertise of the AEAC, our Board conducted one-on-one interviews with 12 members who provided input in response to the following questions.



Question #1

Do you currently have a son/daughter attending a school that is part of the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB)?

Response

- one-quarter (25%) of those interviewed were affiliated with SMCDSB schools



Question #2

Based on your experience, what are the issues/challenges faced by Aboriginal students in our Catholic schools? (or schools in general)

Response

- Too many areas need to be addressed that aren't within the scope of this project – need to determine what is doable at this time
- Require daycare/childcare before and after school, preferably on-site
- Rotating full days (A/B) are a challenge – prefer 1/2 days
- Need inclusion of native spirituality
- Not all Aboriginal groups are being served or integrated



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- Aboriginal students need to be identified as Aboriginal in a positive way
- Important to have First Nation or Métis representative on School Board
- Need to work together to assist with the development of policies, curriculum, etc.
- Important to be able to identify First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in schools with appropriate curriculum and projects in place to support student success
- Lack of cultural understanding/awareness
- Children try to become “faceless and invisible” to avoid racism and being bullied
- Jealousy needs to be addressed – lack of understanding about native/Métis rights
- Lack of transition preparation or timely remedial support
- Recommended and basic assessments need to be carried out in a timely manner for remedial action and appropriate resources
- Transition supports and activities needed to make students feel comfortable in new school
- Ojibway language and Aboriginal teachers are not treated as equals
- Integration of Aboriginal content not embraced equally among teachers/schools
- Racism must not be ignored – needs to be dealt with in a timely and positive manner
- Ensure school has an anti-racism policy – be informed about the process, understand when it will be used, how it will be used, the 5 W’s
- Schools/school Board need to have accountability to the community in this area
- Different categories of Aboriginal people such as status, non-status, Métis/registered citizens creates confusion among ourselves and others - lack of information in relation to understanding our history and impact that still affects us
- Advocacy for accurate and respectful Aboriginal content in the curriculum needs to be the responsibility of educators - not left to students and their families to address
- A major challenge is funding – lack of First Nation/Métis funding to subsidize students with limited funding from Department of Indian Affairs to First Nations in meeting their on-reserve education needs and transition needs
- Education systems are not designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal students
- How our students are taught is just as important (if not more important) as what they are taught – teach to a student’s strengths with consideration of all learning styles
- Residential school syndrome heightens a sense of not belonging, guilt, inferiority – feelings that present barriers to student success when there is a lack of support or understanding about these inter-generational issues



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- Easy to step out of the education system during challenging times – hard to return, needs to be a recruitment strategy to help students return to school and/or be made aware of alternatives
- Culture, history and Aboriginal perspectives should be presented in a way that is not humiliating to Aboriginal students – should not centre out our students
- Still a perception that Aboriginal culture and traditions are taboo – frowned upon
- Need to recognize that students are sometimes disruptive because they are feeling “unsafe” and not being heard – a normal reaction to an uncomfortable situation
- Teachers may want to incorporate Aboriginal content but feel unsure about how to do that – they don’t want to offend but don’t feel knowledgeable
- Métis content not addressed – little awareness or understanding of the history, culture, traditions or term
- Local First Nation and Métis history not addressed
- Use of drugs at school is a serious issue along with peer pressure
- Disciplinary actions need to be revamped – suspensions don’t work – puts an at risk student at greater risk of not acquiring credits and/or dropping out of school
- Need to work on a different mentality in order to support and promote student success
- There is racism among students – a lot of separation among teens in general – need to promote inclusivity and respect for diversity
- Experiential/hands-on learning needs to be incorporated
- Need buy-in from school community and Aboriginal community to move toward positive interaction – build upon Catholic values and Grandfather teachings
- Transition from high school to post-secondary is a big issue – some First Nation communities make this an annual field trip but for the most part there’s a gap in this type of activity
- If students feel unprepared for secondary school they’re at risk of feeling unprepared for post-secondary - expectations need to be realistic with appropriate preparation/supports
- Bullying, jealousy, fear and out of date curriculum all jeopardize student success
- Students try to sort out where and how they fit in based on their own worldview and daily experiences – need to encourage a sense of belonging and ability to problem solve
- Identify grade level and/or time of year when students encounter challenges and look for solutions – tends to be in grade 10 when students turn 16 years old
- Lack of anything “Métis” at school not good for sense of identity, sense of worth, respect



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- Waiting list and lack of funds to conduct assessments when recommended by teacher doesn't help an "at risk" student – requires an alternate solution
- Proper testing and assessment needs to be done in a timely manner
- Important not to assume that all Aboriginal students need up-grading
- Important not to further marginalize marginalized students
- Urban Aboriginal students not recognized – all First Nation, Métis and Inuit students need to be included and supported regardless of status or residency



Question #3

What makes schools/classrooms safe and welcoming for Aboriginal students?

Response

- First and foremost – students need to feel safe in order to learn
- Inclusion of Aboriginal history, culture in all subjects – cross-curricular
- Students need to see 'self' in culture of school – make use of visual resources
- Teacher lead discussion on Aboriginal content should be woven into course content and not seen as an added burden or add-on
 - there are countless opportunities to weave Aboriginal content into any subject as opposed to only being taught in a native studies course
- Inclusivity of Aboriginal content promoted in a natural way – not blatant, need proper teacher resources, training, orientation, etc.
- Good for students to see something related to the culture in the classroom/school environment
- Incorporate seven Grandfather Gifts
- Important for students to have choice of good Aboriginal books in library and classroom
- Sharing circles to promote respect for diversity, self and others
- Develop professional learning communities to enhance curriculum and the classroom experience
- Help students reflect on what they've learned – use talking stick

Making Good Tracks:

“Too many areas need to be addressed that aren't within the scope of this project – need to determine what is doable at this time.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Attitude of teacher is important to comfort level of student – teacher as role model for other students
- Set clear expectations vs. rules, develop a shared vision and promote student buy-in
- Classroom rules determined with student input and posted as reminder and reference as necessary
- Review literature using material that is appropriate for students/classroom
- Use “inappropriate” Aboriginal resources as a “teachable moment” and explain why it’s inappropriate or outdated
- Incorporate culture, teachings, smudge, etc. – find ways to respect no scent/asthma
- Classroom set-up is important – circle formation or variety to engage students is vital
- Incorporate pictures/posters and resources that show culture in a positive light
- Review literature being used in classrooms – acknowledge that negative profiling and stereo-typical resources exist and sometimes make their way into the classroom
- Promote respect for cultural identity – students feel confident knowing their culture is recognized, accepted and respected by others
- Encourage respect and recognition of culture, history, way of life and diversity
- Recognition of National Aboriginal Day, Louis Riel Day – acknowledge important dates
- Acknowledge Catholic/Métis celebrations, connection and historical understanding
- Parent/teacher communication is important – promote awareness of supports
- Aboriginal content woven into curriculum as opposed to a one day topic
- Teachers need to feel confident and prepared to include Aboriginal content
- Need more Aboriginal presence via Aboriginal counsellors, liaison workers, teachers, etc.
- Some teachers and principals go out of their way to connect with Aboriginal community, families and service providers – very proactive
- Incorporate Medicine Wheel teachings and use as a learning tool
- Incorporate story-tellers, story-telling, role models/people from the community
- Child-centered learning
- Important to recognize we’re on a learning curve together
- Smaller class sizes and/or additional supports for large classes
- Recognition of gifts and contributions of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal people in general – consider your own perceptions, see the potential in students
- Important for teacher to have native awareness training





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- Ground rules need to be established at the beginning of school/program as a guide for everyone in the class throughout the course and to promote respectful discussion and respect for different opinions
- More presence of Aboriginal faculty and resource people
- Role models/posters – visuals
- Clarification of expectations of students developed with students – agreement on boundaries and how to conduct themselves
- Respect for students as individuals – where they are, where they come from
- Make allowances for smudging – involve students in finding solutions, exploring options
- Expectations of students and teacher need to be clear
- Review literature for appropriate content – must be informed before inappropriate content can be recognized as inappropriate
- Aboriginal student council representative
- Key is in doing vs. talking about making change
- Visit local First Nation communities, Friendship Centres and Métis Councils
- Promote summer jobs, job search and resume writing with students
- Promote co-op placements in an education environment



Question #4

What are some examples of activities (best practices) that promote the success of Aboriginal students?

Response

- Breakfast program
- Lunch/pizza subsidy when students can't afford – done with integrity so that students are not singled out
- Good transition activities/programs
- Don't underestimate what Aboriginal students can do and achieve
- Snacks (morning and afternoon)

Making Good Tracks:

“Promote respect for cultural identity – students feel confident knowing their culture is recognized, accepted and respected by others.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Picture of the Pope smudging to re-affirm acceptance of culture within Catholic education system
- Smudging incorporated in an appropriate way – good for everyone
- Aboriginal content offered at an early age/grade level so that inclusion becomes more natural and accepted to help break down barriers
- Identify teachers who show strengths in this area and are interested in teaching native studies
- Literature for parents as partners in education
- Aboriginal teachers, role models
- Curriculum developed with/by Aboriginal people
- Promotion of Aboriginal careers
- On-going opportunities for community consultation
- Flexibility in curriculum to address a range of learning needs
- Humour – learning can be fun
- Visual/tactile learning strategies
- Explain to students why they are learning particular content – include them in the decision making/choices when possible and help them understand the learning outcomes
- Career fairs and school trips to Georgian College
- Native language and native studies offered in schools
- Ability to opt out of religious practices, able to learn about Aboriginal Creation Story
- Showcase contributions of Aboriginal people in regards to inventions, medicine, science, community role models, etc.
- Student needs must be properly assessed and addressed rather than being pushed through the education system
- Learn about local First Nation and Métis communities, supports and resources
- Promote and encourage student strengths and interests
- Field trips to special/cultural events, invite guest speakers/role models to raise confidence, self-esteem and to encourage overall awareness
- Important to realize that all students have a thirst for knowledge and are inquisitive about Aboriginal people – this is a perfect opportunity for all to benefit
- Historical timelines – inclusion of Aboriginal content – important to dispel myths and misinformation – address the “Indians get everything free” myth



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- Promote understanding of treaties and what First Nation, Métis and Inuit people have sacrificed for Canada to flourish as a country – how FNMI are compensated
- Tie curriculum to real life and our natural environment as much as possible
- Develop an Aboriginal database of resources, contacts, websites, etc.
- Develop easy to understand communications material, pamphlets, etc.
- Incorporate out of class activities and learning with community hours
- Good to have pow-wow/Métis rendezvous at school to celebrate culture but also important to include activities and resources throughout the school year
- Important to build a trust relationship with students, parents and community
- Promote careers and education mapping to inspire students – lots of decisions to make, students need more exposure to careers and information to help with decision-making
- More concentration on wholistic and applied learning
- Talking circles held on a regular basis as part of school/learning and teaching strategy
- Location in facility for Aboriginal student drop-in open to all students as a cross-cultural learning environment
- Various types of workshops such as drum-making, student projects related to cultural events, school pow-wow, Métis activities, etc.
- Revamp literature to reflect more cultural content
- More of an emphasis on experiential learning – I hear, I say, I do – I know
- Some students don't want to be centered out for being Aboriginal while others welcome Aboriginal recognition – this needs to be taken into consideration and respected
- Important to place high expectations on students – high school is not the end – begin to reinforce education and career options at Grade 6, 7 and 8
- Encouragement needs to be inspiring – judgmental or punitive actions aren't productive
- Students need to accept the consequences of their actions with a focus on developing their skills as a student rather than shutting them out
- Students need to feel encouraged and inspired as opposed to being pressured or forced into making education/career related decisions
- Awareness of funding and scholarship opportunities
- Empower students – present possibilities in a way that doesn't overwhelm students
- Build oral literacy skills – show and tell, talking circles and public speaking



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- Ensure consistency with homework for all subjects
- Make school fun – clarify expectations between teacher and students
- Develop/offer programs that have cultural relevance to attract Aboriginal students
- Spend time in the community to build relationship – get to know who the students are and where they come from
- Develop year round schedule of events to incorporate/showcase Aboriginal activities and celebrations
- Key Aboriginal events to be included on SMCDSB school calendar
- Community education talking circles, Elders Circle – bring community, parents and youth together or present opportunity to participate



Question #5

How are your son/daughter's needs being met at school?

Response

- Teachers are friendly and approachable
- Pertinent information is provided
- School trips promote experiential learning
- Recognizing local history of this area
- Funding to purchase additional resource material
- Counselling services/counsellors available to meet a variety of needs in addition to assessment
- Acceptance by teachers and fellow students for students who use their Aboriginal names – make an effort to learn how to pronounce and show respect for diversity
- Opportunity for SMCDSB teachers to take part in professional development with local First Nation and Métis teachers
- Activities that reach beyond native students to include all students/board staff
- Web-site for easier access of information related to Aboriginal initiatives at school board
- Recommended Aboriginal websites and SMCDSB website links for easier access
- Elder at school or on campus on a regular basis

Making Good Tracks:

“Don't underestimate what Aboriginal students can do and achieve!”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation





Making Good Tracks

- Access to a counselor who has knowledge of culture and local factors impacting Aboriginal students
- Needs not met – son not accepted for having long hair
- Teachers not aware of cultural differences – biases may be present without realizing
- Lack of awareness among educators about Aboriginal people
- Need harassment free environment for learning to take place
- Plant seeds about opportunities – spectrum of jobs, careers, career planning, development of an education plan, develop planning templates, plan activities in and out of the classroom
- Ojibway language as alternative to taking French - include student support activities
- Aboriginal students generally do not access guidance services in secondary schools – need a link – Aboriginal advisor in schools with high population as advocate
- Extra help after school – tutor support to help develop literacy and numeracy skills
- Important to identify individual needs of each student – each has unique needs
- Contemporary science content with Aboriginal contributions/understanding
- Learning circles as a way to support and promote learning outcomes



Question #6

What activities has your son/daughter experienced that promote cross-cultural understanding?

Response

- Appropriate types of resource material and books
- Guest speakers from the Aboriginal community
- Invitation to community members to bring expertise and knowledge into classroom – many parents have supported classroom learning by being guest speakers/presenters
- Aboriginal section in library
- Opportunity to attend education symposiums/conferences

Making Good Tracks:

“Acceptance by teachers and fellow students for students who use their Aboriginal names – make the effort to learn how to pronounce and show respect for diversity.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Teachers approach and understand diversity among Aboriginal people
- Mass – inclusion and acknowledgement of Aboriginal culture
- Incorporate Aboriginal accomplishments and contributions in math and science
- Present culture in a positive light – celebrate all cultures as a school project
- Establish a school drum group
- Be creative in finding ways to infuse and weave Aboriginal content in all subjects - use authors such as Drew Hayden-Taylor and Thomas King
- Early inclusion of Aboriginal content is better for all students
- Important to create opportunities to learn together and to learn about each other
- Get suggestions from teachers and students
- Circles, drumming, incorporate Aboriginal content in history, science, English, math, etc. – knowledge of contributions and accomplishments are limited – use National Aboriginal Achievement Awards as a role model resource
- Elders Council and Youth Council combined to transfer knowledge and promote mentorship
- Practical knowledge and life skills related to the trapline, survival skills, making and using snowshoes, Arctic Rangers – these activities can be used to develop literacy and numeracy and include experiential learning that is fun
- Pen pal program with other First Nation, Métis and Inuit school communities/students
- Invite Aboriginal leaders and Elders to talk to class about issues
- Important that teachers not feel overwhelmed by this initiative
- Individual Education Plan developed with supports/skill development nurtured
- Inclusion of appropriate cultural events in school environment
- Need a gathering place for Aboriginal students to build self-esteem - open to all students to promote cross-cultural understanding and peer mentoring
- Annual events to showcase Aboriginal history, culture and accomplishments that include drum groups, dancers, Métis activities, Elders, etc.
- Friday afternoon set aside for learning reflection – sharing circles
- Extra-curricular activities in the evenings/weekends with transportation support
- More opportunities for community to become involved in school and school events
- Talent show, craft and regalia making classes/demonstrations to build self-esteem, self-confidence and cross-cultural awareness





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- Activities/recognition of National Aboriginal Day – great opportunity to raise awareness and acknowledge Aboriginal people, history and culture - most schools don't take advantage of this – shouldn't be ignored because it's a busy time in the school year – something should be done, acknowledge during morning announcements, fly a flag, find a way – this shows respect for Aboriginal people and sends positive message to students
- Cross-cultural training at every level of the education system – from top to bottom, must be supported at senior level
- Basic understanding of pow-wow etiquette, tradition and protocol
- Basis understanding of Métis Rendezvous tradition
- Individual commitment of educators to incorporate cross-cultural understanding as opposed to a systemic approach
- Cultural classes/extra-curricular activities available for students
- Important for school Board to support events in the Aboriginal community – part of relationship building
- Important to be sensitive about residential school experiences among families and impact upon students
- Native way training/certification – need understanding, not sympathy or lower expectations
- Talking circles promote respect for different perspectives, creates inclusion and on-going dialogue toward finding solutions – find common ground

Making Good Tracks:

“Need a gathering place for Aboriginal students to build self-esteem – open to all students in the promotion of cross-cultural understanding and peer mentoring.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



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Question # 7

What is your understanding of Aboriginal learning styles and how does your son/daughter learn best?

Response

- Aboriginal students have a variety of learning styles and it's important to appeal to the diversity among "all" learners
- Needs of each student must be understood to help determine best teaching/learning strategies
- Aboriginal learning styles is a commonly used term and there's a danger that educators view Aboriginal students as having learning styles unique only to Aboriginal students which then feeds stereo-type beliefs
- Aboriginal learning style consists of the 3 R's – respect, relationship and relevance
- Respect, relevance and relationship are important elements for Aboriginal students and all students in general
- The more engaging the teaching style – the more benefits there are for all students
- An important aspect to reinforce through all grade levels is "learning how to learn" with focus placed on note-taking, study habits, memory strategies, etc.
- References to Aboriginal people needs to be informed and respectful
- Smaller class sizes where possible
- Not good to put Aboriginal students in a box with stereo-typical assumptions and expectations
- More supports and accountability in post-secondary – strategies that help students develop
- Learn by doing/hands-on learning
- Range of learning styles used to enhance curriculum
- Teach the individual with no pre-conceived notions
- Incorporate a variety of hands-on learning experiences to maximize benefits for all students
- Explore best practices – what works in other classes, schools or school districts – lots of information to draw on
- Important to understand that any content that is "relevant" to the students experience or goals enhances learning outcomes
- Hands-on is very important – learn by seeing and doing
- Evaluation process important to measure progress – important for student to see where they're making progress, areas they need to develop with necessary support and encouragement



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- Model behaviour that will promote student success
- Teach students to think rather than memorize only – ability to problem solve is important
- Students need time to process information – especially when English is not the first language spoken in the home
- Connect subject content to the world around them – be passionate about content, need to be able to inspire students and peak their interest
- Students need to be able to believe in something – present school and courses in connection to a bigger picture – help them connect to and visualize their future
- Literacy needs to be promoted and developed in partnership with building self-confidence
- Important to embrace technology – students need to be encouraged to think creatively with the development of skills that promote self-confidence
- Students are able to learn as much as they are able to process - the way information is taught will have an impact on how much they are able to process



Question #8

How are Aboriginal student strengths identified and nurtured in school?

Response

- For the most part they are not – need a way to help students recognize their strengths
- Important to celebrate accomplishments at every opportunity
- Recognize gifts in addition to academic accomplishments such as drum groups, hoop dancers, etc., showcase talent, empower students, special acknowledgement at Christmas concert, have students work on a mural to celebrate who they are and their culture
- Review what is being taught and how it's taught in order to engage students and to nurture their strengths – areas for development
- Have regular celebrations and student acknowledgement as part of school activity and at all school events including graduation ceremonies – celebrate accomplishments and goals

Making Good Tracks:

“Aboriginal students have a variety of learning styles and it’s important to appeal to the diversity among ‘all’ learners.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Cultural strengths/gifts not recognized, honoured or respected due to lack of understanding about culture
- Assumptions about Aboriginal students and people are generally negative
- Schools sometimes have lower expectations of Aboriginal students
- Offering native studies and native languages shows recognition and respect for Aboriginal people as equals and valued
- Aboriginal student strengths/gifts do not typically fit into the way the system recognizes student success and accomplishments
- Principals and Vice-Principals encourage representation from various organizations to support families/students at school interviews or to act as an advocate
- Independent Education Plans need to be explained to parents so they understand what is happening, what is expected and how they can support their son/daughter at home
- Make parents aware of cultural supports available at school or within community
- Hands-on, get involved, be a role model and have expectations of students
- Conduct learning style inventory for teacher and student to be aware of a preferred learning style and preferred teaching style
- When written language creates challenges it's important to include supportive, interactive and innovative learning opportunities that promote the learning process, help develop writing skills and builds self-confidence
- The teaching/marking techniques should engage and empower student learning
- Health, English and science courses and careers need to be promoted in regards to education requirements, jobs and career opportunities in these areas
- Student success can be in jeopardy if the family does not have appropriate childcare or experience financial challenges, single parent family – need to have supports in place
- Some high school students coming from the Island have over an hour commute to school (one way) and teachers need to be aware of this and the challenges it presents
- Promote problem-solving strategies and skills as well as realistic student supports – ask students what they need instead of doing what you think will help them
- Use music to interest students – be creative
- Have an education banquet – invite graduates, parents, teachers and principals, Chief and Council, Métis leadership – provide a tour of facility, promote relationship building by bringing the community into the school



Making Good Tracks

- Pre-math tests and various assessment tools to determine appropriate supports as required
- More information about high school courses, general vs. academic along with connection to long range education/career goals
- Understand that every child has a gift – help to draw that out by creating opportunities for students to discover and showcase their gifts
- Important for teens to have opportunity to hear from Elders – particularly about the Stages of Life and where they are in this cycle – help support them through cultural teachings
- Students need confidence to try new things – important to have activities that build self-confidence and self-esteem



Question 9

How is Aboriginal history and culture celebrated in curriculum?

Response

- For the most part it's not – not good to be viewed as an add-on or extra work
- Currently, individual teachers make a personal commitment to recognize
- National Aboriginal Day is a great opportunity but June is often viewed as too busy a time in the school year to recognize – need to be creative
- Inclusion of Aboriginal content too often means negative stereo-typical portrayal
- Use of “I” for Indian in alphabet worksheets needs to be re-visited – especially when no other race of people is referenced this way
- Aboriginal content in high school is too late – introduction to Canada's First People in elementary is the key
- Inclusivity and early exposure is key to promoting comfort level and familiarity
- International Day is a good opportunity to showcase all cultures and traditions
- Important to introduce at a young age because people have fear of the unknown

Making Good Tracks:

“When written language creates challenges, it's important to include supportive, interactive and innovative learning opportunities that promote the learning process, help develop writing skills and build self-confidence.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Accurate history is not incorporated and culture is not celebrated
- Should include historical timelines and Aboriginal milestones
- No proper depiction of culture
- General lack of understanding
- Social gatherings with cultural types of food and activities
- Generations of Canadians have gone through the education system without learning about Aboriginal people – basic information is required for all grades and all faculty
- Acknowledgement of history/inaccurate information needs to be addressed going all the way back to Christopher Columbus
- Content needs to be user-friendly
- All curriculum could focus on the inclusion of Aboriginal content – everything included must present a balance with role models and areas of pride
- Aboriginal content should be reflected in all schools – not just schools where there is a high Aboriginal student population
- Pow-wow's are an important way to promote inclusion and respect but it's important that it's done in a way that recognizes the sacredness of the culture without exploiting it
- Métis content needs to be included as a priority as well – people are more familiar with First Nation history
- Information needs to be at a very basic/foundational level
- There is an assumption that all Aboriginal students have knowledge about the culture, history, etc. – we're learning too and students must not be drawn on as the classroom resource unless they're volunteering and are comfortable
- Many Aboriginal students are learning about their history and culture in the classroom for the first time
- Take class activities outside and bring community into the classroom
- Draw on community resources and leaders
- Wholistic thinking needs to be incorporated – Aboriginal worldview promotes understanding physical, emotional, spiritual and mental aspects
- Have an annual Aboriginal education banquet – celebrate success at all levels



Making Good Tracks



Question #10

What types of activities promote student, parent and community involvement in your school?

Response

- Respect for beliefs and diversity
- Create opportunities that promote positive relationships
- Sharing creation stories with an acceptance of other worldviews
- Open door policy
- Parent council
- Representation
- Recognition awards
- Volunteer, creative writing, math, science awards – encourage creativity
- Celebrate accomplishments and individual gifts
- Graduation celebrations important
- Hold activities that involve students, parents, Elders, grandparents, etc.
- Maximize this Ministry initiative to build bridges between schools and community
- Showcase culture
- Explore range of opportunities
- Acknowledge teachers who are proactive and inclusive in their approach
- Aboriginal trustee on Board
- Be creative in finding ways to involve youth
- Hold workshops and focus group discussions on an on-going basis
- List ways to participate
- Backgrounder, fact sheets, updates and reports in easy to read format with easy to understand language
- Promote formal and informal learning opportunities as equally important
- Research best practices and review literature to help determine best course of action
- Involve Aboriginal people in the development of curriculum units

Making Good Tracks:

“Use of “I” for Indian in alphabet worksheets needs to be revisited – especially when no other race of people is referenced this way.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Pow-wows, potlucks, activities with family participation encouraged
- Showcase Métis culture Rendezvous – include in gatherings
- Activities that make parents and community feel welcome and comfortable
- Field trips – make use of local attractions
- Cultural day celebrations to showcase diversity within the school community
- Include events that bring community/parents into the school
- Community feasts, pow-wow, convocation feast
- Transition activities at the beginning as well as the end of the school year
- Field trip/cultural awareness session at Enahtig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre
- Partner and network with Aboriginal organizations, Friendship Centres, etc.
- Additional supports for students living away from home, tour of school/campus, open-house, summer orientation, workshops for students and parents
- Student/teacher field trips and meetings in First Nation community
- Career fairs to draw families and communities in to showcase importance of education
- Certificate of appreciation for native language teachers, proactive teachers, student ambassadors – special day, guest speakers, share best practices
- Establish a school drum
- Listen to students and ask for their ideas
- Activities that promote pride in heritage and identity

Making Good Tracks:

“Create opportunities that promote positive relationships.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks



Question 11

What has been your son's/daughter's most rewarding experience at school to date?

Response

- Grade 7 class trip to Old Fort William for 2-1/2 days
- Dressed as voyageurs, slept at the Fort and ate meals from that time period in the Great Hall, stretched furs
- Activities that are inclusive but not overt
- Graduation
- Recognition awards are encouraging
- Learning about seven Grandfather Gifts, relate to Catholic values and character education
- Incorporate plays and activities to build self-confidence and self-esteem
- Graduation celebration
- Learning about self and feeling pride about self and culture
- Learning to move forward - toward education and career goals and to be supported by family as well as the community
- Strategies on how to deal with grief
- Sports – being active in addition to the benefits of the “team” mentality
- Acceptance is huge particularly at this stage of life
- Developing a positive relationship is key to getting to grade 12 and completing high school
- Share success stories, role models
- Encouraging to see students pursuing an education then succeeding out in the world – important to showcase
- Make history or any topic come alive
- Include songs in native language at Christmas concert
- Teachers who make students feel like they can “do it”
- Focus on students gifts
- Student awards to recognize gifts and strengths
- Being recognized for achievements in sports, academic, etc.
- When Aboriginal students are not involved in co-curricular activities they miss the opportunity to feel like they're part of the school community – barriers must be addressed





Making Good Tracks

- Cocurricular activities may help overcome barriers – when transportation/access or other reasons present barriers – these must identified and addressed



Question #12

In order to deliver culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal students, accurate data is required. What are potential issues surrounding voluntary self-identification to collect the data?

Response

- Fear about how the information will be used and who will have access
- Will this be detrimental to how students will be treated in class by teacher or other students/peers
- How will data be collected, stored and used
- Need a clear definition of Métis – if not accurate this adds to confusion
- Refer to the Métis Nation of Ontario for a clear definition – important to be clear
- Confidentiality – who has access and how will it be used
- If teachers are unaware they need support in being able to answer questions in an accurate and meaningful way
- Process needs to be safe
- Everyone needs to understand why self-identification is important
- Options to submit to school Board, via mail, drop-off, etc.
- Inclusive and respectful terms should be used
- Option for direct mail from home to school Board
- Pilot a self-ID project at one of our schools
- Important to have accountability and transparency with updates to the community
- Currently, there's a fear that self-identification will set students up for further racism
- Process needs to promote equal access to education

Making Good Tracks:

“When Aboriginal students are not involved in cocurricular activities they miss the opportunity to feel like they’re part of the school community – barriers must be addressed.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Important to have positive classroom and school environment
- Parents are looking for more than acknowledgement that their child is Aboriginal – want to see meaningful change – more than numbers and statistics
- Parents looking for opportunity to be partners in learning
- Needs to be seen as a good thing – not further marginalized
- Needs to be seen as more than a deficit – need to create awareness about progress, Aboriginal role models and contributions
- Important that project and data does not promote stereo-typical thinking
- Important to get this right
- Community needs to see that information is being used in a good way
- Trust is a huge issue and must be considered
- Information needs to be clear, concise and easy for everyone to understand
- Fear of backlash from students and/or teachers
- Stigma about being identified as Aboriginal if Aboriginal people are not viewed in a positive light – stereo-typical views must be recognized and addressed
- Fear that Aboriginal students will be further marginalized
- Students should not have to deal with negativity directed at them from other students or teachers based on their race
- Some students don't want to be singled out – especially if it means they won't be perceived favourably
- Some students already feel left out or that they are not respected or supported and don't want the situation to become more strained
- Process should help identify specific special education needs, programs and associated costs
- Engage parents as partners in a meaningful way – help empower students with a team approach

Making Good Tracks:

“Important that project or data does not promote stereo typical thinking.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Clarity about what data is being collected and how it will benefit students
- Collection of data should not negatively impact Aboriginal students or families – mistrust and the historical root of this mistrust must be understood
- Important to recognize that voluntary self-identification is a process – many may wait to see how it will unfold before they feel safe enough to participate



Question #13

In terms of confidentiality, who should have access to your son's/daughter's information collected through the voluntary self-identification process?

Response

- Need to be mindful that this has the potential to promote systemic racism and this is a fear among parents/community members
- Where and how would the information be stored
- May be important for different people to know in different situations such as which students are billeted (could focus extra supports)
- Teachers who have success with Aboriginal students would be more trusted
- Need solutions that work for everyone involved and affected
- SMCDSB only
- Schools only need to know numbers not who the students are
- Some students are more recognizable as native so “confidentiality” wouldn't matter
- Some students already share and celebrate the culture and may already be known to others as being First Nation or Métis – important that they are treated respectfully regardless
- Students need to feel they won't be at “risk” if they identify
- Need to be clear about what the school board/schools are going to do with the information
- Need to know guiding principles, policies and benefits
- Need to be optimistic that it will be used in the right way
- Needs to acknowledge concerns and needs of the community
- Awareness campaign important to overall understanding
- Frequently asked questions, information sheet/brochure and communications material all important
- Meaningful reports yields an amazing amount of power to access project funds



Making Good Tracks

- Data will help identify internal gaps and help develop meaningful programs and service delivery with benefits for all
- When information is used in a positive way – it is beneficial for teachers, guidance counsellors and principals to know they have Aboriginal students in their class/school
- Whatever the student and parents are comfortable with
- Teachers need to know who they are dealing with – their classroom population
- Information/data will help build a baseline for number of students, number of credits, what kind of supports we need to put in place, graduation rate per cohort – all important to help with the development of supports and student success initiatives
- Identify who is being promoted from one grade to the next vs. being transferred – students must not fall through the cracks – early intervention needs to take place
- We need the data to measure success
- Need to be clear about why voluntary self-identification is needed



Question 14

What types of resources are you aware of or would you recommend that could assist with classroom learning?

Response

- Books by Aboriginal authors
- Family support/communication tools – options for students who've dropped out
- Aboriginal role-models
- All cultures represented
- Métis display, finger weaving, musicians – culture/history related activities and resources
- Métis Nation of Ontario and Moon River Métis Council
- Don't create an Aboriginal corner – should be dispersed throughout library or classroom
- Variety of video resources for different subject areas
- Information about Aboriginal people, First Nation and Métis communities in our area

Making Good Tracks:

“When information is used in a positive way – it is beneficial for teachers, guidance counsellors and principals to know they have Aboriginal students in their class/school.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Statistics pertaining to Aboriginal people to help with on-going learning and understanding
- Resources need to be positive and accurate
- Resources that promote negative stereo-typing needs to be addressed - this is improving
- Link with Aboriginal organizations to access resources and resource people
- Northern education councils have worked with school Boards to develop resources consistent with Ministry expectations and also culturally appropriate – draw on best practices as much as possible
- Utilize existing locally developed resources
- ROOT Program – Rekindling Our Oral Traditions (Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre)
- List of cultural resources and resource people
- Aboriginal quotes
- Local authors
- List popular and informative websites
- Role models
- Peer tutors
- Small study groups
- Students have a place to call their own
- User-friendly/culturally appropriate text books and resource material
- Easy access to computers
- Study Aboriginal authors, i.e., Tomson Highway, Drew Hayden-Taylor, etc.
- Native language
- Book – The Truth about Canada, Medicine River
- Métis Day Celebration at Discovery Harbour in Penetanguishene (held in August)
- Elders can be very beneficial given the right environment in the school
- Important to develop a relationship and be clear about what you're asking of an Elder
- Important to find ways to reclaim youth at risk
- Circle of Courage Project – Tyendinaga
- Dr. Martin Broken Leg
- Promote co-op placements for high school and college students
- Peer mentor programs – promote student pride and students helping students

Making Good Tracks:

“Important to find ways to reclaim youth at risk.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Canadian Indigenous Education Association
- Funding for testing and assessment – identify learning disabilities and supports
- Goodminds Aboriginal distributor of resources
- Tribal Councils and Aboriginal organizations – important to network
- Partnering among First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations

Additional comments...

- Important to promote inclusivity
- Include other cultures
- JK – Grade 3 breakfast program really important
- Aboriginal book fair at local Friendship Centre
- Education representatives and appropriate supports
- DVD would be good tool to get message across – visual – incorporate music
- Communication with First Nation communities, Métis Nation of Ontario, Inuit Tapirisat, Ogemawahj Tribal Council and other Provincial Territorial Organizations
- This is too important not to get right
- Treatment of native people needs to be acknowledged as part of Canadian history
- Niwijiagan programs, peer tutor and mentor programs
- Professional development days for teachers to include teachings, native awareness training, sharing circles, Elders, etc.
- Miigwetch for providing a safe and meaningful consultation
- Once you become aware – you cannot become unaware
- Surprising that Ontario isn't more progressive in the area of Aboriginal content and programs as a result of high Aboriginal population, political advocacy, etc.
- We have a responsibility to stop our own culture from disappearing

Making Good Tracks:

“Miigwetch for providing a safe and meaningful consultation.”

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle
Consultation



Making Good Tracks

Community Members Speak

Métis Nation of Ontario – Interactive Display Booth at the Annual Fall Métis Rendezvous Gathering held in Lafontaine, Ontario

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

October 2008

Métis Nation of Ontario members were invited to attend all consultation events for input on First Nation, Métis and Inuit education. In addition, an interactive display booth was set up at the annual Métis Rendezvous. The display sought input on education with two key statements presented and responses added to a display board as the day progressed. Fifty-three visitors young and old welcomed the opportunity to have their say and gave considerable thought to their responses. An interesting development was the return visit of several students to see what community members, parents and other students were saying about education. The following is a collection of responses from students of all ages!

Statement #1

What education means to me...

- A proper education mixed with commitment is a way to change your life
- Education should be inclusive, it means “everything”- should be Métis content
- Passing on knowledge
- People understanding people
- Better life
- Trust
- Experience
- Knowledge
- Education is on-going throughout your entire life
- Very important – need creative activities in math, English, essay writing, etc. to respond to all types of learners
- Students need encouragement
- Opportunity to work in the job I went to school for and being able to get work



Making Good Tracks

- Now that I'm older I wish I had made better choices about education when I was younger
- There are more opportunities and supports in place for this generation
- Important to learn about the environment through hands-on/field trip experiences where possible
- Heritage – inclusion, celebration and diversity among Aboriginal people needs to be taught
- Link the past and present for a better future
- Education means a lot – it's at the centre of everything
- Learning about any topic opens a person's mind
- Education = good job = good pay
- A good education is one path to a good future
- Exposure to math and science as well as fun activities to learn will increase confidence which in turn means that more opportunities will be open to students
- Every student should get what they need in school – this might not necessarily be what they want
- Education is so important that it's important to find ways to get that message across at an early age and throughout the education system
- Honesty – history about Aboriginal people has been distorted, history needs to be honest not twisted
- Able to take native studies
- Need to be able to teach our youth and other students about Métis people, history and traditions – the Midland/Penetanguishene area is an historic Métis settlement that is not taught about in schools
- If you don't get an education in a regular school, you have to find alternate ways to get an education – it's important to know what's available
- Feeling included and respected is an important aspect of learning – there should be more emphasis on respect for diversity in schools
- Education can provide a basic foundation that helps character and personality to develop
- Learning how to work through challenges is important to anything and everything in life
- I didn't get an education and I realize how important it is now – it's very important
- Respect for yourself and for others is part of learning and the learning environment
- Encourage youth to follow their dreams to pursue an education and career



Making Good Tracks

- Need creative learning activities to respond to all learning styles – the more creative the better it is for all students
- Math, English, essay writing and study habits, etc. are all skills that can be learned and developed in the right environment
- Reading and writing are essential to all subjects – important to develop because this is needed for everything
- Learning how to research – basically learning how to learn needs to be taught to equip students with the tools to succeed
- Opportunities that are educational, experiential and fun should always be incorporated
- Trust and building a positive relationship with the teacher is an important first step
- Important to be able to learn your own language
- Stay in school – listen to the teacher and learn to read and write
- Knowledge takes many forms and it's important to include various sources and ways of learning
- Life lessons can be applied to school and lessons learned in school can be applied to life
- Build self-esteem and self-confidence
- Colonialism – it's important to recognize this still exists in modern times and the various forms that it takes
- Education is a dream with a plan for the career you want
- Important to be fair with everyone and to treat equally
- If a student is struggling find out what they need and connect them to the proper supports
- Education is about teaching people how to work together and that's a lifelong process
- Students should be able to take native studies in school – this would show respect for Aboriginal people and their relationship as original people of this country and help increase student interest in school – there would be many benefits
- Education is a good thing!

Making Good Tracks:

“Need to be able to teach our youth and other students about Métis people, history and traditions – the Midland/Penetanguishene areas is an historic Métis settlement that is not taught about in schools.”

- Métis Nation of Ontario Consultation



Making Good Tracks

Statement #2

What I need to help me grow strong as a student is...

- Supportive family and learning environment
- Knowledge – learning how to be successful and success take different forms
- Academic skills in addition to life skills, real life knowledge and survival skills
- Use role models to help students better themselves and to work toward higher goals in life
- Create opportunities that plant seeds for a desire and willingness to learn and work harder to reach manageable goals
- Basic needs being met – food, proper nutrition, water, clothing, shelter and feeling safe
- Important to pay attention in class and finish what you start
- Develop activities that will help students overcome their shyness and build self-confidence
- Building self-confidence needs to happen through a variety of activities that engage students – can't just talk about it
- Be prepared to work hard, listen and ask questions when you don't understand
- STAY IN SCHOOL – is an important message for all students – be creative in finding ways to encourage students to stay in school
- A good education starts in elementary school – there should be more connections between elementary and secondary school (high school, colleges and universities) to present education as building blocks with common threads – build comfort level
- Education should infuse a passion for life – make learning real and meaningful
- Learning is life-long and it's important to have activities that bring all age groups together as well as diverse communities
- Tutor support/peer-tutoring needs to be available and respond to a students needs – more training in this area so students can help each other
- Support is huge – need to know about the different types of supports offered through the school, local friendship centres, Métis Council, etc.
- Students need to be made aware of local opportunities, need appropriate financial support with emphasis on life-long learning and use of role models
- Need regular and various forms of encouragement to promote self-confidence and hope for a bright future



Making Good Tracks

- Family support is important to student success but it's also worthwhile to have workshops/information so that parents know how to help students with homework and ways to be successful – planner, memory and study techniques, etc.
- Make learning fun and meaningful
- Routine, study and homework habits need to be taught and re-enforced
- Education means equal opportunity for all
- Activities/workshops that help students understand self, respect for self and others – teach the stages of life to help with this understanding
- Important to understand boundaries – other peoples space, different types of personalities as they build their own confidence, respect and awareness of self and others
- Take the opportunity to teach skills outside of the classroom by making use of community events
- Family/community and financial support are the biggest issues facing students
- Listen – sometimes all we need to do is listen
- Incorporate laughter – students know the difference between “laughing at” and “laughing with” someone – encourage compassion and caring
- Love of learning is natural – everyone wants to learn and be successful – it's important to find ways that work for students and be prepared to try different activities – ask students how they like to learn
- Connect present choices/decisions to the future at every opportunity and that every decision – even no decision – has consequences
- Teach young people to be proud of who they are and their culture – should not be made to feel bad about being Aboriginal
- Provide motivation – someone who can help open doors, create opportunities and knows what's available
- Teacher awareness about Aboriginal people and resources is improving but needs support – we need to network and support each other – no place for blame
- Learn about each other and the communities we live in
- Listen to the Elders, catch what they're saying – sometimes they'll tell you a story so you can draw on their past experience to help make your own decision
- Staying in school needs to be emphasized by parents and communities at an early stage and age in addition to supports and incentives to help students pursue their dreams



Making Good Tracks

- Self-respect is important – let students know they are valued, important and that someone cares about them and their future
- Students need someone to encourage them when things go wrong – counsellor who they can talk to and will guide them through challenging times
- There are so many ways to learn – important to be creative about different ways to learn
- Help students understand education choices in high school and how that impacts the college or university courses and careers they want to pursue
- Transition workshops would help answer questions and present big picture choices as well as consequences of those choices in terms of going to college or university
- Assessments and testing to help students recognize personal/career strengths
- Important to learn to write right – and opportunities to develop this skill
- Workshops on learning how to write essays, develop math skills – make it interactive and fun wherever possible – be creative
- Always and always emphasis the value of a good education
- Networking, supports and awareness are important for students and frontline workers – there are a lot of services
- Needs to be a consequence for students when they make poor choices – that’s part of learning too – consequence must empower and encourage life lessons
- Draw on role-models and Elders to pass on their knowledge – help students recognize how much knowledge they carry and find ways for them to share so they can learn from each other
- Encourage students to ask questions or create opportunities so that everyone in the class has a turn to speak
- Students need to know they can speak up without fear of being bullied or laughed at – learning environment needs to be safe
- Learn from others – try new things
- See new initiatives and funding as an important investment in the people – teachers, students, parents and community
- DETERMINATION and ENCOURAGEMENT – provide encouragement and opportunity for students and plant the seeds for their determination to grow

Making Good Tracks:

“Family support is important to student success but it’s also worthwhile to have workshops/information so that parents know how to help students with homework and ways to be successful – planner, memory and study techniques, etc.”

- Métis Nation of Ontario Consultation



Making Good Tracks

Community Members Speak Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre, Midland, Ontario

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

November 2008

The community consultation event held at the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre had a turn-out of approximately 100 people with First Nation, Métis and Inuit representation. Participants were given an information package that consisted of the *Making Good Tracks* information kit and question sheets to obtain their input on education. Highlights of the evening included a presiding Elder, community feast and community drum group. Following the feast and panel presentation, participants were invited to ask questions about our Board's approach to the province-wide initiative in support of First Nation, Métis and Inuit student success. The following lists input gathered during the community consultation activity in support of student success.



Question # 1

What is/was your favourite subject in school and why?

Response

- Drama/Art
- Phys Ed!!!
- History – interesting
- My favourite subject in school was co-operative education because the work placement reaffirms your self-esteem, boosts confidence and gives you experience in mainstream business – gets you out of a Spartan environment
- French – fascinated by other languages
- Literature – allows you to travel the world from the comfort of your home and opens new vistas for future travel – goal setting
- History
- History – I love to learn about our ancestors and how the world evolved!
- Math – it came naturally to me
- My favourite subject was art because I got to express myself – my way
- Mathematics – it came naturally to me and I knew it would be needed throughout my life



Making Good Tracks

- I like art because it gives you the opportunity to express your inner self and show everything through the visual senses. I like language too because we learn new things all the time and we can put our opinions into our work and have our teachers, peers and parents see how we feel about topics and what we're learning
- History – love to study history and the beginning of mankind, creation stories
- Geography – to gain knowledge of the world around me
- Art – I was able to express myself through various mediums such as soapstone, wood, sculpture and pottery
- Phys ed. – I was good at sports
- English – because it allows the expression of creativity without boundaries
- Currently my favourite subject is native studies because I was raised primarily in a non-native household and I get to learn more about my heritage
- My favourite subject is math because I'm good at it
- Learning English
- Geography - simply because I could go places and find my way with maps, a very interesting subject that was informative and one I still enjoy
- Gym – because it was easy and fun
- Physical education – my favourite subject because I am very athletic and active
- Typing – I was good at it but it's not taught as a subject any more – everyone is already expected to know the keyboard which may be a bit of a challenge for some students
- The creative arts – not just a work of art or sculpture but the being allowed the freedom of expression. Creative expression can be spiritual, a speech about the things that move you, a child's mind and heart is the first example of creative expression
- Art – in high school and welding
- Art – SOME freedom of expression in a positive way
- English – because you can express what you're feeling
- Keep it simple, keep it real, take it outdoors
- Math - because it's straight forward and involves lots of thinking that helps with everyday problem solving - there are always new things to learn and challenges to overcome
- History – lots of information and very interesting



Making Good Tracks

- Art, English, geography - art because we had a good/patient teacher, English was good and interesting materials, geography had good outdoor trips to Manitoulin Island
- My favourite subject was psychology because I wanted to learn more and understand human behaviour
- English – I loved poetry



Question #2

What is most important to the success of Aboriginal students?

Response

- The most important thing for me to succeed as an Aboriginal student is to have a connection to my heritage and to be accepted in all aspects by my community and society
- Instill at an early age that education is a continuous cycle of their future
- Promote post-secondary at Grade 8 – take students on educational, interactive and fun field trips to colleges and universities
- Recognition of culture and history
- Listen to what's being taught and ask questions when not sure
- Study hard
- Keep things simple
- A cultural-based curriculum with hands on teaching/learning
- Knowing who they are and being accepted as equal
- Acceptance of our way of life as follows...
 - a) understand that our ceremonies are VERY important to us
 - b) our language
 - c) our hair! (our young men with long hair should be accepted for who they are)
- Mainstream methods are required and would be even better for student success if used with various Aboriginal approaches/knowledge

Making Good Tracks:

“I liked math in school because it was straight forward and involved a lot of thinking that helps with everyday problem solving – there are always new things to learn and challenges to overcome.”

- Georgian Bay Native Friendship
Centre Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Success in education directly impacts the home community through improved economic development, on-going education opportunities, training, etc.
- Aboriginal student success is important to showcase so that assumptions aren't made about aboriginal students grades being at a lower standard than the average student – don't single out - help each other succeed in a good way
- We need to look toward the future and understand that success takes many forms and every type of success is important
- To know their history
- The relationship between student and teacher without a doubt is critical
- Many teachers evoke feelings of insecurity in me without even realizing – I was always an A++ student but that didn't mean I was always comfortable in class
- I have seen a similar pattern in both of my daughters, one is in a gifted class but if a student is shown disrespect – she'll feel it deeply
- My youngest daughter only excelled for the first time in her life in an alternative learning environment
- Important for people to recognize our culture because we were the original people in Canada
- Support, resources, native counsellors, Aboriginal facilitators and teachers
- Secure financial resources - there one year and gone the next
- Elders on-site for guidance and support
- Staying in school initiatives
- Traditions, culture used as an added incentive and encouragement
- Motivation
- Always give students positive feedback and encouragement on their future endeavors and help determine realistic goals – what to consider
- Get them to meet successful Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit people
- Plant the seeds to help students and our future generations want to strive for success
- That they never need to feel shame or guilt about who they are as Anishnabe
- Let students be who they are and allow them to celebrate their culture and heritage
- Education needs to be recognized as important to students, families and community
- Students need to be accepted for who they are



Making Good Tracks

- Friendship and a caring safe place to learn – school needs to feel like home
- Identity needs to be nurtured
- Positive support system at school
- Better understanding about what Aboriginal learning styles means
- More Aboriginal/First Nation teachers – help teachers feel comfortable teaching Aboriginal subjects – find a way to blend resource people in the classroom
- Respect – encourage students to follow their goals and help them develop goals
- Encourage attendance and hard work
- Supportive learning environment that will result in a positive learning experience
- Educate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people about the true history of Aboriginal people
- Grade 9 history & worldview & Aboriginal content should be mandatory
- Promote feeling good about learning
- Good cross-cultural curriculum
- Patient understanding teachers who understand diversity issues, cultural awareness, understand the importance of humour and patience
- Guidance and support as needed by students to achieve credits and graduate
- Teachers who show an interest and have more native content in their courses
- Relevant history in lessons
- Patience and understanding about challenges that native students face
- Good nutrition and family support
- Respect
- Graduating high school, college or university and carrying on with career goals
- Graduating and being recognized for commitment to education
- Encouragement to stay in school despite attendance problems that may be a result of addictions, drug abuse, family problems, etc., – get to the root of the problem

Making Good Tracks:

“The most important thing for me to succeed as an Aboriginal student is to have a connection to my heritage and to be accepted in all aspects by my community and society.”

- Georgian Bay Native Friendship
Centre Consultation





Making Good Tracks



Question #3

What can teachers do to support the success of Aboriginal students?

Response

- Understanding of Aboriginal culture – use multiple styles in their teaching methods
- Teachers could inspire by taking an interest in the views, values and beliefs of Aboriginal culture – consider how it feels to be treated negatively because of your race
- Compassion for what it feels like to be stuck in the middle of two worlds, one being our way of life and the other being mainstream – teacher can support the success of Aboriginal students simply by relating to students
- Understand that our children are the echo of residential school and that patience and kindness are required
- Know your students needs & help guide them to achieve their goals
- Recognize the uniqueness of Aboriginal culture, history and philosophy and instill worth & pride
- Explain things short and sweet – be clear about what you want students to learn
- Teacher needs to be aware of the Aboriginal culture, be open minded, patient & accepting
- Learn about our culture to better understand our children
- More understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit history and culture and being able to use this understanding to encourage students
- Educators need to understand that Aboriginal students may require culture-based learning/teaching strategies and content in order to connect and succeed
- Teachers must follow their own learning journey but also need to be supported
- Teach students about their culture and history and promote in a way that will make it interesting so they'll want to learn more
- Learn about traditions and include activities like making drums, moccasins, beadwork – connect to learning outcomes for all students to enjoy – these activities teach patience and respect for culture
- Help students understand that history and all of mankind experienced dark times – not just Aboriginal people were targeted so they won't feel burdened by our history
- Important for teachers to know local Aboriginal history and have an awareness about First Nation and Métis communities in our school district



Making Good Tracks

- Open their eyes, ears, & hearts to the reality of Aboriginal students and all students
- Learn the accurate history of Aboriginal people and use locally developed resources
- Engage in professional development events/make use of Aboriginal presenters
- Balance Aboriginal & Eurocentric worldviews in the classroom
- Encourage respect for Aboriginal people, culture, and ways of knowing as well as spirituality – respect for diversity
- Educate about our culture and learn what is offensive – proper terminology
- Learn about Aboriginal resources – what’s available and how to use
- Encourage community partnerships and resource sharing for inclusion in the curriculum
- More guidance supports and awareness about the culture at all levels
- Motivation and development of Individual Education Plans
- Teachers need to encourage students to be more involved in the school community, their own community and to celebrate their heritage
- Make learning more interesting
- More Aboriginal representation – outreach, networking and developing new programs/program partners – all beneficial
- Be gentle with religion – be respectful of our culture, values and beliefs – we’ve suffered a lot in this area
- Learn to listen & listen to learn
- Break old stereo-typical beliefs when it comes to education and Aboriginal students – they want to succeed too!
- Be patient and understanding of their needs
- Guide students in a way that will empower them and help them feel good about themselves
- Be sensitive to Aboriginal culture & ways that enhance learning
- Let students know you care enough to help them be the person they’re meant to be
- Encourage students to explore the world by bringing history and other subjects to life
- Listen to the students – their wants & needs
- Show students the benefits of a good education – help them discover as opposed to telling them
- Know about community resources & help students connect to appropriate resources
- Treat every student as a unique individual with special gifts



Making Good Tracks

- Inspire by helping students to see the importance of reading and writing
- Help develop and implement Individual Education Plans (IEP) based on actual student learning needs
- Employ Aboriginal staff and use Aboriginal curriculum to help make learning relevant
- Encourage students & praise for work well done
- Have patience
- Make learning interesting by relating to everyday life
- Get to know students and community – attend local Aboriginal events and events held at your school
- Kicking students out of class doesn't work – help find ways for students to develop their own problem solving skills while taking responsibility for actions
- Available and practical supports for students who need the extra assistance



Question #4

What can Aboriginal students, parents and communities do to make a difference in student success?

Response

- Aboriginal students, parents, communities could have socials, organize open mic/coffee houses or after school activities that are fun and build confidence
- Have a homework program to help promote student success
- Include Aboriginal success stories/role models in the books used to teach them
- Be supportive & try to guide students in the right direction
- Educate the student to be proud of history and culture with opportunities to share
- Recognition of vast Aboriginal knowledge and wholistic approach to life
- Encourage school visits from Elders

Making Good Tracks:

“Educators need to understand that Aboriginal students may require culture-based learning/teaching strategies and content in order to connect and succeed.”

- Georgian Bay Native Friendship
Centre Consultation



Making Good Tracks

- Work together to promote awareness, role models, contributions and strengths of Aboriginal people
- It is the ultimate responsibility of each parent to be as supportive as possible
- Help out a lot and be more involved
- Don't put students down - accept their flaws as areas to develop and help them grow
- Patience and understanding are imperative
- Encourage Aboriginal inclusion and provide Aboriginal awareness
- Work together more!!
- Don't just talk about what to do, do it – model it and make learning experiential
- Work together and support each other
- Identify support services and make available to help students succeed
- Respect
- Important to get along with classmates and among themselves
- Get involved – meet with teachers, attend school/extracurricular activities
- Everyone should be aware of and recognize that changes need to happen in the way culture, identity, history and perspectives are taught – we need to work together
- Better understanding of each others differences & challenges
- Help to get rid of the drugs
- Support students dreams
- Encourage learning, listening and asking questions
- Encourage students to attend school – try to understand what's happening
- Invite students, parents/guardians and community members to the school and to school activities
- We all need to work together for the good of all students
- Don't judge students - let them be who they are – they need someone to be able to count on and who will listen to them
- Rejoice in what you have and try to show through speech and actions that you respect your own culture, yourself and others
- Stand up and support Aboriginal involvement and events – get involved
- Make learning interesting so students want to learn, attend school everyday & complete assignments



Making Good Tracks

- Parents need to work with students to help develop learning skills and good habits
- Communities need to work with both students & teachers to help whenever & wherever needed as additional support
- Help students find their voice to be able to articulate what they need
- Have high expectations for students and learning outcomes
- Advocate for students having difficulty and need the extra support – everyone has a their own pace
- Understand that healing is part of our journey to move beyond inter-generational affects of the residential school system, etc., – students need to feel supported at every phase of their journey
- Encourage students and families to share the culture through teachings, songs, drumming, regalia, etc.
- Address racism in our schools – students and parents should not have to address
- Support initiatives that engage students & parents – help make a difference in student success
- Assist students with their assignments – extra help as needed
- Be willing to update teaching methods and use new material that reflects our culture and diversity
- Show support and offer encouragement, become involved – ask questions and help students determine their educational goals
- Attend parent teacher nights and check-in frequently if you have concerns about student progress
- Community could plan a social at the school and invite the school community
- Parental support – help parents learn how to support students

Making Good Tracks:

“Everyone should be aware of and recognize that changes need to happen in the way culture, identity, history and perspectives are taught – we need to work together.”

- Georgian Bay Native Friendship
Centre Consultation



Making *Good* Tracks



Question #5

A career I'd like to learn more about is....

Response

- Policing and firefighting
- Computers
- Anything to do with literature or science
- Native culture
- Aboriginal teacher education
- Surgeon
- I'd like to become a female Aboriginal pilot
- Aboriginal history
- Natural medicines
- Professional artist and what it takes to have a career as an artist
- Hockey player
- First Nations self-government negotiator
- Native medicine
- Chef
- Aboriginal social services worker
- I want to learn more about my options – not sure and want to know what's out there
- Graphic designer
- World history
- How to grow and stay positive
- Anishnabe language and arts – history of our people
- Native studies
- Anthropology
- To become a councillor
- PM (Prime Minister)
- A high school teacher or college professor
- Police/detective/investigator – law and security careers





Making *Good* Tracks

- Plumbing and all skilled trades
- Nutritionist
- I'd like to learn more about apprenticeship programs
- Massage therapy

Making Good Tracks:

*"I want to learn more about my options – not sure
and want to know what's out there."*

- Georgian Bay Native Friendship
Centre Consultation

Feedback on Voluntary Self-Identification for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students

Additional comments and suggestions...

- Voluntary self-identification must be able to help address barriers to education such as:
 - 1) attendance
 - 2) racism
 - 3) substance abuse
 - 4) appropriate psych. ed. resources
 - 5) teacher attitudes & prejudices
 - 6) student against student racism
 - 7) parent engagement
 - 8) teacher/student ratio



Making Good Tracks

- 9) reasonable workload/homework – encourage other learning activities outside of the classroom like firekeeping and other cultural activities
- 10) educational resources and information for pregnant teens
- 11) opportunity to take native studies and native languages.

- Process should promote pride in culture, language and history
- Need to continue to educate the general population
- Language needs to be promoted through this initiative
- Keep voluntary self-ID literature as simple and clear as possible
- Students should see benefits to help recognize their potential – search out supports in secondary school that will help them reach their goals
- Have a career day, role models and showcase accomplishments as part of self-ID
- Give students a choice and promote benefits
- It was a wonderful opportunity to learn about your school Board's initiatives

Making Good Tracks:

“Voluntary self-identification must be able to help address barriers to education...”

- Georgian Bay Native Friendship
Centre Consultation



Making Good Tracks

Community Members Speak Barrie Native Friendship Centre, Barrie, Ontario

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

November 2008

The community consultation session at the Barrie Native Friendship Centre was a smaller gathering with 25 people in attendance. This session had the youngest participants with elementary students taking part in the evening that consisted of a community feast, presiding Elder and hand-drum songs prior to the presentation and discussion. The smaller group size allowed for more in-depth discussion on education matters relating to the success of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. As a result, the session went well past the scheduled time.

Special thanks to the Friendship Centre staff for accommodating our group. At the end of the evening, an additional follow-up session was arranged to continue the discussion with feedback from both sessions captured in the findings.



Question #1

What is/was your favourite subject in school and why?

Response

- Reading, writing, spelling – language arts because I was good at it and it was fun
- Math, science and machine shop
- Native studies and native language because it promotes cultural awareness and a sense of pride
- Never had a favourite subject in school – I liked a subject when I felt comfortable in class

Making Good Tracks:

“Never had a favourite subject in school – I liked a subject when I felt comfortable in class.”

- Barrie Native Friendship Centre Consultation



Making Good Tracks



Question #2

What is most important to the success of Aboriginal students?

Response

- Schools must be safe with an anti-oppressive environment
- Access to accurate information about Aboriginal people/in the classroom
- Bring indigenous knowledge into the classroom – it applies to all subjects
- Use ceremony as deemed appropriate and conducted by the right people
- Education is an important part of our healing
- There are two ways knowledge can be presented about Aboriginal people – valued or negative – need to know the difference and be supported with proper resources
- Important to know the difference when selecting resources for the classroom
- Respect has been lost for Indigenous knowledge – slowly gaining recognition
- Make connections between elementary, secondary and post-secondary – on and off reserve including daycare
- Need to be able to find a balance between being Catholic and being Aboriginal in a blended/respectful way
- Focus on what we have in common – our strengths and common goals
- Don't label or judge Aboriginal children – they are children capable of succeeding like any other student
- Incorporate Aboriginal content throughout studies – not just one day or one section
- Know where a child is socially/academically and build on their strengths
- Positive support

Making Good Tracks:

“Education is an important part of our healing.”

- Barrie Native Friendship Centre Consultation





Making Good Tracks

- Parents
- Family
- Community
- Having high self-esteem
- Students seeing themselves represented authentically in school and curriculum
- Language arts offered in our languages
- In-school supports for students and teachers
- Caring/culturally sensitive learning environment



Question #3

What can teachers do to support the success of Aboriginal students?

Response

- Understand that the Native child has likely had a different experience in education and requires approaches that take this into consideration – may not feel safe
- Let students know you care about them and that you believe they can succeed
- Build relationships with students and parents
- Don't make assumptions
- Become more knowledgeable about culture and cultural norms of Aboriginal students in their classrooms
- Identify gaps in learning
- Identify students who require assessments and have them done in a timely manner
- Act as advocates for students to support their success
- Include Aboriginal students without centering them out
- Teachers must not make the Aboriginal student in the classroom the expert
- Students need to see themselves reflected in the classroom and have a sense of belonging – sense of pride in who they are
- Ensure that education is taught and presented in a way that is accessible for everyone
- Use teaching/learning methods that shows students how to work together and feel good about learning



Making Good Tracks

- Important for teachers to understand who we are, where we've come from and where we want to go – we want a good future too
- Education has been painful for us and we've not felt encouraged – important for teachers to know our students and families have been affected by historical experiences
- Respect for Aboriginal knowledge “indigigogy” is slowly returning – need to encourage
- Students need to grow up feeling proud about who they are and good about themselves – they spend a good amount of their time in the classroom and this is a critical place
- Important that stereo-typical content is not used to promote shame or feelings of being less than or embarrassed – this comes from misinformation/distorted information
- Teachers also need to be supported with a basic orientation or understanding of Aboriginal people, history and culture – particularly the local First Nation and Métis communities
- Racism in the classroom/school environment must be addressed – another form of bullying that puts a student at risk
- The teacher is the first point of advocacy in the classroom with students influenced by the way a teacher handles cross-cultural content, issues and student comments
- If students are left to deal with negativity because they're Aboriginal – they don't know what to do with it and internalize it or lash out – then they are branded a trouble-maker
- Social studies/pioneer days, etc., needs to acknowledge contributions of Aboriginal people
- Students should have accurate information about Aboriginal people from the beginning of their education and throughout
- Oppression hurts and it negatively impacts us and our students
- Stereo-typical beliefs are still very common
- Schools need to be a safe place for our children/students of all ages
- Schools need to be a safe environment in order for learning to take place – students need to feel safe
- Cultural awareness and sensitizing is important for everyone
- When teachers model kindness and caring with quality education – that's a good message for all students
- It's important to balance who we are with Catholicism and positive approach to diversity within spirituality



Making Good Tracks

- Include seven Grandfather Gifts and compare similarity to the nine Catholic values for both elementary and secondary
- Inclusion should start with elementary school across all subjects – all students should have a basic understanding about Canada’s original people and role in helping newcomers to this land during first contact
- Don’t promote fear of Aboriginal people
- Draw on local Friendship Centres, Métis Councils and Aboriginal resources in the area to learn about us, our ideology, history, culture, languages, etc.
- We have much to learn about each other and the classroom is a great place for this to take place in a good way
- When teachers do include Aboriginal content in their course it’s important for them to understand that not everyone is receptive/may ask questions based on stereo-typical information – teacher needs to be able to handle this type of discussion in a positive way
- Be aware that including Aboriginal content may cause some fall-out and similarly excluding Aboriginal content may cause some fall-out
- Use more books by Aboriginal authors where possible
- Use alternative approaches to have discussions that promote unity and respect for diversity – circle discussion format is a great teaching/learning tool to promote respect and develop social skills
- Promote a positive approach and model a way for students to have respectful discussion – give them the tools
- Teach about the positive outcomes and contributions of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students/people – share our successes
- Include activities that model and develop social skills, classroom interaction and appeal to a variety of learning styles

Making Good Tracks:

“Teach about the positive outcomes and contributions of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students/people – share our successes.”

- Barrie Native Friendship Centre Consultation



Making Good Tracks

Question #4

What can Aboriginal students, parents and communities do to make a difference in student success?

Response

- Focus on the future
- Don't get lost in the pain of the past – focus on where we want to go, where we're going
- Include more Native content – First Nation, Métis and Inuit
- Bring First Nation, Métis and Inuit people into the classroom as teachers, guest speakers and role models
- Get involved
- It's important that we have a say in what is being taught to our children, who is going to teach them and how they are going to teach them
- Support for the Ojibwa language by everyone is important to student success because the language helps students feel good about themselves – it values who they are and helps them connect
- Teachers shouldn't feel pressured to know everything – need to feel supported
- Important not to make people feel bad about what they don't know
- Teachers need to feel comfortable to call on community members, Elders, etc. and given help with identifying community resources as needed
- Community members need to be compensated for their time, travel when possible – many volunteer their time but they should not be taken for granted
- If racism is an issue – it must be dealt with – we need culturally safe learning environments
- We need to work with principals and vice-principals because we know they want to do the right thing
- Be proactive
- We must be aware of the “lateral violence” among ourselves and promote acceptance of each other regardless of status or where we live
- It's important to understand that Métis people were taught to deny who they were so they would be accepted socially and economically – need to have compassion about historical impacts upon Aboriginal people, what they had to face and still face





Making Good Tracks

- Also important to know that everything is not bleak – we’ve made many contributions and incredible progress in spite of the many challenges we’ve encountered
- Help teachers/school community understand the diversity that exists among us as Aboriginal people and how it impacts us – status, non-status, on-reserve, off-reserve
- Be assertive
- Celebrate our accomplishments – we have much to learn from each other
- Important to involve the right people
- Know your rights as Aboriginal students and what’s available to you – be an informed student, parent and community member
- Know your responsibilities and what is required in order to be successful and supportive
- Encouragement to move forward in a good way
- Aboriginal students should be safe from racism, discrimination, stereotyping and oppression in our schools and classrooms
- The school system must promote safety of our children
- Everyone has indigenous ancestry – their ancestry has a worldview with the old ways becoming more valued, accepted and popular
- This project is about new growth and new connections to the education system
- Our way of life contains knowledge, teachings and how to care for the mind, body and spirit
- It’s important for our young people to feel safe and supported in accessing cultural knowledge and teachings
- We need to be patient and supportive of non-native teachers teaching our history
- Our history is complex and can be confusing – we need to support teachers and they need to feel comfortable to learn as they teach
- Just ask us – we’re glad to help
- Listen to the young people – ask them what they need instead of doing what you think they need
- Put the children first and listen to their voices

Making Good Tracks:

“This project is about new growth and new connections to the education system.”

- Barrie Native Friendship Centre Consultation



Making Good Tracks



Question #5

A career I'd like to learn more about...

Response

- All careers and all possibilities
- Academic requirements for different careers, personal strengths, skill building and self-confidence are all important in choosing a career path – education is imperative!
- Academic assessment to help identify career strengths

Making Good Tracks:

“Academic requirements for different careers, personal strengths, skill building and self-confidence are all important in choosing a career path – education is imperative!”

- Barrie Native Friendship Centre Consultation

Feedback on Voluntary Self-Identification for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students

Additional comments and suggestions...

- For the voluntary self-identification to be successful there has to be a sense of trust and risk free environment in the classroom
- Métis have had to deny their heritage for social and economic reasons – self-ID needs to be as safe as possible
- This is more than a project, more than a gathering, it includes ceremony – we're entering a new phase in education, a new phase in relationship



Making Good Tracks

- How will the voluntary self-identification process help students
- Risk of confusing/hurting students if self-identification comments or perception is negative
- We work hard for our children to feel proud of who they are and their heritage – important that this is protected
- How does the money school Boards receive from this project directly benefit elementary and secondary students
- Information needs to be easy to understand and user-friendly
- We want our students to succeed just like everybody else
- We need to educate the educators in a meaningful way
- Some students may need more supports than others and that needs to be provided in a way that is respectful
- Education is a way to become a better person and to have a good future
- Education needs to encourage a sense of belonging and sense of community
- Many of our communities are viewed as poor but that doesn't mean we're not capable
- We don't want our students to be targeted because of the Self-Identification initiative
- The Catholic school Board provides a spiritual foundation for students which is good
- The voluntary self-ID initiative is a good thing but it's not just about the numbers – it's important that we stay true to who we are and our vision as Aboriginal people
- Voluntary self-identification can be a good thing – it depends how it is used, who has access and the direct benefits
- Self-Identification should not be about validating an Aboriginal student – it's about gathering stats and that needs to be clearly understood but it also needs to be about more than numbers – needs to be meaningful
- The fears and benefits of self-identification need to be acknowledged with an understanding about what families fear and why
- This project needs to be presented in a way that doesn't single out Aboriginal students – need to feel pride in who they are
- Important to understand that terms/categories used to identify us as Aboriginal people are not our terms with some being outdated – important to have an understanding of this

Making Good Tracks:

“Need to be able to find a balance between being Catholic and being Aboriginal in a blended/respectful way.”

- Barrie Native Friendship Centre Consultation





Making Good Tracks

Voluntary Self-Identification First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

September 2009 Launch

It's important to note the magnitude of the Voluntary Self-Identification process for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. All 72 school districts in the province are in some stage of establishing and/or implementing a self-identification process. Following extensive consultation, our board will begin implementation of a voluntary self-identification for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in September 2009.

Although this Voluntary Self-Identification process is a new undertaking, the opportunity to self-identify previously existed. The difference is in the terminology. Registration forms commonly used the term "Native" for voluntary self-identification purposes. However, without intending to be exclusive, the term implies "First Nation" thereby excluding Métis and Inuit students. Although the self-identification process is still voluntary, the most important aspect is that the terminology is inclusive and more accurately reflects the First Nation, Métis and Inuit community should parents/guardians and students wish to self-identify as part of this process.

Frequently Asked Questions



Question #1

Why is the voluntary self-identification for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students so important?

Response

The Ministry of Education in Ontario has identified the success of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students as a key priority. It's important to note that according to 2006 Census data, the First Nation, Métis and Inuit population in Canada has reached the one million mark with one-quarter or 250,000 Aboriginal people residing in Ontario. In addition, approximately 60% of the population is school age – under 25 years old.





Making *Good* Tracks

As previously outlined, the Ministry launched the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework in 2007. Funding was provided to support school initiatives in meeting three main goals to support student success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students:



- High levels of student achievement
- Reduce gaps in student achievement
- High levels of public confidence.

Voluntary self-identification for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students is a critical aspect for schools to monitor projects designed to support student success. Community consultation was viewed as a critical starting point in building awareness and to answer questions about the project as well as voluntary self-identification. First Nation, Métis and Inuit participants provided invaluable insight in this area as our Board prepares to implement voluntary self-identification at all our elementary and secondary schools beginning in September 2009.



Question #2

How will self-identification help First Nation, Métis and Inuit student success?

Response

The voluntary self-identification process will help collect accurate data on enrolment, student success and graduation rates. In turn, the data will help our Board determine program needs and identify student supports. The data will help us determine the most effective ways to support student success as we help First Nation, Métis and Inuit students reach their education and career goals.



Question #3

Besides our school Board, who else will have access to the Voluntary Self-Identification data and how will it be used?

Response

Information collected through the Voluntary Self-Identification process will become part of the Ontario Student Record. It is important to know that information about individual students (i.e., personally identifiable information) is protected and is not shared. Overall data, such as enrolment information,





Making Good Tracks

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results and course completion, will be shared with the Ministry of Education and EQAO. This overall information will be collected from school Boards across the province so the Ministry can provide progress reports on the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework every three years. For more information please refer to the Ministry website at www.edu.gov.on.ca.



Question #4

Will everyone benefit from the voluntary self-identification project or will it just benefit the First Nation, Métis and Inuit students?

Response

Everyone will benefit. In addition to improving learning outcomes and environments for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, some of the benefits for our entire school community include...

- Enhanced cross-cultural learning opportunities
- Culturally appropriate learning opportunities
- New resource material to reflect the rich culture, history, languages and perspectives of Canada's original people
- New First Nation, Métis and Inuit curriculum initiatives for all school boards involved.



Question #5

Is proof of First Nation, Métis or Inuit ancestry required to take part in the voluntary self-identification process?

Response

Proof of ancestry is not required to take part in our school Board's Voluntary Self-Identification process. It is important to note that parents/guardians will have the opportunity to identify their children, while students who are 18 years of age or older will be able to identify themselves as part of this initiative. Definitions for First Nation, Métis and Inuit have been included on the *Voluntary Self-Identification* brochure to minimize confusion for those wishing to self-identify and to also serve as an educational tool.

Please refer to the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board brochure – Voluntary Self-Identification for First Nation, Métis or Inuit Students.

You can access additional self-identification and project information on our Board website at www.smcdsb.on.ca.



Making Good Tracks

Year at a Glance Summary of Highlights

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB)

Fall 2009

We heard what you said during community consultation and this is what we did...

- Established an Ad-hoc Elders' Advisory Council to guide and advise our process
- Established an Ad-hoc Internal Working Group consisting of two Principals (1 elementary and 1 secondary) a Métis teacher and First Nation Director of Education
- Developed a project theme, logo and easy to understand project information
- Designed the Making Good Tracks project information kit
- Developed a Voluntary Self-Identification school board policy and brochure with definitions to meet community information needs
- Native Studies and Ojibway language summer pilot project (1 high school credit each)
- Local and regional education conference planning and student participation
- First Nation, Métis and Inuit student support position at St. Theresa's High School
- Circle of Life Unity Project to promote culture-based learning strategies and resources
- Regular project updates to Principals, Vice-Principals, SMCDSB Trustees and Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle (AEAC)
- Student Pow-wow and Métis Rendezvous at St. Theresa's High School in Midland
- Lunch hour student success/job search workshop series at St. Theresa's High School
- Grade 12 Ojibway Language offered as Dual Credit at St. Theresa's in partnership with Georgian College (worth one grade 12 credit and one college credit) – September 2009
- Production of a voluntary self-identification DVD Project
- Purchase of culture-based leveled reading series for all 44 SMCDSB elementary schools
- Meet & greet activities with community groups in addition to display booths
- Treaty curriculum training for 15 SMCDSB secondary school teachers/faculty
- Additional First Nation, Métis and Inuit resources for all SMCDSB libraries
- Established a SMCDSB professional learning community to enhance First Nation, Métis and Inuit content in SMCDSB high schools
- Voluntary Self-Identification pilot project at Canadian Martyrs School in Penetanguishene to prepare for Board wide launch in September 2009



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- Summer Writing Project to develop a teacher supplement guide and identify resources for Grade 10 (NAC20) – Aboriginal Peoples in Canada
- On-going review of Grade 10 Aboriginal Peoples in Canada course
- Facilitate Circle of Life Unity activities and development of resource material
- Community Consultation Report to keep community and stakeholders informed
- Develop Aboriginal Education Project website at www.smcdsb.on.ca
- Distributed 1,700 Making Good Tracks information kits to teachers in our school board with an additional 873 distributed during community consultations
- Distributed 1,700 copies of the Aboriginal Perspectives Teacher Toolkit to teachers in our school Board – a resource developed by the Ministry of Education with an additional 300 copies distributed in the community



Making Good Tracks

First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Next Steps - Projects Underway

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB)

Fall 2009

Next Steps

In the continued delivery of our First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Initiatives, four projects already underway are priority items in terms of next steps as follows:

- Voluntary Self-Identification for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students – after completing the community consultation phase, based on input - our Board policy, process and information brochure were developed. The pilot site helped with revisions to our material in preparation for our Board-wide launch. In September 2009, the Voluntary Self-Identification process will be implemented at all 53 SMCDSB schools. Student data will be gathered as part of the voluntary self-identification process and help our Board determine project effectiveness in support of student success.
- Dual credit Ojibway Language & Culture – we're pleased that the SMCDSB will offer this grade 12 course at St. Theresa's High School in Midland. Upon successful completion students will earn a grade 12 credit as well as a college level general education credit. Classes will be held once a week for fourteen weeks beginning in September 2009.
- Circle of Life Unity Project – this culture-based student success strategy incorporates Medicine Wheel teachings. A 5' x 5' design on white Board by local artist Bill Monague is visually pleasing, highly interactive and promotes learning/problem solving from a cultural perspective. This resource will be implemented at St. Theresa's High School with information and resources available for use in other schools.





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- Community Members Speak Internal Review – an internal review of the findings contained in the community consultation report will assist with the development of a long term plan. The need for cross-cultural training emerged as a priority item, one of many points raised to help guide our next steps and a DVD is being developed as one resource to help increase awareness.

Closing Comments

The community consultation process helped build a new relationship with the First Nation, Métis and Inuit community. This relationship is important as we work together to improve learning environments and outcomes for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. A united approach is critical to resolving some of the long standing issues that impact student success. And, we also look to the community as partners in the promotion of cross-cultural understanding. It's clear that although a lot of work has been completed to date – this is just a starting point. As individuals, we can make a difference in a student's life. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of students for the next seven generations.





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Appendix





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Suggested Websites (in alphabetical order)

The following list of suggested sites serves as a starting point in response to community feedback gathered during our consultation process. A brief outline is included for each listing. Please refer to the website for more information and watch for this feature to be added to our Board website.

1. **Aboriginal Canada Portal**
Website: www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca

The Aboriginal Canada Portal is a source for First Nation, Métis and Inuit online resources, government programs and services. Features include news, events, jobs, maps, statistics and a wide range of resources on various topics. The Universities and Colleges section lists post-secondary programs, courses and services intended for an Aboriginal clientele. Teacher resources include an interactive teacher/student zone and an Aboriginal Youth Identity Series featuring grade appropriate lesson plans, projects and learning resources.

2. **Barrie Native Friendship Centre**
Website: www.ofifc.org

This link connects you to the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centre website. Under programs, click on Friendship Centre/Core Program Information then select Barrie or Barrie Native Friendship Centre. One of 28 centres in Ontario, a brief history is provided along with the programs offered that include recreational, education, social and cultural activities. The Barrie Native Friendship Centre is located at 175 Bayfield Street in Barrie.





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3. **Beausoleil First Nation**
Website: www.chimnissing.ca

This website provides a wide range of information about the Beausoleil First Nation community that includes Health Services, Education, Economic Development, Emergency Medical Services, Administration and much more. Located in the southern tip of Georgian Bay, access is by ferry during most of the year with alternate means of transportation used during the winter months. The education link includes newsletter, student success tips and information pertaining to elementary and secondary students. Check the website for ferry schedule as well as community news and events. BFN has the largest number of students attending SMCDSB secondary schools.

4. **Canada's Scholarship Site**
Website: www.scholarshipcanada.com

Listed as Canada's foremost website for scholarships, student awards, bursaries and grants, this free service is designed to make your search easier. Scholarship information can be accessed by name, post-secondary institution, due date, amount, eligibility criteria and field of study. Users must sign up for a free account to access additional scholarship related information.

5. **Canadian Aboriginal Festival**
Website: www.canab.com

North America's largest multi-disciplined Aboriginal Festival, this annual event has been held in Toronto and Hamilton to showcase a range of cultural activities and information booths. A unique feature is Education Day with participatory teaching stations and free teacher resources designed to supplement native studies programs.





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6. **CBC Aboriginal**
Website: www.cbc.ca/aboriginal

On June 21, 2007 the CBC launched this website to coincide with National Aboriginal Day. The launch responded to Canadian audiences who increasingly want to be better connected to the Aboriginal reality in Canada. Features include headline news, events, arts and culture, archives and recommended resources for Aboriginal studies. An entertaining feature is the Revision Quest series hosted by First Nations comic/host Darrell Dennis who tackles misconceptions about what it means to be an Aboriginal person in Canada today with humour and personality.

7. **Chiefs of Ontario**
Website: <http://chiefs-of-ontario.org>

A coordinating body for 134 First Nation communities located in Ontario, the main objective of the Chiefs of Ontario office is to facilitate discussion, planning, implementation and evaluation of local, regional and national matters affecting First Nations people in the province. This site provides information on a wide range of issues, an interactive map, a Chiefs of Ontario newsletter, employment opportunities and much more.

8. **Enaahdig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre**
Website: www.enaahdig.ca

The Enaahdig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre was established in 1995 and grew out of a vision to develop a place where healing and wellness needs of the Aboriginal community could be addressed. This wholistic and culturally appropriate environment provides an opportunity to combine western and traditional methodology. Programs are available to individuals and families in a safe environment in order to foster healthy, balanced communities and nations. The interactive site includes programs, services, a newsletter, calendar of events, etc. Enaahdig is located at 4184 Vasey Road in Victoria Harbour.





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9. **Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre**
Website: www.gbnfc.com

The Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre is located at 175 Yonge Street in Midland. The interactive site provides background history, a list of programs, current Board members, newsletter and workshops as well as an opportunity to offer suggestions/feedback. An extensive list of service provider information can be accessed on the Links section that include local sites, health services, employment centres, youth job search, Aboriginal organizations and cultural centres. Information about the annual fall pow-wow is also available.

10. **Georgian College**
Website: www.georgianc.on.ca

The primary Georgian College campus is located in Barrie with satellite campuses in Orillia, Midland, Collingwood, Muskoka, Owen Sound and Orangeville. The Barrie campus offers a range of Aboriginal student support services that include a visiting Elder program, peer mentoring, resource centre/study area and much more. In addition to offering courses with an Aboriginal focus, a range of college and university courses are also available. Visit the website for information about courses and student supports.

11. **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)**
Website: www.ainc-gc.ca

INAC is one of the federal government departments responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments to First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The site provides access to the INAC library, reports and statistics. Additional features include Aboriginal and Northern success stories, Did You Know, Aboriginal Bursary Search information, learning resources and a list of free publications.





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12. **Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)**
Website: www.itk.ca

ITK is a national Inuit organization representing four Inuit regions located in Labrador, northern Quebec, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The site contains information about ITK's role in political, cultural and economic development of the Inuit of Canada. Information is also available about their history, culture and territory in addition to fact sheets, statistics, maps, publications and current news.

13. **Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868)**
Website: www.kidshelpphone.ca

This toll-free, 24 hour, anonymous phone counselling service is available to young people in Canada 365 days a year. It's Canada's only free online counselling service for kids and teens. You can speak directly to a counsellor or post a question online. The Topic Library provides practical information on a variety of issues that include dating, cyberbullying, loss of a friend, violence and abuse and youth health issues. Free Aboriginal resources are also available that include the Seven Grandfather Teachings and role model poster series as well as book marks.

14. **Métis Nation of Ontario**
Website: www.metisnation.org

The Métis Nation of Ontario is a governing body of the Métis National Council. The site provides information about the organization as well as the history and culture of the Métis in Canada. Features include registry information, programs and services, job postings, breaking news, culture and heritage, Riel Day, student awards, special celebrations, landmark cases and much more. Another important feature is the Métis Voyageur which is published six times a year and can be viewed online or downloaded with access to back issues. This publication provides a cross Canada snapshot of Métis news with 12,000 copies distributed to various government, business and educational institutions throughout the province.





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15. **Ministry of Education**
Website: www.edu.gov.on.ca

This site contains information about all levels of Ontario's education system from preschool to adult learning. A Student Voice section invites students to share ideas about education with information on a variety of student projects and forums as part of a province-wide initiative called Speak Up. Additional features include ways to succeed in school, jobs and careers, safe schools, healthy schools, e-learning and much more. Reports, publications and the latest updates in education are available in addition to information on the province wide Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework to promote student success.

16. **National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF)**
Website: www.naaf.ca

NAAF is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds to deliver programs that provide the tools necessary for Aboriginal youth to achieve brighter futures. Services include a series of national career fairs designed to attract First Nation, Métis and Inuit high school students to the wide array of potential careers available in all employment sectors. The NAAF has evolved into the largest non-government funding body for First Nation, Métis and Inuit post-secondary students across Canada. The annual scholarship deadline for post-secondary education is June 1st – visit the website for more information and to download application forms. NAAF also hosts the televised National Aboriginal Achievement Awards to encourage and celebrate excellence in the Aboriginal community and recognize outstanding career achievements of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people. A national youth role model program is another important aspect of the NAAF designed to inspire students on their education/career journey.





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17. **Ogemawahj Tribal Council (OTC)**
Website: www.ogemawahj.on.ca

Created in 1990, Ogemawahj Tribal Council provides professional and technical services to six member First Nations. A range of services include economic development, employment and training, financial management, policy, planning, intergovernmental relations and education. The OTC Education Advisory Council was formed in 1999 to improve formal education for First Nation people at the community, provincial and national levels. Education services include curriculum development, resource services, information gathering, post-secondary funding policy development and special education advisory services to name a few. The OTC office is currently located at the Rama First Nation.

18. **Sainte-Marie among the Hurons**
Website: www.saintemarieamongthehurons.on.ca

A national historic site, Sainte-Marie among the Hurons offers group tours, special events, historical information and education programs. Special programs related to life at Sainte-Marie are offered to gain insight into the rich Aboriginal history and first European community in Ontario. Two additional sites to explore in the area are the Huronia Museum in Midland and Discovery Harbour in Penetanguishene. Sainte-Marie among the Hurons is located in Midland on Hwy 12 across from the Martyrs' Shrine Church.

19. **Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board**
Website: www.smcdsb.on.ca

The governing body for Catholic elementary and secondary education in the District of Muskoka and Simcoe County, our site includes official information, lists of schools, programs, careers, school calendar schedule, student success initiatives and much more. To access information on our approach to the province-wide education initiative in support of First Nation, Métis and Inuit student success – click on “Parents” from the selection bar on the homepage then click on “Aboriginal Education Project.”





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20. **Statistics Canada: Aboriginal Peoples in Canada Inuit - Métis, and First Nations 2006 Census Findings**

Website: www12statcan.gc.ca

A wealth of information can be accessed about First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples as well as the total Aboriginal population on the Statistics Canada website. Features include community profiles, topic-based themes such as housing and education as well as information specific to Aboriginal children, youth and adults.

Additional resources can be accessed on topics such as education, languages and cultures, justice issues, health and population characteristics. Intermediate and secondary resources for teachers and students include maps, news articles, publications, lessons, free learning bulletins and quizzes to name a few. Links to other relevant sites are also listed.

21. **Student Awards**

Website: www.studentawards.com

This site lists scholarships, bursaries, fellowships, grants and other financial awards. It also includes discussion groups related to post-secondary education and student life. Free membership allows full access to the student award data base. Membership benefits include a monthly e-newsletter with deadline date reminders for submissions. And, once you fill out a profile – you'll receive scholarship information specific to your area of study or post-secondary institution you're interested in attending.





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The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB) wishes to express sincere appreciation to all who took the time to support our community consultation process as we work together to support student success. We would especially like to acknowledge the guidance and advice provided by the members of two ad-hoc committees in our approach and implementation of the Ontario, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework.

Elders' Advisory Council

Dr. Ed Connors, Kahnawake Mohawk Territory
Scott Carpenter, Métis Nation of Ontario
Patrick Akpalialuk, Inuit Cultural Resource
Ernie Sandy, Rama First Nation
Gloria King, Beausoleil First Nation

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Deb Slingerland, SMCDSB Elementary School Principal
Matt McCann, SMCDSB High School Principal
Peggy McGregor, Director of Education Beausoleil First Nation
Grant Mantha, SMCDSB Elementary School Principal
Denise DeCourcy, SMCDSB Elementary/NAC20 Pilot Instructor

Ex-Officio Members

Darren Schmidt, SMCDSB Superintendent Project Lead
Linda McGregor, SMCDSB Manager of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Initiatives

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Thank you

