



CASS First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Action Committee

Meeting Highlights – October 23, 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 2025-2026

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)
Dr. Ryan Sawula (Committee Chair) – Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division (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:

Staahtsistayaaki 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

Charter:

Chris Gilmour – Superintendent, Connect Charter

Francophone:

Cynthia Launière-Zielke – Assistant Superintendent, HR and Student Services

AISCA:

Erin Murphy – Senior ECS Manager

Alberta Education:

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

Next Meeting:

The next committee meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2026 (1:00–2:30 p.m.).

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Introduction of Chair (David Keohane)

CASS CEO David Keohane opened with a land acknowledgement and a review of the committee's 15-year legacy. He emphasized that the committee's purpose is to support truth and reconciliation by engaging representatives from school authorities, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in collective dialogue. David introduced Dr. Ryan Sawula as the new Chair. Ryan expressed appreciation for the opportunity to lead and reaffirmed his commitment to continuing CASS' journey toward reconciliation through collaborative and reflective leadership.

Member Introductions

Members introduced themselves, representing public, separate, charter, Francophone, and independent school authorities, along with Alberta Education and Indigenous community leaders. Many expressed solidarity with school authorities in navigating the teacher labour action.

2026 Indigenous Education Gathering Planning (Dr. Dianne Roulson and Jason Bigcharles)

The proposed theme for the 2026 Gathering is "kwayask-wastâsowin for Student Success" (Making Things Right) derived from Cree teachings about restoring balance and relationship. This marks the 10th annual Gathering, to be held April 22–24, 2026, at River Cree Resort (Enoch Cree Nation). Key recommendations from the 2025 participant survey included ensuring balance across gender, Nations, and Treaty areas; centering Indigenous women's voices; highlighting the significance of ceremony; promoting experiential learning and reflection; encouraging system education leader attendance; and highlighting Indigenous artisans. The new venue will improve accessibility and natural light. Members affirmed that sessions at the Gathering should be clearly **connected to student learning** and the following topics:

- Living Treaties
- Land Relationship
- Anti-Racism
- Hiring, Retention, and Recruitment (including experiences of student teachers)
- Learning as Relational Responsibility
- Empowering Youth and Youth Voices
- Language Revitalization

Members also suggested featuring joint Indigenous and non-Indigenous leader panels.

Members voiced strong support for the theme and recommended ensuring cultural balance across ceremonies and topics. They encouraged inclusion of both historical and modern-day Treaty education, language revitalization strategies, and on-the-land learning opportunities. Several emphasized ensuring participants leave inspired, informed, and ready to act.

The theme was endorsed by the committee in principle. The planning group will refine keynote selections, consult with Enoch Cree Nation Elders regarding ceremony and bring an updated program at the next committee meeting.

Webinar Series: Understanding, Learning, and Honouring Cultural Protocol

Dr. Dianne Roulson introduced a forthcoming webinar series focused on enhancing understanding of cultural protocol in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and communities. The series will build on [Understanding, Honouring, and Learning Cultural Protocol in Relationship with Indigenous Peoples and Communities](#), and feature Elders and education leaders offering practical guidance on respectful engagement. The webinars will launch in early 2026, offering CEP credits for CASS regulated members and on-demand access through the CASS website.