Indigenous Cultural Safety Strategy

LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

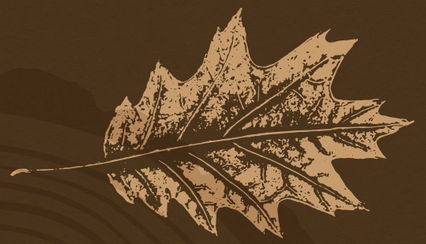
WE BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING, WITH DEEP RESPECT AND GRATITUDE, THAT LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS LOCATED ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF FORT WILLIAM FIRST NATION, SIGNATORY TO THE ROBINSON SUPERIOR TREATY OF 1850. We acknowledge all of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who reside in this territory and across our Nation; we are committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation and respect for all Canadians.

This land, known as Anemki Wajiw, has been, and continues to be, the sacred home of the Anishinaabe people. We honour the enduring presence, knowledge, and stewardship of Indigenous Peoples who have cared for this land since time immemorial. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, learn, and grow on these lands, and recognize that this privilege comes with responsibility.

As educators and leaders, we commit to walking alongside Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation, truth, and mutual respect. We recognize that reconciliation is not a single act, but a lifelong journey—one that calls us to listen deeply, learn humbly, and act courageously.

We give thanks for the wisdom shared with us by Elders, Knowledge Carriers, and community members, and we are inspired by the strength, resilience, and brilliance of Indigenous youth and families. Their voices guide us as we strive to create learning spaces that are safe, inclusive, and rooted in cultural humility.

May this acknowledgement serve not only as a moment of reflection, but as a call to action—to honour the past, engage in the present, and build a future grounded in equity, justice, and hope.



Acknowledging the Collective Voices that Guide Our Steps

The creation of this strategy was a collective journey—one rooted in relationship, reciprocity, and respect. We honour the many voices that shaped this work and acknowledge the vital role of Indigenous community members, families, students, and staff who shared their time, stories, and guidance throughout the process.

This plan could not exist without the insight, generosity, and leadership of those who walked alongside us—reminding us that true change begins when we listen deeply and act together. The use of School Climate Survey and Generator data helped to carry forward student voices and experiences shared in years prior, ensuring that this plan reflects the realities and hopes of Indigenous students, families, and communities.

Through multiple gatherings and feedback from Miiniwewinan (Indigenous Education Advisory Committee), we came together to reflect, learn, and plan the path forward. Each conversation, teaching, and shared story added to the strength and spirit of this work.

At the end of every year, we will take time to reflect and share the journey we have taken—the actions, outcomes, and stories from the work being done. This ongoing reflection is a way to continue showing reciprocity to the voices that first helped shape this plan.

"ELDER FRIEDA MCDONALD SHARES THAT EVERYONE HAS A CREATION STORY. THEY ARE ALL CORRECT IF THE SOURCE IS A GOOD HEART. THE MORE WE SHARE OUR HEARTS WITH EACH OTHER, OUR ABILITY TO INCREASE CULTURAL SAFETY FOR ALL OCCURS."

— Community Member



We hold deep appreciation to everyone who contributed—for their honesty, courage, and belief in the importance of creating safe, inclusive, and culturally grounded learning spaces.

Chi-miigwech, marsi, thank you.

Director and Chair Message

As we present the Indigenous Cultural Safety Plan, we do so with deep respect, gratitude, and a shared commitment to fostering safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive learning environments for all. This plan is grounded in the enduring knowledge, presence, and stewardship of Indigenous Peoples, whose histories and wisdom enrich our schools and our community.

We acknowledge that Lakehead Public Schools is located on the traditional territory of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850.

This strategy is a living document, reflecting our ongoing journey toward reconciliation, truth, and mutual respect. Cultural safety requires an ongoing commitment to listening deeply, learning humbly, and acting courageously. We recognize our responsibility to build relationships rooted in equity and justice, guided by the wisdom and strength of Elders, Knowledge Carriers, Indigenous youth and families, and especially Miiniwewinan.

The plan's priorities—Teaching and Learning; Relationships with Community; Language and Culture; and Safety and Belonging—are interconnected and reflect Indigenous teachings and the medicine wheel. At its center is the Indigenous learner, whose academic growth, well-being, and inclusion shape our actions.

Supported by the Indigenous Education Framework of Relevance, Respect, Responsibility, and Relationality, these commitments will continue to evolve.

Together, we will celebrate successes, share milestones, and continue building a future where every learner feels safe, valued, and empowered.

Respectfully,



SHERRI-LYNNE PHARAND,
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



LEAH VANDERWEY,
TRUSTEE CHAIR

Lakehead Public Schools commits to the adoption of an Indigenous Education Framework that fully commits to the spirit of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which seeks to:

- empower acts of reconciliation throughout all spheres of Canadian society,
- address the ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous Communities,
- engage the oppression and marginalization of Indigenous communities in Canadian society, and;
- provide culturally competent pedagogies in all aspects of education in Canada.

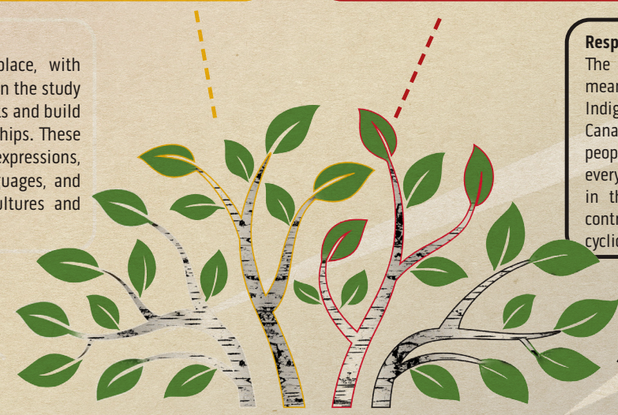
This Framework prioritizes the incorporation of Indigenous education throughout Lakehead Public Schools and is embodied throughout all facets of the Strategic Plan. It commits to a spirit of reconciliation, a journey requiring constant focus, energy, and commitment to collectivity and inclusion while confronting the historical and present marginalization of Indigenous peoples.

Lakehead Public Schools therefore believes that for reconciliation to be possible, Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships must be guided by the following principles:

Relevancy
Education must be relevant and support students in building a healthy mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, and prepare them to work, live, and help build Indigenous and Canadian societies. This means that Indigenous success means the success of every learner.

Respect
Respect is the key to learning, found through commitments to wisdom, love, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. Due to longstanding misunderstandings, violence, and policies and practices in Canadian society, values of patience, listening, and generosity must guide Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships as well as connections with the earth, water, and sky.

Relationality
The world is a relational place, with Indigenous knowledge based in the study of how living beings share gifts and build positive, sustainable relationships. These are best understood in the expressions, ceremonies, pedagogies, languages, and stories within Indigenous cultures and communities.



Responsibility
The creation of healthy and meaningful relationships between Indigenous communities and Canadians is a responsibility of all peoples. In essence, everyone and everything has a role and place in this world and are important, contributing members to a full and cyclical universe.

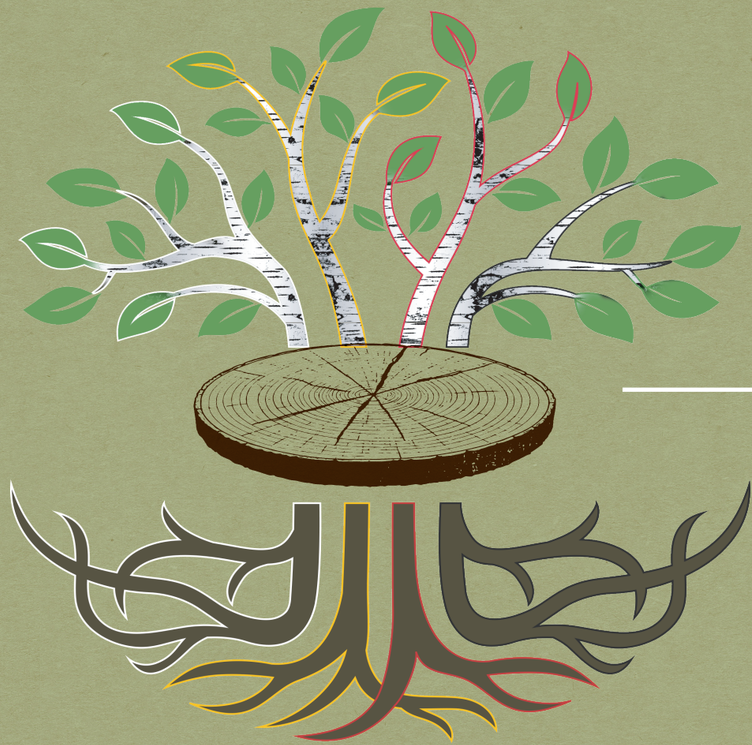
Lakehead Public Schools

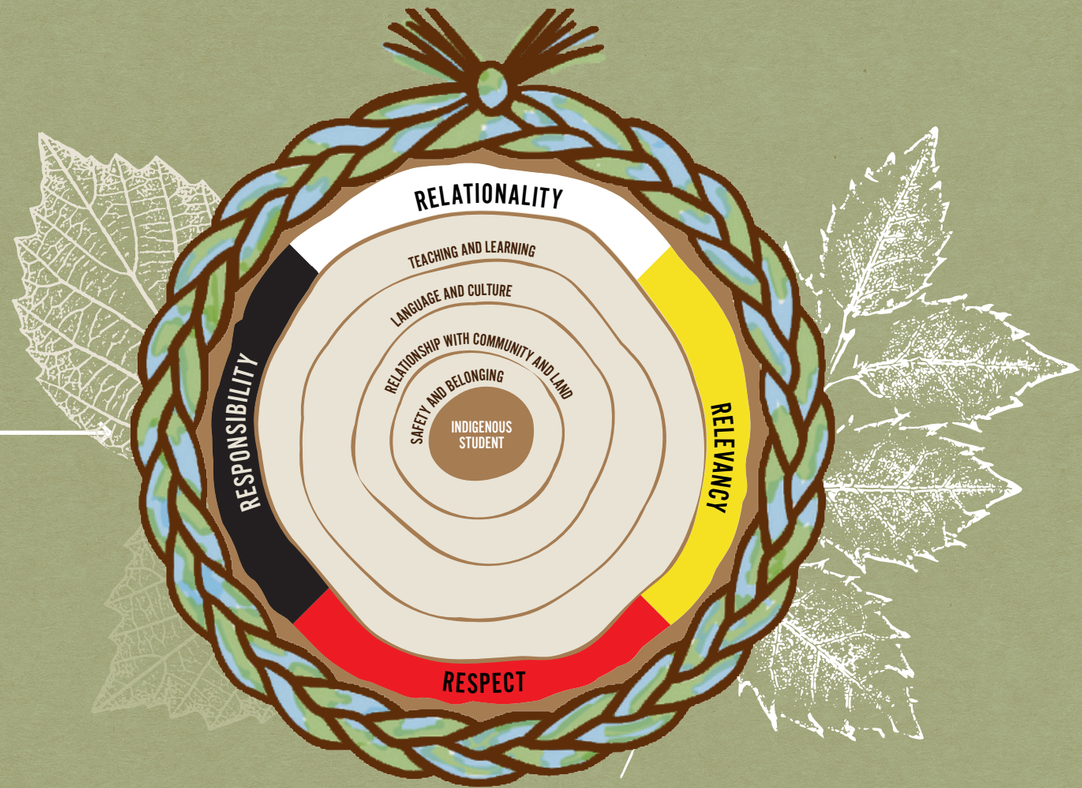
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FRAMEWORK



"FOR ANISHINABEG PEOPLE, BELONGING IS NOT A FEELING, IT'S A PRACTICE. IT'S THE WAY WE LIVE IN DEEP CONNECTION WITH OUR COMMUNITY, OUR ANCESTORS AND THE LAND."

— Leanne Betasamoke Simpson





THE LIVING STRATEGY

THE INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY STRATEGY PLAN IS A LIVING DOCUMENT THAT IS EMBEDDED WITHIN THE LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FRAMEWORK. TOGETHER, THEY EMBODY THE FOUR BRANCHES OF RELEVANCY, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, AND RELATIONALITY. This strategy is not a one-time plan, but a long-term commitment that will continue to grow and adapt as we listen, learn, and act together.

Grounded in the teaching that growth is cyclical, like the rings of a tree, we will return regularly to reflect on our actions, gather feedback, and strengthen our commitments over time. This ongoing reflection and sharing ensures the strategy remains meaningful, responsive, and rooted in relationship.

Indigenous cultural safety cannot be achieved through isolated actions. Each priority is interconnected, like the rings of a tree, the teachings of the circle, and the balance of the medicine wheel. Together, they guide how we learn, relate, and create spaces of belonging.

Like a circle, there is no beginning or end — only a shared journey of learning, respect, and relationship.

At the center is the Indigenous student, surrounded by four key priorities: Safety and Belonging, Relationships with Community and Land, Language and Culture, and Teaching and Learning. These priorities are supported by the Indigenous Education Framework, ensuring our actions remain aligned, purposeful, and connected. A tree's rings serve as a living record, telling the story of our work — the challenges, successes, and moments of growth. Just as a tree does not shed its old rings, we honour the learning and efforts that came before us.

Each new layer builds upon what already exists. Honouring the foundational work — including the creation of the Lakehead Public Schools Indigenous Education Framework with Niigaan Sinclair — is an important part of this journey.

Surrounding everything is a braid of sweetgrass, representing strength, collaboration, and care for one another. The blue and green strands honour Two-Eyed Seeing and the sacredness of the waters and the land, reminding us that cultural safety is a shared, ongoing responsibility.

As we walk together, we look forward to sharing milestones, celebrating successes, and identifying next steps as we continue to grow.

OUR PRIORITIES

"CREATING A SPACE WHERE WE ARE ABLE TO BE WHO WE ARE, ACCEPTED FOR WHO WE ARE AND ALLOWED THE NECESSARY MEANS TO NOT ONLY BE ACCEPTED BUT THRIVE."

— Staff Member

Safety and Belonging



- Develop a board-wide framework with consistent, restorative responses to incidents of racism
- Prioritize Indigenous voices and experiences
- Intentional staffing to support FNMI studies and students
- Clear protocols for students and families to access Indigenous staff and programs
- Embed Indigenous cultural safety in board practices, policies, and procedures
- Increase Indigenous representation across the board

"AS A STUDENT, CULTURAL SAFETY IS IMPORTANT TO ME. DIFFERENT PRACTICES AND BEHAVIOUR IN TRADITIONS AND CULTURE MAKE US ALL DIFFERENT. IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE RESPECTFUL WHILE EMBRACING WHO WE ARE AS INDIVIDUALS."

— Student

Relationships with Community and Land





- Strengthen connections with Indigenous communities and organizations, Elders, and Knowledge Carriers through regular engagement, co-planning opportunities, and reciprocal initiatives that honour Indigenous voice, leadership, and ways of knowing
- Encourage Board and school staff at community events
- Provide training to educators to unlearn colonial teaching methods and embrace diverse worldviews and pedagogies

Language and Culture



- Provide dedicated spaces for smudging
- Develop guiding principles for how ceremony, cultural practices and engagement with sacred items will be respectfully incorporated at Lakehead Public Schools
- Promote and support the presence and daily use of Anishinaabemowin in all schools and across the board
- Increase access to and prioritize high-quality Anishinaabemowin teaching and learning
- Intentionally and appropriately embed Indigenous ceremony and cultural presence into school and board level celebrations and model cultural inclusion consistently at leadership and system events

Teaching and Learning





- Establish board wide protocols and practices to respectfully engage with Elders, Knowledge Carriers, Indigenous families and community members
- Support staff, students, and families to learn about cultural practices and Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- Maintain a collection of culturally appropriate resources for staff and students
- Embed Indigenous voices, cultures, histories, and ways of knowing, being and doing in all curriculum areas

"SO EVERYONE IS IN A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN LEARN, AND WHERE WE CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER."

— Parent/Guardian



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