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## MEMORANDUM

September 14, 2021  
Regular Board Meeting

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<b>TO</b>	Board of Trustees
<b>FROM</b>	Shauna Boyce, Superintendent
<b>ORIGINATOR</b>	Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent
<b>RESOURCE</b>	Kathy Mann, Division Principal TJ Gladstone, Indigenous Facilitator
<b>GOVERNANCE POLICY</b>	Board Policy this report relates to Board Policy 2: Role of the Board; Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent
<b>ADDITIONAL REFERENCE</b>	BP 1: Vision Statement BP 2(4): Communications and Community Relations
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>INDIGENOUS EDUCATION REPORT</b>

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### PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

### BACKGROUND

The Board of Trustees upholds the Mission for Parkland School Division (PSD) to “assure supportive learning environments, meaningful experiences and healthy relationships that create opportunities to develop resilience, to gain diversity in perspectives and to achieve enduring success.” This report is in support of the Division’s Mission and is provided with respect to the Board’s Annual Work Plan.

### REPORT SUMMARY

Staff, students, parents and community stakeholder partners are called on to acknowledge the historical significance and contributions of Indigenous People and their cultures within the context of education. The Superintendent recognizes the need for all staff to take appropriate action to bridge and to build our relationships with our First Nation communities.

This *Indigenous Education Report* highlights the actions, intentions and shared responsibility of all staff members, that are considered from the dual perspectives of looking back at our successes and challenges, and

of looking forward; planning and responding for continual improvement. For Parkland School Division, the priorities set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding for Alberta resonate with our Education Plan. Our primary responsibilities toward healing are twofold:

- To ensure that all students learn about the history and legacy of residential schools, along with the robust history of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada; and
- To enable all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students to achieve success, in a welcoming, supportive and safe school culture, without exception.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions.

SJ:kz



## Parkland School Division

*Where the World Opens Up*

### INDIGENOUS EDUCATION REPORT

September 14, 2021

**OUR STUDENTS POSSESS THE CONFIDENCE, RESILIENCE, INSIGHT AND SKILLS REQUIRED TO THRIVE IN, AND POSITIVELY IMPACT, THE WORLD.**

Staff, students, parents and community stakeholder partners are called on to acknowledge the historical significance and contributions of Indigenous People and their cultures within the context of education. The Superintendent recognizes the need for all staff to take appropriate action to bridge and to build our relationships with our First Nation communities.

The intent of Reconciliation is to work together to heal the damage of a dark history of Residential Schools for the 12,000 children who attended the 25 residential schools in Alberta and for the legacy this has left for their children. The Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] for First Nations Education in Alberta is an agreement between the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta, the Government of Alberta, and the Government of Canada, to work toward strengthening learning and educational success for First Nation students in Alberta.

The MOU acknowledges that First Nation students attending First Nation schools, or provincial schools, are not achieving educational outcomes or levels of success similar to all other students in Alberta. To this end, there is a desire to improve the services and quality of education for all First Nation students in order to improve the educational outcomes, while respecting our Indigenous students' cultural identity.

The Provincial MOU presents the following principles for all who are involved in education:

1. To work collaboratively and expeditiously to continuously improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students;
2. To recognize the diversity of First Nation peoples, communities, language, culture, traditions and spiritual practices, and the need for standards-based and culturally appropriate education;
3. To ensure First Nation students have equitable access to quality education and smooth transitions between First Nation and provincial schools;
4. To achieve comparable quality standards between First Nation on-reserve and provincial education;
5. To enhance governance, policy, programs and fiscal accountability to students, communities, funding and agencies;
6. To empower and engage First Nation Elders, students, parents, and communities to improve educational outcomes;
7. To maximize effectiveness of existing activities and investments, and to pursue initiatives to improve educational outcomes; and
8. To promote the development of institutional capacity and relationships.

These responsibilities, as principles for governance and operation, may be considered from the dual perspectives of looking back at our successes and challenges, and of looking forward; planning and responding for continual improvement.

For Parkland School Division, the priorities set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding for Alberta resonate with our Education Plan. Our primary responsibilities toward healing are twofold:

- To ensure that all students learn about the history and legacy of residential schools, along with the robust history of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada; and
- To enable all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students to achieve success, in a welcoming, supportive and safe school culture, without exception.

## INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF PARKLAND SCHOOL DIVISION

Within the context of looking forward for success, the 2021-2022 Education Plan for Parkland School Division identifies key objectives for education planning:

- Improving our understanding and representation of Indigenous culture to foster a sense of belonging and identity;
- Supporting educational achievement among Indigenous students;
- Improving the well-being of Indigenous students;
- Increasing the participation and engagement of Indigenous students and families in education; and
- Establishing stronger relationships through effective collaboration with our Indigenous community partners.

## Fostering Belonging and Identity

How do we best ensure and improve the experiences that our Indigenous students have while attending Parkland School Division? How do we best ensure that our Indigenous families enjoy a sense of belonging? Improving the educational experience for our students and our families requires the establishment of an organizational culture that is focused on equity, and that continuously seeks avenues for developing and deepening our shared understanding.

At a foundational level, the Parkland School Division *Treaty Acknowledgment Protocol* recognizes the importance of honouring and acknowledging Treaty 6 territory, as we work toward strengthening relations and building bridges with our neighboring Indigenous communities: Paul First Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation and Alexander Cree Nation. Our Protocol requires division and school-based staff to acknowledge Treaty 6 Territory at all significant school and community events or gatherings.

Parkland School Division resides within Treaty 6 Territory. When we acknowledge the land, it is important for us to recognize the original intention and spirit of partnership that our Indigenous neighbours understood when they entered into those agreements with colonist settlers. In 2020-2021, the Division invited students to think about how they might creatively represent a land acknowledgement and what it means to them.

Students grades 4-12 from across the Division were invited to submit artistic representations of our Treaty 6 acknowledgment. Artistic prints, that showcase the perspectives of our students, now reside in each of our schools. For more information, a Parkland School Division YouTube video [[Land Acknowledgement in PSD](#)] captures our students' efforts and artistry. Our Land Acknowledgement poster is featured on the next page.

It is clear that a respectful, well-delivered Land Acknowledgement is an important component of ensuring that our students are well-connected to Treaty history. More than that, though, we recognize that our Indigenous students need to see reflections of themselves in their environments; whether this is represented in the physical environment through culturally symbolic artifacts and images, in the spiritual environment through the embedding of traditional practices, or through the human environment by increasing Indigenous representation in our staffing, we continue to do the work of raising the visibility of an Indigenous presence in our schools.



## Land Acknowledgement

With peace, harmony and unity, we honour the land on which we stand as Treaty 6 territory. This is sacred land to many First Nation, Métis and Inuit, and in particular our neighbours, Paul First Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Alexander Cree Nation and our friends of the Métis Nation. We recognize and acknowledge Indigenous values, traditional teachings, ways of being, contributions and historical inequalities. We respect all cultures with an open heart and an open mind. We ALL heal together.

Original artwork by Taelin Bird, Grade 12



Text contribution by Makena Keenan, Grade 9



Students need to see themselves in their schools. To this end, our schools have taken additional measures to increase the visual imagery and artifacts that represent Indigenous culture. Some examples to highlight include:

- The Healing Garden at Forest Green School;
- The Pendleton Blanket display at the Centre for Education;
- The Mural Project at Memorial Composite High School; and
- Art projects that respect the culture, identity and rich history of our Indigenous Learners.

Our educators have access to a wealth of resources through the FNMI Indigenous Page (internal to PSD) – This Google page was created to provide access to the wealth of resources available provincially and nationally, and it provides our teachers with an opportunity to share resources they have recognized as being beneficial.

### National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: September 30<sup>th</sup>

The Federal Government passed legislation to establish September 30<sup>th</sup> as a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The intent is to provide a day to recognize, and to commemorate the legacy of residential schools. September 30<sup>th</sup> is also known as Orange Shirt Day. Students and staff wear an orange shirt to commemorate the effects of the legacy of residential schools and the true narrative of one student's experience. On her first day at school, Phyllis Webstad was stripped of the orange shirt that was given to her by her grandmother.



September 30<sup>th</sup> in Parkland School Division is a day devoted to Truth and Reconciliation. Our schools plan activities and events to ensure that, each year, students have an increased understanding of the legacy of residential schooling in Canada.

Our schools recognize that cultural artifacts are essential to promote belonging. Parkland School Division schools continue to work toward promoting a welcoming culture for our Indigenous learners.



## Supporting Educational Achievement

Parkland School Division has a tradition of recognizing our graduating students of Indigenous backgrounds with a special event. The event involves teachings from local elders about the significance of the eagle feather and the Métis sash as well as performances of traditional drumming and singing. Each student is presented with an Eagle Feather or a Métis sash as they cross the stage. Graduation is the culmination of educational achievement. To ensure that our students have the opportunity to enjoy all aspects of their schooling, it is critically important that we understand best-practice strategies for improvement, and that we have a very clear understanding of the current academic progress of our students. Our educational intent is to fully close the achievement gap that exists for our Indigenous students.

The Provincial Accountability Pillar Surveys (now called Assurance Surveys) provide an overview of the perspective of parents, staff and students across a variety of educational categories (survey results). These results are compared and contrasted to derived results. The derived results provide data regarding aspects such as acceptable and excellent performance on Provincial Achievement Tests, or statistical results regarding drop-out rates. Our most recent Accountability Pillar information details the disparity that exists for our Indigenous learners.

Three Year High School Completion	Parkland School Division			Alberta		
	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg
All Students	78.0	81.2	80.9	79.7	79.1	78.4
FNMI Students	57.6	59.9	66.2	55.8	56.6	54.5

Currently, 78.0% of Parkland School Division students graduate at the end of 3 years. There is a 20.4% gap for three year completion for self-declared First Nation, Métis and Inuit students.

Six Year Transition (to Post-Secondary)	Parkland School Division			Alberta		
	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg
All Students	50.0	48.6	47.6	60.1	59.0	58.5
FNMI Students	44.3	36.0	35.4	35.0	34.2	33.0

While significantly greater than the provincial average – there is a 5.7% gap for post-secondary transition.

Diploma Examination Participation Rate (Writing 4+ Exams)	Parkland School Division			Alberta		
	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg
All Students	45.0	46.2	46.7	56.4	56.3	55.6
FNMI Students	23.3	15.9	24.2	24.4	24.6	23.6

Within the Division, a 21.7% gap exists for writing four or more exams.

Regarding standardized achievement:

Provincial Achievement Tests (Grades 6 & 9)	Parkland School Division			Alberta		
	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg
Acceptable Standard (All)	72.3	72.7	71.5	73.8	73.6	73.6
Acceptable Standard (FNMI)	53.6	55.9	54.4	54.0	51.7	51.9
Standard of Excellence (All)	14.9	14.0	13.8	20.6	19.9	19.6
Standard of Excellence (FNMI)	6.0	3.8	5.1	7.4	6.6	6.5

Significant gaps exist between achievement results at both the acceptable standard and standard of excellence.

Diploma Examinations (Grade 12)	Parkland School Division			Alberta		
	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg	Current	Prev. YR	3 Yr. Avg
Acceptable Standard (All)	87.2	87.2	87.5	83.6	83.7	83.1
Acceptable Standard (FNMI)	83.5	78.5	80.2	77.2	77.1	76.7
Standard of Excellence (All)	19.6	21.5	19.4	24.0	24.2	22.5
Standard of Excellence (FNMI)	10.8	13.2	10.0	11.4	11.0	10.6

### Improving Student Attendance

We recognize that there is an achievement disparity for our Indigenous learners. A significant avenue for exploration is to review student attendance.

Students	Students who attend:			
	91-100% of the time:	85-90% of the time:	80-84% of the time:	Less than 80% of the time:
All Students (Inclusive) (10,847)	68%	19%	7%	6%
All non-Indigenous Students (9,781)	69%	18%	7%	6%
All FNMI (1,066)	56%	19%	7%	18%

Student achievement is diminished when students are absent from school. Our attendance rates for 2020-2021 indicate that a significant contributing factor to increasing student achievement would be to improve our understanding of the factors that keep students from attending. We recognize that the pandemic created challenges for many families across the Division. To be clear, however, we also recognize that attendance concerns existed prior to the pandemic.



Current and future plans require consideration of how best to meet the academic needs of all of our students generally, and – given the data above - our Indigenous students specifically. Regular attendance at school is critical to the success and well-being of our students. To promote regular attendance through early identification and response, as well as consistency in approach, staff will attend to the following attendance protocol:

- When the teacher identifies that a student is chronically absent (90% attendance and below), the teacher will then connect with the parent(s) or guardian(s) by phone or in person;
  - An ongoing review of that student’s attendance will occur (monthly, at a minimum);
  - Administration may determine that more frequent reviews are required; and
  - The teacher will ensure that the conversation is well documented.
- When a student’s attendance diminishes beyond the first level, subsequent actions may include the following:
  - Administration may connect with the parent(s) or guardian(s);
  - A letter may be issued to identify the problem if the parent is not responsive;
  - A meeting may be called with the parent(s) and/or guardian(s); and
  - A Divisional meeting may be called to discuss the matter.

It will be essential to reveal any other variables that may be impacting the family. For instance, is the family in crisis? Are there transportation issues?

Given the recognizable impact that attendance has on learning – it is important that our schools follow up with all students to quickly determine strategies to improve attendance. It is also critically important to recognize that student attendance will be impacted by each student’s academic success and sense of belonging – these factors (belonging, achievement and attendance) all contribute to the overall success of our students.

### **The Homework Hub**

Students are more likely to want to attend school if they are experiencing success. Each week, volunteer staff come together after school to support Indigenous high school students at Memorial Composite High School with their learning. Our students work with staff to complete assignments, prepare for exams, and generally provide a support network for the students. While the Homework Hub was somewhat impacted by the pandemic, when operational, the hub would see approximately twenty to twenty-five students attend on a weekly basis. A meal is shared with volunteers and students at the conclusion of each session.

### **Attending to Teaching Quality Standards**

Instructional Services, through the leadership of our Indigenous Education Facilitator, supports a collective of K-12 teachers who collaborate to build resources that support Indigenous Foundations and Ways of Knowing. In addition to connecting educators with ongoing PD and workshops, the resources considered and developed include:

- Building activities around the Seven Grandfather teachings;
- Lessons on Potlatch, land-based teachings and metissage;
- Bare Icebi – Gathering Together;
- Treaty Talks;
- The *Indian Horse* film study;
- The Blanket Exercise; and
- Weaving our Ways.

In the 2020-2021 school year, a number of educators came together to develop resources to support the *Teacher Quality Standard: Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit*. Resources developed included novel studies, lessons for the Seven Grandfather Teachings, a Chickakoo Lake Nature Walk guide, and a high school novel study for Richard Wagamese's work *One Drum*.

### **Staffing for Improvement**

In addition to our Indigenous Education Facilitator, many of our schools have created positions to directly support our Indigenous students. Memorial Composite High School holds the position of an Indigenous Graduation Coach, Spruce Grove Composite High School has their Indigenous Culture and Education (ICE) team, Forest Green, SPC and Duffield School have FNMI liaisons. As well, 21-22 will see the establishment of a coalition of representation from each school to come together and build capacity within schools to lead this work.

All Parkland School Division staff were provided with a professional development session on unconscious bias during the preparatory non-instructional days in August, 2021. In addition to staffing for particular roles that benefit our students, it will also be essential to hire teachers and support staff to represent the greater diversity of our learners.

## **Improving Well-Being**

### **Mental Health**

Our students' sense of belonging, and their overall academic achievement, are both supported when strategies are implemented to improve our students' well-being. Learning is fostered when students have strong mental health. Adult mentorship is essential, and our local Elders and Knowledge Keepers bring a richness of perspective and knowledge to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Through the power of story and a connection to traditional practices, the presence of Elders in our schools provides guidance and support to our students. Wherever possible, our schools are encouraged to access the wisdom and experience of Elders and Knowledge-Keepers.

From a wellness perspective, the Division continues to promote the importance of Indigenous Self-Identification. When Indigenous students self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit, not only do they gain a sense of pride in their culture and the ability to connect with others from similar backgrounds, but they also help ensure they get the many different supports available to them in their education and future employment.

### **Bare Icêbi**

The Full Moon Learning Series is an extension of the Bare Icêbi - Gathering Together. An opportunity to come together and strengthen our community in a safe space without judgement. A place to listen, learn, and explore our wonders. These opportunities are supportive of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 94 Calls to Action, and support section 5 of the new Teacher Quality Standard: Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

### **Land Based Learning**

Connections for Learning has partnered with YWCA Yowochas and CHANGE Health Alberta to create Camp Yowochas, a day program that incorporates canoe paddling, wildlife exploration, outdoor education, Indigenous ways of knowing, and the option of a national brigade experience in August with the Voyageur Brigade Society of Edmonton.

Based at Camp Yowochas, students in this active, outdoor summer school learn about physical education and Canada - all while earning high school credit.

## Improving Participation and Engagement for Students and Families

Stakeholders, and in particular our Indigenous neighbours, gain trust and confidence when we are attending to developing a strong relationship between the Division and the Indigenous communities that result in increased support for academic achievement and a greater sense of belonging for our students.

Last June, Parkland School Division began to establish a process for Indigenous Education community engagement. Teachers, stakeholders and administrators gathered to have an initial conversation on Indigenous Engagement with an intent to establish a process for various gatherings throughout the year that would enable staff to hear from our stakeholder partners.

Our intent is to continue to explore the process of stakeholder engagement throughout 2021-2022.

## Expanding Understanding of Indigenous Language

Language is an inherent part of cultural belonging and identity and the Stoney Language, one of our traditional Indigenous languages, is not well known. Through the efforts of Elders and staff, an online dictionary with recordings of local Elders is being established in an attempt to preserve the language.

Despite the barriers presented by the global pandemic, the Division and Paul First Nation Education collaborated to provide teachings to our Paul First Nation students in efforts to revitalize the Stoney Language. Elder Violet Poitras and Language Coordinator Glenna House, worked with Parkland School Division staff to generate online lessons for students at Forest Green, Stony Plain Central, Connections for Learning and Memorial Composite High School. Our intent is to continue providing these lessons and, further, to develop Cree language programming for our MCHS students.

## Establishing Stronger Relationships through Collaboration

Parkland School Division continues to collaborate with Paul First Nation through the Alberta Innovation in First Nations Education Grant Program (IFNE). As mentioned earlier, much of the grant and collaborative work existed to promote language acquisition. The Grant supports partnerships between First Nations and school jurisdictions.

We recognize the importance of strong relationships.

We acknowledge that in order to reconcile a tragic history of residential schooling, we must walk alongside the members of our Indigenous communities, bring a willingness to learn, and recognize that we have a long way to go to build trust. Our approach is that we recognize our responsibility to make systemic improvements from the position of privilege that enables us to do something about the current reality for our students. To that end, the current and future plan includes consideration of how best to meet the academic needs of our Indigenous students, but also the recognition that we must continue to create environments that welcome, respect and care for our Indigenous students so they feel they belong and can learn.

Our school staff appreciate that Elders are very important members of First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities. Elders have valuable knowledge to share with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and communities. Our intent is to continue to explore and access the value and contributions of Indigenous knowledge and teachings through Elder involvement.

## Education Plan: Avenues for Development

We recognize that there is much to do to continue to improve the lives of our students. The following avenues for development are included in the 2021-2022 Education Plan:

- Teachers and leaders attend to Indigenous Ways of Knowing through specialized resources, such as through staff use of the Pebbles Series, to develop foundational knowledge;
- Teachers and leaders implement and develop Indigenous language classes as a method for students to connect with Indigenous culture and identity;
- Leaders explore the value of implementing an Elder-in-Residence program;
- Teachers and leaders develop students' opportunity to experience Indigenous Knowledge Systems in schools, including: connection to land, language, elders and relationships;
- Teachers and leaders develop students' experiences with Indigenous ways of knowing through art, symbols, ceremony, story and song – and therefore raise the visibility of Indigenous culture in schools;
- Teachers and leaders collaborate to develop grade level resources to embed Indigenous ways of knowing and foundational knowledge into teacher practice;
- Teachers and leaders develop students' experiences with character education programs that are based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings; and
- Leaders identify a lead (or catalyst) teacher at each site to participate in Divisional collaboration around meeting the needs of Indigenous students.