

Indigenous Learning Services

Student Services

December 2024

Board Report



“Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts.”

The late Honourable Murray Sinclair

The late Honourable Murray Sinclair highlights that only through genuine respect and understanding can we create a Canada that feels welcoming and inclusive for all.

Student Services is proud to share the exceptional work that is being done by the staff of Indigenous Learning Services to create a warm, caring, respectful and supportive learning environment for all students in the Edmonton Catholic School Division. This intentional work to build the capacity of students and staff to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action in schools is done by building foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit experiences. In fact, the statistics learned through the 2023-2024 Assurance Survey, give us cause to celebrate this work.

ECSD Annual Survey Themes 2023/2024 Satisfaction/Agreement Percentages

Theme	Student (%)	Parent / Guardian (%)	Certificated Teacher (%)
Catholic Identity	92.3	96.6	98.0
Wellness	86.6	95.2	95.2
Inclusive and Caring Learning Environment	90.4	94.1	94.0
Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit	93.5 *	97.0 **	96.6 ***
Access to Help, Support, and Resources	86.8	87.6	91.3
Student Engagement	81.8	92.9	94.8
Student Growth	89.4	95.5	92.5
Teaching and Learning Practices	85.6	93.6	97.1
Parent and Guardian Engagement	88.9	96.3	96.5
Facilities	87.2	96.3	92.9
Overall Satisfaction with Edmonton Catholic Schools	87.4	95.2	95.8

From Final ECSD Annual Survey Highlights 2023-2024, March 2024

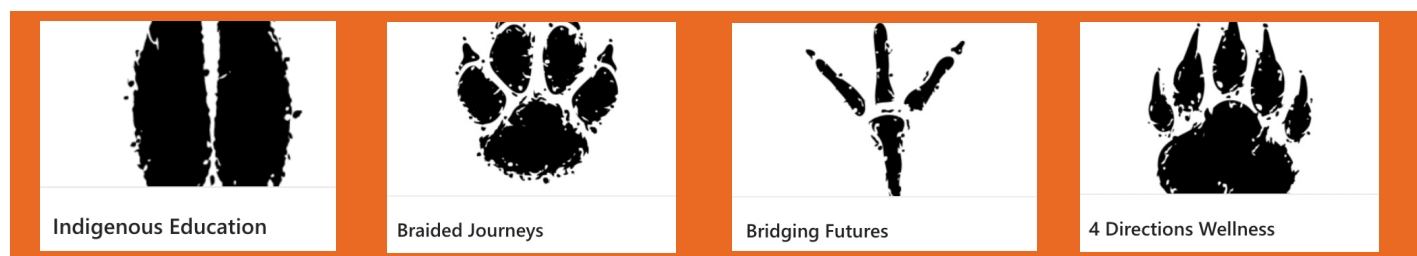
- * Highest performing Student theme
- ** Highest performing Parent/Guardian theme
- *** Third highest performing Certified Teacher theme





"Our mission is to provide support to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, families, and all Division staff as we work together with a holistic approach to encourage high levels of success for each learner within a faith-based community."

The work of Indigenous Learning Services focuses on four main areas of support for Division students, families and staff.



Professional Development plays a significant role in creating an environment where each student is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Indigenous Learning Services (ILS) has created these learning opportunities for all staff in the Edmonton Catholic School Division whether through site based professional learning, Division wide professional learning, or through the very successful Truth and Reconciliation Lead Teacher professional learning, which ensures each school site has a staff member who is a resource for students and staff.



Every school in the Edmonton Catholic School Division has at least one designated **Truth & Reconciliation Lead Teacher**.

Truth & Reconciliation Lead Teachers are offered:

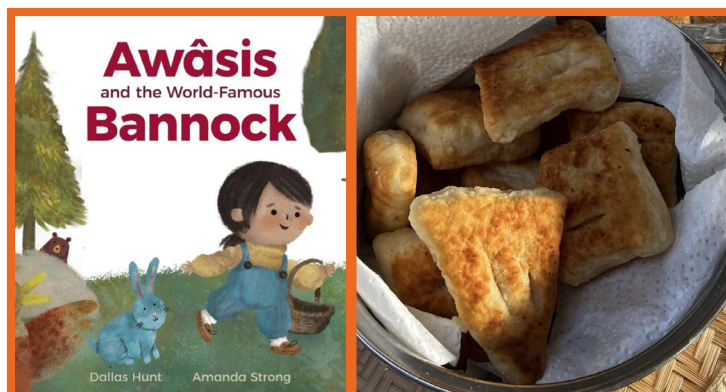
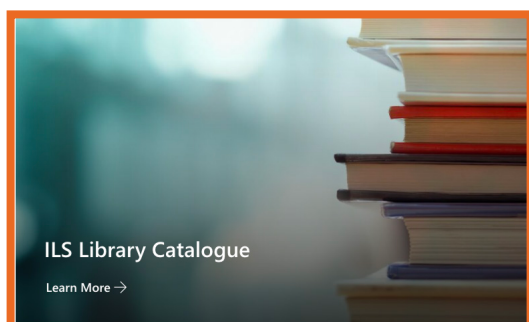
- monthly professional development opportunities
- on-going communication and curriculum support
- collaboration that focuses on building foundational knowledge of Indigenous education within the school site and implementation and planning of whole-school initiatives



Truth & Reconciliation Lead Teacher Role:

-  Provide support to students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit through initiatives such as regular Gathering Circles, Indigenous Family Nights, Indigenous focused excursions and learning opportunities.
-  Participate in Professional Development relating to Indigenous Education and Truth & Reconciliation
-  Disseminate information about Indigenous Education and Truth & Reconciliation within their school community (ie: emails, announcements, newsletter, social media, etc.)
-  Support staff and student learning related to Indigenous Education and Truth & Reconciliation within their school community

The Truth and Reconciliation Consultant, through a weekly email, ensures that every Truth and Reconciliation Lead Teacher, and thus all school staff, have up to date information about resources, supports and celebrations for students, families and staff. In addition, she maintains the Indigenous Learning Services Library, which boasts Indigenous authorship of over 90% of the resources.



"I will work harder to find information to share with my students directly from Indigenous speakers and writers. I don't want to be part of a system that allows misinformation, and I want myself/ my students to have the opportunity to learn authentically." *Feedback from a T & R Lead Teacher*

Truth and Reconciliation Lead Teacher Professional Development

September:

- Truth & Reconciliation Lead Teacher Welcome - Lead Teachers attended our ILS presentation and were guided through details and the responsibilities of their role as a Truth & Reconciliation Lead for their school site.

October:

- Learning from Indigenous Community - Three sessions provided to Lead Teachers were:
 - Inuit Connections with Goota Demaris
 - Métis River Lot History with Musée Héritage Museum
 - Culturally Sensitive Trauma-Informed Practices in the Classroom with Joanna Gladue

November:

- Strengthening Relationships - In this session, we will look at ways Lead Teachers can support building and strengthening community within their schools. We will learn about Indigenous worldview and education systems among Indigenous groups prior to early settlers, the impacts of Residential Schools on Indigenous families and how school staffs can build and strengthen relationships with their Indigenous students and families.

February:

- Indigenous Cosmos - In this session we have invited a well-known Elder and Knowledge Keeper, Wilfred Buck, to share some teachings of Cree Stars. Wilfred Buck will be bringing his planetarium and will be meeting with Lead Teachers to share some of his knowledge about Cree sky science.

March:

- 13 Moons – Language & Culture Launch of Resources - We will gather to learn about some resources that can be used in classrooms to learn and teach about Indigenous Ways of Knowing through the seasons, this will include 13 Cree moons with teachings of the moons and their significance.

April:

- Connecting to Land and History - In this session Lead Teachers will learn about the true histories of the Indigenous peoples whose land we are currently situated on. This will be an opportunity for Lead Teachers to get out in the community by participating in a River Walk. Community guests will be invited to join and participate in open dialogue with Lead Teachers and learn about Edmonton's true events in history told from the perspective of Indigenous peoples of this territory.

May :

- Year End Gathering - In our final gathering of Lead Teachers for the 2024/25 school year, we will celebrate the year by sharing highlights, classroom learning, whole school initiatives, resources, and practices. Lead Teachers will have opportunity to collaborate, share ideas of planning for National Indigenous History Month in June and National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21. We will also look at plans for next year and how we can build upon the foundational learning that took place this year.



Division Wide Professional Learning Sessions:

- Indigenous Games - Traditional Indigenous games play a vital role in teaching and learning, as each game holds cultural significance and teachings among nations. Indigenous games can be used to teach and learn about humility, respect, patience, discipline, and perseverance. Games introduced are: Tie-up, Guessing Sticks, Run and Scream, Sticks in Fist and Stick Dice Game.
- Two Worlds Approach to Building Relationships - This session provides participants knowledge on how Indigenous and mainstream ideologies vary, how introductions are connected to identity, how to assist Indigenous students to explore their Two Worlds Identity, how to create an introduction based on positionality & practice in dyads and what is Indigenous self-identification versus legal/political status.
- Becoming Indigenous Trauma Informed - This session explores what becoming Indigenous trauma informed means for those who are working in education serving Indigenous students and families.
- Truth First: Identity Fraud & Cultural Exploitation in the Age of Reconciliation - This session helps staff gain a deeper understanding of how these issues affect reconciliation and cultural authenticity.
- Attendance Strategies - This session shares current research and provides high-yield strategies to improve attendance for Indigenous students.
- Indigenous Cosmos - Sky Teachings & Storytelling with Wilfred Buck - Elder and Knowledge Keeper.
- Wellness Circles - A Wellness Circle Guide was created to support school staff who are invested in creating a Wellness Circle program with their Indigenous students in junior high.
- Building Relationships with Indigenous Students and Families - Staff will discover strategies to strengthen community within their schools.
- Funding Opportunities for Indigenous Youth - Staff investigate funding opportunities available to Indigenous youth who are pursuing post-secondary studies or apprenticeship programs.
- Learning Through Seasons - Staff are introduced to ways we can learn and connect to land through Indigenous Knowledge and Language throughout the seasons.
- Connecting to Land & History -Staff will learn about the true histories of the Indigenous peoples whose land we are currently situated on.
- Post-Secondary & Career Resources to Empower Indigenous Youth - This session explores the multitude of resources available to Indigenous youth at any stage in their future planning.
- Transitions - This session explores current research, and effective transition supports for students entering junior high and high school.
- MMIWG2S+: Colonization & Gender Roles -To begin to unpack such a complex topic, this session examines some of the following questions:
 - What has impacted our perception of men's & women's roles in our own lives?
 - What does Two-spirit (2S) mean?
 - What is Matriarchy vs Patriarchy?
 - Why is violence towards MMIWG2S+ so pervasive?



Site Based Professional Learning Sessions::

Based upon requests from the school sites:

- Blanket Exercise - provides an opportunity for staff to increase foundational knowledge while they focus on the key historic events between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada. Participants gain a deeper understanding of treaty-making, colonization, resistance, land rights and residential schooling
- Meaningful Territory Land Acknowledgements: Going Beyond the Script - Do you ever wonder why we do territory acknowledgements? Are you interested in creating your own personalized territory acknowledgement that comes from the heart?
- Indigenous Worldviews - What are Indigenous Worldviews and why are they important? Participants learn about Indigenous Worldviews and why they are important in creating a better future
- Indigenous Allyship - What does it mean to be an Indigenous Ally?
- Land Pedagogy - Introduction to Land-based Education connecting people to land through land pedagogy

Division Wide Truth and Reconciliation Events:

- Orange Shirt Day
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Indigenous Veteran's Day
- Métis Week
- Rock Your Mocs Week
- MMIWG2S+ Awareness Week
- National Indigenous History Month
- National Indigenous People's Day

"This was my third or fourth experience with the blanket exercise and by far the best. The ILS staff were wonderful presenters and shared with openness, willingness and humility. Thanks again for sharing with us your story and the story of our ancestors."
participating staff member



Collaboration and Building Foundational Knowledge

Collaboration:

- Member of the Division's Artificial Intelligence Steering Committee and Research Committee
- Representation of ILS at the Beginning Teachers session
- With the department of Learning Services:
 - Curriculum Crates - Math, Science, Social Studies and Kindergarten
 - Guidance - Resource selection and 7 Sacred Teachings
 - Two-Eyed Seeing and Indigenous Perspectives in Elementary Classrooms
 - School Teams - Collaboration with EDIAR and Social Studies to present; *Selecting Culturally Responsive Resources*

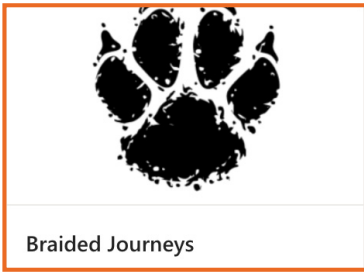




Each week in the **Staff Week at a Glance**, information about professional learning sessions, opportunities for conversations and connections, events locally and nationally, and resources are shared with the entire Division by the Indigenous Learning Services staff. This information is vital so that teachers, support staff and administrators are aware of the multitude of opportunities to expand their knowledge and everyone's role in Truth and Reconciliation.



The Indigenous Learning Services **Sharepoint** site contains a wealth of information that supports the Divisions work towards the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.



The **Braided Journeys** program is dedicated to empowering Indigenous youth throughout their educational journey. Tailored supports are provided during pivotal moments of transition whether it's the leap from junior high to high school or the significant step from high school to post-secondary education. One of the key pillars of Braided Journeys is individualized career development, encompassing self-exploration, job shadows, career days, and post-secondary student-for-a-day experiences, as participants gain valuable insights into potential career paths. Central to the success of Braided Journeys are the dedicated student centers established within participating school sites. These centers provide a space where students receive academic and cultural supports, a space for prayer and ceremony with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Additionally, they serve as hubs for leadership and career development initiatives, fostering a sense of community and empowerment among participants.

The Indigenous Learning Services **Advisory Circle** provides guidance to our department in the work that we do. Members represent diverse Indigenous communities including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. They have given feedback on new professional development sessions, cultural teachings and character education, and new curriculum.



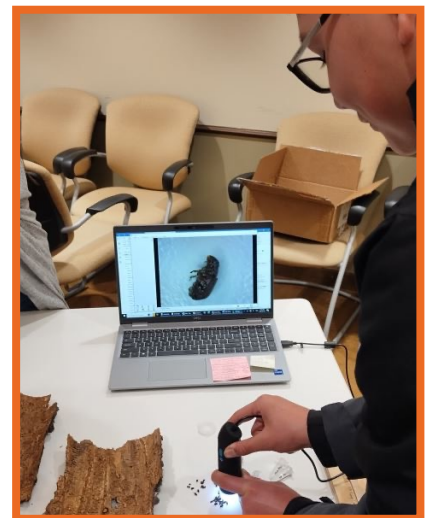
"I would love to hear more on what we can do at a school level to help heal children and families dealing with trauma" *Feedback from a T & R Lead Teacher - a request for professional learning*



Bridging Futures aids students in the development and implementation of life skills and career planning, while also providing opportunities to explore a variety of industries and become familiar with the world of work and higher education.

In partnership with CAREERS, Bridging Futures staff plan and co-facilitate career investigation field trips throughout the school year.

- CLAC Career Development College campus - hands-on training in both welding and scaffolding trades
- Economics for Success at the University of Alberta -which looks at the advantages of attending postsecondary and what is needed to succeed in today's workforce
- Discover the World of Legislative Auditing with the Office of the Auditor General
- Forestry Sciences at the Northern Forestry Centre -learn more about research projects, participate in hands-on interactive learning, and understand potential next steps in pursuing a career in forest science
- Post-secondary Open House and Student For A Day
- Health Discovery Day at the University of Alberta
- Try A Trade at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
- Indigenous Career Fairs - four times a year
- Lunch & Learns - Resume writing, scholarship applications, career speakers, post-secondary advising





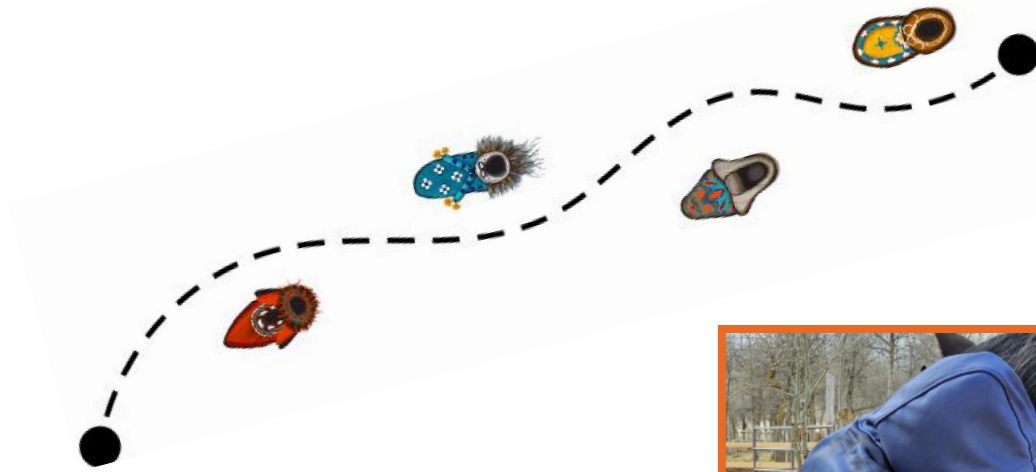
Four Directions Wellness provides Indigenized mental and emotional health supports to Indigenous students, families, and staff throughout our school division. This work includes:

- culturally relevant and holistic online and in-person wellness sessions
- an Indigenous Junior High Wellness Symposium
- Indigenous trauma informed practise and addressing racism & bias in the Classroom
- National Indigenous History Month
- MMIWG2S+ / ReDress awareness, and the Moose Hide Campaign
- hosting Indigenous family nights

Some new and exciting programs that were added to 4 Directions Wellness are:

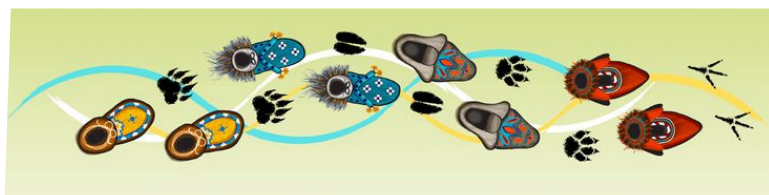
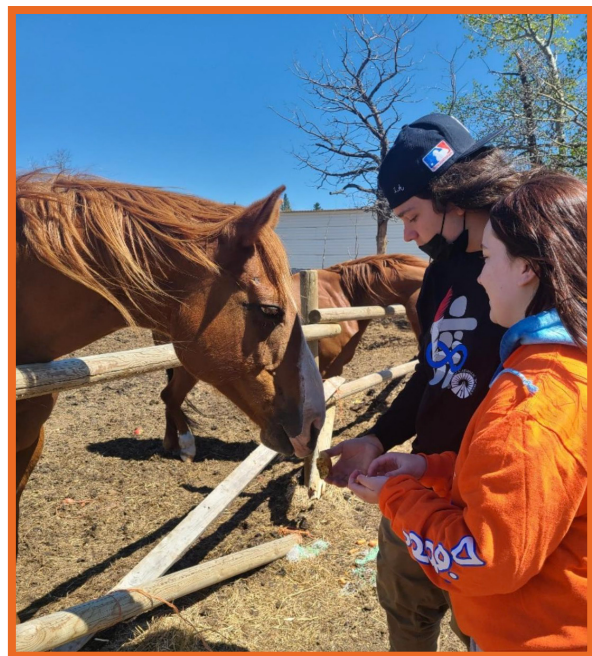
- Beginning last year, Indigenous Learning Services collaborated with Aboriginal Counseling Services of Alberta to form an Indigenous Theatre Arts Program for Indigenous junior and senior high students across the Division. This year the program has evolved into a Creative Arts Club for Indigenous junior high students with an opportunity to explore self-expression through art, music, comedy, improv and creative writing. The project incorporates an Indigenous theatre troupe, Expressive Arts therapists, and guest speakers.
- iskwêsis Return to the Fire, a violence prevention project which addresses violence against Indigenous female and female identifying high school students, through educational and ceremonial activities that focus on violence prevention and Indigenous female empowerment.





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Indigenous Learning Services was awarded a generous grant through the Archdiocese of Edmonton's Indigenous Reconciliation Fund. This support is dedicated to fostering the participation of Indigenous students in a transformative monthly Equine and Cultural Wellness Program. Through this initiative, students engage in enriching land-based education and medicine wheel wellness, centered around equine engagement, and connection. This program not only promotes cultural awareness but also enhances overall well-being providing invaluable opportunities for our Indigenous student to thrive. The initiative commenced in March 2024, and will continue to December 2025 and will include monthly programming for 75 students from across the Division.



The building of foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experiences is one of the most important pieces of work undertaken by Indigenous Learning Services. This work is fundamental to the:

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action #63 which calls upon the public education system to develop and implement curriculum, share best practices, build student capacity, and identify related teacher training needs.
- Alberta's Teaching Quality Standard (TQS), Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) and Superintendent Quality Standard (SQS) focus on building foundational knowledge, creating and sustaining relationships, and career long learning relating to Truth & Reconciliation and Indigenous Education.
- Goal of Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD) to build the capacity of students and staff to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action in school and beyond by building foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experiences.

Based upon the impressive percentage of students, parents/guardians and teachers who agree that students learn about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit culture, history, perspectives, and experiences in their school, this knowledge and the experiences provided by Indigenous Learning Services ensures that each student in Edmonton Catholic Schools is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.



"Hope is more than just wishful thinking. It is a transformative power that shapes our reality." *Quote from People of Hope - Division Video 2024/2025*

