

February 2021

# Summary of Practices

in support for self-identified Indigenous secondary  
students considering teaching as a potential career

Prepared by:

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COLLEGE OF ALBERTA SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

## Executive Summary

This summary has identified many successful practices that are currently being implemented by school districts to support self-identified Indigenous students to consider teaching as a potential career. Barriers to a potential teaching career and recommendations for how school districts can overcome these for self-identified Indigenous students were also stated. These practices were collected by members of the CASS First Nations Métis and Inuit Education Action committee (representatives from Treaty 6, 7, 8, Rupertsland Institute, Alberta Métis Settlements General Council, CASS Zones 1-6, AISCA, Francophone, and Alberta Education.)

The collection of these practices was one of four recommendations/calls to action in the CASS Indigenous Teachers Survey report.

*“CASS researches, identifies and shares career planning practices to increase the number of self-identified Indigenous high school students interested in teaching as a profession. This work should be completed in collaboration with CASS membership, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Action Committee, and the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA).”*

<https://cassalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Indigenous-Teacher-Survey-Report-Draft-2019-01-23-Final.pdf>

Although school districts identified many effective strategies, there still exists many barriers that need to be addressed such as a lack of support, racism, funding, underrepresentation of role models and Indigenous teachers/leaders. These barriers can be overcome with the implementation of the many strategies highlighted in this summary.

Committee members gathered feedback from their representative group on these three questions describing the practices that they have implemented in their organizations. Where possible, quotes from school districts are highlighted.

1. What strategies are effective to increase the number of self-identified Indigenous students interested in teaching as a career?
2. What are potential barriers for self-identified Indigenous students interested in becoming a teacher?
3. How can these barriers be overcome?

Thank you to the members of the CASS First Nations Métis and Inuit Education Action committee for gathering strategies that are being actioned in Alberta school districts and to

the many school districts that generously shared their experience of supporting Indigenous students to consider teaching as a career. This summary of practices will also be included in the final report on the Indigenous Teacher and School and System leaders Survey in June 2021.

Please contact [Elizabeth.gouthro@cass.ab.ca](mailto:Elizabeth.gouthro@cass.ab.ca) for any questions/comments.

## **1. What strategies are effective to increase the number of self-identified Indigenous students interested in teaching as a career?**

The most common identified strategy was the need to coach and mentor students through the process of thinking about choices/ life after high school early on with work experience and leadership experience, prior to completing high school. Other frequently mentioned effective strategies were the presence of Indigenous role models within their education settings, transition programs between school districts and universities to foster relationships in advance of attending college/university, and creating stronger relationships with Indigenous families.

### **Mentoring /Coaching**

This quote from a participant explains why this is necessary and how it might happen.

*“It is difficult to get students to think about their career choices in high school. While some students have a sense of what career they would like to pursue, many don't have any idea where life's journey will take them. Given that you must have a university degree to be a teacher, it is essential that students understand the criteria to be accepted. It is also helpful if they understand the lifelong benefits of being a teacher. It really is an exceptional career. As such, it would be critical for universities, school divisions and the teacher profession to partner up and provide information to students about the profession and how to get into the profession.”*

The following list is a brief overview of some examples of the mentoring/coaching model strategy. Where possible a link is included for further reading.

- *Grad Coaches at high school level to assist Indigenous students in exploring all possible avenues. i.e., Braided Journey Edmonton Public School Division*  
<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjCuLqsmN3uAhUTvJ4KHSY9BtYQFjAAegQIAxAC&url=https%3A%2F>

<http://www.ecsd.net/page%2F1335%2Fbraided-journeys&usg=AOvVaw0sEzw63i7tTrS6ya1psCo1>

- *“Having conversations with students directly about the teaching profession. Indigenous culture lends itself to storytelling and having an opportunity to discuss student experiences at school can potentially engage Indigenous students to enter education as a profession.”*
- *“Exposure – Students need to have that classroom experience via work experience, often within their own school or school system.”*
- *“People advocating the perks of being a teacher at an early age”*
- *“Creating a passion/ignite the passion for wanting to make a difference in students’ lives”*
- *“Providing opportunities for leadership roles at an early age”*
- *“Offering programs that allow high school students to experience a leadership role for younger students. For example, the Reading Buddies initiative that Braided Journeys runs has given students the opportunity to experience a teacher/student type relationship and can really help foster the idea that they are capable of taking on a mentorship/teaching role.”*
  - *Offering high school students, the opportunity to take on roles that educate others. I.E. Facilitating the Blanket Exercise for example.*
- *Offering high school students, the opportunity to meet with HR representatives and learn about the hiring process and ask questions*
- *Introducing high school students to role models*
- *Exposing youth to post-secondary campuses*
- *Counselling students on ways to budget money to avoid student financial burdens*
- *Connecting students with Indigenous teachers within their communities at least once through their practicum experience*
- *Volunteering opportunities for credit that include classroom experience, mentoring, and/or coaching*
  - Provide specific mentoring opportunities or training materials that give a “day in the life” kind of vibe*
- *Expanding dual credit opportunities that offer students the opportunities to qualify as an educational assistant while in high school, gaining valuable work/leadership experience and earning funds to support college /university expenses. The link describes an example of earning dual credits while in high school etc. in collaboration with their local university successfully leading to increasing the number of self-*



*identified Indigenous Teachers in their school system.*

<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/build-from-within/>

## **Indigenous role models**

- *Providing Indigenous role models in professional roles in our schools prior to grade 12 when students self- determine next steps.*
- *Inspiration! Students need to experience amazing role-models by seeing other FNMI successful in this field.*
- *Providing opportunities to connect with an adult role model through such programs Teacher Advisor.*
- *Many are interested in a teaching career, so we gave them work experience opportunities at the elementary and junior high schools. They had very good experiences and success with lots of those kids with their experience.*

## **Transition programs between universities and school districts to foster relationships in advance.**

- *Working closely with universities and college-university transition programs, building relationships with Indigenous university members*
- *Staff take the students to all of the pre-registration meetings and help them register. They all have the opportunity to register in College or University - whether or not they are accepted, we need to follow up.*
- *Invite presentations by Indigenous Recruiters from a number of post-secondary institutions that offer B.Ed. programs*
- *Provide opportunities to explore teacher preparation programs and have discussions on the student's preferred*
- *Promotion of the Aboriginal Teachers Education Program, University of Alberta (ATEP) to students <https://www.ualberta.ca/aboriginal-teacher-education-program/index.html>. And the Niitsitapi Teacher Education Program at the University of Lethbridge <https://www.uleth.ca/education/niitsitapi-teacher-education-program-0>. Several other universities are in various stages of developing these education programs, often in partnership with a First Nations college.*
- *Offering EDUC201 as a dual credit opportunity (four students have completed this course in the last two years, and one is currently registered) LINK*

*“We have had huge success with our community-based education degree through University of Calgary. Students don’t have to leave home except two weeks a year. We pay the full cost and hire them part time as they are working on their degree to give them a better foundation. Last year we had 11 grads from the program and 7 were Indigenous.”*

From Fort Vermillion School District

### **Creating stronger relationship with Indigenous families**

- *Creating a positive connection with families upon student registration.*
  - *“Hosting “Meet and Greet”, when permitted to dispel the stigma of schools. Many of our current families have a historical connection to Residential Schools and taking the time to hear the voices of Indigenous community members can help parents and students have a more positive outlook on schools.”*
- *“Positive experiences in education for Indigenous students- why would they want to return to a setting if it wasn't positive....so supporting connection, cultural acknowledgement, and pride building non-Indigenous perspective so that there is greater understanding, value and a respect for Indigenous Culture and People”*
- *“Relationships are CRUCIAL, all students need to feel as though they belong and are connected. I believe our Indigenous students often are the least connected which directly impacts their desire to return to the educational setting after graduating. Teachers need to make their efforts to learn and understand Indigenous Culture visible- it shows a commitment and genuine care for our Indigenous students and their culture as a first step.”*
- *“Building a relationship between the school district and the Indigenous communities/families – seeking their input on what successful strategies would look like”*
- *“Educating families and communities in the value and importance of having Indigenous (Métis) educators. Families and communities are not always supportive of those achieving or striving for better lives.”*
- *“Ensuring students are positively represented in curriculum and pedagogy: for instance, when Métis people see themselves represented in literature as readers, they are more likely to see their stories as valuable and to feel writing is a possibility for them—this effect extends to seeing themselves in roles like formal education and teaching”*

Peace Wapiti School Division:

*“Increasing the number of high school self-identified Indigenous students pursuing teaching is something we are working towards as a district. Last year, our Indigenous Education Admin Advisory Committee highlighted this as an area needing focus and investment. While we have yet to roll out a formalized district plan, we have started a few initiatives that we hope to build upon. These initiatives are based on the belief that successful strategies include:”*

- *Building personal relationships between post-secondary institutions and students/families*
- *Students and their families learning together about teaching programs offered at post-secondary institutions.*
- *Students being exposed to Indigenous role models in the post-secondary and teaching field.*
- *Celebrating and investing in students through Grade 12 bursaries and recognition awards.*
- *Harnessing the voice of the students by creating a high school Indigenous student council.*

## **2. What are potential barriers for students interested in becoming a teacher?**

School district leaders identified several barriers that prevent self-identified Indigenous students from considering teaching as a career. Lack of appropriate support systems in school systems, universities and community to assist self-Indigenous students in career planning, funding, transition planning, ongoing prevalence of racism across educational systems and in dealing with the inter-general legacy of residential school resulting in not meeting the entrance requirements for University.

Most of these barriers could be overcome if school districts implemented the effective strategies identified in the first question “What strategies are effective in increasing the number of self-identified Indigenous students interested in teaching as a career?”

*“Funding is a huge concern, as well as living away from their families. There is also the historical distrust that is embedded in our Indigenous communities when it comes to schools (rightfully so). Again, I think it’s about catching our students early in grade 9/10 and setting a clear path. We need to look at the bigger picture beyond trying to get them to 100 credits, so they get their diploma. I have an Indigenous student in grade 10 now who really, really wants to be an elementary school teacher, and she’s very bright and an amazing young woman;*

*however, she's only attended 30/75 classes this semester and is not passing any of her courses. The historical issues are still running deep and there is much work to be done with reconciliation. This is a huge conversation. I also believe that this is cyclical. Representation is one of the most important factors for our BIPOC and other minority students. They need to see themselves in us. When they only have white teachers, they don't think of it as an option for them. So, the problem is actually the solution unfortunately. We need more Indigenous teachers so that we have solid representation, which in turn, will inspire more Indigenous students to become teachers. And, really, it's not just Indigenous - it's non-white in general. We need more representation. I'd love to chat more about this."*

### **Post-secondary Entrance requirements**

- *Education level can be another factor that holds them back. Smaller communities are often taught at a lower level than students in towns/cities, Indigenous students may feel as though they are not "smart enough" to work at a University level.*
- *Having the academic skills needed to successfully complete university courses are critical.*
- *For our students, the only barrier would be to meet the pre-requisite for entering the Bachelor of Education program.*
- *Marks not high enough*

### **Racism**

*"Victim of racism in the education system; Not seeing Indigenous culture/values reflected in education system."*

### **Support Systems**

- *The barrier we see is just a lack of support system to help them get through and navigate the university world.*
- *About a half of their students take a gap year and the gap year kills the chance for most of them to go back to school. They get used to earning money and then it's hard to go back.*
- *Who helps these students after they leave us as secondary kids? In high school, guidance counsellors, coaches, etc. help them out. In post-secondary, if they are left to seek out support, many will fall through the cracks.*
- *Financial funding is a major issue if they do not receive any form of financial support from their Nation.*

- *Not living close to a college or university. Being away from home and family. Funds, not all bands can provide education funds needed for university, living expenses, books etc.*
- *Culture shock (Movement from Reserve – City)*
- *Students may also potentially feel a sense of guilt when leaving a community/family environment as they may hold a major sense of responsibility in these settings*
- *Many of our Indigenous students will be first generation University students. Helping them prepare for that lifestyle would be helpful. Having them shadow an education student at Keyano would be great.*
- *Making sure a counsellor helps them apply.*
- *Being afraid to ask for help and access resources*
- *Finances, parents may not be financially set to support their child*
- *Connection, they need to have a meaningful connection with at least one teacher in high school to spark that interest in chosen interests. For me it was my art teacher.*

#### **Lack of Information/Knowledge**

- *Like many grade 11/12 students, there was a lack of understanding on how to apply, how programs worked, how payment worked, what is offered, and how getting a formal education may benefit them*
- *Many students do not have an understanding of the benefits of being a teacher and the process for getting into university.*
- *Many students would be the first in their families to attend post -secondary, and therefore their family may not have the ‘knowledge’ to ‘support’ them – it was suggested that parents and community members be invited into relationship building as well.*

#### **Away from community, family home**

There is a lack of appreciation for how far the community is from the college, how rarely these students visit the city (especially the college), and how difficult it is for students to give up living at home rent-free to instead pay for residence in an unfamiliar place.

### **3. How can these barriers be overcome?**

There were few responses to this final question as the responses to the first questions asking for identification of effective practices implicitly assumed that by implemented these school districts would be overcoming barriers. Included are final comments by a few respondents.

- *Increase indigenous teachers; increase FNMI content in school curriculum; positive contributions of Indigenous culture in Canadian society”*
- *“As noted above - an intentional effort by key stakeholders to let indigenous students know they are wanted by the profession, they are needed by the profession and provide these students with information about how they can become part of the profession. This is not typical for our profession as we are in a position where we have a surplus of people looking to become teachers. Consequently, we do not have to recruit in a traditional sense. We need to consider a different approach with respect to indigenous teachers and actively recruit indigenous teachers.”*

Currently, the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) in collaboration with the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) is conducting a survey of self-identified Indigenous teachers and school and system leaders to learn about the recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion practices /policies that support increasing the representation of Indigenous teachers and leaders in our provincial school system. A final report of the findings and recommendations will be available this June. This report will guide and inform next steps by CASS and the ATA to address how to address the underrepresentation of Indigenous teachers and leaders.

Additionally, CASS is collaborating with the Alberta Association of Deans of Education to identify how best to support self-identified Indigenous students transitioning to and while in university.

# Oo'mahn'istay likakimaaks: You've Got a Story— Next Steps to a New Beginning

Indigenous Youth  
Transition Event

## COMMUNITY REPORT



We would love to share  
our day with you...



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
WERKLUND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



CALGARY CATHOLIC  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Land Acknowledgement

The Creator gifted us with this land that we are blessed to share and care for together.

The Calgary Catholic School District acknowledges that the land we gather on,

**Mohkinstsis**, is the ancestral territory of the **Siksikaitsitapi**:

the **Siksika**, **Kainai**, **Piikani** and **Amskapi Pikuni**.

We acknowledge all the Treaty 7 signatories, including the **Tsuut'ina** people,

as well as the **Iyârhe** Nakoda Nations: **Bearspaw**, **Chiniki** and **Wesley**.

This land is also the home of Métis Nation Region 3  
and all others who call this place home.



## Date of event:

February 3, 2021

## Platform:

Online Zoom; Recorded Video Messages

## Event Sponsorship:

University of Calgary, Werklund School of Education





# Acknowledgements



## **Community Elders:**

Wanda First Rider (Blackfoot Elder); Bruce Starlight (Tsuut'ina Elder); Rod Hunter (Iyarhe Nakoda Elder); Edmee Comstock (Métis Elder)

**University of Calgary**  
Werklund School of Education

**Calgary Catholic School District**

## **U of C Faculty Guest Speakers:**

Dr. Amy Burns; Dr. Jaime Fiddler; Dr. Adam Murry; Dr. Yvonne Poitras Pratt; Dr. Tiffany Prete; Dr. Daniel Voth

## **Indigenous Student Speakers:**

Chantel Large; Cecilia Littlelight; Tylor Pavlik

## **School Recruitment:**

Samantha McLean – Indigenous Student  
Recruitment at U of C

Aileen Taylor – CCSD Career Counselling

## **Event Co-ordinators:**

**University of Calgary:**

Dr. Aubrey Hanson; Dr. Erin Spring

**Calgary Catholic School District:**

Angela Houle; Patricia McCallum; Paula Huddy

**Research Assistants:**

Teresa Miles; Maureen Plante



# Purpose

The aim of this project was to encourage and build on the positive trajectory of Indigenous youth in educational settings and to help them become aware of the possibilities and options that are available regarding post-secondary education. It is hoped that this event will contribute to increasing Indigenous student transition rates to post-secondary education

## “Seeing Yourself at University”



## Beginning the day...

The day began with an introduction by Angela Houle which included an acknowledgement of the land and setting out the agenda for the day.

This was followed by a prayer and blessings from Elder Wanda First Rider.





# Community Elders

Sharing Their Perspectives  
on the Importance  
of Education





# Wanda First Rider Blackfoot Elder



Wanda is a Blackfoot Elder from the Kainai Nation. She is also the Elder for the Calgary Catholic School District. She works as a liaison with students and families in schools. She has worked in the school district for 33 years, and has been a tremendous resource. She also does wonderful work in the Indigenous community of Mohkinstsis and on her home nation of Kainai.

"Your high school experience has been both rewarding and challenging. Making friends and learning about all aspects of life through education."

"...through the voices of our knowledge keepers, our ceremonies, our traditional grandparents...inspires, encourages, motivates each of you to continue to be persistent in your educational journey."

# Bruce Starlight Tsuut'ina Elder



Bruce is a Tsuut'ina Elder. He lives on the Tsuut'ina Nation with his wife Deanna. His family owns and operates the Brown Bear Woman Cultural Centre. Bruce and his family do a lot of work in the Indigenous community and his family has a tipi at the Elbow River Camp during Stampede.

"It's always good to have a dream. Without dreams, you can't get to where you want to be...all the people I know who have been successful in life, they had a dream, number one, and then they had education."

"Attend functions that are Indigenous.  
Don't lose yourself."



# Rod Hunter

## Iyarhe Nakoda Elder



Rod is an Iyarhe Nakoda Elder. He is also a council member for the Bearspaw Nation. He works hard in his community and does much cultural work for the University of Calgary. His drumming group, Eyahey Nakoda Drummers, perform at many UCalgary events and at the Calgary Catholic Indigenous Students Graduation Celebrations.

"...continue with that circle. You're born, you meet somebody, you have your own kids. You grow old and then you become an Elder. You have to share your education. Shared what you've learned with the younger people. You can't keep it to yourself. You have to make sure your kids, your grandkids, and your great grand kids know their traditions and know how important it is to have an education."

"Education...that word keeps coming back."

# Edmee Comstock

## Métis Elder



Edmee is a Métis Elder. Her family is from St Boniface, Manitoba, what is now known as Winnipeg. Her great, great grandfather was Jean Bruce, the first president of the Métis Louis Riel was his secretary. She is the youngest of 17 children and has lived in Calgary for many years now. Edmee presented the Métis students with their sashes and an explanation of the sash at the CCSD Indigenous students' graduation ceremony in 2019.

"Today you can achieve university. You can achieve to be a professor, if you would like to...doctor, a lawyer...you'll have many choices. You could be part of our government. You can help make the difference to other Métis, First Nation, and Inuit people that are coming behind you. So make that choice and run with it."

"The Elders, we'd love to listen. And if you ever feel you need an ear to listen sometime we don't need to be giving you advice all we need is to hear what direction you'd like to go into and encourage you. So let's encourage each and everyone of each other."



# Indigenous Student Speakers

Three successful UCalgary Indigenous students, two of whom are former CCSD students, spoke about their achievements and experiences. CCSD Indigenous high school students were invited into breakout rooms to meet with and ask questions of the guest speakers.



Chantel Large  
"A Day in the Life  
on Campus"



Cecilia Littlelight  
"Transitions;  
Safeguards; and  
Supports"



Tylor Pavlik  
"Indigenized spaces  
on campus"





# Events of the Day...

Each student received an information package that contained:

- UCalgary promotional
- Educational material
- Indigenous resources for on campus
- Contact and funding opportunities
- CCSD face mask
- Components for a medicine pouch including sage.



Hosting the day online  
with 13 Calgary  
Catholic Schools



Students were presented with a UCalgary video tour of the campus in stages throughout the morning session. The video was narrated by Dr. Hanson and Dr. Spring and included places such as MacEwan Hall, Student Services, and Indigenous spaces on campus.



# UCalgary Faculty Speakers

The final session of the morning included presentations by UCalgary Indigenous faculty and Dr. Amy Burns (Associate Dean). Students were again allowed a question-and-answer session with the guest speakers via breakout rooms.



Dr. Yvonne  
Poitras Pratt



Dr. Tiffany Prete



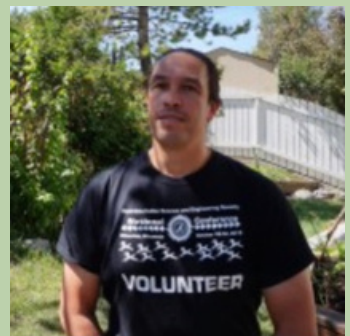
Dr. Amy Burns



Dr. Daniel Voth



Dr. Jaime  
Fiddler



Dr. Adam Murry





# Lunch Time Competition

## "Students in Action"

To get the students active during their lunch break they were tasked with a photo competition.

Students uploaded photos to Padlet, an online platform.

They were then asked to vote for best photo.

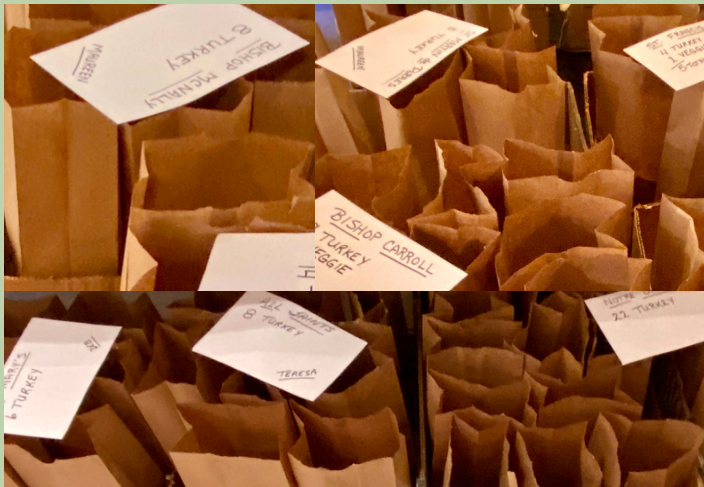
The top three voted by students received hoodies from the UCalgary.





# Catered Bagged Lunches

- Croissant Sandwich
- Red Apple
- Granola Bars
- Apple Juice
- Baked Bannock w/Jam





# Sharing Our Heritage



If you have never tried making baked bannock...here is a simple recipe for you:

## BAKED BANNOCK

3 cups all purpose flour  
1 tbsp salt (I like sea salt)  
1 tbsp sugar  
2 tbsp baking powder  
1/4 cup vegetable oil  
1 cup milk  
1/2 cup water



Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix dry ingredients. Add wet ingredients. Mix with hands. Knead for about 1 minute on well-floured surface. Place ball of dough on a large cookie sheet to rest for approximately 10 minutes. Press dough into a large flat oval about 1/2 – 1 inch thick. Dock the dough with a fork. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes until golden brown. Stand upright on its side to let cool for 15 minutes.

Slice into pieces and enjoy!





# UCalgary Opportunities

## Samantha McLean

As a Student Recruitment Advisor, she supports Indigenous students, families and community members as well as individuals from Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories.

- Application Process
- Deadlines
- Scholarships
- Acceptance Process





# CCSD

## Aileen Taylor

School Counselling Consultant

- Scholarships
- Loans
- CCSD Help that is Available to Students



# Medicine Pouch

## Teaching & Creation:

"Take Your Culture with You"

Elder Wanda First Rider

Students were provided with pre-cut leather, printed with UCalgary lettering. Beads were gifted with a packet of sage (sacred medicine) for each student to place inside completed pouches.







# Medicine Pouch Teaching & Creation



**Students who participated were asked to fill out a simple survey at the end of the day.**

EXIT TICKET QUESTIONS:

- What was your favourite part of today?
- What is one thing you wish we would have included in a day like today?
- Was the event helpful? if so, how?
- Has this event increased your confidence and/or likelihood of applying to post-secondary?





# QR Code exit survey 43 of 44

respondents said  
they were more  
likely to consider  
post-secondary  
education now  
because of the  
event.





# In Summary...

# Through the Wisdom of Our Elders...

**Blackfoot Elder  
Wanda First Rider**

**"We are proud of your accomplishments and we know you will accomplish your dreams of pursuing post-secondary education. Our Indigenous communities are unique in that we live in two worlds. Our people know that we must understand these two worlds. So, as Indigenous people we go through life seeking out gifts of knowledge from these two worlds."**



**Métis Elder Edmee Comstock**

**"The biggest gift you can give yourself is education...doors will open...people will listen...and you will feel proud of yourself. Each of you have that gift of being able to achieve this."**

# Iyarhe Nakoda Elder Rod Hunter

**"The traditional education is just as important.  
To be successful in life, you have to have  
the formal education and  
the traditional education. To be super successful...you  
have to know both."**



# Tsuut'ina Elder Bruce Starlight

**"... all the people who have been  
successful in life, they had a  
dream number one. And then  
they had education. "**

**"So keep your dreams strong and just for you.  
And then everyone, the community,  
will be proud of you."**



THANK YOU

to everyone who contributed to making  
this day a success!

