

- the importance of showing respect for the contributions and ways of knowing of Indigenous Peoples reflected through stories and songs that have lived on this land for thousands of years;
 - a teaching from likiinayookaa (Marlene Yellowhorn, Kainai Nation, Principal, CBE) that land acknowledgement is not something you do, rather, it is something you feel – a lesson passed on to likiinayookaa from her grandfather; and,
 - a teaching from Lori Pritchard (Métis and Ukrainian from Saskatchewan, Education Director, CBE) that identifying a commitment to action must always be connected to land acknowledgement. (4:52)

Invitation to the Circle and Land Connect Moment

Crystal invited participants to imagine themselves on the land and settle into a spot around a fire as they prepared to listen, connect, learn, and reflect. She emphasized the pedagogy of Indigenous learning that brings us together in circle. She also provided an opportunity for participants to connect to land through their imaginations and hearts. This was done to set the tone for the virtual circle while modelling the need to acknowledge and become aware of our deeply rooted relationships to one another and the natural world. (9:53)



Spirit and Intent and Navigation of the Guide:

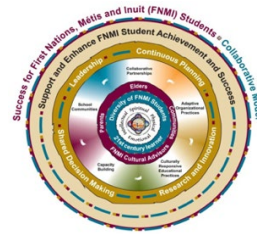
Crystal, one of the key developers of the [Guide](#), talked about the birch tree image featured throughout as representing our connection to one another through land, life and breath. She described the [Guide](#) as a starting point; a branch or leaves on a tree that represent a small part of the whole tree within a forest. It was developed in 2019 and updated in 2022 to support system education leaders begin the process of deepening their understanding. The real work, she said, is connecting and working with Indigenous Peoples and community and building respectful relationships over time. (15:40)

Acknowledgements

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Resources Growing from the Guide

In the spirit of strengthening relationships, Dianne highlighted the three additional resources that flow from the [Guide](#) and represent leaves on the birch tree ([A Virtual Circle with Elders](#); [Improving Success for Indigenous Students](#); and [Establishing and Sustaining Respectful Relationships for Student Success \(ESA Guide\)](#). The latter focuses on Education Service Agreements (ESAs) and is directly tied to the webinar topic; building respectful and reciprocal relationships. ESAs are agreements between First Nations and provincial school authorities. They come into place when students living on reserve attend provincial schools and when students living in the city attend school on reserve. The [ESA Guide](#) offers heartfelt and honest guidance from many leaders, including members from the CASS First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Action Committee. It includes the wisdom of **Debbie Mineault**, Director of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education, Northland Schools Division, who played a key role in this webinar. She talked about the important work that began many years ago ([Alberta Education, Collaborative Frameworks, 2012](#)) and is being carried on today (refer to the Explore section of about [ESA Guide](#), entitled: Reawakening the Spirit of the Collaborative Frameworks/Image). (19:25)



Presenter Introductions

- Debbie Mineault**, Director of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education, Northland Schools Division (0:41)
- Elder Virginia Cardinal**, Bigstone Cree Nation (22:22)
- Knowledge Keeper John Bigstone**, Bigstone Cree Nation (24:31)
- Mark Owens**, Associate Superintendent, Northland School Division (while Mark did not present he played a key supporting role)

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Elder Teachings About Reciprocity

Debbie invited the Elders to respond to questions to highlight the work they have been doing with NSD and offer teachings about reciprocity. Each of the questions is highlighted in the video with beautiful images that show reciprocity in action. ([27:00](#))



Why Is Teaching About Reciprocity Important in School Communities?

Elder John Bigstone spoke about practicing reciprocity when he is picking medicines. He always carries tobacco with him and makes an offering to the land before taking anything. He gives back to the people in his community (and beyond) who can benefit from the gifts he has been given. He said reciprocity is about always giving back and sharing what you have to help others. He talked about his own learning path as an ᐃᓃᖃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **oskâpêwis**, Elder Helper, and that now, at this stage in his life, he needs an ᐃᓃᖃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **oskâpêwis**. He said the way we give of ourselves is important; that we must always be of service. He highlighted the importance of all of us “living by example”, being prepared to help in any way, not being afraid to roll up our sleeves and show the children how it’s done. He shared the **nēhiyawēwin** (Cree language) word, ᐃᓃᖃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **onîsohkamakew** to get to the heart of what he was describing. It means, helping people, supporting and loving one another, and sharing what you have with the whole community. ([27:28](#))



What Does It Mean to Give Something Back in Return for Gifts Received?

Elder Virginia said she has a responsibility to give back the legacy gifted to her by her parents and grandparents. She strives to do so with the parents and children with whom she works each day. The gifts that she has been given must be practised and taught, she said. This includes bringing back the things that have been lost through assimilation. Her mom taught her the **nēhiyawēwin** word, ᐃᓃᖃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **miyo-âpacitâw**, the importance of sharing of knowledge, having humility, caring for others, knowing we are all equal, not putting herself above anyone else. ([36:43](#))



How Do We Embrace Relationships and Reciprocity With Each Other?

Elder John pointed to trust and respect as foundational to any relationship. He said this must include respectful communication. Elder Virginia acknowledged that, because of our shared history in this country and violent colonial practices, trust has been lost and

many Indigenous peoples have shut down. There is a lot of work to do to build trust and respect with each other, she said. She emphasized the importance of returning to the **nēhiyawak** teachings of ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **kayâs wahkotowin**

(forefather

relatives), ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **maskawisiwin ekwa** (strength of character), and ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **sakihewin** (love) and embedding them in their everyday cultural practices. This is what will provide a strong foundation for young people. ([40:00](#))



How Does the School Community Promote Cultural Wellbeing?

Elder Virginia talked about teaching the children the **Niska** dance. May is the time when you teach this, she said. The dance is full of teachings to connect the young people to the land. When these teachings are connected to what is happening in the classroom, the kids feel a connection. They are dancing for their own wellness. Elder John talked about the importance of nurturing young people’s sense of identity and their connection to the spirit world. This dance and other dances, songs, and ceremonies hold the teachings necessary to show young people who they are and where they come from; how they are connected. Debbie highlighted the concept of ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ ᐅᓃᖅ **pâhkwesimowin**, a ceremonial dance. This is about the skill of observation, she said., and the gift of having a relationship with nature. Dancers have that gift and with it comes a feeling of pride and joy in identity. ([43:59](#))



How Do We Preserve Old Knowledge Held in Language Teaching?

Elder Virginia explained that the stories shared through **nēhiyawēwin** hold teachings about life skills, survival, morals, spirituality, respect for the land, and respect for family and community. It is through language that we preserve our knowledge, she said. Elder John underscored how hands-on experiences, ceremony, observation, oral teachings, and stories were how young people learned their ways. Very few people speak **nēhiyawēwin** now and this loss has been devastating. In the translation of **nēhiyawak** to English, a great deal is lost. **Nēhiyawēwin** connects us to our spirit, he said, and through spirit we learn our values and ways. Debbie and the Elders emphasized how critical language revitalization efforts are to preserving the beauty and complexity of their values and ways. They recognize

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4. What are our next steps and how will I put one learning from this webinar/learning guide into action?



Resources for Building System Leadership Capacity

- [A Virtual Circle with Elders](#)
- [Establishing and Sustaining Respectful Relationships for Student Success](#)
- [Guide to Relationships and Learning with the Indigenous Peoples of Alberta](#)
- [Improving Success for Indigenous Students](#)
- [Successful Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education: Collaborative Frameworks Building Relationships Companion Resource, 2012](#)
- [Indigenous Education | Cultural Protocols, Calgary Board of Education](#)
- [Optimum Learning For All Students: Implementing Alberta’s 2018 Professional Practice Standards](#)
- [Walking Parallel Paths, Together, in a Good Way. The Office of Indigenous Engagement and ii’ taa’poh’to’p, University of Calgary](#)



Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard
 Quality superintendent leadership occurs when the superintendent’s ongoing analysis of the context, and the superintendent’s decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality school leadership, quality teaching and optimum learning for all students in the school authority.
ALBERTA EDUCATION MINISTERIAL ORDER #003/2020

- 1 Building Effective Relationships
- 2 Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
- 3 Visionary Leadership
- 4 Leading Learning
- 5 Ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education for All Students
- 6 School Authority Operations and Resources
- 7 Supporting Effective Governance

Leadership Quality Standard
 Quality leadership occurs when the leader’s ongoing analysis of the context, and decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality teaching and optimum learning for all school students.
ALBERTA EDUCATION MINISTERIAL ORDER #002/2020

- 1 Fostering Effective Relationships
- 2 Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
- 3 Embodying Visionary Leadership
- 4 Leading a Learning Community
- 5 Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- 6 Providing Instructional Leadership
- 7 Developing Leadership Capacity
- 8 Managing School Operations and Resources
- 9 Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context

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