

A Focus on Community Engagement and Student Achievement

Initiatives from the Canadian School Boards Association



Saskatchewan School Boards Association

Action Plan to Strengthen First Nations and Métis Student Achievement

The Aboriginal Council of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA), consisting of 24 self-declared Aboriginal trustees, developed an action plan to ensure schools boards are supported in establishing a representative workforce; to ensure school boards are succeeding in eliminating the achievement gap; and, to ensure school boards are effectively engaging First Nations and Métis parents and communities.

In support of the action plan, the SSBA was proud to host the inaugural National Aboriginal Trustees Gathering in June 2011. Approximately 65 delegates representing six provinces and territories from coast-to-coast-to-coast attended the gathering to discuss student achievement and parent and community engagement. A student panel provided insight on the successful practices parents and schools engage in to encourage student achievement. The gathering was also infused with Aboriginal entertainment and ceremonies to celebrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures.



With support from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, the SSBA commissioned a report developed by Cheryl Hoftzyer from the University of Saskatchewan. The report titled National Aboriginal Trustees Gathering: A Summary of Strategies for Strengthening First Nations and Métis Student Achievement provides a summary of the gathering, analyzes provincial perspectives and includes an annotated bibliography highlighting successful practices. The document was presented at the SSBA's Fall General Assembly and is posted on the SSBA website at www.saskschoolboards.ca (located under the "Services" tab click on "First Nations and Métis Education").

In 2011 the SSBA also commissioned Strengthening Our Voice: A Guide for Engaging First Nations and Métis Peoples in Public Schools. This document developed by the Gabriel Dumont Institute focuses on Aboriginal education in Saskatchewan and researches promising practices that schools may incorporate to engage students, parents and communities in publicly funded education. This document is also located at www.saskschoolboards.ca (located under the "Services" tab click on "First Nations and Métis Education").

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Ontario Public School Boards' Association

"This is Us, This is Canada" Ontario's Urban Aboriginal Education Project

Ontario's Urban Aboriginal Education project, an initiative of the Ministry of Education, involved three of OPSBA's member school boards-Lakehead DSB, Simcoe County DSB and Toronto DSB. OPSBA was proud to be a partner in this project. The three lead school boards achieved far-reaching results in meeting the project's goal of supporting success in school for urban-based First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. Each school district produced resources to support their initiatives in the areas of student success and well-being, curriculum materials, professional learning for staff, involvement of First Nation, Inuit and Métis leaders in schools and active engagement of families and community.

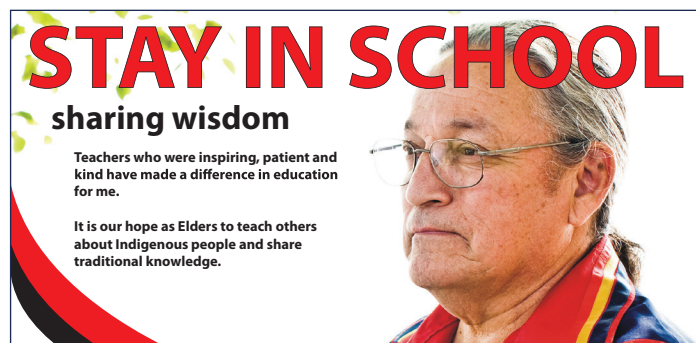
Voices from the Project:

"Yesterday, we learned about sovereignty and self-governing and we researched about Nunavut becoming a province."

- First Nation High School Student

"I made this eagle because it's my grandpa's spirit and...the eagle guarded him for his whole life. I'm going to give it to my grandma so she can remember my grandpa."

- First Nation Elementary School Student



"We used an Inuit language, we were singing in Ojibway and we brought in the Métis culture across the board."

- Teacher

"My child has had increased exposure to her Inuit culture. I have been impressed by all the Aboriginal projects, arts and displays from the library. To our family, this is important because our child is getting cultural influence not just at home, but at school as well."

- Inuit Parent

"We've seen more parents come in and support their students because of this program. There seems to be more willingness ... for us to try to understand what their culture is at home and how it feeds back into the school so they can see the effect of it. There is a door opening."

- Teacher



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Manitoba School Boards Association

Initiatives in Aboriginal Education: Locally-initiated programs that are making a difference

Nationally, Aboriginal learners experience lower rates of success than the general student population, and the situation in Manitoba is no different. However, in the midst of this troubling scenario, there are bright spots where locally-initiated programs are making a difference. The Manitoba School Boards Association has compiled information about dozens of such programs so that educators can learn from each other's experiences and improve outcomes for all learners.

More than 20 school divisions have shared information about dozens of programs operating in their schools. While we asked survey respondents to categorize programs under three broad themes—incorporating Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, improving outcomes for Aboriginal learners, and engaging Aboriginal learners and communities—many of the responses we received were much more finely focused.



We found programs that support the full gamut of learners, from pre-schoolers to young adults embarking on post-secondary studies. Some school divisions have developed gender-specific programs, to reach boys and girls and help them make wise decisions at vulnerable points in their lives. While a number of schools hold day or week-long celebrations of Aboriginal culture, many have also incorporated Aboriginal perspectives, such as the Seven Sacred Teachings, into their day-to-day operations. Governance structures, curricular resources, school facilities—all have been shaped or reshaped, somewhere in the province, with an eye to making a positive impact for Aboriginal learners.

Initiatives in Aboriginal Education: Survey Results, can be found on-line at mbschoolboards.ca. This living document, which includes contact information for each program, is being updated regularly.

