

Board Agenda Item



Topic: Annual Report from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services

Presenter: Ron Eberts

Meeting Date: February 12, 2025

Background

Red Deer Public Schools is committed to creating opportunities and improving educational outcomes for all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in the division. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services works collaboratively with education partners to implement programs and create initiatives that honour the history, culture, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples and to help realise the vision that all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in Alberta achieve the educational standards set for Alberta students. Red Deer Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all students have equitable opportunities for success. An important part of this work is to ensure that all Red Deer Public students are knowledgeable, understanding, and respectful of the rich diversity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services work in collaboration with schools to systematically build First Nations, Métis, and Inuit content and perspectives into the daily operations of school communities. Full time staff members include the department coordinator, Hayley Christen, and lead teacher, Terry Lakey. In each school, a point person is assigned and serves as a liaison between the school and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services. In addition, there is a dedicated Instructional Assistant to support student achievement and graduation in both Hunting Hills High School and Lindsay Thurber High School. The division's formal partnership with the Red Deer Native Friendship Society allows for a full time Cultural Resource Connector to work directly with staff and students in the schools.

Achievement and Completion Assurance Measures

High School completion data from Alberta Education is always represented by a one-year time lag, due to the results not available when results are released to schools in the fall of each new school year. As such, the most recent completion results available are from the 2022-2023 school year, at which time Red Deer Public Schools continues to demonstrate that our First Nations', Métis and Inuit learners complete high school at a greater rate than the provincial average.

Our students completed high school within three-years of entering Grade 10 at a rate of **70.1%**, which is over **11% higher than the provincial average**. The students who completed high school within four-years of entering Grade 10 completed high school at a rate of 68.6%, or 3% higher than the provincial average. Finally, our students who completed high school within five-years of entering Grade 10 did so at a rate of 72.0%, almost 3% higher than the provincial average. These completion rates, although above the provincial average in every category, still lag behind the general cohort of Red Deer Public Schools' students, meaning there is still growth to be seen in the coming years.

Board Agenda Item



For the second year in a row the First Nations', Métis and Inuit learners in Red Deer Public Schools achieved the acceptable standard on both available Grade 6 Provincial Achievement Tests (Science & Social Studies) at a higher rate than the provincial average. Our First Nations', Métis and Inuit learners were above the provincial average on all four of the Grade 9 Provincial Achievement Tests. In all cases, our disaggregated results for our First Nations', Métis and Inuit learners are below the results of our general cohort of students, so again, we continue to work with our schools in an effort to bridge this gap.

In regard to Diploma Exams, our First Nations', Métis and Inuit learners also continue to exceed the provincial averages for the acceptable standard of achievement. Overall, 85.1% of our self-identified Indigenous learners met the acceptable standard on their Diploma Exams, over 9% greater than the provincial average. Individually, in eight out of nine Diploma Exams written by our First Nations', Métis or Inuit learners, they exceeded the provincial average for the acceptable standard. These Diploma Exams were English 30-1 and 30-2; Math 30-1; Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2; Biology 30; Chemistry 30; and Science 30. Our Math 30-2 results were within 1.1% of the provincial average.

Foundational Knowledge & Teacher Capacity

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services strive to ensure that all staff have a strong foundational knowledge and understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in order to provide an environment where the learning aspirations and potential of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students will be realised. Working with schools individually helps to determine staff needs with regard to professional learning. This past year, learning opportunities for school staffs included:

- Blanket Exercise Training
- Choosing Authentic Resources
- Elder Protocol & Tobacco Ties
- Indigenous History of Red Deer
- Metis Identity
- Metis Pointillism
- Properties of Matter - Shapeshifter
- Talking Sticks and Sharing Circles
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Teaching Indigenous Games

Professional Learning is also provided to new school leaders and new teachers in our division. New teachers participated in professional development that included teachings on the Circle, Sharing Circle and made a talking stick for use in their classrooms. We also worked with Corrine Thorsteinsen to provide professional learning on the LQS in connection to Foundational Knowledge for the new Vice-Principal and new Principal groups. The learning focused on building relationships with Elders and Elder protocol. In addition, we also worked with Red Deer Polytechnic on providing professional learning to their Pre-Service Teachers at the Indigenous Perspectives Conference. We lead sessions on Indigenous Games and Tipi Teachings.

Curriculum & Teacher Capacity

Board Agenda Item



The Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) requires teachers to have the capacity to infuse Indigenous content into their daily teaching. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services support teaching staff by providing professional learning on how to infuse Indigenous content in all subjects and grade levels. In addition to professional development, teacher capacity is also facilitated through consultations with Terry Lakey or Hayley Christen and the use of the [Curriculum Connections](#) (K-12) document. As more teachers are empowered to teach Indigenous content, they often consult with us ahead of time. The topics of the consults are wide-ranging, and this past year included the following topics:

- Truth & Reconciliation, and Orange Shirt Day projects
- How to teach Indigenous Games on their own
- How to plant, care for, and harvest the plants in their Indigenous medicines garden
- Projects and plans for National Indigenous Peoples' Day
- How to invite in and connect with an Elder
- Teach sensitive material in an authentic and thoughtful way, such as the Outside Circle Novel Study
- Tipi Setup and use of Tipis at the schools.

Resources have also been developed to support teachers with instruction for the [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#), [Indigenous Veterans Day](#), and [Métis Week in November](#).

With the implementation of the Science curriculum, we continue to see an increase in the number of schools requesting these popular science presentations:

- Grade One - Matter and how physical properties can be changed; Living Systems and how people look after plants and animals and how plants and animals look after people
- Grade Two - Matter and landforms and bodies of water in Alberta: Items made from nature - birch bark canoe, and the Red River Cart
- Grade Seven - The tipi building lesson is very popular with almost every Grade Seven Science class in the division participating.
- Across several grades - connections to plants, medicines, and the traditional gardens in several of our schools.

New Curriculum Support & Implementation

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services work with the other curriculum coordinators in supporting the implementation of the new curriculum. Work to realign resources and lessons with the new curricula in Math, English Language Arts and Literature, French Language Arts and Literature, Science, and Physical Education and Wellness continues. The new curriculum includes many outcomes that explicitly mention connections to First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. Support is provided for these outcomes through lesson and resource development, as well as the sharing of important background knowledge that a teacher must have to effectively teach the concepts. Consultation with knowledge keepers and Elders both locally and across the province has provided support to us and helps to ensure we are providing genuine and authentic resources and content.

Board Agenda Item



Community Connections

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services continue to connect with community partners including the Red Deer Native Friendship Society, Red Deer Polytechnic, Urban Indigenous Voices, community Elders, Remembering the Children Society, the Métis Local, the Foothills Society, The Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre, and the Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery. Involvement in community events and projects is an exciting and important part of the work and includes the following events:

- Waskasoo Seepee Healing Round Dance in collaboration with the Foothills Society.
- Grade Twelve Indigenous Student Celebration
- Inspiring Indigenous Youth Success Conference, for grade eight Indigenous students.
- Spring Feast at Fort Normandeau with Safe Harbour Society
- Two-Day Culture Camp at Red Deer Polytechnic for educators.
- Indigenous Community Christmas Dinner
- Urban Aboriginal Voices Society Education Domain
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Walk
- Participation and support for Remembering the Children Society
- Creation of an Educational Resource for Remembering the Children Society
- Red Deer Polytechnic pre-service teachers at their annual Indigenous Perspectives Conference
- Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre - providing support and guidance for the Transforming Practices Conference

Student Supports and Cultural Programming

This past year we submitted a group application to Jordan's Principle to receive funding to support Status First Nations and Inuit students. In March we received approval for funding from March to April 2024, and in July we received approval for funding for the 2024-2025 school year. With the funding over 80 First Nations and Inuit students have received needed Educational Assistant support, Speech Language Therapy, Level C Assessments, and Assistive Technology support such as Chromebooks and iPad communication devices.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services strives to bring authentic cultural programming into schools to support Indigenous students. This past year we hosted the third annual Inspiring Indigenous Youth Success Conference for Indigenous students in Grade Eight. The conference was held at the Red Deer Polytechnic. The RDPSD First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services team, in collaboration with Red Deer Catholic, Red Deer Polytechnic, Red Deer Native Friendship Society, and We Matters created this exciting opportunity for students in the community. This year we had three additional school divisions join us, including Wolf Creek School Division, Saint Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Separate School Division, and Chinook's Edge School Division. This is an amazing and highly impactful conference for the Grade Eight students. Indigenous youth meet other Indigenous youth from Central Alberta. As well, they have the opportunity to listen and engage with a wide range of Indigenous speakers and presenters, who share their stories to engage and inspire students to strive for excellence in their schooling and to dream and set goals for their future beyond high school. Students were able to tour Red Deer Polytechnic and become familiar with the post-secondary campus. Dr.

Board Agenda Item



Lyle Kewatin Richards shared words of encouragement and motivation to help inspire the young people.

In June 2024, we held our second annual Grade Twelve Indigenous Student celebration. The event provided an opportunity to recognize the hard work and achievements of Grade Twelve Indigenous students in Red Deer Public Schools. We had 25 students attend from all three high schools. Students invited special guests to join them in their celebration. The Red Deer Indigenous Dance Troupe performed for the attendees and two local Elders, Dr. Lyle Kewatin Richards, and Linda Ophus shared words of encouragement with the students. A young Indigenous performer and entrepreneur, Dashayne Morin presented an inspiring keynote address to the attendees.

Other cultural events students in our division attended included the International Powwow Gathering in October at the Westerner. Indigenous families were provided one-day free admission compliments of Powwow Times. Students from the Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School Foundations program spent a day at Fort Normandeau playing Indigenous Games and listened to Knowledge Keeper Darcy Goodrunning sing, drum and share cultural teachings in the tipi. Grade Five students at Joseph Welsh Elementary School learned how to teach Indigenous Games and they led the other grades through an Indigenous Games day on National Indigenous Peoples' Day. The two tipis we have at Normandeau School and Don Campbell School, are used by the host schools, and also see other schools nearby visit the tipi and learn traditional stories or experience cultural traditions in the tipis.

Red Deer Public Schools' commitment to enhancing Indigenous student achievement and fostering truth and reconciliation is evident in the wide range of initiatives, partnerships, and supports provided by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learning Services. These efforts empower Indigenous students to thrive academically while ensuring all students and staff deepen their understanding and respect for Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives. Through this work, we build a stronger, culturally inclusive learning environment honouring our truth and reconciliation journey.

Quality Indicators:

Educational Leadership

- QI 1.1 The Superintendent conducts an analysis of student success and ensures school principals develop action plans to address concerns.
- QI 1.2 The Superintendent identifies trends and issues related to student achievement to inform the Three-Year Planning process, including recommendations for innovative means to improve measurable student achievement.
- QI 1.4 There is measurable improved student achievement over time.

Personnel Management

- QI 4.4 Fosters high standards of instruction and professional improvement (Quality Teaching Standard).

Board Agenda Item



- QI 4.5 Provides for training of administrators and the development of leadership capacity within the Division.

Superintendent/Board Relations (“The First Team”)

- QI 6.5 Provides the Board with balanced, sufficient, concise information and clear recommendations in agendas.