

# First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

We are entering a time of hope...of collaboration...and of walking together to provide bright futures for our students. It is very exciting to think of the possibilities. (Sandy Axmann, Learning Services Supervisor)

## *Eliminating Achievement Gaps*

### Success for All...All Kids Are Our Kids

In Grande Yellowhead Public School Division #77, our success with high school completion rates is largely due to the passionate, dedicated, caring, and compassionate people who work on developing relationships each day. Our teachers take the time to build relationships and engage students in other ways than just in classrooms. There is a strong sense of team. "Success for All ...All Kids Are Our Kids, One Year's Growth through Quality Learning Environments" is our goal.

Renee Fehr is our Indigenous Liaison worker who travels between our Grande Cache schools. She is the glue that connects that community closely to the schools at all levels. She supervises the classes so that our 3V Cree Language teacher, Sandra Davenport is able to immerse students in cultural activities as well as their language. Renee says, "Lots of times teachers want to do it themselves but they don't necessarily understand how Aboriginal culture is different, how the values and cultural understandings make a huge difference. So the big thing is then to include me so that those points are made and so parents know, we, educators, don't know everything, but understand that we want to help, and we want to learn, and we want to support".

Renee also reaches out to the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation that is located just outside of Grande Cache. She includes her neighboring community because she realizes that their students transfer between their own school district and GYPSD#77. She enables the transition to our schools to be as seamless as possible by supporting individual students and families who reach out to her. She creates collaborative activities between each school and each community so there is a bond prior to arriving at one of our schools. More students graduate from our Grande Cache high school because of the level of support they receive transitioning from school to school throughout their educational journey.

This level of support is a model for our other four zones. We realize that strong levels of supports to individual students and families is necessary to overcome barriers to learning. Some families experience extreme poverty and high levels of depression and anxiety because of this. Our Family School Liaison Counselors are trained in Circle of Courage and Ways of Knowing, providing culturally responsive supports in a timely manner ensure that barriers to completing high school are minimized or removed.

### Completion Rates Up

Achievement by self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit high school students in Grande Yellowhead is trending upwards. The 2015 Accountability Pillar indicates that:

- The (5 year) high school completion rate is at 81.2 per cent, well above the provincial rate for FNMI students (53.2) and nearing the provincial rate for all students (82).
- The drop-out rate is only 2.5 per cent, which is better than the provincial average of 3.4 per cent for all students.



Our Eagle Feather Program, initiated division-wide just last year, is growing. We've learned we need to educate our principals and the community about their importance culturally. We will be developing proper protocols for awarding an Eagle feather by working with our Indigenous Education Council members.



Elders provide wisdom and support to students, teachers and schools. Their knowledge and teachings are invaluable.

We have a great working model for successfully providing supports within our schools. The issue becomes being able to replicate it in all areas of our school jurisdiction. We need more highly skilled First Nations and Métis teachers who are able to care deeply about providing quality education to all students...Success for All ...All Kids Are Our Kids, One Year's Growth through Quality Learning Environments is our goal one student at a time.