



Annual Indigenous Education Report

To: Program and School Services Committee

Date: 28 April, 2020

Report No.: 05-20-3874

Strategic Directions

- Transform Student Learning
- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

Recommendation

It is recommended that the *Annual Report 2019: Indigenous Education in the Toronto District School Board*, as described, be received.

Context

In March 2014, the Ministry of Education released an updated Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan to guide the work of school boards through to 2016. In a subsequent memo to all Directors of Education in November 2017, the Ministry further directed school boards to develop plans for responding to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada: Calls to Action*, as they relate to education.

Aligned with the Provincial Policy Framework, the Toronto District School Board's current Indigenous Education strategy is grounded in supporting student achievement and well-being by centering Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum; building system-wide knowledge and awareness of Indigenous cultures, histories and ways of knowing through structured staff development and direct support to schools; and providing wrap-around supports for Indigenous students and families of Toronto's extremely diverse urban Indigenous population.

Implementation of the Board's Indigenous Education strategy is the mandate of staff at the TDSB Urban Indigenous Education Centre. Led by a Centrally Assigned Principal, this team of Indigenous education professionals comprises:

- Centrally Assigned Vice-Principals (2)
- Office Assistants (2)
- Itinerant Student Success Teacher
- Child and Youth Counsellor
- Social Workers (2)
- Itinerant Cultures and Traditions Instructors (1.5)
- Community Liaison Workers (2)
- Council of Elders (4)
- Instructional Leaders (4)

Collectively, UIEC staff develop and deliver a broad range of programs, initiatives, resources and services to students, staff and communities across the Board, covering the Seven Canopies of Indigenous Education:

- Professional Learning
- Student Well-Being and Voice
- Community Engagement
- Programming, Curriculum Development and Implementation
- Research, Development and Innovation
- Partnerships
- Reconciliation, Relationships, and Governance

For a comprehensive overview of the UIEC team's current activities in each of these areas, please see the annual staff report, *Annual Report 2019: Indigenous Education in the Toronto District School Board* (Appendix A, attached).

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

UIEC staff will continue develop and implement strategies to support the achievement and well-being of Indigenous students throughout the Board, including

- culturally-relevant curriculum, enhanced learning opportunities, direct wrap-around supports (counselling, traditional healing programs, youth empowerment, etc.) that focus on the unique needs of urban Indigenous students, families and communities; and
- system-wide professional learning to enhance staff capacity by building understanding of Indigenous sovereignty, cultures, histories and current contexts, as well as trauma informed practices and cultural safety.

Resource Implications

Indigenous Education has been highlighted as one of the eight proposed strategic drivers that will assist the Board of Trustees to develop the 2020/21 operating budget. This is an important step in ensuring that budget funding decisions support Indigenous Education in the TDSB. UIEC staff will continue to work collaboratively with TDSB central departments (e.g., Teaching & Learning, Professional Support Services, Employee Services, etc.) and Indigenous community partners to provide supports and develop enhanced learning opportunities for Indigenous students across the system.

Appendices

- Appendix A: *Annual Report 2019: Indigenous Education in the Toronto District School Board*

From

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Annual Report 2019

Indigenous Education in the Toronto District School Board



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
Indigenous Languages

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Forward

Food Forest

Excerpt from a speech by Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, **We Are All Treaty People**, presented At Young Peoples Theatre, February 13, 2019

Mother Earth taught us, among other lessons that there are seven principles of good conduct. They are called the Seven Ancestral Teachings and were imparted to us from the seven canopies of food that are found in the Food Forest.

The first canopy are the oldest trees that grow the tallest in the forest and protect all the other plants. Among these tall trees are the walnut, the chestnut, the beechnut, and the maple trees.

From them we learn **wisdom**. For example, the meat of the walnut is shaped like the human brain and modern science tells us what our ancestors already knew: that walnuts provide nutrition for the mind along with the sap from the maple tree. Therefore, we call the tallest trees in the food forest the canopy of wisdom.

The second canopy of food that is available in the food forest are the fruit trees: represented amongst many others by the plum, the cherry, the apple, and the pear trees. Fruit trees are challenged by harsh winters, storms, hurricanes and droughts. And still, as fragile as they appear to be, give their fruit which represents **courage** to us.

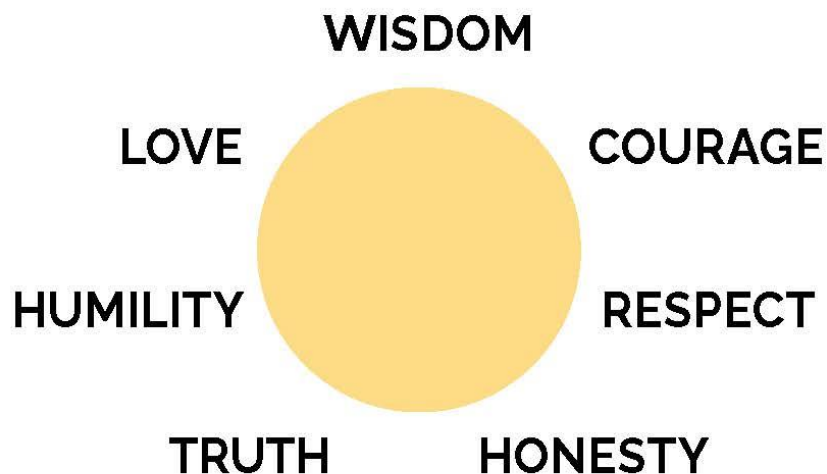
The third canopy of food available in the Food Forest are all the berry bushes. Raspberry, blueberry, thimbleberry, gooseberry, bearberry. The berry bushes are self-fertilizing and self-propagating and grow together amongst each other. They come in different colours, and shapes and tastes and textures yet they exist and thrive in harmony with one another. We learn **respect** from these berry bushes.

The next canopy of food that lives in the food forest is the food that grows right above the ground such as squash, pumpkin, cucumbers, cabbages and lettuce. There's an honesty about these foods - the fact that they are trusted and are evidently good for you - shows in their very existence. They are never counterfeit. They teach us **honesty**.

The fifth canopy in the food forest is the food found on the surface of the ground. Here we find our medicines, we sort the poison ivys from the good ivys, the poison oaks from the good oaks, the mushrooms from the toadstools. **Truth** is always in accord with fact and reality, and it is up to us to separate fact from fiction. That is what we learn from this canopy, which also includes the strawberry which represents the earth itself. Unlike every other fruit, the seeds of the strawberries are on the surface of the fruit, just as we the humans occupy the surface of the earth. The

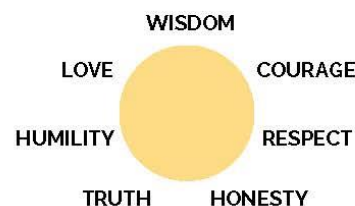
strawberry is also shaped like a heart, and strawberries are good for your heart. In fact, the Anishinaabe word 'Debwewin' is synonymous with both 'Truth' and 'heartbeat'. Beneath the canopy of truth in the forest we find, potatoes, carrots, turnips and other vegetables which are buried under the ground. They are not necessarily evident on the surface, we must dig and search for them often on our knees. In the process we learn about **humility** from these foods.

The seventh canopy are the creepers and vines that go through the woods and embrace the other plants. From them we learn about **love**. Wisdom, courage, respect, honesty, truth, humility, and love. These Seven Ancestral Teachings have been guided and been practiced by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial.



CANOPY 1:

Professional Learning



Supporting Contextualization of Indigeneity

Event: Living Library - Treaty Recognition Week

Dates: November 7-8, 2019

Stakeholders: UIEC, Ministry of Indigenous Affairs

Impact/Reach: Over 900 TDSB students in grades 4-12, and 30 educators

In collaboration with the Ministry for Indigenous Affairs, the Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC) organized four school visits for Treaty Recognition Week. The speakers, John Hupfield and Brianna Olsen, shared their knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, current perspectives, and Treaties with over 900 students in grades 4-12 over two days. As a result of the school visits, the students and Educators in attendance were able to deepen their own knowledge and were inspired to continue to do meaningful work in the future. Several educators are continuing the inquiry around how they might further their own learning on treaties and how they might share that knowledge with their students in a constructive way.

Supporting Beginning Teachers in Indigenous Education

Through the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), Instructional Leaders engaged newly-contracted teachers into learning about Indigenous Education at Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s Calls to Action 62 and 63. During this professional learning, teachers were introduced to TDSB's commitment to Indigenous Education through the *MultiYear Strategic Plan*, connections to curriculum, finding resources to support both student and teacher learning, and about the work of the UIEC to support Indigenous students and their families.



Supporting Expressions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Cultures Course (Revised 2019), NAC10

For schools that numbered among their courses NAC10 - *Expressions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Cultures*, the UIEC provided various professional learning opportunities. These opportunities included learning from Indigenous perspectives, from artists, speakers, Elders, and a partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). NAC10 had been selected by over

4000 students, across 64 TDSB secondary schools. As part of the revised curriculum, UIEC, in collaboration with the AGO, launched newly-developed professional learning for the revised course, and UIEC offered five professional learning days for NAC10 teachers to further their learning about Indigenous art and artists.



Indigenous Education Month - Métis Rights and Modern Day Treaties

Through Métis-specific professional learning, sixty participants assembled their knowledge and understanding of contemporary and historical contexts around Métis rights and modern-day treaties. The learning started with a keynote opening by Métis Lawyer and

Métis Nation of Ontario President, Margaret Froh. Participants also deepened their understanding of centering Indigenous perspectives by working with new Ministry of Education curriculum documents and UIEC Library resources.

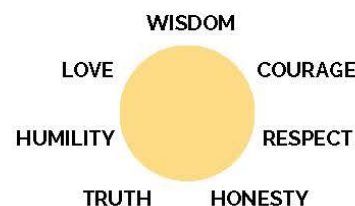


Impact of Professional Learning

- Educators indicate increased confidence in incorporating Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions in the school and classroom experience of all students;
- Relevant, respectful, and appropriate Indigenous-centred practices, including more broadly incorporating Indigenous-centred courses in secondary schools, are being implemented more regularly across schools participating in UIEC professional learning, with a renewed focus on school improvement; inquiry-based professional learning among participating leadership teams; and
- Teachers have reported that, based on their learning of new strategies that centre Indigenous knowledges and voices, gaps in Indigenous student achievement are beginning to close and students are experiencing enhanced well-being.

Canopy 2:

Student Well-Being and Voice



Aanse

Through Aanse, Instructional Leaders and School Support Teams worked with staff and students at schools with a high population of self-identifying Indigenous students. This work included supporting initiatives like Kâpapâmahchakwêw-Wandering Spirit's new Media Arts - Film, Audio, Video, Broadcasting, and Journalism program.

Student Success Team

The Student Success Team was focused on the social and emotional well-being of Indigenous students throughout the TDSB, and specifically with Aanse schools. The Student Success Team receives approximately four referrals per week to support Indigenous students from across the TDSB. The referrals range from advocacy, counseling, student success, cultural support, social work, school re-engagement, food insecurity, housing, sex trafficking, attendance, accessing mental health supports, navigating the school system, consultation with other non-Indigenous support service staff, and much more.

The Student Success Team planned a series of professional development days for all frontline staff members, focusing on the unique intersections of Indigenous histories,

current realities, mental health, trauma, and education. These were planned to be delivered by both the Indigenous itinerant social workers and the Indigenous itinerant Child and Youth Counselor. This entailed full-day training to seek to develop meaningful and experiential ways of understanding the complexities of Indigeneity and mental health. Staff who attended these PD sessions had the opportunity to receive the teachings of both Elders and Residential School Survivors, as well as a full-day of practical training on trauma from both an Indigenous and Western lens.

The Student Success Team has an Itinerant Cultures and Traditions Instructor who works across the TDSB on a referral basis. The Itinerant Cultures and Traditions Instructor supports students through providing cultural support, to address students isolated in schools with lower Indigenous populations. Students participate in a range of ways, including cultural teachings (e.g., wampum) and in arts-based Indigenous activities that are holistic and centred on student well-being. Students also receive cultural support in their academics, and families receive support accessing cultural events, community organizations, and agencies in Toronto.



Indigenous Social Work

As the TDSB recognizes and supports the rising need for critical mental health needs, Indigenous social work has sought to meet the unique needs of Indigenous students. Indigenous students face a disproportionate amount of mental health challenges and systemic barriers that impacts achievement and emotional well-being. Intergenerational trauma, poverty, racism (both direct and systemic) and the over-representation of Indigenous children in the legal system and Children's Aid are just some of the factors that contribute to the unique challenges that Indigenous students face.

Indigenous students drop out three times more than the national average, and have overwhelmingly identified experiencing a lack of support and safety in the school setting (noted in the 2018/2019 Aanse report, as well as the 2017 TDSB Parent Census Report).

Therefore, advocacy and capacity building in schools remain at the forefront of Indigenous social work in the TDSB. This is achieved through providing professional development and education for staff, providing life-altering one-to-one counseling, facilitating student groups, advocacy for families, and outreach to the broader Indigenous community across the GTA.

Examples of how this has been achieved in 2019/2020:

- Indigenous Social Workers have facilitated five year-long student groups, with the goal of fostering positive peer relationships, developing social skills, gaining new experiences and knowledge, and amplifying student voice. Social Workers also delivered workshops on the impacts of colonization on healthy relationships, human trafficking, and missing and murdered indigenous women.
- Indigenous Social Work has facilitated the Toronto Indigenous Youth Leadership Council. Amongst a variety of initiatives, this group of students coordinated the Decolonizing Our Schools Conference.
- Facilitating the third-annual Youth Gala, in partnership with WE.ORG, and connecting students to employers from Employment Ontario and the City of Toronto. As well as, coordinating events and providing student volunteer opportunities.
- The facilitation of a west-end parent's council, to amplify student and parent voices in the Toronto west-end schools.
- Responding to student crises (including suicidal ideations, homelessness, community violence and self-harm).

- Providing in-class student circles, to raise awareness amongst classroom communities about Indigenous cultures and teachings, in order to foster better peer-to-peer relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Impact of Student Well-Being and Voice

- Increased engagement, understanding and self-confidence of Indigenous students;
- Increased connection to culture and community, and making connections to students' personal lives;
- Safe spaces are created where students can explore their Indigineity;
- Increased student and family re-engagement with school;
- Increased understanding of the supports needed to address the social determinants of health and wellness (e.g. food security, housing, health supports) of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

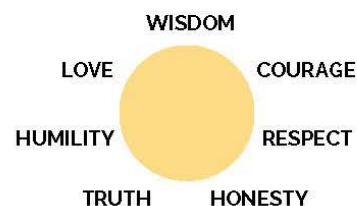
Canopy 3:

Community Engagement

Engaging Indigenous Artists Working in School

UIEC staff worked with Indigenous artists on a partnerships list to support them in connecting to curricula, navigating policies and procedures, and sharing their work

with schools. UIEC developed protocols for teachers and schools to facilitate engagement of artists in ways that are welcoming and respectful.

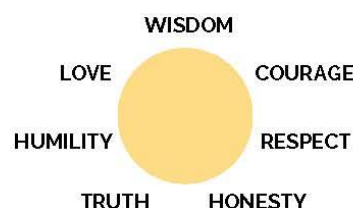


Impact of Community Engagement

- Increase in role models and mentors who can offer advice and guidance from and with an Indigenous perspective;
- Increase in community attendance at Indigenous socials, feasts, Speaker Series and learning opportunities;
- Increase community attendance at the UICAC meetings;
- Increase interest in community members engaging in partnerships.

Canopy 4:

Programming, Curriculum Development and Implementation



The UIEC Instructional Leadership team built system-wide knowledge and awareness of Indigenous cultures, histories and ways of knowing through structured staff development and direct support to schools:

- building capacity system-wide among staff to enhance conditions in schools for Indigenous students;
- developing and implementing curriculum units, courses of study, and professional learning modules;
- vetting resources and helping classroom teachers and teacher-librarians identify accurate, authentic materials and resources for classrooms and school libraries;
- establishing partnerships and learning initiatives in collaboration with various Indigenous organizations;
- delivering professional development at all levels to all staff (e.g., New Teachers Induction Program, Outdoor Education staff, The Arts, French, etc.).

Instructional Leaders also met with Principals and teacher leader teams to support the development and implementation of 'Indigenous Education learning plans'. This included support with understanding Indigenous pedagogy, Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, cultures, languages and ways of knowing. To align with TDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, Instructional Leaders also facilitate schools developing specific Indigenous Education goals in their SIP.

Urban Indigenous Education Centre Library

The UIEC Library Collection has grown with the addition of several hundred new books purchased from Goodminds. The new additions to the collection represent First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives and include selections appropriate for readers from Kindergarten to Graduate-level learning. We have also added four additional copies of Indigenous Peoples Giant Floor Map to the collection.

Promising Practices Resource

Instructional Leaders updated the Promising Practices Resource to support teachers, Learning Coaches, and other school initiatives. The document is a reference for how to engage in Indigenous Education in responsible and respectful ways.

Ojibwe Language

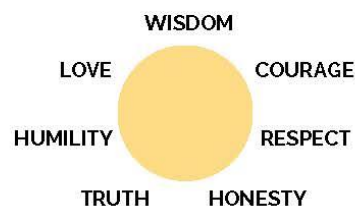
Ojibwe is offered in grades K - 12 at eight schools within TDSB. Elementary schools that offer Ojibwe in grades K - 8 are Eastview PS, Humewood CS, Bala CS, and Wandering Spirit School. Secondary schools that offer Ojibwe in grades 9 -12 are Riverdale CI, Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI, Native Learning Centre Downtown at Jarvis CI, Native Learning Centre East at Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI, and Kâpapâmahchakwêw - Wandering Spirit School. Currently, there are seven Ojibwe language teachers within TDSB. With student population growth and demand, we are looking to include within our Indigenous language programs: Mohawk, Cree, and Inuktitut. There are currently 374 students currently enrolled in Ojibwe language class in the TDSB.

Online Resources

The UIEC provides resources to the system (e.g., Direct Line, System Leaders' Bulletin, Trustees' Weekly, etc.) throughout the school year by co-producing resources on various topics and Indigenous Days of Significance including: Indigenous Education Month, Treaty Recognition Week, Aboriginal Veterans' Day, Louis Riel Day, Inuit Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, etc.. The Urban Indigenous Education Centre also has a Google Site (<https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/uiiec-resources-draft/home?authuser=0&pli=1>) which includes our online curriculum resource, the Awesome Table; a Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/UrbanIndigenousEducationCentre/>); and a Twitter account @UIEC_TDSB.

Canopy 5:

Research, Development and Innovation



Kâpapâmahchakwêw - Wandering Spirit Nutrition Program Research and Support

Elders, administrators, and Instructional Leaders from the UIEC are working with researchers, Elders and community workers from Waakebiness-Bryce to analyse the effectiveness of the Indigenous

Nutrition Program at Kâpapâmahchakwêw-Wandering Spirit School and to offer Indigenous Food Sovereignty workshops for members of the school community.



NBE3 - Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices

Instructional Leaders are supporting a Board-wide initiative to offer NBE3 as a substitute for compulsory grade 11 English (ENG3C/U) starting in Sept. 2020. This work includes working with administrators, guidance counsellors, and English departments to promote this course with students and to develop curriculum materials and practices that are responsible from an Indigenous Education perspective, like using Kirkness and Berhardt's Four Rs of Indigenous Education or Joanne Archibald's 7 Indigenous Storywork Principals.

Media Arts - Film, Audio, Video, Broadcasting and Journalism Program

Instructional Leaders are working with staff and administrators of Kâpapâmahchakwêw to develop the four year secondary Media Arts - Film, Audio, Video, Broadcasting and Journalism program.

Impact of Research

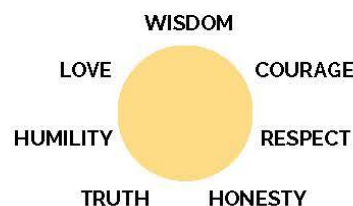
There has been an increasing demand for Indigenous communities to engage with Indigenous research methodologies in education which include participatory and decolonizing research processes led by Indigenous peoples. The research provides implications for future research based on what we have learned from Indigenous communities. Continued action is needed for implementing Indigenous methodologies which supports Indigenous student well-being and achievement.

Decolonizing research is a process for conducting research with Indigenous communities that places Indigenous students' voices and perspectives at the centre of the research process. This privileges and promotes Indigenous knowledges and methods. We continue to learn that data needs to be gathered and analyzed through processes recognized and valued by the communities in which and with we are working.

Canopy 6: Partnerships

Relationship Development and Maintenance

Instructional Leaders, working with UIEC administrators and members of the SST and Cultural Liaison Team, develop relationships with new Indigenous partners and maintain relationships with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, artists and community members.



Art Gallery of Ontario

The AGO and UIEC collaborated to offer field trips for all NAC 10 classes across the Board. This year, the collaboration has focused on professional learning for teachers and the hiring of Indigenous artists to work as Education Officers at the Gallery.

Impact of Partnerships

UIEC partnerships are contributing to improving First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and well-being and increasing all staff and students' awareness and knowledge of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions.

Wüléelham



York University Indigenous-Focused Courses, Cohorts and Programs

Wüléelham: is a Lenape word that means "make good tracks"

Rooted in Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies, the *Wüléelham* courses, cohorts and programs engage participants in learning from Indigenous peoples' experiences and perspectives.

Wüléelham options were developed to highlight the specific strengths of urban Indigenous communities. They are not intended to be taken in a linear sequence; instead, students make their own tracks, choosing to participate based on their timelines and interests. Our ultimate goal is to provide students with the knowledge and understanding to contribute to community well-being through their chosen career paths.

Developed in collaboration with Indigenous scholars and communities, *Wüléelham* prepares students for a wide variety of careers including, teaching, journalism, public administration, law enforcement, court work, policy work, or research on Indigenous experiences.

Bachelor of Education (BEd) - WAABAN Indigenous Teacher Education

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Report, the Faculty in collaboration with the Toronto District School Board Indigenous Education Centre offers admission to a **special cohort** of students who will complete the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree with a focus on Indigenous worldviews. **Waaban Indigenous Teacher Education** will educate a new generation of teachers prepared to address the needs of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, families and communities. *Waaban* will be grounded in Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy and will include teachings from Indigenous Elders, educators, and community leaders.

Waaban is an Anishinabe (Ojibwa) word meaning *it is tomorrow*. It signifies commitment to a holistic program of teaching and learning that acknowledges

the impacts of colonialism, and draws on the wisdom of ancestral teachings and contemporary leaders to put Indigenous futures into Indigenous hands. *Waaban* Indigenous Teacher Education will include attention to contemporary urban, rural and reserve perspectives and teachings from a diversity of nations. Students will be introduced to cultural and community resources and have opportunities to learn from and with Indigenous educators.

Some features of the program are:

- **Community-centred**
Held in Toronto for a special cohort of teachers who will take most classes together. Students will work with faculty members, guest speakers and others from the community to gain knowledge, insight and skills for teaching and learning in Ontario schools
- **Condensed schedule**
 - Complete a full two-year degree in four consecutive semesters (16 months)
 - Classes will take place in a continuous schedule of terms (Summer-Fall-Winter-Summer)
 - Click here for a full list of required courses
- **Location**
Students will take courses at the Urban Indigenous Education Centre - 16 Phin Avenue accessible by TTC (Donlands subway station). They will also participate in community practicum placements and school practicum placements in order to gain practical skills and experiences to qualify for the BEd degree.

- **Focused curriculum**
Courses and experiences infused with a focus on Indigenous education.
Note: Special elective courses will be available to students in this cohort

Graduates will be certified to teach in Ontario in one of the following teaching panels:

- Primary-Junior (JK to Grade 6)
- Junior-Intermediate (Grade 4 to Grade 10)

Master of Education (MEd) - Urban Indigenous Education Cohort

Developed in collaboration with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Urban Indigenous Education Centre, the Faculty of Education at York University is offering a Master of Education (MEd) Cohort with a focus on Urban Indigenous Issues to a **special cohort** of part-time students. This cohort in the MEd is in response to the need for knowledge and understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives. Admission to this program is generally completed every two years. **The next cohort will likely start in September 2021.**

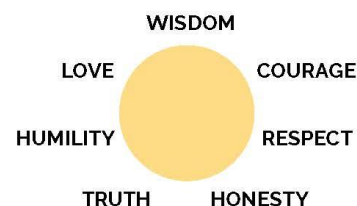
Indigenous people are often rendered invisible in a bustling multicultural cityscape. The impact for Indigenous children, youth and their families is frequently one of alienation. Students in urban settings confront particular challenges including: not being recognized as Indigenous students; not seeing themselves represented in the teaching population; and not seeing themselves represented in the curriculum. They attend school despite a long, negative and hurtful relationship between Indigenous people and schooling.

In urban settings, school board administrators, teachers, employees and other service providers for Indigenous people may confront challenges, including: identification of Indigenous students; delivery of programs; and a lack of knowledge and understanding of urban indigeneity, Indigenous students' experiences, and the complexities of teaching Indigenous subject material. This program takes these challenges seriously. This special cohort in the MEd program, focuses on Urban Indigenous Education as an area of study. Admission to this program is completed every two years.

Classes will be held at the TDSB Indigenous Education Centre (IEC) located in downtown Toronto at 16 Phin Ave (Donlands & Danforth) and is easily accessible by subway.

Canopy 7: Reconciliation and Relationships

Instructional Leaders collaborated with Elder Dr. Duke Redbird to support teachers to be learners and to be nurtured as whole people. “In Conversation with Elder Dr. Duke Redbird” and “2020 Vision with Elder Dr. Duke Redbird” Sessions allowed staff to develop new relationships with an Elder, make connections with the staff at the Centre, and to deepen their understanding of many truths of Indigenous people in Canada as a part of the reconciliation process for the Board. For example, in anticipation of the 350th anniversary of the Hudson’s Bay Company, Duke shared stories and a film about Indigenous resistance to the 300th anniversary celebrations in 1970. To achieve The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call To Action 62, “We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to: i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students,” Duke encouraged attending educators to develop curriculum telling Indigenous stories about “the Company.”



All UIEC

work at the Centre is informed by the TRC’s Calls to Action 62 and 63.

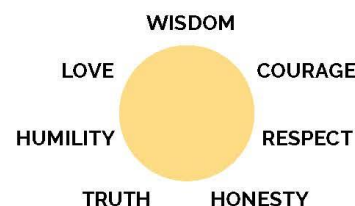
Part of UIEC work with partners and other community members is supporting people from the Board to work with them “in a good way,” so that the Centre can nurture healthier relationships between staff throughout the TDSB and Indigenous people who learn in the TDSB and support the learning of staff and students in the Board. For example, the ongoing work of collaborating with partners to develop protocols for staff engaging with them supports stronger relationships.

Ceremonies

This is a purification sweat lodge ceremony with a minimum of 28 Grandfathers joining UIEC staff in the lodge. The purpose of this type of lodge is to be reborn again and cleansed with a good heart, good mind, and overall good spirit, sometimes we forget to take the time to take care of ourselves and this is a great opportunity for us to connect with the Creator in a good way. The UIEC Team gets the opportunity to celebrate with our Creator and Ancestors two times a year, off site in Southern Ontario.



Creating spaces of belonging



The Role of School Staff: Effective Practices and Safe Spaces for Indigenous Students

Executive Summary

For educators, staff, and community members, concerned about the mental health and well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, the work begins by examining the structures, assumptions, and history upon which the school system is based. The legacy of the residential school system continues to tear Indigenous families apart, disconnect people from their language and culture, and contribute to a lived reality of schooling that lies far outside that of mainstream students. Decolonizing the schools would mean, among other things, eliminating practices that prioritize performance over relationships and adopting a non-hierarchical approach to people and knowledge. Students from marginalized and oppressed populations face barriers to school success that stretch far beyond individual behaviours or learning styles. Creating spaces of belonging means committing to the idea that all students deserve to have their whole being acknowledged and their needs met; indeed, it takes no less for them to succeed.

The Indigenous perspective on mental health and well-being begins with the holistic understanding of the four aspects of a person: mental/cognitive; spiritual; emotional; physical. Conceived of as a personal medicine wheel, each of these four parts must be acknowledged and nourished for a person to develop. Kevin Lamoureux, among others, share their experiences growing up within the school system.

For Indigenous students to succeed in TDSB schools, they need to have their identities acknowledged and reflected back to them. As research into stereotype threat shows, when people are in settings where their identity may be seen to cast a negative light on a group to which they belong, their performance will decline measurably. Teachers should make their classrooms inviting places for students of all backgrounds and their expectations should be as transparent as possible. Educators may feel tentative about teaching the Indigenous content in the curriculum—

and certainly non-Indigenous teachers should not attempt to lead any activities that would be disrespectful to ceremonies of any given people—but if they have done the work to educate themselves about the issues, they should feel empowered to teach the material.

Allies, or helpers, of Indigenous students should acquaint themselves with plentiful online resources, as well as seeking guidance from other, more experienced allies, and Indigenous teachers when necessary, to understand the history of Canada's relations with Indigenous people and to uphold their responsibilities as parties to the many treaties in effect with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people (see also, "The Ally Bill of Responsibilities").

Recommendations (2017)

- An Indigenous paradigm for mental health looks at the values and tools students have at their disposal.
- Counsellors should set aside their clinical training and share their stories and beliefs with Indigenous students.
- Counsellors need to recognize the expertise that each person has of themselves and to help them feel good about themselves.
- Social workers can work in tandem with elders and traditional teachers to emphasize the importance of students' cultural practices.
- Helpers should be clear about their intentions and their background as a way to find commonalities with the people they are there to help.
- Non-Indigenous helpers need to understand the cultural differences that exist around ideas of sickness and health.
- Helpers should refrain from diagnosing Indigenous students because, from an Indigenous perspective, a diagnosis can have the effect of a naming ceremony, that is, it can become that person's identity.
- A helper's relationship with an Indigenous student should be the central focus in any discussion of the student's education and wellness.
- Helpers need to view the people they are helping as the experts of their own lives and avoid judging their behaviour.
- Care and compassion from helpers can open doors to students who may be experiencing difficulties.
- Educators should promote policies and practices that increase the level of self-governance for Indigenous students, since research shows that this leads to lower suicide rates among youth.
- When someone is engaging in self-harm, helpers need to listen sympathetically and avoid pathologizing them.
- Self-harm comes from deep pain, so helpers must work with it in a deep way.
- Educators should strive to increase and improve Indigenous students' connection to the land.
- As a helper, you can only help someone along as far as you



yourself have gone.

- Let people cry.
- Helpers must be a part of undoing the effects of decolonization by being honest about who they are and where they come from.
- Educators need to stop ghettoizing Indigenous knowledges in the classroom—stop doing “stick, stone, feather” activities.
- Helpers should ask those they are working with to explain what helps them when they are feeling down.
- It is time to emulate the many educators and social leaders who are seeking to heal the world through spirituality.
- Teachers can easily incorporate Indigenous spirituality into the classroom by seating students in a circle, teaching about the seven values every person ought to live by, and doing outdoor education activities.
- Helpers can disrupt colonial practices by not enforcing a gender binary in which people are expected to be either male or female.
- Policy makers should continue the commitment of infusing Indigenous knowledge into the entire school board and curriculum.
- The school board should perform regular reviews of how the Indigenous knowledge infusion is going.
- Staff at all schools should be educated on, and implement, the importance of emotional competence for a healthy and safe environment in which to learn and teach.
- Educators should continue moving away from a punitive style of communication for all.
- Educators should teach students about stereotype threat, instill in them a growth mindset, reframe tasks so that social identities are not highlighted, deemphasize threatened social identities, and encourage self-affirmation.
- To be an effective ally to Indigenous students, helpers should commit to making a difference and learning more about Indigenous people.
- Non-Indigenous helpers need to understand the power they hold and to have humility about that power.

Recommendations (2018)

- Speaking in one's Indigenous language and celebrating one's own culture within an educational environment.
- Providing a safe space at school that may not be available to students at home.
- Being aware of PTSD that a student may possess and assessing the appropriate needs of the student—understanding that trauma is a range of experiences.

- Thinking about how routine practices in the school system causes traumatized students to experience further injury.
- Allowing a child/student to maintain their own independence by not exerting strict practices within the education system.
- Reminding school staff that they have the ability to change a child/student's life- they can make a huge difference in a child's life through appropriate and considerate teaching practices.

Opening

Bonnie Johnston, Community Liaison, Urban Indigenous Education Centre
Elder/Joanne Dellaire

Panel

Bonnie Johnston, Moderator
Elder/Dr. Joanne Dellaire
Kevin Lamoureux, Keynote Speaker

Youth:

Edward Cyr
Makwa Baskin
Tanis Desjarlais
Ella Laforme
Sarah Staniforth

Bonnie Johnston began with thanking all educators, communicators, and especially the students who brought everyone together for this event. She then thanked Elder Dr. Joanne Dellaire who was present and especially thanked Emily Blackmoon for coordinating the event and making it possible.

Elder Dr. Dallaire began the day with a song and prayer, “to remind each of us of our responsibility to ourselves, each other, the community and our culture”. A smudge was distributed throughout the room. Elder Dr. Dellaire reminded everyone in the room of the loss of rights and passages that would be taught to so many Indigenous children. She explained that “children are so full and fresh with the spirit and so we have to treat them gently. Our youth are people in our communities that bring the new knowledge, kids take care of us- innovative, strong, and forward thinking. The education system holds a philosophy that renders us incompetent, thinking of us as wrong and flawed and something to correct”. Elder Dr. Dellaire mentioned the pain of residential schools. She explained that “science proves DNA carries painful memories, but also ones of healing and success - ways to be”. She then challenged guests to “look inside, find a quiet moment and focus on the breathing and find something that percolates inside of you to help you when you are feeling down rather than going to a stranger to write us a prescription.” Elder Dr. Dellaire argued that “today are the voices of our future. We need to listen to them today and the innate teachings that they bring to us”. She explained that “everyone is an instructor or teacher some way, some how. People do not learn from

what you say but what you do. Our children are always watching us. We need to teach them how to recover from mistakes; we need to learn how to recover from our own mistakes. There is always room for growth and change.”

Elder Dr. Dellaire finished speaking and Bonnie Johnston opened with the land acknowledgement: “We are situated upon the ancestral territory of the Wendat Nation, the Anishnawbek Nation, and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and we acknowledge the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on this land.” She then welcomed the Fourth Annual Creating Spaces of Belonging conference. Ms. Johnston works at the Urban Indigenous Education Centre as a Community Liaison. She then acknowledged those that could not be present at the event today: friends and community members, those out there struggling, those in institutions, hospitalized, recognized them and asked the creator to look out for those individuals and give them strength.

Keynote Speaker

Keynote Speaker, **Kevin Lamoureux**, began with a welcome, and introducing himself. He thanked the organizers and Joanne and for including him in the event. For him he explains, "school was a protective factor, teachers in his corner helped, I did not have family to rely on for the messages I received from teachers." He comes from a world of education and stated that "they do not get enough thanks." He expressed his appreciation that there is a safe place in the city for Indigenous youth and was thankful for all of the expertise in the room and to be a part of the conference.

Lamoureux shared a story: he explained that one of the challenges he carries in his life is suffering from depression. He encouraged everyone to share their challenges too and ensured that others should not feel uncomfortable. He stated that if he asks something of youth, he should also be doing it himself. He did not grow up to be open and possessed a colonial mindset from the men who raised him which discouraged expressing emotion including being open or crying. He shared that he still feels embarrassed crying sometimes and described his experience of having depression as "being like a campfire slowly growing dimmer" and the fears and anxieties associated with that.

He also shared his "happy story" he explained as being "one of the best days of his life," which was the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s final report. He knew it would be historically significant, but was unsure of the emotional impacts it would have

on him; he remembered clearly that he was in a hotel, gathered in public space when it happened with just as many non-Indigenous people there as Indigenous people but he explained, "all that matters is Canadians came together wanting to leave something better for their children than what we inherited." Lamoureux spoke in his language and celebrated that it meant that colonialists who tried to kill their languages had failed. He desperately hopes that this will be the last generation of children who have to heal from their childhood.

Lamoureux stated that the TRC is like the "burning fire" in which we take it's teachings seriously. He argued that the committee represents a spirit of reconciliation and that it teaches us to think about what we are bringing to the fire to contribute to its light. He said, "some days it may just be a twig, or on other days it may be a bundle of logs". He explained that there are many Canadians sitting with their back to the fire that resent that money is being spent on nurturing that fire. He says, "we shouldn't be angry but we should pity them." He continues, "The circle surrounding the fire is supposed to be an invitation. There are only two sides to a circle, either inside or outside; if we want to create belonging for kids, we want them to recognize that their place is inside the circle".

Lamoureux examined that there is a growing body of literature that says, "our collective health and well-being is about the environment in which we live." His counselling background is reflective of being bound up in the environment- who



we live with, circumstances in which we live including social determinants of health and well-being. He states, “we are social creatures and are completely bound to each other, hence our well-being is bound up in the quality of our relationships with others”. He argued that

In regards to trauma, Lamoureux discussed that one should talk openly about wellness – the first symptom of trauma for people who go through it, is silence. He stated, “we can all relate to overcoming hardship. We don’t talk about it, we don’t think about it. Leave it as far in the past as you can.” He said on the day of the release of the Truth and Reconciliation final report, people were wearing shirts that said “survivor and sense of optimism, hope and leaving something better behind for our children than what we inherited”. He argued that food security and insecurity can be a predictor of our health and well-being. He explained that the social determinants for learning, whether we will be successful in school, are also predictors of academic success. He adds that this is why so many of our children underperform on standardized tests. The tests fail however, this does not reflect the brightness of the children, it is a “failing of the instruments.” He asserts, “these kids are resilient and adaptive and these tests do not capture that. Our ability to navigate successfully in school has to do with the ways in which we live.”

Lamoureux theorizes that “health and social problems are more and more in unequal countries.” He presented a UNESCO scatter plot that showed a collection of nations in the world including “first world” or “developed” countries. The X axis reflecting a measure of equality and a gap between

wealthy and poor (the higher the gap, the more unequal the country) and the Y axis reflecting a measure of social problems/ challenges, symptoms of inequality ie. health outcomes, addiction, mental wellness, infant mortality, criminality, trust, incarceration, early pregnancy rates, etc. The diagram represented that there was a correlation between inequality and social problems. Lamoureux raised a number of questions: “Why would a country that is more unequal be more likely to experience crime? Or be more likely to experience mental health or addiction? Why is there less trust from unequal countries? He argues, “the United States of America is by far the most unequal country, Canada is right in the middle and Japan is the most equal”. He believes that we are absolutely sensitive to matters of fairness and justness.

Lamoureux affirmed the idea that everyone is prone to feelings of unfairness for example “sibling activity”. He explains, “When you’re the kid and every day you come to school and watch other kids having everything you don’t like cool clothes, good grades, a family, etc. how long is it before that kid says “forget it” out of anger at this system.” He argued that “Canada should provide for the needs of all of its kids. Everyone in this system is affected, regardless of where you are in the hierarchy- there is always someone ahead of you that has something that you don’t have”. He used the example of people buying things they do not need with money they no not have to maintain a certain appearance. He adds, “Houses keep getting bigger, fashion changes every year, etc. as a reminder of what you do not have.” In a hierarchy he explains, “there’s

always someone beneath you too. The symptoms of the idea "I don't want my tax dollars going to them, why don't they just work like I do?" creates a divide and broken relationships that end up affecting impoverished communities". He adds, "Countries that are fundamentally unequal makes healing more difficult because of the wreckage of this relationship."

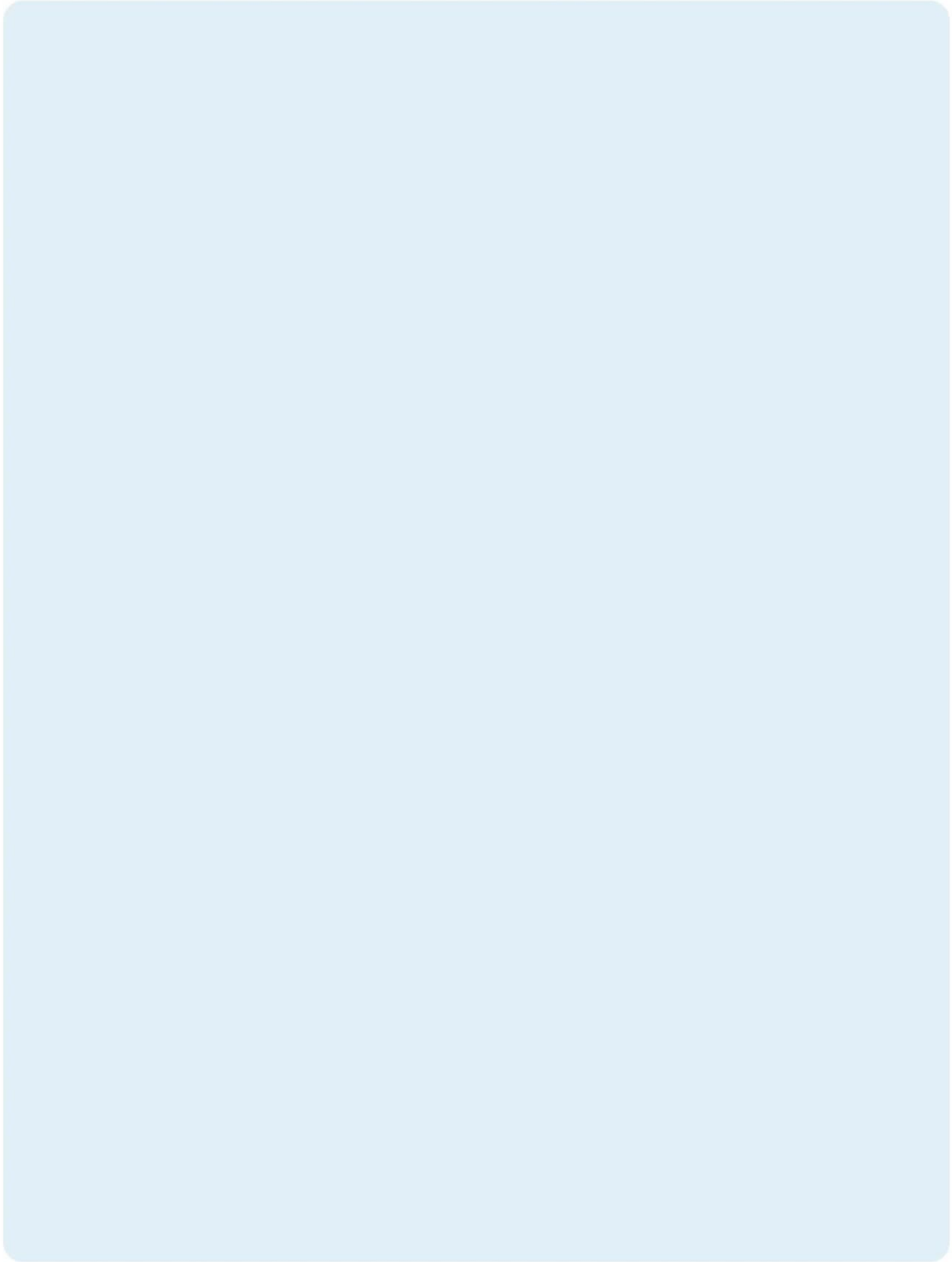
Lamoureux argues, "This is what we have inherited as a nation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Committee offered 94 Calls to Action which are our roadmaps home." He urged everyone in the room to read them all and to email him if they would like him to send them a copy. In relation to the Calls to Action, he explains that the first question we might have is "why is this being asked of us?" He explained, "for many it will expose us to a story of Canada that we didn't grow up knowing." He added that we should not blame ourselves if we did not hear these truths. He said, "it's something that was done to you, not something that you did." He asked everyone if Canada would be better off if the Calls to Action were fulfilled.

Lamoureux mentioned The TRC's Call to Action 1.3 which includes "Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools". He emphasized trauma training as a necessary tool that these workers should possess. He talked about the buffalo and if the community senses danger, before leading the stampede, the adults will create a protective circle around the children because they understand there is nothing

more sacred and precious than their children. He explained that as people who love and care about kids, it is empowering if we can create an opportunity to understand trauma.

In terms of trauma-informed healing, Lamoureux shares that trauma entails a range of experiences. The most basic examples and easiest care of trauma to be aware of is PTSD; he explained that this is the most accessible example of trauma. The symptoms he states are usually dissociation, flashbacks, etc. He empathized and shared that if people are suffering from PTSD, that "it's not their fault, it can sneak up on you anytime. It can cause isolation and withdrawal, nightmares, depression, not giving a shit, feeling incompetent, waiting for the other shoe to drop, feelings of inadequacy or not feeling like you are enough- all making you feel like its really hard to dig yourself out of that hole." Elder Dr. Dellaire chimed in and added that she believes depression is a natural response to abnormal circumstances."





Aanse: Indigenous Student Well-Being and Achievement Strategy

2018/2019

Urban Indigenous Education Centre



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The purpose of this report is to document the first year of the Urban Indigenous Education Centre's work in Aanse: Indigenous Student Well Being and Achievement Strategy. The goal is to outline the professional learning approach, centre First Nations, Métis and Inuit student voice to inform educator practices, and identify the resulting impact on educators' learning and practice. Overall, Aanse aims to contribute to a decolonization of current practices and schools which impede Indigenous student well being and learning. With this report, the Urban Indigenous Education Centre hopes to learn how to best to support educators to enhance conditions in schools so that First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and families can be better served.

Project Participants

Participating schools were selected based on data reflecting the highest numbers of self-identified Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) students in the Toronto District School Board. 1 Administrator and a minimum of 3 Teachers from the following Schools participated in the project:

Phase 1	Phase 2:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wandering Spirit School (Elementary) • Eastview Public School • Bowmore Road Junior and Middle School • Native Learning Centre East • Wandering Spirit School (Secondary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duke of Connaught Junior and Senior Public School • Withrow Avenue Junior Public School • Grey Owl Junior Public School • Carleton Village Junior and Senior Public School • Fairbank Public School • Danforth Collegiate Institute • Sir Wilfred Laurier Collegiate Institute • Riverdale Collegiate Institute • Western Technical-Commercial School
Central Staff:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-8 Learning Coaches, Student Success Transitions Counselors, Community Support Workers, and Centrally Assigned Principals from Learning Centres 1, 2, 3 and 4 who supported the above schools 	

Overall Inquiry Question

Participants were asked to engage in a professional learning process aimed at enhancing and decolonizing conditions in schools for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. The staff of the Urban Indigenous Education Centre worked collaboratively with Elders to develop professional learning experiences focused on creating collective responses to the following question:

In what ways can we effectively and appropriately engage Indigenous ways of knowing to decolonize and Indigenize teaching practice and enhance well-being and learning for Indigenous students?

Overall Goals

- Share and Investigate ways to build respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous students, families, and community members
- Learn about trauma-informed practices in Indigenous contexts

- Enhance the promotion of Indigenous knowledges, self-determination, strength, contributions and resistance across school culture
- Enact the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Context

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Article 4: Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

Call to Action #62

We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

Call to Action #63

We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

- Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Indigenous Education Goal: To work together with Indigenous communities to address the knowledge gap that exists amongst staff with respect to:

- Histories, cultures and contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples in Canada with regards to the impact of ongoing colonization and systems of public schooling within Indigenous

communities

- Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- Creating culturally-safe and trauma-informed schools so that staff are better able to support the achievement and well-being of all students through a change of practice

Frameworks

Decolonizing Education

The work of Aanse is framed by the concept of “decolonization” as influenced by the work of Linda Smith (1999), Susan Dion (2010) and Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012). For the purposes of engaging in professional learning within the context of a public district school board, use decolonization to refer to a process of critiquing colonizer settler worldviews and challenging oppressive colonial structure they maintain and perpetuate (Dion, 2010). Specifically, decolonizing education refers to the long-term process of acknowledgement, desire to, and action toward, divesting colonial power over knowledge, language, governance, and land (Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Following Dion’s work in her Decolonizing Our Schools report (2010), the UIEC undertook to facilitate opportunities for educators to decolonize schools through:

- Investigating and learning from the history of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, including ongoing colonization
- Identifying ways in which oppression and colonization currently manifests in education and beyond
- Understanding Indigenous people’s activism and assertions of human and Indigenous rights
- Coming to know, understand, and experience Indigenous informed teaching and learning practices
- Participating in collective actions with the goal of transforming relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from one premised on colonization to one of reciprocity and justice

(Dion, 2010, p. 12-13)

The Four Rs: Respect, Reciprocity, Relevance, Responsibility

The work of Aanse is also framed by Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (2001) work focused on the Four R’s – Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility. Kirkness and Barnhardt developed this framework in relation to Indigenous students in the university context, although the framework has been very useful within the context of creating professional learning for educators in a k-12 context. We employ the Four R’s as a way to guide what needs to happen in schools in order to enhance the experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit elementary and secondary school students.

Respect: Increasing schools’ (and educators’) domains of knowledge to include and respect Indigenous cultural values, languages, and traditions.

Relevance: Creating opportunities to help Indigenous students “appreciate and build upon their customary forms of consciousness and representation as they expand their understanding of the world in which they live” (p. 9). Schools must meaningfully incorporate Indigenous perspectives in their everyday functioning in order to become more relevant to the Indigenous students’ perspectives and experiences.

Reciprocal Relationships: Challenging notions that schools are dispensers of knowledge and students are the receivers of that knowledge, thus valuing vulnerability among educators in schools. Reciprocal Relationships means making teaching and learning a two-way process in which a sharing and respect for knowledge between both educators and students “opens up new levels of understanding for everyone (p. 11).

Responsibility (Through Participation): Taking responsibility for working with Indigenous students, families and communities to create conditions where Indigenous identity, experiences and history is affirmed while ensuring opportunities to critically examine colonizing structures.

Project Design:

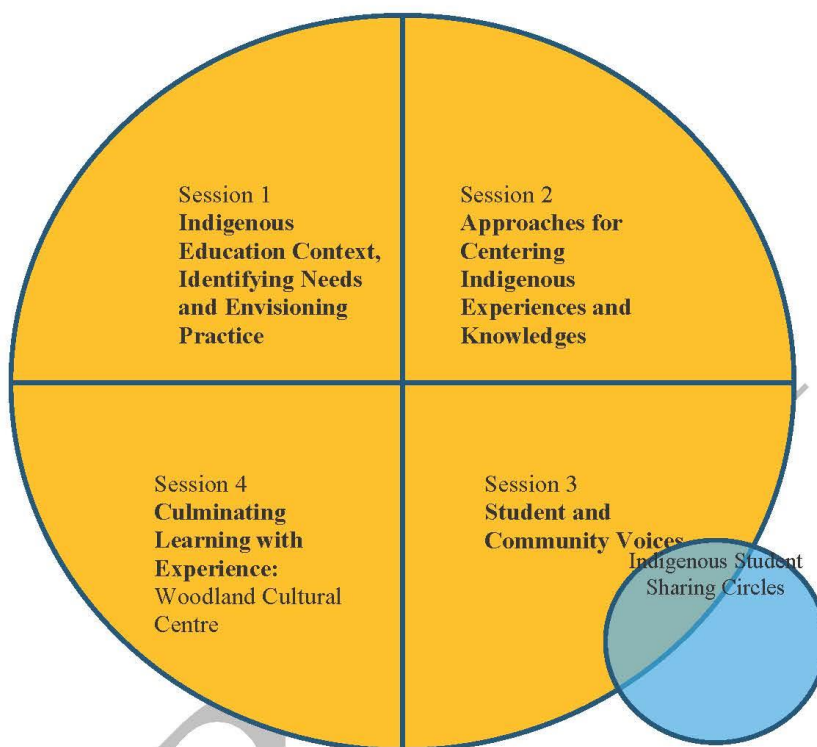
The professional learning design for Aanse was based on an Indigenized version of a collaborative inquiry structure, influenced directly by the above Indigenous education frameworks as well as concepts and teachings underlying the Medicine Wheel. The UIEC staff worked to plan and facilitate multiple layers of professional learning sessions and adapted accordingly for project participants. Schools in Phase 1 of the project receiving more direct UIEC Student Success Team, Community Liaison, and Instructional Leader support in between sessions.

Session 1 focused on building relationships with participants, focusing on current understandings of Indigenous Education, identity and power, raising awareness of Indigenous cultural and colonial contexts, asking participants to identify their students’ needs and strengths, and to identify their own learning needs.

Session 2 focused on sharing approaches and strategies for centering Indigenous knowledges and experiences. For example, members of the Student Success Team shared information and strategies on Trauma Informed Practices. Elders shared important teachings on treaties and nation to nation relationships historically and today, and Instructional Leaders shared content based resources available through the UIEC.

In Session 3, for Phase 1, Phase 2 and Central Staff sessions focused on centering First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) identified students’ voices. 3 different groups of students from various schools across the TDSB were invited to speak and share their stories and experiences in schools. These were opportunities for students to share with educators what needed to be built upon, changed and disrupted in their practices in order to enhance conditions for Indigenous students in their respective schools.

Session 4 involved participants in attending a learning experience at Woodland Cultural Centre. At the centre, participants had the opportunity to hear the stories of Residential School Survivors, be guided through the Woodland Cultural Centre’s museum, and access resources from the Goodminds Bookstore. Participants were also asked to share their key learnings from participating in Aanse, name strategies they implemented and monitored for impact on students in their classes who identified as First Nations, Métis and Inuit, and identify next steps.



Indigenous Student Sharing Circles: Key Themes

As part of the Aanse project and alongside professional learning sessions for participating educators, staff from the Urban Indigenous Education Centre organized and facilitated Sharing Circles with groups of self-identified First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students from Phase 1 schools. UIEC staff collaboratively developed key questions as prompts that could be used in each of the circles. Some questions include:

- How do you describe yourself?
- What do you see as your strengths and challenges in school?
- What can adults do to help you learn?
- What makes you feel safe and supported at school?
- What lets you know an adult cares about you?
- What helps you or keeps you from doing your best at school?

The following themes emerged from what students discussed during the Sharing Circles. Some examples of what students said (verbatim) are provided below each theme.

Focus on Self

Emotional Well-Being

"My anxiety weighs me down"

"I don't feel accepted and safe"

"What helps me do my best in school are the people who motivate and push me to do better, like my friends."

"Stress related stuff keeps me from doing my best. My work schedule is a huge factor. I don't get home until late. Balancing work and school family stuff stresses me out."

Self-Determination

"Kids, if they don't want help they feel they don't need it and kids will wander around the halls and interrupt others."

"What helps me do my best is surrounding myself with good people."

"If a student doesn't like it they won't do it."

"I feel tired and don't want to attend, or depending what is going on in life. Also, depending on some classmates I don't get along with, I bite my tongue but it is hard."

"Lessons are repetitive and boring. It is boring sitting at a desk, there should be more choice."

Self-Perception (Identity and Efficacy)

"Kids make poor decisions, which represents us in a bad way."

"I feel accepted to be Native at the school."

"Saying to myself, 'I can't do it', holds me back."

"When I am at school I feel comfortable in [this school] cuz we are all Native. But when I go into [another] school I become aware that I am Native and I don't feel comfortable. I get tired for having to explain that I'm Native to non-Native people."

"My challenge is that I am free spirited but my strengths is that I put my own effort into it and when it comes to pressure I step up to the challenge."

Focus on Teachers

Relationships and Teacher Perceptions/Beliefs about Student

"My teacher is challenging to work with, doesn't ask me what is wrong."

"People will take time to ask me how i am feeling ad provide space."

"I would like teachers to understand my anxiety disorder to help me be successful. I need extra time and understanding of what's difficult in my life."

"[The Vice Principal] makes me feel safe and is understanding of me and my past."

"Teachers to be more respectful and not kiss their teeth at us 'cuz I know it's rude."

"I would like to be taken more seriously."

"I don't feel safe in my classroom I feel like my teacher hates me."

"I think my teachers thinks I don't know how to do stuff, she thinks I'm stupid. I don't think she likes me and doesn't want me to learn. I don't enjoy anything in the class."

"Support [me] by being there helping out and treating others with respect."

"[It's helped me learn when the] teacher responded to students and expressed themselves."

"It's nice to know when teachers know what you are going through."

"Teachers should engage with students more. Teachers like [] care about what they do."

"When teachers are absent it pisses me off."

"In grade 9 this high school on the reserve near Moosonee, most of the community is full of Cree and Ojibway and Inuit families and more diverse cultures, but in grade 9 I feel like the teachers that taught their really know what it is like to deal with families that have trauma and know how to handle the students if they had outburst and it was amazing. I felt safe and comfortable there. The teachers were understanding, they gave students space, used great strategies."

"I like when [teachers] share their own experiences to a lesson. Cuz usually it is a funny one...shared experiences. It gives us a chance to relate to the situation or to the teacher when they do something silly, it makes me feel safe and helps in the classroom. It helps me a lot. I would say, 'Hey! That is a funny teacher.' I will go back but when they are quiet or uptight I don't feel comfortable and not a good learning atmosphere."

"[I feel supported]... When [teachers] are able to sit down and listen to the things I have to say."

"[I feel supported]... When [teacher] gives us flyers or opportunities that she knows we like and are interesting, she doesn't have to do that."

Expectations of Behaviour and Cultural Safety

"I feel like some students use racist words like savages and I don't like it and the teacher doesn't say anything."

"A challenge is the kids fooling around in the halls being loud when I am trying to work."

"A challenge for me are students because it is hard to get along with them. It is hard for me to talk to the teacher about that. I think they listen but they don't do anything about it."

"The school could work on the environment being more controlled because it is annoying."

"...noises take me off task and I lose concentration."

"An ideal school is a place where I can be less nervous, I need less noise or yelling in the hallway, or slamming of doors, I would prefer tables and chairs, I would like more art time"

"Some students and teachers don't respect my culture"

"I think my culture is representing well. I like that I can learn the language. I would like more culture classes."

"Teachers need to discipline disruptive kids that distract them from learning"

"[What makes me feel safe is] a teacher that upholds the rules and safety regulations for example, if someone was doing something bad in school they would stop the behaviour."

"Teachers need to be serious and stop behaviours and make sure there is a consequence."

"I feel safe and supported but too often people get away with stuff. Also there should be no such thing as group punishment! It should only be the person that did something wrong that gets punished."

"Collective punishment does not make me feel supported. Complaints need to be taken more seriously. Teachers also need to check in more with students."

Pedagogies

"An adult can help me learn by listening to my concerns, they help me calm down."

"I think our culture is being represented well. Some of the teachers are showing it in the classes."

"A teacher looking at [issues] from a different perspective."

"I prefer when teachers are more open minded to multiple ways of teaching."

"Teachers should have a wide variety of teaching, routine is boring. I don't want come to class when it is boring. More creativity in lesson plan. Teachers should be on the student to complete work and engage them and remind them as well as check in often."

"Varied lessons in class and teachers should engage with students more."

"There is too much stuff to do. There should be more hands-on activities."

"Teachers need to work together and communicate assignments."

"I think one on one time with a teacher is how I learn best."

"Lessons are repetitive and boring. It is boring sitting at a desk, there should be more choice."

"Sometimes in certain subjects, teachers move quickly and I find it difficult to keep up."

"Things that help me are incentives. Sometimes the teachers...would bring us coffee or bonus marks to get us to do our work."

"I like when [teachers] use humour to get us to do work. That helped motivate me a lot."

Focus on Access

Cultural Knowledge

"I would like to have more cultures classes, it is always cancelled."

"Field needs a lot of plants and a big park with swings. No boundaries."

"Teachers, friends, plants and the ground outside makes me feel safe."

"We should spend more time outside."

"I had a culture lodge room in my old school which was helpful and made me feel comfortable.... "In the lodge I had access to resources. My fav person in the whole school worked there - the Aboriginal liaison. [This school] is chill, quiet, I feel supported by my current teachers."

"[I know an adult cares about me] When teachers think about what else they could do for their students, like bringing in elders, workshops, field trips, planning for us, going above and beyond."

"I feel like my culture is represented in the morning announcements with the land acknowledgement, I feel a sense of pride, when some of my classrooms have medicine wheels or the colours displayed in the classrooms."

"[Indigenous culture] is mostly represented in the classroom. It makes me feel proud to get the opportunity and chance to learn my language. I do not see it represented in [other schools]."

Food and Space

"[The Principal] makes me feel safe when stuff is happening outside."

"I can go to [an alternative space] and have a quiet space away from my teacher."

"Not eating food makes me not do my best."

"Offer more kids with food breakfast program"

"[My ideal classroom would be] an organized classroom with contributions from the students to make it more personalized."

"More personalized artwork on the walls and more spaces to feel relaxed."

"Organized teachers that help the students. Better food, no greasy chicken or burnt food. The school needs to be cleaner less graffiti and snack should be on time."

"The food needs to be better. I understand why it is bad because [the cook] is cooking for a lot of people but there needs to be bigger food portions."

Staff Perceptions

Through a collaborative inquiry process of professional learning, participating staff were asked to document what they perceived to be Indigenous student learning needs, what they understood as corresponding staff needs to address student learning needs, and then to develop a team inquiry question based on those identified needs. Staff perceptions and understandings shifted over the course of the professional learning journey. While UIEC staff supported participants to create inquiry

questions that corresponded with perceived Indigenous student and staff learning needs, the ever-shifting nature of participants' work over the course of the project did not always allow for a direct connection.

Indigenous Student Needs (perceived by participating staff)

Themes of Academic Achievement, Student Well-Being, and Identity and Cultural Representation emerged from how staff perceived Indigenous student needs. Specific perceived needs identified by educators are listed below each theme.

Academic Achievement

- Developing reading strategies that allow students to critically access complex texts.
- Seeing themselves as having the ability to have academic success based on high expectations.
- Critical thinking, reading fluency and stamina.
- Developing reading strategies that allow students to critically access complex texts.
- Seeing themselves as having the ability to have academic success based on high expectations.
- Critical thinking, reading fluency and stamina.
- Completion of literacy component for graduation.

Well Being

- Feeling that they are part of their learning community and appreciated and respected for who they are.
- Mental well-being.
- Intergeneration and chronic trauma.
- Attendance, disruptive behaviours, and self-efficacy.
- School engagement.
- Sense of belonging and connection with the school.

Identity and Cultural Representation

- Having a deep understanding of the Seven Sacred Teachings of the Anishnabek.
- ...have a greater understanding of and embrace their personal stories and heritage within the context of Canada today.
- ...to help young people learn about their cultures, histories and languages.
- Seeing themselves reflected within the school.
- The most urgent learning needs for our Indigenous students is to have a greater understanding of and embrace their personal stories and heritage within the context of Canada today.
- Becoming aware that there are other Indigenous students in the school.

School Staff Team Learning Needs

Indigenous Pedagogy for Student Well-Being

- How to address and assist Indigenous students who are experiencing trauma in their lives.

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- How to incorporate contemporary Indigenous issues into the curriculum”.
 - Indigenous trauma informed practices.
 - Centering Indigenous Education into our daily learning.
 - Restorative practices.
 - Sharing ideas and encouraging student voice.
 - Changing staff mindset from sympathy toward sense of empathy.
 - How to centre Indigenous education into our daily learning and how we approach curriculum (including resources and classroom management strategies).
 - Knowledge and cross-cultural awareness with staff and community.
 - Learning more about details of Truth and Reconciliation findings.
 - Finding further ways to promote and celebrate Indigenous peoples and knowledges within the school as a whole.

Allyship and Knowledge of Indigenous Perspectives

- We need to understand what good allyship looks like. My understanding was that I was supposed to be learning how to advocate and speak in ways we now understand might not be appropriate.
- How to become learners, building relationships when cultural safety has not been the reality in the past, knowledge to centering Indigenous ways of knowing.
- Having the right language and cultural understandings to do this work authentically.
- Awareness and planning about how to build a more welcoming environment for Indigenous students.
- Better understanding of connections between 7 Ancestral Teachings and Character Education.
- How to bring authentic Indigenous voices into the classroom curriculum.
- Increasing staff knowledge about values and ways of knowing for Indigenous students in the schools in ways that are accurate.

Staff Inquiry Questions

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- *What happens to student-well-being, engagement and attendance when we better facilitate intentional and meaningful dialogue with specific Indigenous students who are disengaged?*
 - *In what ways can we increase staff awareness of Indigenous teachings and make a more inviting space for Indigenous students?*
 - *What happens to Indigenous students' attendance, engagement, and willingness to self-identify if we intentionally create a culturally responsive environment and curriculum?*
 - *How do we effectively support indigenous student well-being through staff understanding of trauma informed and restorative practices?*
 - *How do we as a school incorporate Indigenous experience into the curriculum without cultural appropriation?*
 - *How can we support indigenous student well-being through staff engagement and understanding?*
 - *How might Indigenizing and decolonizing our classroom design and set-up empower student voice and increase student engagement so that we can create a more culturally relevant and responsive learning environment.*
 - *What will happen to student engagement and feelings of inclusion if we centered Indigenous Ways of Knowing and being in the classroom?*
 - *What decolonizing and indigenizing actions can we apply at the school level in order to create a safe environment for students to feel belonging and to self-identify?*
 - *What happens to the school's Indigenous students and community's sense of belonging if we increase the staffs awareness of Indigenous teachings and make a more inviting space in the school?*
 - *How can we better facilitate meaningful dialogue with specific students about their experiences in and out of school?*

Key Learnings (School Teams)

High Impact Indigenous Education Actions

During the ongoing professional learning, participating staff teams reported that they learned the following classroom and whole school actions made an observed difference in Indigenous students' well-being and achievement:

Classroom Actions:

- Indigenous-focused field trips
 - E.g., Crawford Lake, IRSS Legacy Celebration
- Consistent use of Sharing Circles in classrooms
- Use of Trauma Informed Practices (OFIFC) resource in classrooms
- Explicit teaching of Indigenous content, including resistance
- Intentional and regular access to a caring adult
- Connections to Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Connections to Indigenous Community Agencies

Whole School Actions:

- Indigenizing the School's Main Entrance
 - Creation of inclusive space for all students

- Positive and calming space to engage with students and share Indigenous teachings
- Indigenous Student Club
 - Weekly meetings with self-identified Indigenous students, in collaboration with UIEC Student Success Teacher
- Water Walker Focus
 - All classes read the Water Walker
 - School wide water walk, led by Indigenous student
- Restorative Practices Initiative
 - Professional Learning Community process in Restorative practices
 - Inclusion of Trauma-Informed practices lens
- Whole-School Circles Modelling
 - Teachers signed up for guided restorative circle sessions led by Indigenous staff members
- Student and Teacher Access to Indigenous Knowledge Keeper

Families and Community

- Family and Community Sharing Circles
 - Regular opportunities for parents, guardians and community members to engage in sharing circles about family engagement, in the community
- Initiation of community Indigenous mural
- Regularly scheduled staff meeting conversations about centering Indigenous knowledges in classroom practices and how to best support Indigenous student well-being and achievement

Planned Actions for 2019/2020

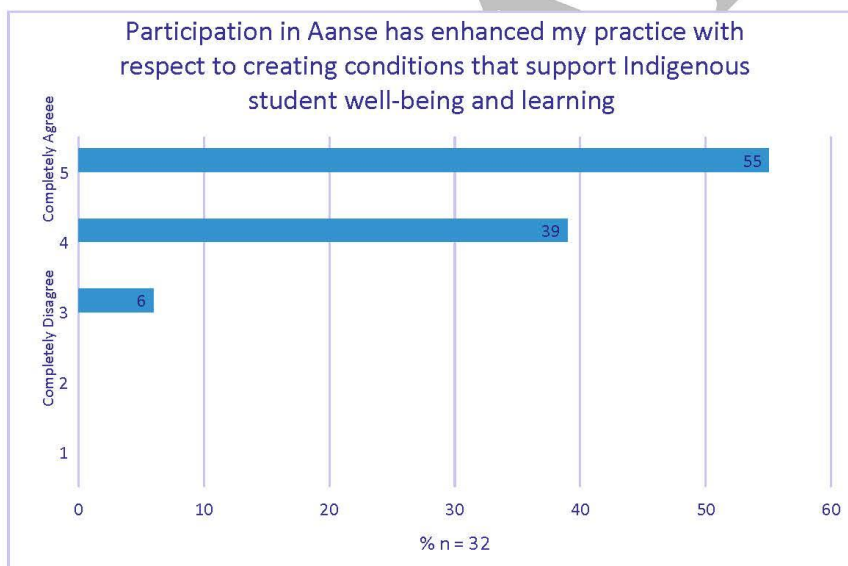
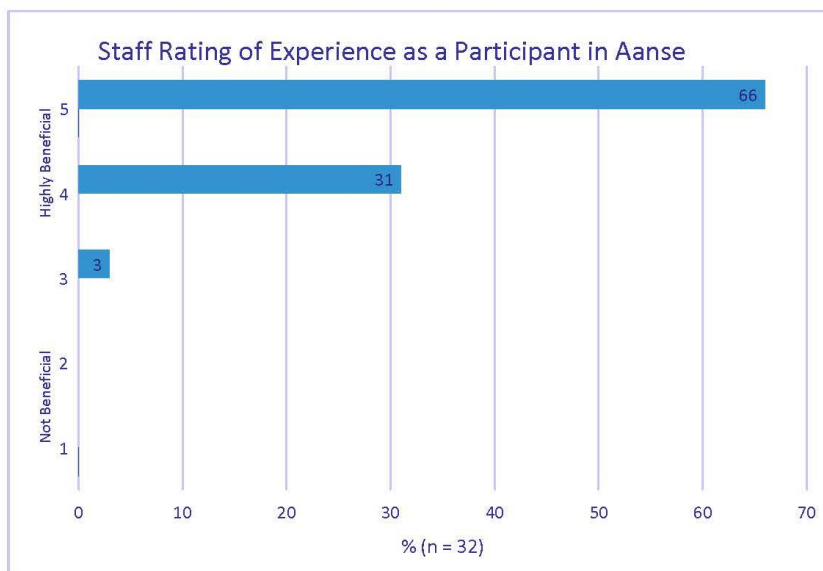
- Sourcing Indigenous classroom resources
- Partnerships with Indigenous artists to create lasting artistic contributions to school community
- Implement Indigenous Education Best Practices Walkthrough to decolonize practices and Indigenize classroom design
- Indigenizing Sports and Wellness Days
- Orange Shirt Day for ongoing Indigenous Education Practices in classrooms
- Indigenize Eco-Club actions
- Indigenizing the School Space initiative
- Aligning French and English Indigenous Education Resources to allow for access across programs of study

Key Learnings (Individual Participants)

- Importance of intentionally building relationships with Indigenous students, families, and community (engage in the *labour of reciprocal relationship* building)
- Increased awareness of Indigenous knowledges
- Importance of collaboration among colleagues in order to push each other's thinking about Indigenous education
- Increased understanding of what it might mean to decolonize education

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- Ongoing understanding of the difference between equity work and decolonization work
 - Increased knowledge of resistance and sovereignty narratives as a challenge to damage-centred narratives
 - Understanding that relationships with Indigenous students, families, and community members are key to engaging Indigenous education
 - Increased awareness of presence of Indigenous students in the schools
 - Importance of ensuring all voices are acknowledged and heard
 - The impacts of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous students and families
 - Understanding of the Seven Ancestral Teachings
 - How to create an Indigenous space within the classroom
 - Better understanding of the unique experiences and needs of Indigenous students
 - Survivance should be the focus, as opposed to a deficit-based, “one-story” approach
 - Protocol for engaging with Indigenous community, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers
 - Shifting approaches from trauma-informed to healing-centred
 - Current approaches and beliefs about Indigenous students need to be challenged
 - How to build relationships with students and colleagues in an intentional way
 - How to build collaborative inquiry into my everyday practices rather than seeing professional learning as an add on
 - Importance of feelings as means of communicating
 - Strategies for working with individuals and groups who have experienced trauma
 - Everyone has gifts
 - Increased awareness of the impact of the Indian Act on the experiences of Indigenous students and families
 - Awareness of the number of resources available through the Urban Indigenous Education Centre
 - Importance of learning from the voices of Indigenous students

Perceived Impacts of Professional Learning on Staff Learning and Practice



Participant Comments on the Professional Learning Experience

"Thank you for organizing this wonderful learning opportunity. I have learned a lot and will continue to find ways to enrich my understanding of Indigenous perspectives so I can share them with others in the spaces I support."

"I began these workshops with a bit of hesitation, but from the first meeting date the feeling of belonging was so profound and my lack of proper information was highlighted. I truly felt after our sessions that it is our duty to make everyone feel belonging in our schools and that indigenous students see themselves on our walls, in our stories and in our teaching."

"This professional learning series has been so valuable. Thank you so much for all your work on putting this together and for the content and books you provided us. It has really helped me to ask myself some hard questions, learn, listen and reflect on my practice."

"I would like to continue to take more actions but need more support in this area and so I hope this kind of learning extends further and that this is not the last time I am part of these kinds of workshops."

"Very powerful professional learning and a safe environment to explore knowledge and to cultivate a deeper understanding with how I position myself in an indigenous space."

"Thank you for the opportunity. These sessions have opened my eyes to thinking about the way I approach teaching. I definitely see that there is work I still have to do in my attempt to decolonize my own class and to assist doing so in the spaces that I currently support."

"Thank you to everyone who made this all happen. This has been my best professional learning in a long time. Going forward, I will be looking at how I can continue to engage with this learning formally. I want to acknowledge how much I appreciated the vulnerability of so many of the facilitators and I learned so much through your willingness to share openly and meet me where I am/was in my own learning. That in and of itself was really powerful modelling in terms of mentorship, facilitation, teaching, coaching."

"I always appreciated listening to the Elders speak, Gave lots of perspectives on what I still don't know and on how to move forward in taking action. I also enjoyed the smudging at the beginning, gave me a sense of calm. This opportunity has made a deep impact on myself personally and professionally. It is a lens I want to bring into more in my work with schools and with administrations. I am deeply humbled by having this opportunity and again hope to engage in more of this kind of learning in the future."

"This has been an incomparable and spiritual process. I deeply value the insights, knowledge and perceptions I've gained through this series and will bring my learning to whatever I pursue across the rest of my career."

Recommendations

- Develop UIEC involvement in directly supporting School Improvement Planning and implementation in all Phase 1 and Phase 2 schools alongside school leadership teams
- Identify explicit processes for Phase 1 and Phase 2 schools to leverage UIEC support consistently throughout the year
- Access and triangulate data from Academic Dashboard (in connection to Teacher classroom assessment), UIEC Student Success Team Referrals, and classroom assessments to identify most urgent needs among, Indigenous students, increase focus on responding to student needs and mobilizing student strengths
- Continue with an explicit focus on educator beliefs about Indigenous students and Indigenous student learning and well-being
- Focus more directly on decolonizing practices in consideration of resources currently available and with opportunities to create new resources for staff

- Create opportunities for Principals and Vice-Principals of Phase 1 and Phase 2 schools to form a Collaborative Inquiry group aimed at enhancing their own leadership capacity in Indigenous Education
- Integrate professional learning about anti-Indigenous racism, trauma informed approaches, concepts of sovereignty and cultural safety into all leadership development opportunities
- Initiate and lead Indigenous Education Administrator Collaborative Inquiry to support the enhancement of Indigenous Education in schools as well as provide support to tracking well-being and learning among First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning and well-being in order to inform School Improvement efforts
- Create professional learning opportunities for Senior Team on anti-Indigenous racism and decolonization the implications for schools and the system
- Create and maintain system wide Indigenous Student Mentoring Network that connects Indigenous TDSB staff with Indigenous students – for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students currently experiencing academic engagement as well as for those experiencing challenges with academic engagement and overall well-being in school
- Begin formal capacity building development in schools with highest numbers of Access to Service referrals to the Urban Indigenous Education Centre

Implications

Participating staff communicated learnings that reflect a need for pedagogies of truth and sovereignty and a constant probing of what these pedagogies might mean for Indigenous student well-being and learning. The work of Aanse must continue to move away from defining issues with solutions that re-entrench settler colonial power (Simpson, 2017) and further toward (re)imagining decolonized learning processes for educators and Indigenous students - processes that focus on respectful, wholistic, and multifaceted ways of affecting conditions in education. The work of Aanse emphasizes the need to support mostly non-Indigenous educators to build respectful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous students, families and community members in order to highlight resurgence and redress, alongside truth and reconciliation. Such work must necessarily disrupt damage-centred narratives of Indigenous experiences. These deficit-based narratives often become the manifestation of 'awareness' for settler educators.

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