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Ian MacRae – Director of Education

Lakehead Public Schools is committed to the success of every student and believes that Learning, Engagement and Environment work together to support the success and well-being of every student. Within the environment, it is the goal of Lakehead Public Schools to provide a safe environment for students that facilitates their 21 century learning needs; and to ensure a caring and inclusive learning and working environment. The board is also committed to engagement meaning that we will, in collaboration with community partners, encourage effective and efficient supports and services for students and families. We will also strive to ensure schools and families are engaged in respectful and reciprocal communications. All of this is to support the learner where high levels of personal and academic excellence are sought for every student. We have a continued commitment to student success in order to enhance life choices for all students. We also promote resiliency and well-being of students and staff.

Lakehead Public Schools recognizes that we are in a historically significant time in Canada with respect to the relationship between Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal education, and reconciliation for our nation. Our work in Aboriginal education continues to align with the truth telling and reconciliation process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. This commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect will forge a brighter future for all students and staff of Lakehead Public Schools.

The Board's Strategic and Operational Plans and the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007)* and *Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2014)* guide Indigenous education in Lakehead District School Board. Four areas of focus are: improving student achievement, closing the gap, strengthening community partnerships and increasing our cultural awareness as a community.

To support the specific mental, spiritual, emotional and physical needs of our First Nation, Metis and Inuit learners, the following are supports that are in place at Lakehead Public Schools:

Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC)

The Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC) guides all work related to First Nation Metis and Inuit Education at Lakehead Public Schools.

It is composed of at least six parents/guardians appointed by the Board who are of Aboriginal ancestry; three members appointed by the Board with preference given to candidates who are of Aboriginal ancestry and/or are members of agencies or groups that provide services to Aboriginal people; a youth of Aboriginal ancestry presently enrolled in a secondary school program appointed by the Board; a Trustee appointed by the Board; the Director of Education or designate; and a Principal or Vice Principal. The committee is also supported by a number of community elders.

Mandate

The mandate of the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee is to advise the Board on matters relating to the education of Aboriginal students.

The mandate specifically includes:

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Increasing the cultural awareness of all Board trustees and personnel through professional development and/or other related activities.
Expanding the awareness of effective programs for the educational needs of Aboriginal students.
Facilitating initiatives for all Aboriginal students.
Providing advice on initiatives including, but not limited to, student programs, Aboriginal studies, student retention and alternative education programs.
Developing and enhancing partnerships with community based agencies that support Aboriginal students and their families.
Responding to the Board on requests for advice and recommendations on matters that the Board may direct to the committee.
Advocating both provincially and locally for specific needs of Aboriginal students.
Identifying community issues that impact education.
Responding to other initiatives as they arise.

Elder's Council

Lakehead Public Schools has an Elder's Council that meets regularly to provide advice on matters related to the education of First Nation, Metis and Inuit pupils. They also provide support and guidance for training for staff as well as the topics important for the learning of all students (i.e. Residential Schools, Treaties, etc) and other matters as required.

Graduation Coaches

The Graduation Coaches in the Four Directions Program support First Nation, Metis and Inuit learners at the secondary level.
The Graduation Coach approach:
Focuses on relationships and mentoring, transitions, culture, career planning, academics and parent engagement
Acts as a liaison between families and schools
Provides support to improve attendance, well-being and academic success
Determines barriers, work on strategies to remove them, put in place the protective factors necessary for students to thrive (Unger, 2012)
Transition programming – elementary to secondary – encourages a sense of belonging in the school community
Motivates students to stay engaged in learning
They do this by:
Getting to know students and facilitating engagement
Creating and enhancing a welcoming, supportive space
Building close, supportive relationships with students, families and communities
Acting as an advocate for First Nation, Metis and Inuit students within the Circle of Caring Adults

Aboriginal Achievement Tutors

The Aboriginal Achievement Tutors in every secondary school provide academic tutoring, a safe space, cultural opportunities within the school and within the community and connections as needed.
They do this by:
Having a safe and welcoming space within the school
Supporting student who need extra help with class work
Supporting students who need a volunteer experience for graduation

Helping students connect with their families, i.e. making time for them to call or email home as they wish
Providing information to families through Facebook regarding what is happening in the school to support students
Providing connections to community events
Taking students on field trips
Other supports as necessary

Mino Bimaadiziwin

Mino Bimaadiziwin is a summer camp for youth in grades 7,8,9 and 10. In its third year, Mino Bimaadiziwin continues to be based on traditional cultural teachings and focus on: key life skills, leadership development, healthy relationships, positive self-esteem, self-awareness and connections to education. The program was enhanced in the second year to include: participation of youth mentors in a leadership role; increased learning on the land with two days and one night at Kingfisher Outdoor Education Centre; and, a reach ahead credit opportunity for grade 9, 10 and 11 students who also attend a second week of in-school classes.

Ongoing Ministry support, local partnerships, and an enhanced partnership with the OPP Aboriginal Policing Bureau contribute to Mino Bimaadiziwin's continued development. The overwhelming success of the program is clear with: 33% of year one campers returning, student participation increasing by 43%, all students completing the camp; 42% of year two campers receiving an additional high school credit; and most importantly – incredible feedback from students and their families!

Ready 4 Secondary School

Is a new, one week summer camp for Grade 8 First Nation, Metis and Inuit Youth entering secondary school in the fall to help them transition and get a jump start on their 40 hours of community service.

After School Activities

Lakehead Public School engaged with Leadership Thunder Bay to develop wrap around supports for students who are living in Thunder Bay without their parents. The group outreached to community groups that work with youth and created a website that links youth to social, recreational, volunteer and other opportunities. The website will launch with the return to school this September.

Safe Schools App

In January 2015, Lakehead Public Schools launched the Safe Schools App. Safe Schools App. The purpose of this app is to provide students with a safe, secure and anonymous way to report bullying and other incidents that affect the safety of our schools. The Lakehead Public Schools Safe Schools App provides you with information on how to get help in your school and a direct link to Thunder Bay District Crime Stoppers report serious issues. The app can be downloaded from Lakehead Public School website www.lakeheadschoools.ca

Social Workers

Social workers are available in every family of schools including one secondary and a number of elementary schools. They are available to support student needs and to connect them with community supports and services as necessary.

Aboriginal Parent/Guardian Advocacy Program

This program's goal is to empower parents, guardians and students for student success. It offers an advocate to help support student registration, Navigation of the educational system, Translation, Transition to school, Connection to community supports, Assistance with school events, visits and participation in Parent/Teacher interviews and meetings.

Linking Families

With a goal of link families and school and working together to support students, Lakehead Public schools held the Linking Families series. In partnership with Sir Winston Churchill CVI and Sherbooke Public School, three events were held within the two school communities. A community feast was held at Sherbooke Public School on April 12, a feast for families, students and community partners was held at Sir Winston Churchill CVI on April 21 featuring Michael Redhead Champagne and a community showcase was held at the Vale Community Centre on June 10 featuring Shabastik.

Academies of Learning

Lakehead Public Schools has begun the pilot of Academies of Learning that are focused at the grade 7&8 level on community connected, experiential learning. Getting students outside of the classroom to learn, to ask questions, to investigate through inquiry-based models of the questions they have. It's about their learning, and it's about tying the curriculum to real-life experiences. Students retain more, learn more, and they have a chance to reflect on their learning. Much of the content in the outdoor academy incorporates an indigenous perspective through learning about everything from lacrosse, canoe building and paddle making to birch bark basket making.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

The following steps have been taken this year:

Providing training and resources for staff helps to ensure all staff and students are aware of the true history of Canada. Training also helps staff to develop and understanding to better support students based on their learning needs. Currently the Board is responding to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* in a number of ways.

Over 250 staff members have participated in Native Awareness Training to build cultural and historical understanding.

Four cycles of Cultural Sensitivity Training system-wide have been completed. This year the training focused on Truth and Reconciliation, specifically the history of Residential Schools and our collective responsibility to reconciliation.

Grades 7-12 History Teachers participated in professional development using the resource *Stolen Lives: The Indigenous Peoples of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools*.

We continue to provide appropriate resources related to Aboriginal education that are shared system wide and provide training for as they become available.

A Grade 6/7 class at McKellar Park Public School took part in the Connecting Anishnaabe & Western Ways of Knowing in Mathematics. Through our partnership with Fort William Historical Park, an Indigenous artist and classroom teacher co-taught birch bark basket making integrating Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in the classroom.

Mino Bimaadiziwin, an Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program is a collaborative effort between the City of Thunder Bay Police, Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre,

Lakehead University - Office of Aboriginal Initiatives, the Ministry of Education, Ontario Provincial Police and Red Tail Hawk Consulting.

Secondary students participated in the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program in partnership with Lakehead University. One specific example included four students from Hammarskjold High School that took part in *The Tikkun Project*, which culminated in attending an International Symposium in Windsor, Ontario.

All secondary schools have either a peer mentoring program or an Aboriginal Student Leadership Committee.

Indigenous Education Focused Collaborative Inquiry projects continued in one elementary school and all secondary schools with the goals of improving student achievement and well-being amongst First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, increasing knowledge and understanding of cultures, histories and perspectives, and engaging staff in authentic partnerships with community.

The staff resource *First Nation, Métis, Inuit Presence in Our Schools: A Cultural Resource for Staff* has been revised and updated to include information that supports Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

Additional Supports for Aboriginal Education

The Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher (AERT) continues to work collaboratively within system initiatives to provide professional development that supports staff and student learning.

The Indigenous Support and Engagement Initiative resource teacher is working with staff in two secondary schools to develop strategies to support the learning of Indigenous students and to re-engage students who withdrew from school.

Partnerships are important to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit student success and retention. We continue to work closely with a number of community partners through the work of the Aboriginal Community Liaison officer.

Native Studies and Native Language courses continue to be offered system wide at the secondary level, in Armstrong and in select north and south zone elementary schools.

Two secondary schools are piloting the use of the Native Studies Art course being offered to all Grade 9 students enrolled in art.

Next Steps

Racism

In the fall, with the support of AEAC, Lakehead Public Schools is starting an Anti-Racism campaign. We plan to engage our students, families and communities to share with us their stories and to help us stand up against the racism that is occurring in our community,

Lakehead Public Schools recognizes that there is much more work to do to ensure our youth are safe and reach their life goals. We are willing to and interested in partnering with all community partners to ensure their success.