

Urban Aboriginal Education Project - Welcoming Environment

Lakehead Public Schools

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Our Welcoming Learning Environment!



Introduction

Environment

Practices and Attitudes

Resources and Materials

Outreach and Community



Integrity Acceptance Responsibility

Empathy Respect



Welcoming Environment

The Urban Aboriginal Education Project (UAEP) provides Lakehead Public Schools with the opportunity to develop innovative models and strategies to support Aboriginal student achievement by meeting the needs of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students living in Thunder Bay, along with their Aboriginal families and communities. (From this point forward these three groups will be called "Aboriginal.")

Our Welcoming Environments e-scan attempts to capture information related to addressing the goals outlined in the Urban Aboriginal Education Project.

Improving Student Success

The strategies to improve student success as outlined in the UAEP are:

- Build capacity for environments that are supportive for learning.
- Reduce gaps in student achievement through environments and classroom resources that reflect the lived experiences of the student population.
- Increase parental participation in schools by creating an environment that is inviting.

These strategies are closely linked to the UAEP's Indicator's of Success:

- A minimum of four pilot schools will have used the scan, identified improvements that can be made to the environment and gathered feedback from focus groups.
- Increased participation of First Nation, Métis and Inuit parents in education.
- Eased school transitions for First Nation students/families coming from First Nation communities.



UAEP Goals

The Urban Aboriginal Education Project will work with other district school boards to develop and conduct an environmental scan that would assist schools with defining and measuring environments that are welcoming to Aboriginal students, parents and families.

It is important to visit best practices in other jurisdictions. For example, some items may include signage, translation, orientation events, travel, and development of effective materials. Youth will take an active role in the development of materials, taking ownership and creating a sense of belonging to the school.

The UAEP goals for Welcoming Environments look closely at implementing the Ontario Ministry of Education's, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework.

- **Goal #2 Reduce Gaps in Student Achievement**
Strategy 2.2: Provide additional support in a variety of areas to reduce gaps in student Outcomes.
- **Goal #3 High Levels of Public Confidence**
Strategy 3.2: Build capacity to support identity building, including the appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives, values, and cultures by all students, school board staff, and elected trustees.

A template will be developed to identify welcoming, inclusive environments, and a list of resources purchased or developed are included to illustrate what steps have been taken to incorporating the goals of the UAEP and the FNMI Education Framework Policy to building inclusion of Aboriginal students and education in our schools. The following four areas that have been identified to achieving the goals are outlined in the wheel:

- Environment
- Practices & Attitudes
- Resources & Materials
- Outreach & Community



This Welcoming Environment figure visually demonstrates the balance of what is needed in our schools to help in creating a holistic approach to meeting the needs of our Aboriginal students and families.

This environmental scan is a **work in progress** that overviews the planned activities that will be undertaken through the Urban Aboriginal Education Project.

Welcoming Environment

The environment of the school includes the physical aspects and the first impressions that are received by the students and families that come into the building.

The following is a list of areas that were identified (but not limited to):

- **Entry Points**
- **Bulletin Board**
- **Signage**
- **Pamphlets/Brochures**
- **Posters**
- **Logo**
- **Welcoming Staff**



Practices and Attitudes

The practices and attitudes that are demonstrated in the school by teachers and staff is an important element for relationship building and inclusion.

- **Registration**
- **Staff**
- **Interviews**
- **Programming: Fair start/ good start**
- **Parent/Guardian Involvement**
- **Community Services**
- **Invitations**

Resources and Materials

The resources and materials that have been or will be purchased for our schools will include Aboriginal content and perspectives.

Books

- Levelled
- Fiction
- Non-Fiction
- Graphic Texts / Novels

Additional Classroom Resources

- NFB (films)
- First People Resource Collection
- Newspapers Local (i.e. The Chronicle-Journal) and Aboriginal (i.e. Wawatay, Seven Magazine)
- Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools Guide for Staff

Teacher Resources & Skill Sets

- Training on Aboriginal Awareness & Culture
- Cultural teachings to connect with the First People Resource Collection
- Teaching strategies to build literacy
- Tribes

Additional Teacher and Staff Resources

- Aboriginal Role Models (i.e. Artists)
- Elders
- Community Resource Booklet
- Community Guests
- Attending Special Events
- Aboriginal Education Resource Teachers
- Aboriginal Community Liaison and Partnership Officer
- Lakehead Public Schools Web Page – Aboriginal Education
- Transitions Program
- Mentoring Program
- Bulletin Boards

Outreach and Community

Outreaching to the community is essential to building proactive and positive partnerships. Accessing community input and resources provides our schools with sustainability in our goal of implementing Aboriginal perspectives.

Coordination of Community Services

- Red Cross (access to food donations for breakfast/lunch programs)
- Elders Council & Protocol
- Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee
- Urban Aboriginal Strategy



Notes

**Aboriginal Community Liaison and Partnership Officer
Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher
(807) 625-5100**



Anishinaape Pimaatisiwin Kikinoomaakewikamikong
Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools