



## CASS First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Action Committee

# Meeting Highlights

April 27, 2022

Committee Membership for 2021-2022

**Chair – Elizabeth Gouthro**, CASS Consultant

### CASS Representatives:

**David Keohane** – Executive Director

**Claudine Cortes** – Executive Assistant

### Treaty Representatives:

**Brian Wildcat** – Superintendent, Maskwacis Education Schools Commission (Treaty 6)

**Genevieve Fox** – Director of Education, Blackfoot Confederacy Tribal Council (Treaty 7)

**Chester Auger** – Director of Education, Bigstone Cree Nation Education (Treaty 8)

### Métis Representatives:

**Dianne Desjarlis** – Director, Alberta Métis Settlements General Council

**Lisa Cruickshank** – Director, Métis Education and Lifelong Learning, Rupertsland Institute

### Zone Representatives:

**Laura Poloz** – Superintendent, High Prairie School Division (Zone 1)

**George McGuigan** – Superintendent, Fort McMurray Catholic School System, (Zone 2/3)

**Selena Frizzley** – Coordinator of Indigenous Education Services, Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools, (Zone 4)

**Lori Pritchard** – Education Director, Calgary Board of Education (Zone 5)

**Robbie Charlebois** – Associate Superintendent of Human Services, Horizon School Division (Zone 6)

### Francophone:

**Brigitte Kropieinicki** – Directrice Générale/Superintendent of Schools, Conseil scolaire du Nord-ouest

### AISCA:

**John Jagersma** – Executive Director

### Alberta Education Representatives:

**Nicole Callihoo** – Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nations Métis and Inuit Directorate

**Lori Bell** – Executive Director, First Nations Métis Inuit Directorate

**Ronald Taylor** – Director, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Services Branch

The mandate of the CASS First Nations Métis & Inuit Education Action Committee is to collaboratively identify effective education practices for school authorities through engaging with representatives of First Nations, Métis, Public, Separate, Francophone, Charter, Independent authorities, and associations.

### Absences Due to Cultural and Spiritual Reasons

David Keohane updated the committee on his discussion with the Minister of Education regarding concerns from school districts when Indigenous students were absent for a cultural and or spiritual reason. Under the current Alberta Education Act, cultural and or spiritual reasons are not an excusable absence, as there is no code for either. The CASS Board of Directors, at their March meeting, supported having an excused absence for cultural and spiritual reasons as it would align with our collective commitment as school authorities to implement the principles of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The minister expressed appreciation for what was being requested and suggested that section 7(F) of the Act does allow for school districts to establish policies and procedures for this provision. CASS will put out a call to school districts to request sharing their established policies and or procedures for absences due for cultural and or spiritual reasons. Please forward these to [elizabeth.gouthro@cass.ab.ca](mailto:elizabeth.gouthro@cass.ab.ca).

### Establishing Terms of Reference for Cultural and Ceremonial Component of The First Nations Métis and Inuit Education Gathering

The committee agreed to establish an ad hoc committee to investigate drafting a protocol for the cultural and ceremonial component of the Gathering and report back to the committee. The committee recognized the critical role that culture and ceremony have in the Gatherings for participants and want to establish a process /protocol that is inclusive, creates safety and represents the diversity of Indigenous Peoples in Alberta. The members of the committee are Lisa Cruickshank, Dianne Desjarlais, Genevieve Fox, Lori Pritchard and Elizabeth Gouthro.

### 2022 Gathering Learning Survey Report

The committee had a brief discussion on the Gathering survey report. The feedback was very positive with participants expressing strong support for the opportunity to learn by listening to Elders, Knowledge keepers and Indigenous

keynotes and speakers sharing their lived experiences. They were also very appreciative of the cultural component of the Gathering. Many felt inspired and invigorated to learn more and share with their colleagues what they had learned. They saw learning the truth as a lifelong learning goal to reconciliation. Suggestions for improvement mostly relate to the facility. CASS signed a multi-year contract with Fantasyland hotel for the 2023 & 2024 Gathering. Other facilities will be investigated that meet the growing demand for space and in support of economic reconciliation, Indigenous facilities will be considered in 2025. There were also suggestions for the program to be spread out over more days to shorten the length of the days. While the committee understood the rationale behind this suggestion, they felt that it would increase the cost of the Gathering to spread it out over more days. The committee recommended investigating having a pre-conference day to meet the need for more time to learn.

### Revisions to the Guide to Relationships and Learning with the Indigenous Peoples of Alberta

The committee decided to allocate certain sections of the revisions to Guide to each member in preparation for the whole committee review at the May meeting. Once this step is completed the Guide will also be translated into French. The revised Guide should be available to members late June.

### Committee membership for 2022-23

The members of the committee were asked to check with their organization and or zone to determine if they would be continuing as the representative for 2022-23.

**Next meeting scheduled for May 19 and June 16, 2022, 1-3 p.m.**

*For more information, please contact: Your representative and/or Elizabeth Gouthro 1-587-226-8256 [elizabeth.gouthro@cass.ab.ca](mailto:elizabeth.gouthro@cass.ab.ca)*