



2025 Learning Survey for the CASS First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Gathering

Executive Summary

The ninth CASS First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Gathering: *Wâhkôtamowin for Student Success* took place April 30 to May 2, 2025 at the Wyndham Hotel in Edmonton.

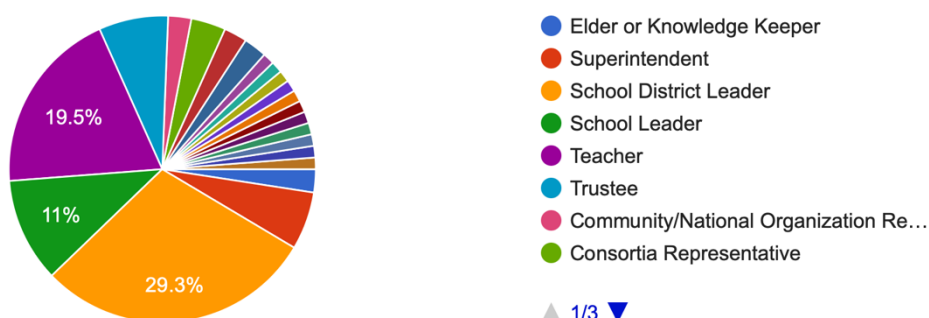
Four-hundred twenty people attended and survey results indicate that the 4 goals of the Gathering were met with a very high level of satisfaction from participants. Goals for the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Gathering include:

- an increase in understanding how to apply foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students;
- an increase in capacity building to meet the learning needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students;
- an increase in understanding how to engage and collaborate with First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders, Elders, communities and organizations; and
- an increase in awareness and understanding of how to implement and lead practices that support reconciliation within our schools, school systems, and communities.

Below are the highlights of the 2025 survey findings to inform the 2026 Gathering. In 2026, the Gathering will be held April 22-24th at the River Cree Resort, 300 East Lapotac Blvd., Enoch Nation.

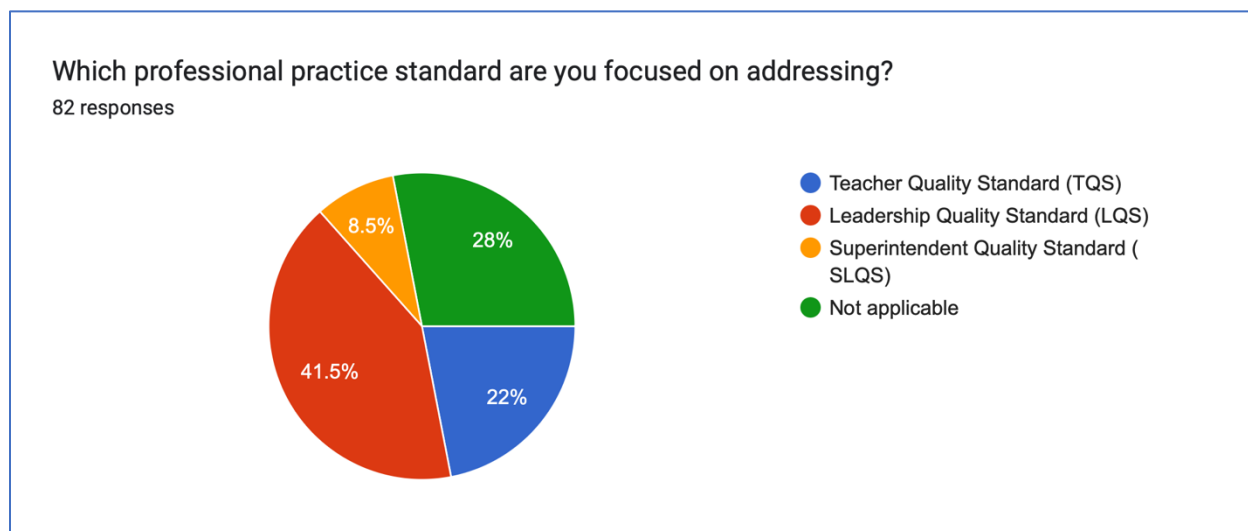
Please indicate your position.

82 responses



Reflections on my Learning:

The Alberta Professional Practice Standards: [Teacher Quality Standard \(TQS\)](#), [Leadership Quality Standard \(LQS\)](#), and the [Superintendent Quality Standard \(SLQS\)](#) include a focus on Indigenous Education.



1. How did this learning opportunity contribute to your personal and/or professional awareness/understanding of Indigenous Education?

Participants shared thoughtful, detailed reflections about how the learning opportunity deepened both their personal and professional understanding of Indigenous education.

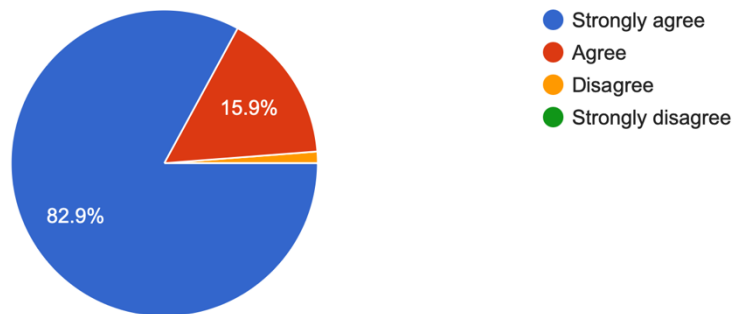
A consistent theme across responses was the value of learning directly from **Elders, Knowledge Keepers**, and **Indigenous educators**. The strength of **Indigenous voices** at the Gathering was deeply appreciated. The knowledge and wisdom shared throughout the event—through keynotes, ceremonies, and session offerings—significantly contributed to a broader understanding of the **distinct nature and diversity** of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews.

Participants described feeling encouraged, challenged, and inspired to continue or deepen their **commitments to Truth and Reconciliation**. Presentations, particularly those by Dr. Niigaan Sinclair and the youth panel, were cited as transformative—emphasizing **action and deep listening**. The Gathering reaffirmed the importance of including **Indigenous knowledges and approaches** respectfully in curriculum, policy, leadership, and teaching practice, aligning closely with the SLQS/LQS/TQS.

Attendees noted the importance of continued reflection, acknowledging that meaningful learning in this area is ongoing. Many expressed gratitude for the opportunity to connect with others, **build relationships**, and participate in a **shared journey** toward **reconciliation and justice**. The experience was described as healing, energizing, and eye-opening, with many expressing gratitude for learning through **ceremony, story, and holistic teachings**.

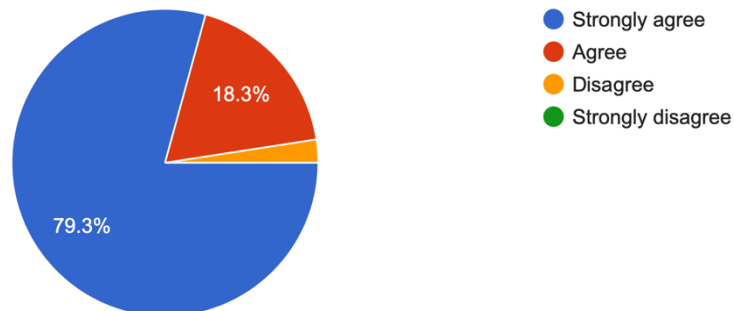
2. I commit to applying my learning (awareness and understanding) in my role/practice.

82 responses



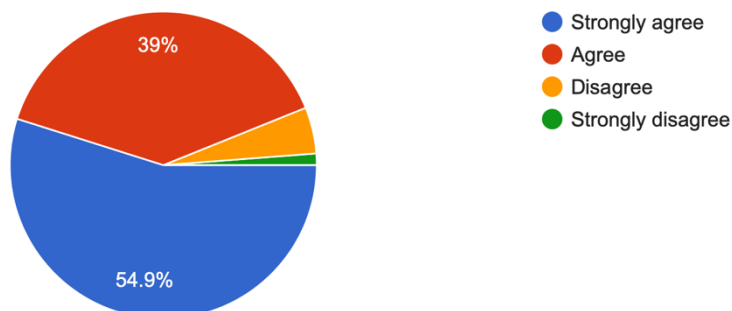
3. I commit to sharing my learning with colleagues and others.

82 responses



4. This professional learning opportunity provided ideas about how to lead and incorporate strategies/actions into my work.

82 responses



5. I commit to putting my learning into action by...

Respondents expressed a wide range of thoughtful, intentional commitments to putting their learning into action—inspired by their experience at the Gathering. A recurring theme was the importance of **sharing knowledge**: with colleagues, students, leadership teams, and broader school communities. This sharing was seen not only as a professional obligation but as a **moral responsibility** to extend the impact of the Gathering and continue the **collective learning journey**.

Many respondents committed to **centering Indigenous voices, knowledges, and practices** in their work by including land-based learning, storytelling, Indigenous languages, and local cultural teachings from Elders and Knowledge Carriers. Many noted plans to create opportunities for students and staff to **learn from and with Indigenous educators**—emphasizing the value of establishing and sustaining **respectful relationships** over simply learning about Indigenous histories and cultures. T

Respondents acknowledged their roles in **decolonizing education spaces** by making room for Indigenous worldviews and **challenging the dominance of Western approaches**. This included practical actions like supporting Indigenous language learning, embedding Treaty education, and incorporating the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action** across curricula and school and system processes and practices.

Personal reflection and team-based dialogue were also prioritized. Participants noted the importance of **pausing to reflect, becoming better listeners**, and **creating space** within their teams for shared learning and critical self-examination. They emphasized the need to **carry forward** the **teachings and responsibilities** shared by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and youth, ensuring these are lived out in daily practice.

In summary, participants demonstrated a wide range of actionable commitments, grounded in shared values of **respect, humility, and a collective responsibility** to uphold and advance reconciliation through education.

6. Please identify one learning related to “Wâhkôtamowin for Student Success” that made the 2024 Gathering meaningful.

Participants identified a wide range of learnings connected to **wâhkôtamowin**—a relational concept extending beyond human connection to include land, spirit, and all living beings.

A central insight was that wâhkôtamowin **calls everyone in**. Youth, naturally drawn to connection, must be supported by educators who honour and nurture this capacity. Healing—both individual and collective—was seen as rooted in **relationships grounded in care, spirit, and mutual respect**.

The **youth panel** stood out as a powerful highlight, offering firsthand stories that deepened understanding of how belonging and relational accountability impact student success.

Keynotes, particularly Dr. Niigaan Sinclair’s, were praised for linking **truth-telling with hopeful, actionable reconciliation**. His message—“we are an ‘and’ people, not ‘or’ people”—reinforced the need for collective, relational approaches in education.

Ceremonies and stories, such as the **pipe ceremony and Manitou Asiniy**, underscored the importance of grounding educational practice in **spiritual and cultural protocols**.

Participants emphasized the need to honour **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge** alongside Western perspectives. Educators reaffirmed their commitment to embedding Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating into **everyday practice**, not just on symbolic days.

Land learning was highlighted as restorative and deeply connecting—linking students to culture, community, and the natural world.

7. One aspect of this learning opportunity that might be improved is:

Participants provided thoughtful and constructive feedback on how the learning opportunity could be strengthened. Many expressed deep appreciation for the overall experience and excellent program offerings.

Venue and Physical Environment:

Participants noted several **venue limitations**, including crowded seating, poor acoustics, understaffed hospitality, limited refreshments, and a **lack of natural light**. Many felt the space

was disconnected from the land, suggesting future locations support **land-based learning and ceremony** to better align with Indigenous pedagogies.

Conference Structure and Learning Experiences:

Participants called for a shift from traditional conference formats to **more dynamic, and experiential sessions**. They emphasized **centering Indigenous pedagogies** through ceremony, cultural immersion, and oral storytelling, rather than PowerPoints and written materials.

Indigenous Voices During the Opening

Participants emphasized the need to **elevate and balance Indigenous voices** during the opening. They called for Indigenous Elders, youth, and leaders to lead and set the tone from the start.

Cultural Protocol and Clarity:

A recurring theme was the desire for learning related to **ceremony and cultural practices**. Attendees expressed a deep respect for protocol and noted that they would appreciate **learning the significance** of what was taking place (either before or during, as appropriate).

Balance in Representation:

Participants called for **broader Indigenous representation**, including **Inuit and Treaty-specific perspectives** (e.g., Treaty 7, Blackfoot, Stoney Nakoda), and more involvement of local Knowledge Keepers, Indigenous staff, and student voices.

Schedule and Pacing:

Some participants noted that the **length of certain days**—particularly Thursday—made it difficult to stay fully engaged. Suggestions included shorter sessions, better pacing across the day, and building in more opportunities for informal **connection, movement, and reflection**.

Overall, the feedback reflected a desire to see the Gathering continue evolving in ways that **embody Indigenous ways of knowing**, build meaningful relationships, and create inclusive, respectful, and transformative learning experiences.

8. One thing I require to further support my personal/professional learning is:

The following themes were highlighted.

Time, Space, and Support for Meaningful Engagement

Participants consistently called for **more time to reflect, collaborate, and plan**, emphasizing the need for **intentional space** to move from learning to action within schools and communities.

Access to Indigenous Voices and Knowledge

Participants emphasized the need for **sustained connections to Indigenous voices**—particularly Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and local community members. They are interested in **land-based learning**, greater access to **Métis and Inuit perspectives**, and support for **Indigenous language revitalization**.

Resources, Curriculum, and Practical Tools

Educators expressed great interest in **curriculum-aligned resources** and ideas that support culturally responsive teaching. There was a clear desire for tangible resources that **bridge the gap between knowledge and practice**, ensuring that Indigenous content is not only acknowledged but embedded in respectful ways in everyday teaching and learning.

Systemic and Structural Change

Many spoke to the importance of **system-level leadership** to address systemic barriers and how to better **align leadership at all levels** to ensure meaningful, sustained progress and action.

Professional Diversity and Role-Specific Learning

Some participants sought more **role-specific sessions**—especially in HR, finance, and administration—alongside the relational and cultural content, highlighting interest in **Indigenous staff hiring** and recruitment practices.

Continued Learning and Networking Opportunities

Participants deeply valued the Gathering and requested **year-round learning**, more Elder engagement, peer networking, and clearer promotion of **CEP credits** across all CASS events.

Learning as Relational Responsibility

Respondents noted that professional learning is not a checklist of competencies, but a **relational responsibility** grounded in humility, learning, listening, and action.

9. Please share comments/suggestions regarding future CASS Gatherings.

Participants overwhelmingly value the CASS Gathering as a meaningful space for learning and connection. To reflect its purpose and audience, future events would benefit from:

- Centering **Indigenous Voices and processes** (e.g, Elder-lead sessions, less colonial framing and structure).
- A more culturally aligned and accessible **venue**.

- Improved food and **hospitality planning** (e.g., Indigenous menus, better food planning and waste reduction).
- Expanded **experiential**, land, and interactive learning opportunities.
- **Tiered fees** for Elders and Knowledge Carriers and consideration of **honoraria** for session presenters.
- Elevate and balance Indigenous voices during the opening.
- Increased **representation and balance** of Indigenous voices across First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

Participants noted that continued thoughtful planning, grounded in **relational accountability and Indigenous ways of knowing**, will strengthen the Gathering as a model of professional learning in education for reconciliation.