



Meeting Highlights

May 20, 2025

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.

Committee Membership for 2024-2025

CASS Representatives:

David Keohane – CASS CEO

Jonathan Kaiswatum – Board Representative
Dr. Dianne Roulson - CASS Leadership Consultant (related to the annual Indigenous Education Gathering and grant deliverables)

Zone Representatives:

Roger Lauck – Director of Teaching & Learning, Grande Prairie Catholic (Zone 1)

Annalee Nutter – Superintendent, Fort McMurray Public (Zone 2/3)

Tim De Ruyck (Committee Chair) – Superintendent, Wolf Creek Public (Zone 4)

Dr. Ryan Sawula – Associate Superintendent - Curriculum and Inclusion, Red Deer Catholic (Zone 4)

Cindy Stefanato – Director of Indigenous Learning, Rocky View Schools (Zone 5)

Aaron Skretting – Director of Religious Education, Holy Spirit Catholic (Zone 6)

Treaty Representatives:

Tracy Swampy-Sylvester – Superintendent, Maskwacis Education Schools Commission (Treaty 6)

Staahtsistayaaki – Dr. 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 Desjarlais – Director, Alberta Métis Settlements General Council

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

Charter:

Chris Gilmour – Superintendent, Connect Charter

Francophone:

Dolorèse Nolette – Directrice Générale/Superintendent of Schools, Conseil scolaire Centre-Est

AISCA:

Erin Murphy – Senior ECS Manager

Alberta Education:

Carmen Parent – Executive Director of Rural and Métis, First Nations and Inuit Education

Ron Taylor – Director, Indigenous and North Services Branch

For more information, please contact:
Your representative and/or David Keohane
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Land Acknowledgement / Introductions

The CASS Land Acknowledgment video was played at the start of the meeting. Tim De Ruyck welcomed participants.

Updates from Committee Members

- **Wolf Creek Public Schools:** Shared a [document](#) highlighting Indigenous Education and Reconciliation events.
- **Rocky View Schools:** Preparing for their inaugural First Nations high school graduation, actively recruiting Indigenous education staff, and working towards their multi-year goals while supporting staff and students.
- **Grande Prairie Catholic Schools:** Conclusion of their CPA Martin Family initiative meetings featuring cultural presenters and grant to host a traditional moose hide tanning program in partnership with the local friendship center, giving students the opportunity to engage with Indigenous traditions.
- **Red Deer Catholic Schools:** Strong land camps and cultural programs based on student feedback, which evolved into the "aunties and uncles in training" initiatives, successfully incorporating community Elders and reflecting student voice in their programming.
- **Fort McMurray Public Schools:** After the strike, busy with various initiatives, including attending hand games, hosting a Grade 7 Indigenous Health conference, planning a family feast, organizing an author visit from Christy Jordan Fenton, and running multiple land-based learning camps for different grade levels, all while schools wrap up reconciliation projects and work with an Elder in residence.
- **CASS:** Next year, nearly one-third of school authorities in the province will have new superintendents, bringing experienced leaders with strong backgrounds in truth and reconciliation, which is seen as a hopeful development for the future of Alberta's education system.
- **AISCA:** Excitement about a new school in Calgary opening in September, focused on Indigenous STEAM education, with a founder who is an astrophysicist.
- **Alberta Education:** Changes to the 25/26 funding manual, requiring school authorities to report on activities supporting Truth and Reconciliation recommendations, as well as the impact of programs on First Nations students' educational outcomes. These changes, effective in November 2026, aim to increase accountability and inform future funding decisions.

2025 Indigenous Education Gathering Debrief

Overall, the feedback for the Gathering was constructive, with many positive comments about its impact while also suggesting areas for growth in future events, including balanced representation across Nations, continued youth involvement, and a focus on Indigenous languages and cultural practices.

Key themes included:

Conference Feedback & Suggestions: Several attendees shared positive feedback on the Gathering, particularly the youth panel and engaging sessions. There were also discussions on how to better involve underrepresented groups, including youth and superintendents from school authorities, and ideas for making the event more inclusive, with suggestions like discounted rates for Elders and session presenters. Other suggestions for future gatherings included involving more youth, further emphasizing Indigenous language, improving outreach to school divisions that may not have attended in the past, and considering a more standardized process for honouring Indigenous Elders, vendors, and presenters.

Challenges: Some challenges were raised, including the difficulty of involving youth volunteers due to supervision requirements, as well as concerns about some vendors not being Indigenous from Alberta.

Cultural Representation: The importance of maintaining a balance of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit representation was emphasized. A potential future focus on Inuit culture was suggested.

Event Logistics & Venue: Attendees recognized the effort involved in organizing the Gathering, especially with the transition to a new venue for one year.

Webinar Series on Cultural Protocol

D. Roulson asked for suggestions for a webinar series related to [Understanding, Honouring, and Learning Cultural Protocol in Relationship with Indigenous Peoples and Communities](#).

Participants discussed the value of having the webinar with a focus on sharing learning stories from various school divisions of successful Indigenous education practices, including language revitalization initiatives collaboration, and promoting inclusive educational practices. The webinar can also bridge the gap for those with the challenge of making connections due to geographical distances. The webinars are primarily intended for system education leaders, but past webinars have been open to anyone.