

Indigenous Education for All



LETHBRIDGE SCHOOL DIVISION

Indigenous Education

3 YEAR ASSURANCE PLAN (Year 2) - 2022-23

2021-2024

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Introduction

We acknowledge that The Lethbridge School Division is located within the traditional territory of the Blackfoot First Nations. We have had the privilege of accessing local knowledge and wisdom to guide us through the development of this strategic plan, while keeping our lens focused on student learning. Lethbridge School Division recognizes the long-standing challenges that Indigenous students have encountered in their educational journeys in public school systems, and it is also recognized the important role education plays in facilitating authentic Indigenous learning for all (staff and students).

This plan focuses on outcomes that develop all staff and students as learners who possess the skills and attributes necessary to achieve and be successful, as well as enhancing and building upon inclusive practices that honor and celebrate Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

Board Priorities and Data

The Lethbridge School Division Board Priorities and data inform division planning, as well as orchestrate and influence actions. Preparing Indigenous students for their learning journeys now and into the future carefully considers meeting their needs as learners as well as supporting their wellbeing in our schools. To mobilize a plan that impacts learning for Indigenous students, the environment in which our Indigenous students learn also must be supported. Staff, students, and community also need to be considered and thoughtfully integrated into planning, strategies, and measures.

This Strategic Plan serves as a guide that acknowledges systems and their complexities, while creating opportunities across the school division for staff and students to continue to learn and grow. This plan includes promising practices that build empathy, enhance Indigenous Ways of Knowing, support our Indigenous students and their learning, and provide meaningful learning opportunities for our staff to fulfill the demands in the classroom of the Teacher Quality Standard 5 (TQS5). The Alberta Education Assurance Framework addresses the provincial assurance domains. We view the work in our Indigenous Education Portfolio and in our schools as three domains: Achievement, Inclusion, and Innovation as they connect to “Teaching and Learning” and “Student Growth and Achievement”. There is a connection between the strategies in the plan and the domain of Local & Societal Context within our local context in Lethbridge and Indigenous Ways of Knowing.



Nature as a Guide for Our Work

From an Indigenous perspective, nature is viewed as an intelligent process where cooperation and sharing with nature provides an illustration or model of how we as humans can learn. All Indigenous ties are connected to nature. From these fundamental beliefs, nature provides our education system with a starting point to access our personalized connection to Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Whether we are a teacher, a student or another staff member, nature is accessible as it is all around us. Nature is in everything we do and has many ties into curriculum.

The connection to land presents itself as a foundational teacher and entry point for Indigenous Education. When acknowledging personal paths of Truth and Reconciliation, barriers present due to a lack of understanding, fear of the unknown or connection. Nature provides an immediate connection regardless of our experiences and generates an ease that can break down barriers to a difficult process for some.

i.e., Teachers in the system have participated in outdoor activities and walks to listen and observe how nature cooperates. Teachers were asked to find evidence in nature to the subjects that they were teaching. This activity provided a starting point of inquiry on how the land taught Indigenous people to survive. This activity also explored the empathy and connection to land. From here teachers can convey their experiences and share their learnings and such an activity with their students.

The barrier-free opportunity for staff and students to connect to nature facilitates engagement and inquiry where deep learning about self and others can occur. It is through this “Place-Based” process that learning about Indigenous Ways of Knowing can become most meaningful. We recognize that our Indigenous Education team and school staff can use nature as an entry point/access point on this journey of learning about Indigenous Ways of Knowing, it is tangible, accessible, and inspirational.

Teaching and Learning - Professional Learning through Experience, Nature and Language

The success of Indigenous student learning and Indigenous Education in our schools is influenced by our school leaders’ and teachers’ abilities. Their relationships and deeper understanding of the historical impacts of colonial education systems on Indigenous populations play a significant role in understanding their own personal journey as it relates to Truth and Reconciliation. At the beginning of the 2019/20 school year, our Coordinator of Indigenous Education scheduled visits of up to two hours meeting with Administrators at each of our school buildings to understand where each school is at in their journey and determine how our Indigenous Education department can best support each school and Administrator in the 2019/20 school year. These visits informed the Indigenous Education department that there needed to be stronger supports for teachers and curriculum. As a result, in 2020-21, Lethbridge School Division revised the Indigenous Education staffing model to provide additional teaching support to our classroom teachers. Our Elementary Teacher - Indigenous Education focused on PL/curriculum grade 4 their first year through the lens of inquiry. As she has built relationships with the system her work has branched to all grades and providing Division wide PL. Our Middle School Teacher has been championing “Think Outside” and working closely with personalized PL at the middle school level. Our High School teacher has been working closely with content in Social Studies and English assisting teachers with weaving in Indigenous content. We recognize the structures and demands are different in each of our levels and our teachers will be working in each school for a block of time throughout 2022-23 and providing professional learning opportunities. Our

Coordinator will be working closely with the teachers supporting the work they are doing as well as facilitating cultural learning opportunities and supporting our Graduation Coaches.

Indigenous Education Committee Survey

In January of 2022 Administrators were asked to complete a survey to update our current understanding of where our schools are at with championing Indigenous Education. It is evident that our system has benefitted significantly from adding teachers to our Indigenous Education work. Professional learning has shifted to a collaborative and “side by side” model that can meet teachers where they are at. This has enhanced many teachers’ ability and confidence to include Indigenous content in their teaching. Our Indigenous Education teachers have built a useful resource bank and have teamed across Zone 6 to build and enhance this tremendously useful resource. Other work valued and appreciated that has been done by our teachers in this portfolio include facilitating field learning for students and staff, championing the “Think Outside” Program, morning announcements introducing Blackfoot Language, development of various kits that are ready made and facilitating cultural events. The Graduation Coaches and the work they have done is also tremendously beneficial for our division. Two years ago, the Indigenous Education model shifted, and we hired Graduation Coaches to support each high school. The role of the Graduation coach has evolved to where their key focus surrounds enhancing post-secondary exposure and experiences for our students of Indigenous ancestry while also supporting cultural learning at the high school level.

Inclusion and Diversity

Lethbridge School Division believes in honoring and valuing the diversity of all learners. Informing our school leaders of promising practices through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that connect to Indigenous communities, school systems, and authentic professional learning opportunities is important. Various professional learning opportunities related to Inclusive Schools, UDL and connecting with Kainai Board of Education continue to enhance our understanding of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. In response to some of the challenges we have encountered this year our, Administrators initiated an Anti-racism/Anti-oppression Administrator Committee. This Committee has been supporting and guiding learning and information that has been shared throughout the 2022-23 year and will continue to respond to the challenges our system encounters regarding racism. It is anticipated that we will be releasing an Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Policy in September and we also anticipate supporting a Blackfoot Flag raising ceremony in the Fall of 2022.

We have now reached a point with TQS 5 (curriculum), student and family need, and staffing pressures that have inspired us to think differently about how we meet the following identified system needs:

- Supporting teachers with accessing resources and weaving in Indigenous content to their current practice
- Supporting staff with deep learning experiences connected to Indigenous Ways of Knowing – building relationships, connection, and valuing perspectives

“Our conversations are changing, so must our work.”

The center of this professional learning visual is the “**what**” of what we are attempting to focus on with our Indigenous Education Department and within our schools. We recognize that through positive relationships, understanding nature through an Indigenous lens and learning about the diversity

of Indigenous perspectives, we can build greater understanding of Indigenous cultures, celebrate Indigenous culture, and learn from one another while ensuring our “self” is well.



Student Growth and Achievement- Inspiring Innovation, Taking risks

Effective communication and teamwork build mutual understanding, trust, and common language.

We all communicate through the silence of language, regardless of the language we speak. As we begin to unpack our experiences and share through communication our intention is to provide clarity.

Unfortunately, in vulnerable times, confusion or hurt feelings can occur. That is why we are all embarking cautiously, respectfully, and mindfully upon our journey of learning Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Each person's interpretation of their experiences is valued and viewed as an opportunity to dialogue and furthermore build relationship and understanding.

We recognize that Lethbridge School Division needs to continue to endeavor to support our families and parents of Indigenous students and encourage their positive participation in their child's education. Nurturing our school-family communication and relationships is valuable when considering a student's educational experience and success within our system. Families need to feel welcome in a school environment that supports safety as a foundational tenet. Integrating shared learning and the inquiry process in our classrooms demonstrates Lethbridge School Division's larger commitment to nurturing Indigenous Ways of Knowing beyond the day-to-day learning experience.

i.e., One teacher shared "that there is no safe entry point" when referring to their own personal and professional Teacher Quality Standard 5 (TQS5) journey. Through communicating needs clearly, collaborating with staff who possess Indigenous Ways of Knowing/experiences and relying on relationships with staff and nature, they were able to connect and enhance the authentic learning experiences for them and their students. Communication and collaboration for this teacher facilitated a broadening of perspectives for all involved and shifted away from a more prescribed "traditional" curricular approach. They indicated that learning for all was enriched.

Holistic learning provides opportunities for students to build empathy, perspective take, apply personal connection or relation, thereby enhance the learning experience.





The Importance of Student Perspective and Voice

One student of Indigenous ancestry recently shared an experience where she had an opportunity to dance in front of her peers. She indicated that sharing her own perspective and cultural connection provided a starting point for relationship building and learning between herself and her non-Indigenous peers. Recreating our learning environment so reflection, questioning, vulnerability, and deeper understanding can occur, will directly enhance connection for our staff and students. Our classrooms facilitate opportunities for our students to explore and discover knowledge from each other that assists them in determining who they want to be without barriers. We recognize that the traditional approach to “sage on the stage” learning in our classrooms is changing and as a result, facilitates learning through shared experiences and deeper connection thereby building empathy. It is our hope that continuing to provide these types of learning experiences in our schools will change and shape a promising future for all.

We will continue to explore and build upon our “Think Outside” initiative moving into the third year of its success (and other cross curricular initiatives that high school teachers have begun to initiate on their own volition). In response to the wellness pressures the Pandemic has presented, we recognize many of the Indigenous Ways of Knowing are woven into the work we do and can be showcased by learning/teaching outside. Students have indicated they enjoy learning outside and the benefits that present with place-based learning impact health.

Because the Division so deeply values student voice and we have spent time in 2022 building Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Policy and continuing to encourage inclusivity we are looking to host a “Student Wellness World Café” in the Fall of 2022. We anticipate much of the conversation will support our need to hear student voice specifically relating to Inclusivity, Diversity, and Wellness. It will be important to hear and share our students of Indigenous ancestry and their experiences.



Indigenous Education Division Outcomes and Strategies

1. Students advance reconciliation by acquiring and applying foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experiences.

Improve growth and achievement of Indigenous students.

Strategic Actions:

- Inform Administrators and School Leaders (Lead teachers, Indigenous Education teacher reps) of Strategic Plan & gauge feedback on current practices
- Increase the level of Indigenous student engagement
- Target building the capacity of Administrators around Indigenous Ways of Knowing
- Provide Professional Learning for all Teachers and build capacity to share experiences and Blackfoot Culture and Language
- Communicate out to system regularly regarding updates about Indigenous Education and endeavors
- Targeted intervention at the High School level with Grad Coaches that work under the Indigenous Education umbrella
- More purposeful review of data relative to Indigenous students to develop strategies for academic improvement
- Support Indigenous Education Collaborative Communities for teachers to inquire into Indigenous Education and Blackfoot Ways of Knowing
- Support partnerships between the Indigenous Education department staff and district staff (Mental Health Capacity Building Team, Counselling Team, Indigenous Education Committee Reps, Wellness)
- Facilitate and Support Kainai Board of Education Partnership
- Plan events that celebrate Indigenous cultures and create pride in various Indigenous cultures
- Support Teacher professional growth in Indigenous Education (TQS, Competency 5)
- Students will access knowledge of their culture and language as resources are available
- Facilitate cross-curricular planning recognizing Indigenous Education practices in the classroom as part of new curriculum implementation (TQS, Competency 5)
- Celebrate various rich Indigenous cultural learning opportunities throughout all schools

Measures

- Anecdotal qualitative feedback that is strength based in content
- Increase understanding and implementation of a holistic approach to teaching methods measured from classroom visits and professional conversations with teachers
- Increase in the number of teachers accessing Indigenous Education resources allocated by the district – signing out resources at Curriculum Centre- promotion by our Teachers of Indigenous Education
- Increased percentage of Indigenous students who achieve the provincial Acceptable standard on PATs, DIP, High School Completion, transitions rates to post-secondary and trades, Extra-curricular, Mentorship, APORI.
- Data from Fountas & Pinnell (literacy scores grades 1-5) and MIPI, indicating a year of growth in learners
- High school graduates entering post-secondary upon their completion of high school
- Track Number of students involved in leadership opportunities (Mentorship Program, Indigenous Advisory Committee, Student School Council, Division School Council, Town Hall Participation)
- Diversity and Inclusion Parent Table participation by Indigenous parents
- Attendance and engagement increases

2. The school community applies the resources needed to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student achievement.

Support teaching and leading that ensures the success of our Indigenous Education portfolio

Strategic Actions:

- Support staff in the implementation of the learning competencies outlined in the new curriculum that develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for successful learning, living, and working, including critical thinking, communication, problem solving, collaboration, managing information, cultural and global citizenship, creativity and innovation, personal growth, and well-being.
- Provide access to Blackfoot Language and Culture classes that may be offered in the community
- Provide Professional Learning opportunities for Administrators that are culturally informative culturally and current/updated practices that encourage open, reflective practices
- Provide all students and staff with access to Elders and Cultural Consultants, Knowledge Keepers and Mentors as required
- Develop and access Indigenous resources & supports that engage students and families with literacy and numeracy
- Establish Professional Learning Communities with school based Indigenous Education Committee Reps
- Facilitate Division PL for Indigenous “teacher reps” – grade 1 and grade 6/7 level at elementary and middle school
- Continue to foster KBE and LSD connections
- Provide Indigenous Education teaching support at each of the division levels
- Build school staff foundational knowledge of Indigenous Culture and Truth and Reconciliation via professional learning, and curriculum and resource development.
- Create and/or access curriculum resources and artefacts that recognize Indigenous culture and history in support of Indigenous Education for all learners - “Indigenous Education for all”.
- Integrate Indigenous content into delivery of instruction across curriculum areas for all learners.
- Build capacity of Indigenous Education staff to feel comfortable sharing their knowledge and working more closely with staff and sharing personal and cultural experiences
- Create partnerships to access external resources that support wellness and cultural programming (Ever Active Schools, Opo’kaa’sin)
- Support staff with accessing PL for Trauma informed practice that is culturally relevant work closely with Mental Health Capacity Building learning opportunities

Measures

- Indigenous Ed Committee survey
- Regular feedback formally and informally from Administrators Committee
- Connect with & survey Indigenous student leaders, gauge feedback from them about their learning journeys
- Track administrators and teachers accessing Indigenous PL days hosted by the Division, and Indigenous resources
- Survey schools (through administrators) about their Indigenous Education Priorities for each school year and provide generative dialogue to support their priorities
- “Our School Survey”, attendance data, family participation in school events.
- All schools acknowledge the traditional territory at key events
- ATA survey (annual)
- Increase in Elder and Knowledge Keepers’ participation in schools when required
- Number of targeted events/evenings supporting initiatives related to Indigenous endeavors
- Increase in resources available to teachers of Indigenous content

APPENDIX A:

Indigenous Education Vision and Mission

Indigenous Education for All

Vision

Respecting the traditional Blackfoot Territory, we reside on, all staff and students will understand our historical and social context. This foundation informs a culture of inclusion where all students and staff are successful, confident, valued, and proud of who they are in Lethbridge School Division.

Mission

Lethbridge School Division is dedicated to delivering and providing culturally authentic learning opportunities that build capacity among all learners. A proactive, professional, and positive team puts relationships at the center of learning. Consistent, collaborative, and culturally sensitive supports are delivered through successful practices for schools and families.

APPENDIX B:
Indigenous Education Department Data and celebrations

To be included in the Fall 2022

