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Improving Indigenous Students' Success Through an Analysis and Implementation of Promising Teaching Practices

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Abstract

This project outlines the journey of a diverse team of culturally responsive lead learners within a rural school system in Saskatchewan as they attempted to identify perceived barriers to Indigenous student success while designing a framework that endeavoured to align promising practices and initiatives to better support educators.

Keywords: Indigenous, reconciliation, promising practices

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support of our local Elders/Knowledge Keepers, board of education, director of education, school community councils, Meadow Lake Tribal Council partners, Northwest School Division Reconciliation Team, FNMI Lead Learners and the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation. Without these combined efforts, this work would not have been possible.

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Background/Context

With the development of the 94 calls to action by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC, 2015), Canadians from all walks of life and professions are not only paying attention but are actively changing the way they view, interact, engage, and build relationships with Indigenous people. This is no more prevalent than in education where federal and provincial stakeholders are actively trying to lessen the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students with the ultimate objective to improve graduation rates.

To date, in Saskatchewan education systems, there are countless people developing numerous initiatives, partnerships, research projects, resources, professional development, and instructional promising practices to help lessen the achievement gap, and therefore, improve the success of Indigenous students. Like other school divisions in the province and as a rural school division in Northwest Saskatchewan, we have been working on developing and implementing the aforementioned initiatives to enhance Indigenous culture, ways of knowing, and teaching and learning styles. These efforts have at times felt disjointed and fragmented and may have left educators wondering what to do next and afraid to move forward.

We understand, to move forward with improving Indigenous student outcomes, our team needs to focus on how to remove barriers, identify and enhance promising practices, and help educators feel comfortable and competent teaching Indigenous students. This is easier said than done as there is an overwhelming amount of research, resources, initiatives, programs, and opinions out there that may have led to educators being unsure of where or how to start. Additionally, we know that educators are equipped with varying levels of knowledge and understanding and may feel unprepared for the challenge of meeting the needs of our Indigenous students.

In our discussions as a team, it became abundantly clear that a one-size-fits-all fragmented model focusing on Indigenous education will not achieve success. Through this research, we wanted to find ways to help educators identify entry points to available resources based on their level of knowledge, understanding, and experiences.

As we moved through this research process, we felt it was paramount to develop a system-wide approach that best supports educators and students while encapsulating current frameworks and promising practices such as the *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework* (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2018).

As a diverse group of passionate and dedicated culturally responsive lead learners, we felt it was our moral imperative to develop and implement promising practices for Indigenous students that would cut through the dense forest of informational clutter and create a clear path towards improving Indigenous students' outcomes.

Purpose, Scope, and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of our study was to bring together a diverse group of culturally responsive lead leaders to see what knowledge and understanding could be gained to better support Indigenous students within the Northwest School Division (NWSD).

The lead learner group was comprised of personnel from a provincial school division, tribal council, and a federally run band school. The group included Elders, classroom teachers, and educational leaders.

Our objective was to identify perceived barriers and to research promising practices to incorporate into NWSD schools to better support educators as they work to improve the success of our Indigenous students by researching the question: *How can a diverse group of culturally responsive lead learners support educators in their efforts to improve the success of Indigenous students in a school setting?*

Literature Review

Since we had identified an overwhelming number of fragmented initiatives as a potential barrier for teachers, we felt it was necessary to search for alignment across the literature and initiatives already being used throughout the division. The following programs and resources were analyzed and used to inform this research project:

- *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015)
- Following Their Voices
- Inspiring Success Framework (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2018)
- *Turning High-Poverty Schools into High-Performing Schools* (Parrett & Budge, 2012)
- *Disrupting Poverty: Five Powerful Classroom Practices* (Budge & Parrett, 2018)
- *Building a Culture of Hope* (Barr & Gibson, 2018)
- Leading to Learn: Impacting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Student Outcomes (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education).

After the completion of the analysis, the following themes emerged:

- Relationships: caring relationships are necessary if significant learning is to occur.
- High expectations: all students are capable of meeting high standards when appropriately supported.
- Equity: an equal opportunity to learn requires equitable conditions for learning.
- Teachers are responsible for student learning.
- Barriers to learning are difficult but not impossible to eliminate.
- Biases: educators need to confront their own biases and blind spots as they work to eliminate conditions that perpetuate underachievement in their classrooms, schools, and districts.
- Hope.

These themes informed our practices while working alongside the NWSD Reconciliation Team and FNMI Lead Learners and Elders.

Methodology

This action research project was a qualitative study that used data collected within the NWSD to investigate the research question. This study established the beginning of an ongoing effort to reflect, act, and evaluate approaches to improve the success and engagement of Indigenous students in the school setting.

Setting: This study took place in the NWSD.

Participants: The participants in this study were teachers and administrators of the NWSD and members of the NWSD's FNMI Lead Learners group that was comprised of:

- Elders/Knowledge Keepers
- Teachers
- Educational leaders including senior and school-based administrators

We relied on the expertise, knowledge, and experiences of individuals from outside the school division to guide us in this research project, specifically Elders/Knowledge Keepers, tribal council and federally run band school personnel. For data collection purposes, the focus was with NWSD teachers.

Data Collection

Data regarding participants' perceptions of factors that contribute to or inhibit success among Indigenous students was collected using an online questionnaire (Appendix A) that was sent out to teachers and administrators within the NWSD in May 2018 and June 2019.

Additional data was collected through focus group conversations within FNMI Lead Learner group meetings. To moderate the focus group conversations, we facilitated a semi-structured interview process using a Speed Conversation activity (Appendix B).

Data Analysis and Findings

Data from Online Surveys

The Reconciliation Team, along with our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, analyzed the survey responses for emerging themes. The following key themes and sub-themes were identified.

| Key Themes | Sub-Themes |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money: financial support for resources, PD, presenters.• Time: too many other things to do that are more important.• Resources: finding age-appropriate materials within the treaty kits to support younger grades.• Professional development.• Genuine lack of knowledge/expertise or comfort level in teaching.• Fear of misrepresenting or disrespecting.• Time to collaborate.• Low percentage of FNMI students in class or school.• I/we treat everyone equally.• Mindset and paradigms as a barrier. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General perception: desire to move forward with learning and collaborating, just need guidance and support.• Blaming situation on external barriers like attendance, family, etc.• Biases, myths, and stereotypes regarding Indigenous people were evident in some responses to survey questions. |

Speed Conversations

At the final FNMI Lead Learner meeting in May, we were looking for feedback from the group to help assess our progress throughout the year. We decided to solicit this through a Speed Conversation activity. Discussions from the speed conversations were coded and categorized by the researchers into emerging patterns and themes that could be used to answer the research question: *How can a diverse group of culturally responsive lead learners support teachers in their efforts to better support the success of Indigenous students in a school setting?* We specifically wanted participants to reflect on how the group meetings influenced their own or their staff's practice. The following themes and sub-themes were identified.

Developing Your Compelling Why

- Facilitating staff/school professional development.
- Continual thought, learning, and growing through internal ongoing reflections.
- Not one and done.
- Good for all.
- Create commitment to the priority, collaboration, and sharing.

Professional Development Time

- Treaty education.
- Not add on, part of what we do.
- Grade-alike collaboration and support time.
- Time to internalize before implementing.
- Speakers, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, presenters.
- More intentional, less tokenism.

Tools Provided to be Used/Shared with Staff

- Staff/team questionnaires to develop hope (Appendix F).
- Cross-cultural competency continuum (Appendix G).
- Treaty education outcome assessment (Appendix H).

Valuable Resources

- *Indecently Exposed*, Jane Elliott
- Indian Horse
- Circle of Courage
- KAIROS Blanket Exercise
- Treaty Simulation
- Language infusion
- Medicine Wheel
- Elders/Knowledge Keepers

Addressing Misconceptions/Biases (challenging)

- Determine staff needs in this area.

Developing Foundational Knowledge

- Understanding of the Indigenous history of Canada and the implications of colonialism, residential schools, system of oppression, racism, cultural genocide.
- Deconstructing Canadian narrative.
- Anti-racism/anti-oppressive education.

Relationships

- Getting to know your students better in order to create a sense of belonging.
- Networking with like-minded educators.

Courage and Confidence

- Validation.
- Feeling empowered to be courageous.
- Courage and confidence to have difficult conversations.
- Creating a network of confidantes (Elders, Knowledge Keepers, team, and other stakeholders) – the feeling that they are not doing this alone.
- Confidence in asking for help and guidance from colleagues.

Roles and Clarity

- Diversity within the group ensured all roles were represented (staff, Elders, students, board, senior administration, and administration). Without this, it wouldn't have worked.
- We are all on the same page.
- All hands on deck.
- Administration/FNMI Lead Learners cultivating an environment for growth and creating a groundswell.

Emerging Promising Practices (what the team would like to see)

- An expectation in our PLCs.
- What matters is measured – treaty education should be on our report cards.
- Measurement/accountability tool.
- Whole-staff professional development time.
- Designated time in staff meetings.
- Webinars.
- Principal makes it a priority.

Ethical Issues

We obtained written permission from the participants of the focus group to be part of the study using an informed consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, that confidentiality will be maintained, and that participation is voluntary. Furthermore, a statement was included indicating there would be no penalty from withdrawing or not participating in the study.

Discussion

The Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation Grant

The Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation grant, along with school division funding, was used to bring together a diverse group of culturally responsive lead learners to develop a Reconciliation Team for the Northwest School Division for the purpose of pursuing the question of how to support teachers in their efforts to better support the success of Indigenous students in a school setting. In total, we brought the Reconciliation Team together for six meetings in locations spread across the school division. These locations displayed current promising practices within our schools and, as the year progressed, brought light to new initiatives.

Stumbling Our Way to Enlightenment Through Action Research

After the first research cycle, we analyzed our data, reflected on our progress, and had honest conversations between ourselves about the trajectory of the project. We realized that we were not doing anything new. We realized the need to refocus on how we would go about changing paradigms, mindsets, and the overall alignment. This led us to redirect our research by focusing on how to develop big ideas, such as Hope, and instill change in our division.

Putting the Pieces Together - Change Process Model

To effectively make this change, we used Kotter's (2012) 8-Step Process for Leading Change as our framework.

1. Create a sense of urgency.
2. Build a guiding coalition.
3. Develop a vision and strategy.
4. Communicate the change vision.
5. Empower educators for broad-based action.
6. Generate short-term wins.
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change.
8. Anchor new approaches in the culture.

Stage 1: Establish a Sense of Urgency

Grad-rate data, spanning over the last five years, showing the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was shared with educators across the division. This data could no longer be ignored, thus, demonstrating the urgent nature of the problem.

Additionally, a pivotal point in moving this agenda forward came when our director of education, on behalf of the board, announced to our administrators that improvement of Indigenous student grad rates and outcomes was a major focus of the province and school division. Therefore, it is an expectation that every school will create a Learning Improvement goal that aligns with the division and provincial strategic plans.

To solidify the urgency, we needed to use the information that we had to help people develop their own understanding of why this was so important to them. To this end, we discussed the imperatives identified in the Inspiring Success Framework (2018) that were: historical, cultural, ecological, moral, economic, and Student First. We tried to create differentiated avenues for people to understand the importance of connecting one of these implications to their own Compelling Why. Three such avenues were through the lens of:

1. Treaty education
2. Poverty
3. Hope

Following a model presented by Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators, the researchers developed and shared our individual Compelling Whys with the Reconciliation Team and modelled this process so that FNMI Lead Learners were better equipped to facilitate this important step with their staff (Appendix C).

Stage 2: Build a Guiding Coalition

As mentioned previously, the majority of the funds received for this research was used to bring together a diverse group of culturally responsive lead learners to develop a Reconciliation Team for the Northwest School Division for the purpose of pursuing the question of how to support teachers in their efforts to better support the success of Indigenous students in a school setting. We cannot express enough the importance and the significance of the team approach to the goal of improving Indigenous students' success in our schools.

Norms

We understood that the makeup of the group consisted of a variety of knowledge and understanding, and it was important that we honoured everyone's voice in a respectful manner. We decided to do this by using the Circle of Courage (Belonging, Mastery, Generosity, and Independence) as our framework in categorizing norms. The following norms governed our meetings.

Belonging

- Be present and contribute.
- Ask questions.
- Listen actively.
- Acknowledge and value that we are all at different places.

Mastery

- Develop our knowledge base with scaffolding.
- Ask questions to people beyond this group.
- Set goals.

Generosity

- Share ideas within the group.
- Share ideas beyond this group.

Independence

- Take action.
- Follow through on tasks.
- Make decisions.

Shared Beliefs

Taking the necessary amount of time to develop our shared beliefs was a crucial step in guiding us throughout this journey. Inspired by a module within Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators, the researchers developed a Shared Beliefs module (Appendix D) to use with the Reconciliation Team to co-create the following belief statements.

1. We believe in deconstructing our personal paradigms in order to reconstruct our way of thinking.
2. We believe school leaders play a pivotal role in creating a school culture that values and works towards inspiring hope.
3. We believe it is important for students to have a sense of belonging.
4. We believe we need to understand our students and their ways of knowing in order to create authentic relationships.
5. We believe we need to develop meaningful relationships built on trust to reach high expectations.

These belief statements were shared with the board of education, senior administrators, administrators, and teachers/educators to clarify our intent and purpose.

The data from the Speed Conversation activity spoke to the importance of this team as members expressed the following positive attributes of having the opportunity to work together.

- Support
- Learning
- Comradery

- Giving and getting respect
 - “Be mindful of the implications of our words and our actions.” (Elder)
- To confide in each other
- To network
- To know people have your back
 - “Nobody is in this alone.”
- Validation
- The greater good
- Multiple perspectives
- To develop a sense of togetherness
 - “One or two voices behind this is not enough ... a team approach is the only way.”

Developing Foundational Knowledge

Through this process, it was imperative that our Reconciliation Team and FNMI Lead Learners continued to develop specific foundational knowledge with regard to the true history of Canada as it pertains to Indigenous people, implications of colonialism, residential schools, oppression, and racism. Therefore, we embedded opportunities to deepen current understandings through exercises such as Elder teachings, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, Treaty Simulation, site visits, and learning from our Leading to Learn facilitators. The purpose of this education was to begin to remove the barrier of lack of knowledge that was identified in the baseline survey. This process was crucial to help staffs develop their Compelling Whys.

Stage 3: Develop a Vision and Strategy

While conducting research on the idea of hope, we realized that this was the concept that tied all other initiatives together. We strongly agreed with Barr and Gibson (2018) that in order to move forward with improving Indigenous student success, we needed to inspire hope within our division. We needed to ensure our educators had not only hope in their students, but also hope in themselves and their ability to elicit change.

Stage 4: Communicate the Change Vision

We attempted to tie the idea of ‘Hope’ to our existing school division’s mission and vision and shared it with necessary stakeholders. Therefore, the following information was presented by the researchers to the board of education.

Vision: Inspiring Hope

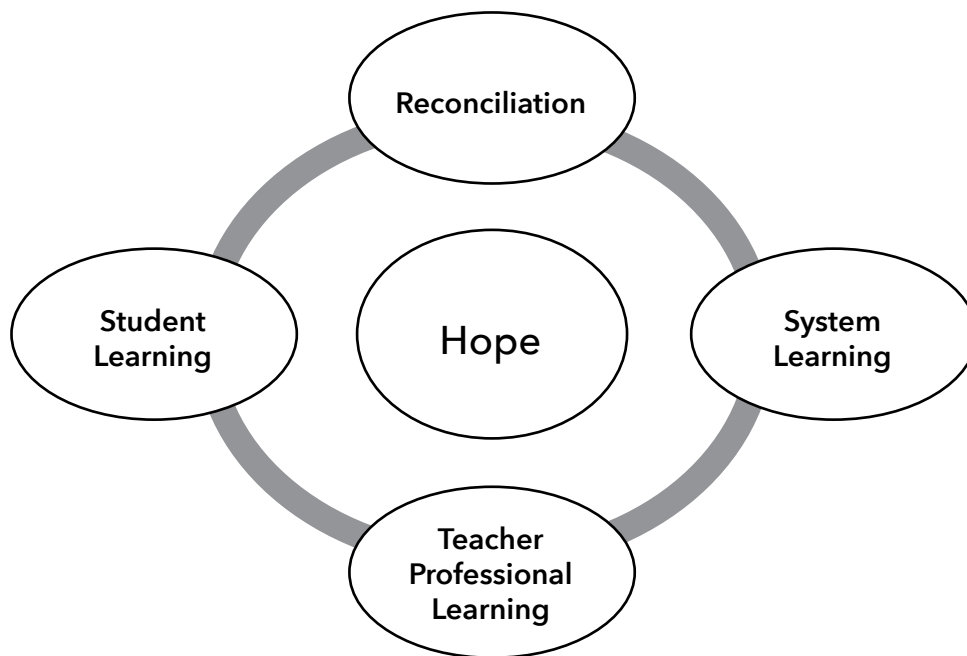
The Northwest School Division’s mission and vision is, “Laying the Foundation for Success ... One Student at a Time.” The Inspiring Cultures of Hope initiatives endeavour to align and strengthen the division’s foundational principles for success that are:

- The pursuit of excellence based upon high expectations for all.
- The principle of being student-centered.
- Accountability toward each other as individuals, schools, communities, and governing bodies.

- A culture of mutual respect, trust, and understanding.
- The highest standards of integrity and honesty.
- Inclusiveness as the celebration and acceptance of all people.
- Collaborative and cooperative relationships with all stakeholders.

We, as a division, can develop and inspire hope among all stakeholders. We can and will make a difference, one child, one teacher, and one parent at a time. Eric Jansen (2011) states, “How much hope and optimism kids feel at school is more important for boosting achievement than IQ ... Without it, all other strategies will fail.” Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Northwest School Division to build their foundation of success on the pillars of optimism and hope.

Next we utilized our Elders, our FNMI team, and the superintendent of schools to begin to communicate and spread the message of hope across our school division.



Alignment

As there were several initiatives happening throughout the province and in our school division, we needed a conscious, concerted effort to align promising practices and initiatives that were happening independent of each other, contributing to disjointed and tokenized delivery of effective practices to enhance Indigenous students’ achievement across the division. Efforts were made to align a number of specific calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the Educational Strategic Sector Plan, Inspiring Success Framework, Following Their Voices, Leading to Learn, Poverty and Hope.

This was extremely important so that all stakeholders, Elders/Knowledge Keepers, board members, senior administrators, administrators, and teachers gained clarity on how these initiatives were interconnected. This was crucial in moving these factions forward to endorse not only what we were doing, but also to validate that what the Reconciliation

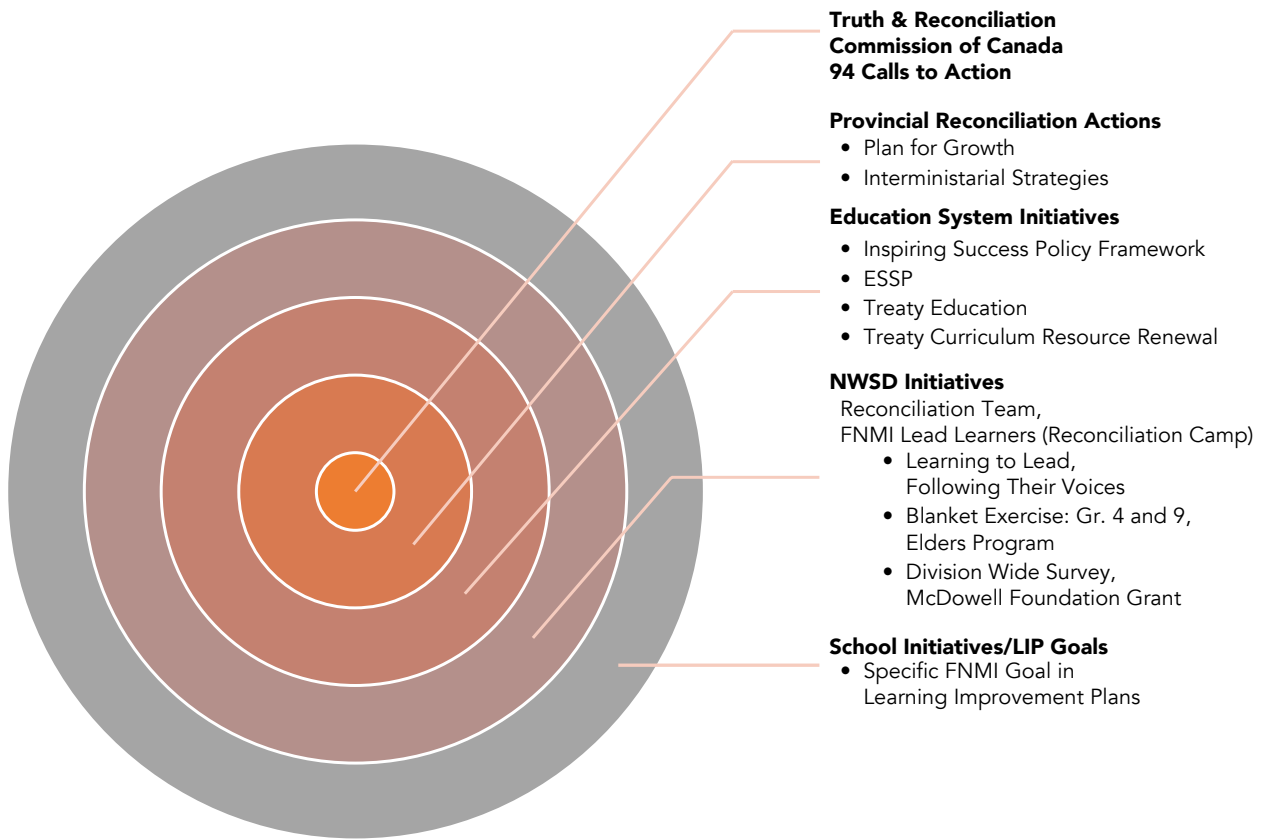
Team/FNMI Lead Learners were doing was credible, worthy, and respected. Without this understanding, the opportunity to move forward would have been compromised thus creating an insurmountable barrier.

What became abundantly clear was that it was imperative we take the time to present to administrators and staffs on how the initiatives aligned. To that end, a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix E) was developed and shared.

Figure 1

It was the educational system that has contributed to this problem in this country; and it's the educational system, we believe, that's going to help us get away from this.

Hon. Senator Murray Sinclair, Chair, Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada



First Nations & Métis education goals and outcomes are not an "add-on" but are integral to the planning and focus of the education sector as a whole.

Inspiring Success, p. 5

Figure 1 shows the alignment of initiatives and the vision of hope.

Stage 5: Empower Educators for Broad-Based Action

We now needed to work with the team of FNMI Lead Learners to effectively implement promising practices in their schools. We developed a framework for structuring our FNMI Lead Learner days into high-quality professional learning opportunities. Each day included the following components:

- Elder teachings throughout the day.
- Active participation in all facets – not sit and get.
- Sharing of promising practices:
 - Teachers teaching teachers.
 - Site visits.
- Discussion: Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit influenced discursive strategies designed to facilitate a space to discuss the hard-to-talk-about topics.
- Moving forward: for example, future-state activity. Where are we going now? What else do we need?
- Team empowerment: acknowledging and reinforcing the collective and self-efficacy that the members of the FNMI team can and will make a difference. As one participant said in the Speed Conversation, “If not us, then who? If not now, then when?”
- Action items – Quick Win: tool/action that members could take back to their school and easily implement.

Stage 6: Generate Short-Term Wins

At each FNMI Lead Learner day, members participated in a Quick Win action that they could easily implement to promote the advancement of FNMI goals within their schools. Additionally, administrators were given tools or information at administrator’s meetings to take back to their schools. Such Quick Wins included: Treaty Simulation activity; KAIROS Blanket Exercise facilitator’s training; activities from Leading Learners; and Inspiring Hope questionnaires.

Stage 7: Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change

We tried to draw out and showcase promising practices as they emerged. We recognized that great things were happening around the school division and celebrated these achievements by asking schools to host our meetings and to conduct a demonstration of how they were advancing FNMI goals in their schools. This allowed Lead Learners to move forward by witnessing, first hand, practical ways school teams were turning theory into practice.

At the final FNMI Lead Learners day, the Speed Conversations gave individuals the opportunity to share and celebrate successes with other team members. It was moving to see how this group grew together over the course of the year. This gave them the courage and confidence to continue to do great work in their schools.

Stage 8: Anchor New Approaches in the Culture

We continue to work in and out of these eight stages of change as we endeavour to build and sustain a culture of hope within our school division. A challenge that we are faced with as we move forward is how we manage to keep the momentum and progress going without the support of the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation grant. We will need to continue to:

- Work with and support this group.
 - FNMI Lead Learners Reconciliation and Culture Camp 2019 - building on the foundational knowledge, we will focus on anti-oppressive/anti-racism education.
 - Utilize our Leading to Learn facilitators not only with administrators but also our FNMI Lead Learners at camp and follow-up days.
- Develop professional development modules. This may be through webinars, face-to-face professional development, modules, focus groups, cultural facilitator's camp, follow-up days, or newsletters.
- Develop and promote collaboration between FNMI and non-FNMI partners and Elders/Knowledge Keepers.
- Celebrate successes and quick wins.
- Promote the vision of Hope.
- Educate and strive to enlighten those who may be reticent to embrace a strength-based approach to Indigenous education.
- Experiment with developing a holistic assessment tool to inform instruction and improve learning that encapsulates foundational knowledge, treaty essential learnings, and Indigenous ways of knowing – what gets measured *correctly* gets done *correctly*.

Reflections and Perspectives

This section outlines some of our teams' individual reflections and thoughts on this journey.

Evolution of the Reconciliation Team

It is important to note that over the course of our research, the compilation of our team diversified, and our team name evolved. At the commencement of our research, we had two teams: the Reconciliation Team and the FNMI Lead Learners. The Reconciliation Team was the overarching team whose prime responsibility was to support the actualization of the goals within the division strategic plan. The FNMI Lead Learners were school-based personnel responsible for implementing and supporting teachers in their buildings. We found redundancy between the two teams. In the spirit of inclusiveness and collaboration, we realized we needed to appreciate, honour, and include the voices of all stakeholders, regardless of hierarchy. Thus, the teams merged into one inclusive Reconciliation Team.

Sid Fiddler, Elder, Waterhen Lake First Nation

When asked to reflect on his experiences while contributing and participating in supporting our team, our Elder indicated he was hopeful and optimistic about what we can achieve together, bi-culturally: "We need to move forward with a sense of togetherness, so it's not us against them with common goals and common beliefs." He believes we are at the tip of it all, and we will get there, "At some point, we will learn about the other, deeper things, but at this point, this is what we can offer ... 40 years ago, I would have said it's not possible, and now I say – it's about time. There is no template for this. All we have is the belief we can do it."

Our Elder highlighted what he has enjoyed the most throughout this experience.

- Relationship building, because that's what it's about.
- Capacity building – not only for me, but for all of us, Indigenous and non. That's the basis of reconciliation.
- Discussions.
- Blanket Exercise – a good way to facilitate awareness of history and its impacts.
- Practical things – actually participating in ceremony (smudging, pipe ceremony, sweat lodge, talking circles). Good combination of learning outcomes while also effective models to prepare individuals for difficult conversations.

We asked our Elder about his thoughts as we began to break down barriers and move toward discussing and addressing anti-racism/anti-oppressive education. He recognized it is a challenging environment to navigate as this topic evokes strong emotions, positive and negative. Part of the process is to teach personal strategies for people to de-stress while also being educated about this difficult topic. He discussed the importance of the teachings within ceremony as a means to prepare people to talk about difficult emotions and topics during their educational journey.

After reflecting on what it was like to bring his unique perspective, knowledge, and wisdom to this group, he mentioned it is just who he is. Like most people, he has normal anxieties, but after experiencing acute trauma and addressing his own demons, coupled with his maturity, age, and experience, he has developed a sense of empowerment that has given him the confidence to empower others.

Teacher, Melissa Newman, J. H. Moore Elementary School Susan Plante, Principal, J. H. Moore Elementary School

When I joined JHM's journey towards improving FNMI curriculum and content, and reaching and respecting the FNMI students within our walls, our staff were all in very different places academically and emotionally. Our FNMI committee began to try and pin-point what was getting in the way of our staff's ability to embrace and teach FNMI content with as much passion as the rest of their curriculum. After group and one-on-one discussions within our building, we decided to create an "Action Plan" that outlined our goals for the school year and highlighted how we were going to reach those goals. We started simple in hopes of taking away the stress teachers were feeling. It was clear very quickly that teachers didn't feel confident in the knowledge they were expected to share with students and unsure of where to find answers for questions they had themselves.

The "Action Plan" was our starting point, but it was the NWSD FNMI Retreat and FNMI meetings throughout the school year that helped us build a strong foundation amongst our staff that translated into creating a strong foundational understanding of FNMI culture with our students. These meetings allowed for connections with Elders and other leaders in the school division fighting similar battles. A sense of community was developed in these gatherings that allowed for any question to be asked and honesty amongst everyone. We learned to respect that everyone was in a different place in this journey of reconciliation. It was an environment where we developed new ideas to bring inspiration to our schools and students, and most importantly, we individually as leaders developed a better understanding of FNMI culture and experience that allowed us to be more empathetic and comfortable passing on new knowledge.

Our school, specifically, has infused our staff with new resources and read alouds to authentically teach FNMI content and help all of our students develop a strong personal identity. We have offered opportunities at almost every staff meeting for our staff to reach out and ask for help in areas they don't feel confident. Through school-wide cultural days, our assemblies, teaching our treaty outcomes, educational trips, and FNMI Fridays (themed mini-lessons developed by our FNMI committee and shared with

all of our teachers K-Grade 6), our students are now consistently seeing FNMI content in their learning environments and given opportunities to explore interests, questions, and personal knowledge through classroom discussions and activities. None of these wonderful opportunities would have been possible without the support of our division's FNMI committee and the massive amount of knowledge Elders have shared with us over the past three years. It is their passion and patience that have allowed us to revamp our understandings of FNMI culture and better educate our students and communities. We still have a long journey in front of us, but we are proud of the progress we have made thus far. Our hope is to create open-minded students who respect and embrace Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and thoughts and have the confidence to question and break common negative stereotypes.

Cheryl Treptow, Learning Coach, Northwest School Division

While working within schools, I was troubled with the reality of the achievement gap between our Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This research project allowed me to dig deep into this problem. It is with profound humility that I acknowledge entering the research process with a mindset of deficit theorizing. I was looking, solely, for barriers to Indigenous student success instead of also looking for success stories. Through working with this group and having conversations with educators and Elders, I quickly discovered the incredible knowledge, passion, and experience within our school division. I was awakened through this experience, and I started paying attention to the dedicated and passionate individuals I have the privilege of working with. I am extremely grateful to the educators in this school division for their commitment to make a difference in the lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work on such a meaningful project with the guidance from our Elders. Finally, I am hopeful and optimistic we will continue to see the rise of promising practices to support our Indigenous students.

Michael Radford, Principal, Dorintosh Central School

This group provided an opportunity to meet with like-minded professionals and deconstruct our views of education and its impact on our students, FNMI, and non-FNMI alike. As a group we were able to compile resources and ideas that could help remove barriers to education in our buildings. In Dorintosh Central School, this enabled us to keep refining our land-based education program and reflect upon our practices in order to keep improving. Furthermore, this group engaged us in a process of self-reflection and sharing; we were able to share our struggles and successes and gain feedback from others. This was instrumental in developing authentic action research in our building. And finally, this group helped remove barriers to promising practices for our students by providing opportunities to network with other professionals, Elders, senior administrators, and learning coaches. This collaborative process was similar to an educational think tank that fostered new and creative ideas for teaching treaty education and implementing meaningful truth and reconciliation. The collaboration, friendship, learning, and support that we developed through this process brought an excitement to our profession!

Terry Craig, Superintendent, Northwest School Division

As I reflect on our McDowell grant project from a professional viewpoint, I think of what an amazing experience it was and how it has helped to solidify a path forward to removing identified barriers for our educators to better meet the needs of our Indigenous students. The board of education and the director of education for the Northwest School Division were integral contributors to this endeavour with their guidance and feedback. One of the key elements that came out of the project was how we managed to show the alignment between federal, provincial, and our division goals and initiatives. This was paramount in helping educators create their own Compelling Why in order to move them forward in their learning journey. It also helped us as a division to identify key foundational elements that needed to be in place in order to support educators where they were.

From a personal perspective, I feel that the relationships that I have developed during this journey with educational colleagues, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers has renewed my commitment and faith that we can make a difference for Indigenous students in the Northwest School Division. We spent less time defending what, and why what we were doing was important, and more time focusing on supporting colleagues in schools and classrooms.

At one of our meetings last year, a teacher expounded on how she, “Now had the courage to move forward.” Funny, that was exactly what I was thinking based on their excitement, commitment, and passion. Did we find and eliminate all barriers? Certainly not. Did we create a groundswell of people who felt and understood that we could improve Indigenous student outcomes and achievement? Yes, yes we did.

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Appendix A

Online Questionnaire

What school and classroom barriers may prevent you from implementing promising instructional practices pertaining to improving achievement of First Nations and Métis students?

Appendix B

Speed Conversation Activity

Each table has a different topic from the list below to address. Please choose a topic to discuss within a small group for about 10 minutes. After the time is up, you will choose a new topic and repeat the process. Please have someone record the discussions on the paper provided.

- Talk about how you have helped your school staff develop their Compelling Whys.
- Discuss any areas you have gained confidence and competence in promoting at your school.
- Tell about how you shared the big idea of 'Inspiring Hope for all Students' with your staff.
- Lack of time (collaboration and professional development time) was mentioned as a barrier to implementing promising practices for improving achievement of Indigenous students. Elaborate on how your school has worked to find time to work on this goal.
- Discuss how you and/or your school have refocused on improving the learning of treaty education outcomes.
- Talk about some of the interesting resources you have used or would like to use.
- Consider the statement that was frequently made on the NWSD survey: There are a minimal number of Indigenous students in our school; therefore, Indigenous education does not apply to us.
- Talk about any professional learning experiences you have led with your staff including the Blanket Exercise, Treaty Simulation, others...
- Talk about your own growth to better understand Indigenous students' success. I used to think_____. Now I think_____.
- Explain how you and/or your staff have broadened your understanding/knowledge of a deeper element of Indigenous cultures.
 - Referring to the Cultural Iceberg activity:
 - Surface level (observable – clothing, appearances, celebrations, etc.)
 - Deeper level (unobservable – worldview, beliefs, values, assumptions)

Appendix C

Compelling Why Module

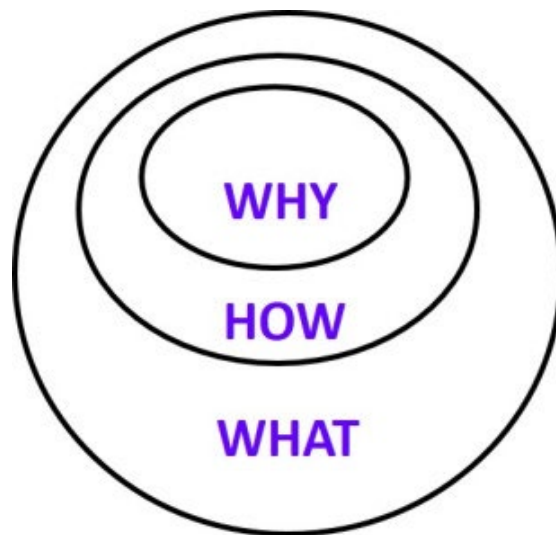
Purpose of Developing a Compelling Why

Understanding why you are working towards a goal drives you to get there. Crafting and articulating your own Compelling Why allows you to clarify your own emotions and thinking. It enables you to rally team members behind a cause based on beliefs and values.

“Successful leaders inspire others to action by having a strong, clear sense of purpose. They nurture a climate that allows people to question and encourages people to think deeply about their own purpose. We do not achieve great things because we have to or are told to: we achieve incredible accomplishments because we are compelled to for more important reasons.”

Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators, 2016, p.7

So how do you come up with yours?



- WHY – Leadership develops the shared WHY: core beliefs and values.
- HOW – Know HOW to bring the WHY to life: actions taken to realize the core beliefs and values.
- WHAT – The results of those actions where tangible work happens with students; core beliefs and values come to life.

(Adapted from Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators)

How to Write Your Own Compelling Why Statements

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boil down your idea into one sentence. What is your cause? | Positive relationships between students and teachers play an important role in supporting improved learning. |
| Explain the current reality or your situation. Make it emotional. Show how this is preventing us from flourishing. "Up until now these (bad) things have been happening." | Up until now, building strong relationships with students has proven to be difficult because of barriers between understanding students, their families, and their worldviews. Specifically, Indigenous students have been disengaged and are at risk of not graduating with their peers. |
| Show the light. The new way that allows us to be liberated. "Now thanks to (X), those bad things don't need to happen anymore." | With a commitment to learn, understand, and honour cultural diversity, students' sense of belonging will be enhanced, therefore improving relationships, engagement, and student success. |

Share your Compelling Why with your team.

Have your staff and/or students brainstorm as many reasons as they can about the importance of your cause.

Encourage staff and/or students to craft their own Compelling Why.

Appendix D

Module: Developing Shared Beliefs

**Adapted from Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators

Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators modules are a resource intended to provide a starting point for planning and implementation. Adaptions can be made to suit your context.

| Purpose: Surfacing shared beliefs and understandings about inspiring success for all students is essential for building the foundation for this work within our team and within schools. Facilitator: school leader Intended audience: school staff Projected time: one hour | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| | Content and Process | Materials |
| Introduction and Key Understandings Time: Five minutes | Surfacing shared beliefs and understandings about inspiring hope for all students is essential for building the foundation for this work within our team and in schools. The following activity provides FNMI lead learners with a process for surfacing the shared beliefs that will then lead to identifying actions that align with beliefs to support all students in achieving success. | |

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Exploration</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>Four Corner Quotes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insert the following four quotes that align with the four core beliefs from Inspiring Success (or other quotes related to the cause). • Print these quotes out on large paper and post in the four corners of the room (duplicate the corners and have eight spaces for discussion using the four quotes if you have a large staff). • Ask participants to go to the corner that has the quote that most resonates with them. • Choose four core beliefs from <i>Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework, Imperatives</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Historical Imperative: Saskatchewan is situated on the traditional territories of First Nations and Métis whose languages, cultures, traditions, and knowledge are derived from the relationship and connectedness to this land. The provincial education sector has a responsibility to reflect and affirm these relationships in all aspects of education so that First Nations and Métis students feel they belong, and all Saskatchewan learners understand the significance of where they live. ◦ Cultural Imperative: First Nations and Métis cultural practices in the education sector and communities are to be encouraged and supported so that the learning environment is a welcoming and culturally responsive and affirming place. ◦ Ecological Imperative: Teaching with First Nations and Métis ways of knowing has the potential to re-engage First Nations and Métis students in their learning and is culturally responsive and affirming. This will support better education outcomes and higher graduation rates. ◦ Student First Imperative: Students emphasized the importance of strong relationships between students and teachers, student engagement in their learning, having a quality learning environment, and shared responsibility for education amongst all students, parents/caregivers, teachers, and the broader community. • Or use other quotes from Elders/ Knowledge Keepers, sections of Inspiring Success, or others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of quotes on 11x17 paper (PowerPoint slides of quotes). • Inspiring Success quotes from Policy Imperatives. |
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| <p>Application</p> <p>Time: 30-45 minutes</p> | <p>Connect to the text using the following prompt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on what is the core belief within this quote that resonates with you? • Each person records their identified core belief on a sticky note. • Take the quote from the wall and each person's sticky note back to a table for group discussion. • Categorize group sticky notes to identify similar core beliefs. • What is your group's core belief statement from this quote? • Create a clear and concise statement that summarizes your belief in one sentence. • Write it on chart paper to post around the room after they have been read out. <p>Have groups share their belief in the room for the rest of the groups and then post on the wall.</p> <p>Examine the belief statements with the lens of whether or not they reflect the group's beliefs about inspiring hope for all students.</p> <p>Give each person four green sticker dots, four red sticker dots, and four yellow sticker dots to place on the belief statements to indicate their commitments or concerns.</p> <p>Green: I agree with this and hold the same belief.</p> <p>Red: I don't agree with this belief.</p> <p>Yellow: I still have some questions about this belief, but I can commit to it.</p> <p><i>*Note: Make it clear to participants that not all dots need to be placed (e.g., a participant might not use any of their red dots).</i></p> <p>Leader takes the belief statements with the dots to analyze and determine if these truly are the beliefs of the group.</p> <p>If there are belief statements that have red dots on them, there needs to be opportunity for those who have used the red dots to indicate opposition to the belief and be supported in the discussion. Options for doing this could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation put out to staff with the belief statements acknowledging that there are some with red dots and it's important for those opposed to have their concerns heard. Create opportunities for staff to meet with leader to discuss any concerns around shared belief statements. <p>Provide an opportunity for staff to discuss the statements as a group. If issues persist, perhaps provide relevant evidence from research to support the surfaced beliefs.</p> <p>Ongoing Work</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finalized beliefs are posted on the team's online space and shared with interested stakeholders. 2. Set aside a few minutes at future meetings to review and connect back to shared beliefs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky notes • Chart paper • Markers • Sticker dots (four red, four green, four yellow for each person) |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Module Reflection

- What are the next steps?
- When will next steps occur?
- Who needs to be involved?
- How will this action impact students?

Appendix E

Alignment Presentation

https://nwsd203my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/cheryl_treptow_nwsd_ca/EdPfIPhCRfxDrQnZfDQAFzMBOKPQyjs8cn9oY-xZDHht5g?e=cBmoql

Appendix F

Hope Staff/Team Questionnaires

Optimism

<http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnoxidWlsZGluZ2FjdWx0dXJlb2Zob3BlfGd4OjQ4OTZiN2NhYzBjMTUzODc>

Place and Belonging

<http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnoxidWlsZGluZ2FjdWx0dXJlb2Zob3BlfGd4OjRIODJjYjI1N2U3M2I2MjI>

Pride and Self-Esteem

<http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnoxidWlsZGluZ2FjdWx0dXJlb2Zob3BlfGd4OjU5MTA4ZTJIMGRhNzlhMjI>

Purpose and Passion

<http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnoxidWlsZGluZ2FjdWx0dXJlb2Zob3BlfGd4OjVmMzM1NmMxNGlwOGNhNGQ>

Appendix G

Cultural Competence Continuum - Characteristics

(Adapted from Terry L. Cross, et., at., 1989), Coleman/Pellitteri 2000 & Updated 2/4/13

| I. Cultural Destructiveness I make a conscious effort [use my power] to destroy cultures that are different from my own or from what I think will work best for others. ... "We are all that is important." | II. Cultural Incapacity I am unwilling to be useful or helpful to other cultures. ... "We take care of our own." | III. Cultural Denial/Indifference I believe that culture/colour and dimensions of diversity are unimportant. ... "All people are the same." |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Characteristics include and are not limited to ...</i> | <i>Characteristics include and are not limited to ...</i> | <i>Characteristics include and are not limited to ...</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe I (my family, my group, etc.) is superior to, and have extreme biases against, those who are different. • Overt message to those who are different is that they are not valued or welcomed. • Others are perceived as nonentities, expendable and/or undeserving. • Harm to others is acceptable, appropriate, and/or justified. • More of an absolutist worldview that highly values winning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual/group is not consciously deciding to be incapacitated; they are simply taking care of their group. However, if the group reflects the dominate culture, the process alone results in institutional or systematic bias. • Stuck in a mindless position; simply not aware of our behavior that maintains this incapacitated state; however, outsiders will experience subtle messages that some cultures (groups) are neither valued or welcomed; at best may be tolerated. • Disproportionately apply resources to benefit their own group. • Residual effects of incapacitation may be lower expectations for some cultural, racial, ethnic groups (and/or other dimensions of diversity such as gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.) • Those who are different are segregated for their good. • More of a relativist worldview, (I'll take care of my own) that highly values maintaining the status quo. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages assimilation and the suppression of difference. • Discomfort recognizing difference and ignores (or unaware of) cultural strengths. • Denies that culture and dimensions of diversity (gender, ethnic group, sexual orientation, etc.) are significant. • Beliefs, policies, actions that assume world is fair and achievement is based on merit: "should pull oneself up by own boot straps." • Institutional attitudes that refuse to take responsibility for the impact of their behaviour/actions on others and often blame individuals/families for the perceived failures. • Does not recognize the reality of power/privilege. • Believes what is useful for the dominate group is universally applicable and applies as such (one size fits all). |

| <p>IV. Cultural Pre-Competence: I realize that my responses to cultural difference are more often than not culturally destructive and I am trying to understand how to respond culturally competently/proficiently. <i>"Often have nice written policies, but limited action." The operative word is "trying."</i></p> | <p>V. Cultural Competence Cultural competence is characterized by a commitment to social and economic justice. <i>"Foster mutual adaptation to difference to create environments that are useful for all."</i></p> | <p>VI. Cultural Proficiency Cultural proficiency means that I hold culture in high esteem and that it is my organizing frames of reference and the foundation by which I understand relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, systems, etc. <i>"Optimal, universal, inclusive and proficient."</i></p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><i>Characteristics include and are not limited to ...</i></p> | <p><i>Characteristics include and are not limited to ...</i></p> | <p><i>Characteristics include and are not limited to ...</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed commitment to valuing diversity but no clear plan for achieving organizational cultural competence. • Works at being inclusive. • Ceases to expect those who are different will suppress their difference and at same time is not sure what to do when difference is expressed – resulting in movement towards the status quo. • Recognizes the need for consumer/ family involvement and at same time often not sure how to integrate this voice/involvement. • Expressed commitment to human/ civil rights and social justice, as we define them. • Beginning to realize ethnocentric beliefs distort one’s vision about those who are different. • Beginning to question the validity of segregation and/or assimilation. • Recommends the need for improved services to specific poorly served populations, with no action. • Maintains a parental attitude towards the marginalized group; positive outcomes are associated with how close the marginalized group can approximate the dominate group in terms of language, appearance, values and beliefs. | <p><i>Effective plan and demonstrated actions of individuals/organizational cultural competence, which includes and is not limited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfully behave in a manner that demonstrates a value for diversity. • Participants in rigorous/ongoing self-examination into the manner in which culture/heritage influences perceptions, attitudes and behaviour about (and towards) those who are culturally different. • Works at being inclusive. • Ceases to expect those who are different will suppress their difference. • Willingness to stay engaged with others to integrate their values, beliefs and associated needs into decision making and action. • Demonstrated commitment to human/civil rights, social justice, as defined by the marginalized individual/group. • Actively develops cross-cultural knowledge and skills. • Continuously looks outside of one’s own worldview to gain a more accurate understanding. • Mindfully engages in a mutually adaptive process, rather than segregate and/or require assimilation. • Actively seeks input from specific poorly served populations and takes action to meet the defined needs. • Adapts service delivery to meet the needs of a multi-cultural community. | <p><i>Realization that we (as individuals/ groups) are both separate and also connected, which requires the following understandings.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldview shifts from absolutism/ ethnocentrism [separateness] ... to universalism [both separate/ connected]. • Attitude shifts from judgments, cruelty, unforgiveness, selfishness, etc. [separateness] ... to compassion (kindness, generosity, gentleness) to self/others [both separate/ connected]. • Relationships shift from stereotyping [separateness] ... to authentic [both separate/ connected]. • Policy shifts from exclusionary [separate] ... to inclusionary [both separate/connected]. • Practices shift from destructive [separate] ... to constructive [both separate/connected]. |

Appendix H

Treaty Education Outcomes Assessment Tool

Background:

On December 10, 2007, the Throne Speech for the Province of Saskatchewan announced the provincial government's commitment to mandatory treaty education:

"Treaty education is an important part of forging new ties. There must be an appreciation in the minds of the general public that Treaties are living, breathing documents that continue to bind us to promises made generations ago. This is why my government is committed to making mandatory instruction in history and content of the Treaties in the K-12 curriculum."

Since then, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC), school divisions, and educators across the province have made significant efforts to support mandatory treaty education. The implementation of mandatory treaty education is important because:

- Students learn to appreciate Saskatchewan's past, present, and future.
- It promotes understandings that respect and honour First Nations and Métis (FNM) people.
- Treaties are the foundation of Canada and the province of Saskatchewan.

The Northwest School Division (NWSA) commits to supporting teachers as they work to implement the mandatory treaty education curriculum.

Content:

These holistic rubrics were created through collaboration between FNM and non-FNM partners. They will aid teachers in evaluating the level of knowledge and understanding NWSD students have of the treaty education outcomes.

The NWSD will use this data to assess students' knowledge of treaty outcomes to help us make informed decisions regarding:

- Allocation of resources.
- Promising practices: celebrating and promoting what are we doing well and investigating what we can do to improve.

The holistic rubrics are available for Grades 1 to 9. Reporting will be done once at the end of the school year.

How to Use this Assessment Tool

1. Teach the treaty outcomes. Teachers may want to use the K-9 Treaty Education Learning Resource and/or the OTC treaty kits available in schools for completed units and lessons designed to meet the outcomes.
2. Gather your own classroom assessment evidence that may include but is not limited to:
 - Oral language: debate, interviewing, conversations, questions, responses, audio, games, etc.
 - Visual communication: story boards, illustrations, design, photographs, video, diorama, collage, maps, etc.
 - Projects: models, experiments, work samples, investigations, surveys, scrapbooks, posters, etc.
 - Performance tasks: simulation, demonstrations, video production, presentations, etc.
 - Written language: essays, research papers, scripts, brochure, articles, stories, proposals, reflective journals, personal response journal, etc.
 - Tests: multiple choice, true/false, short answer, matching, extended response.
3. Use the rubric provided and your professional judgement to evaluate what students know, understand, and are able to do in relation to the outcomes.
 - Refer to the indicators of the outcomes to help you determine depth of knowledge and understanding.
 - Through this process, we will begin collecting exemplars of assessment evidence to share with teachers across the school division to help calibrate professional judgement.

Grade One: Learning That We Are All Treaty People

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR1: Examine how sharing contributes to treaty relationships.

- Describe how sharing occurs in families, classrooms, and communities.
- Explore, using family and community members as a resource, the diverse views on what it means to share (e.g., the land and resources from the land on which we live).
- Represent how sharing was of benefit in early contact between First Nations peoples and explorers.

SI1: Examine the connections between intentions and actions.

- Represent how thoughts influence actions through personal examples (e.g., if I intend to be nice, I act in a particular way; or if I intend to help my mother or father, this just remains a nice idea, unless I take action and do something to help them).
- Describe how some thoughts influence actions (e.g., being thankful and expressing gratitude by saying thank you establishes a pattern).

HC1: Explore the many ways people meet their needs from nature and the land on which they live.

- Describe various uses (e.g., food, clothing, shelter) of buffalo, elk, moose, and caribou now and in the past.
- Compare how people, past and present, live on the land (e.g., agriculture, ranching, trapping, fishing, dwellings, and modes of transportation).
- Explain how people helped and continue to help each other live on this land.

TPP1: Explore what is meant by “We Are All Treaty People.”

- Recognize that treaties contain promises for all people.
- Represent that all Saskatchewan people are treaty people from the time the treaties were signed, through to today, and into the future.
- Describe what a promise is using student’s personal experiences.

Grade Two: Creating a Strong Foundation Through Treaties

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR2: Examine how the treaties are the basis for harmonious relationships in which land and resources are shared.

- Examine the concepts of peace and harmony and provide examples of how these concepts are expressed in people’s lives and discuss why these concepts are important.
- Discuss the First Nations concepts of sharing (e.g., traditional community ownership vs. individual ownership) and consider what sharing the land and its resources might mean.
- Represent examples of peaceful and harmonious relationships between First Nations and others.

SI2: Recognize the importance of honesty when examining one’s intentions.

- Share examples of honesty.
- Discuss the role of honesty in written or verbal expressions of intention.
- Explore and express what may happen if honesty is separated from one’s actions (e.g., promising to do something and not doing it).

HC2: Analyze the traditional forms of leadership that were in practice prior to European contact and in First Nations communities.

- Explore the traditional leadership practices of First Nations (e.g., matriarchal, consensus approach, spiritual).
- Describe the concept of consensus from student’s own experience (e.g., deciding what restaurant to go to, what game to play at recess).
- Research how decisions were made by First Nations; compare past and present ways of selecting First Nations leaders.

TPP2: Develop an understanding of treaties as sacred promises that exist between the British Crown (i.e., government) and First Nations.

- Explore First Nations beliefs that treaties are special promises sealed by sacred ceremonies (e.g., pipe ceremony).
- Recognize that the treaty suits, medals, and flags are symbols used by the British Crown to signify its commitment to uphold the promises made in the treaties.
- Represent understanding of the concept that treaties will last for as long as the sun shines, grasses grow, and rivers flow.
- Identify the Saskatchewan numbered treaty territory in which they live (e.g., Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10).

Grade Three: Exploring Challenges and Opportunities in Treaty Making

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR3: Examine the relationships between First Nations peoples and the land, before and after the signing of treaties.

- Examine the impact of geography (e.g., grasslands, boreal forest or woodland, grain belt, lakeland regions) on the relationship between First Nations people and the land.
- Describe the lifestyle changes of First Nations, prior to and after placement on reserves.
- Discuss the worldviews associated with ownership of the land and consider the impact those views have on a person's relationship to the land.

SI3: Examine how the various teachings people have about the natural world guide behaviour and actions.

- Interview family members to learn the stories and teachings they hold related to nature and Mother Earth and explore the intended meaning found in those stories and teachings.
- Analyze how First Nations peoples' beliefs guide relationships with the land and natural world.
- Compare the First Nations and British Crown view of the treaties with respect to land and ownership.

HC3: Explore the benefits that each of the parties to treaty enjoy.

- Recognize how all Saskatchewan people are beneficiaries of treaty (e.g., sharing of treaty education outcomes and indicators).

TPP3: Explore how the use of different languages in treaty making presented challenges and how those challenges impact people today.

- Research various languages spoken during treaty making in the treaty territory that students live.
- Express challenges faced by all people when their first language is not spoken in the communities where they live.
- Investigate how language used in the treaty-making process limited mutual understandings of differing worldviews.

Grade Four: Understanding How Treaty Promises Have Not Been Kept

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR4: Analyze how relationships are affected when treaty promises are kept or broken.

- Represent examples of promises experienced in their families, classrooms, and communities.
- Discuss the impact on relationships when promises are kept or broken.
- Identify treaty promises from the local treaty territory and the extent to which those treaty promises have been fulfilled
- Discuss the effect of unfulfilled treaty promises on relationships.

SI4: Examine the intent of treaty in relation to education.

- Discuss why First Nations signatories believed there was a benefit to both European education and traditional ways of learning.
- Research the forms of education that First Nations people have experienced since the treaties were signed.
- Discuss why some First Nations peoples refer to “education is our new buffalo” (i.e., the means to survive in the new world with the newcomers).

HC4: Explore the historical reasons why people entered into treaty.

- Examine how the disappearance of the buffalo and the loss of traditional hunting and trapping territories created a need for First Nations to enter into treaties.
- Explore how people used the land before the community students are living in was formed.
- Recognize that treaties provided opportunity for newcomers to live on and share the land of what is now Saskatchewan.

TPP4: Examine the objectives of the First Nations and British Crown’s representatives in negotiating treaty.

- Examine the benefits each signatory hoped to achieve.
- Analyze the challenges and opportunities associated with negotiating treaties (e.g., communication among groups, transportation, participation, preservation of language, and cultural practices).
- Identify how each of the signatories to treaty recorded the events.

Grade Five: Assessing the Journey in Honouring Treaties

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR5: Examine the concepts of colonization and decolonization and analyze their effects.

- Recognize the impact of colonization and assimilation policies of the Canadian government on First Nations and Métis societies.
- Examine effects of racism on relationships among Saskatchewan people.
- Investigate the current process of decolonization and the impact this has on all Canadian people.

SI5: Analyze how symbols used by treaty signatories contributed to the treaty-making process.

- Investigate how symbols were used throughout history to influence people (e.g., promote solidarity or intimidate and control people).
- Compare the symbols associated with the Canadian judicial system (British Crown) and the symbols used by the First Nations peoples during treaty making.
- Investigate and report on the significance of symbols that depict the peaceful and harmonious relations between two sovereign nations (e.g., pipe ceremony, feasts and festivals, doves, handshake, or gatherings).

HC5: Analyze the concept of self-government as it applies to First Nations and Métis people.

- Describe First Nations and Métis political organizations in Canada and Saskatchewan.
- Identify First Nations and Métis leaders who were instrumental in the establishment of their political systems and structures.
- Investigate challenges and opportunities facing First Nations and Métis political organizations today.

TPP5: Analyze the benefits of treaties for all people in Saskatchewan from a contemporary perspective.

- Identify contemporary results of Saskatchewan Treaties (e.g., urban reserves, economic development, resource sharing).
- Examine tribal councils or First Nations bands who have urban land holdings and/or commercial enterprises and the resulting benefits to all Saskatchewan people.
- Investigate contemporary negotiations that support treaties as living agreements.

Grade Six: Moving Towards Fulfillment of Treaties

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR6: Analyze the concepts, structures, and processes that have been developed for the purpose of treaty implementation.

- Research the various structures and processes that have been created in an effort to honour treaties.
- Describe how the full implementation of the treaties is expected to bring positive economic implications for all people of Saskatchewan.
- Explore the concept of sovereignty as related to First Nations peoples.
- Explore the concept of sovereignty as related to Métis peoples.

SL6: Analyze the importance of the preservation and promotion of First Nations and Métis languages.

- Express how one's cultural identity is influenced by language.
- Explore initiatives in Canada that contribute to the preservation and restoration of First Nations languages.
- Describe how the loss of language impacts cultural identity (e.g., importance of ceremony, song, dance, storytelling).

HC6: Analyze how the movement towards the fulfillment of treaty obligations has positively affected all people in Saskatchewan.

- Examine the impact of urban reserves on livelihood (e.g., economic, social, cultural, environmental).
- Examine how the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and other organizations supports the fulfillment of treaties.
- Investigate how parties to treaty are utilizing the land for economic development opportunities.

TPP6: Investigate the role of the treaty table and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) in promoting good relations between signatories.

- Describe the role that treaty commissioners play in facilitating the fulfillment of treaty.
- Investigate and report on the goals and achievements of the treaty table and the OTC.

Grade Seven: Understanding Treaties in a Contemporary Context

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR7: Analyze to what extent each of the signatories to treaty meets their respective obligations.

- Compare the meanings of “commitments” and “obligations” from the different worldviews.
- Examine how the federal government addresses the commitments made in the treaties.
- Examine how the obligations of First Nations have been met.
- Research the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution (1982).

SI7: Examine oral tradition as a valid way of preserving accounts of what transpired and what was intended by entering into treaty.

- Represent the ways oral tradition is used by diverse cultures, starting with First Nations.
- Explain how written and oral accounts might differ from one another.
- Examine the role of ceremony, traditions, and story in transferring knowledge from generation to generation.
- Compare the recorded accounts of treaty from the perspectives of the Crown and First Nations.
- Research oral accounts of treaty as passed on to each generation by Elders.
- Research visual representations that supported the oral tradition of treaty (e.g., Chief Pasqua’s pictograph, wampum belts).

HC7: Examine *The Indian and Native Affairs Act*, including its amendments, and explore the effects it has on the lives of First Nations.

- Identify the elements/big ideas of *The Indian and Native Affairs Act* including its amendments.
- Examine the effects of *The Indian and Native Affairs Act* on the lives of First Nations.
- Investigate how the treatment of Aboriginal veterans differed from non-Aboriginal veterans.
- Investigate the process whereby First Nations peoples acquired the full rights of Canadian citizenship including the right to vote.

TPP7: Investigate the impact of Bill C31 on the equality of genders under *The Indian and Native Affairs Act*.

- Research the concept of “status Indian” and determine the implications of this concept on the government’s fulfillment of treaty.
- Investigate traditional kinship patterns and explain how First Nations would have traditionally determined their membership.

Grade Eight: Exploring Treaty Impacts and Alternatives

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR8: Analyze the impact of treaty on the Métis people.

- Research and assess the role of the Métis in the treaty-negotiation process.
- Examine the role of interpreter in the treaty process (e.g., importance of language).
- Examine the concept of scrip, as opposed to being signatories of treaties, and explore the importance of having a land base from which to generate a livelihood.
- Investigate how Métis peoples' identity was impacted with their inclusion in Treaty 10.

SI8: Assess the impact residential schools have on First Nations communities.

- Compare stories of First Nations people who attended residential schools to the experiences students have had in their own schools.
- Investigate how First Nations people were forced to learn languages and cultures other than their own.
- Represent the effects of residential schools on First Nations' languages and cultures.
- Examine how First Nations and communities continue to deal with and heal from the abuses experienced by First Nations peoples in residential schools.
- Assess the importance of the official apology offered by the Canadian government as recommended by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for the tragic outcomes of the residential school era.

HC8: Examine how provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments, who have not negotiated treaty, work to respect each other's interests.

- Research and compare the experiences of British Columbia First Nations with the experience of people from Saskatchewan who have negotiated treaties.
- Analyze how respective worldviews influence the interests of each party who desire to enter into treaty.
- Explore how each province and territory in Canada has worked towards developing a relationship with First Nations.

TPP8: Assess whether the terms of treaty have been honoured and to what extent the treaty obligations have been fulfilled.

- Represent an understanding of the concepts "medicine chest" and "education" as intended in the treaties.
- Relate various quality of life measures from the perspectives of First Nations and non-First Nations people based on the fulfillment of treaties.
- Propose options that may address any inequities discovered.

Grade Nine: Understanding Treaties from Around the World

| Beginning | Approaching | Proficient | Mastery |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Incoherent understanding of addressed content | Superficial understanding of addressed content | Coherent understanding of addressed content | Insightful understanding of addressed content |

TR9: Investigate the treaty experiences of Indigenous people around the world.

- Apply knowledge of treaties in Canada to the experiences of Indigenous peoples in other countries.
- Investigate the Canadian government’s response to the UN Declaration of the Rights for Indigenous peoples.
- Analyze the motives and actions of countries whose governments honour and support treaty relationships.
- Analyze the motives and actions of countries whose governments oppress Indigenous peoples.

SI9: Apply understanding of treaties and treaty making with world Indigenous peoples.

- Research and compare the treaties and treaty-making processes within Saskatchewan and various countries (e.g., New Zealand, Ethiopia, Brazil, Japan).
- Analyze the purpose of symbols used in treaty making from Canada to other countries.

HC9: Analyze how treaty making recognizes peoples’ rights and responsibilities.

- Examine treaties involving Indigenous people from countries other than Canada (e.g., Treaty of Waitangi).
- Investigate relationships between governments and Indigenous peoples and document the instances of peaceful resolution.
- Compare the peaceful nature which Canada employed in the treaty making with the processes in other countries.
- Relate Canada’s treaty-making process to their peace-keeping role in international affairs.

TPP9: Examine the effectiveness of treaty making in addressing the circumstances of Indigenous peoples.

- Investigate treaties with Indigenous peoples in other countries.
- Describe the circumstances that have prompted the negotiation of treaties in other countries.
- Analyze the challenges Indigenous peoples face when negotiating treaties.

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