



CASS First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Action Committee

Meeting Highlights – January 14, 2026

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:

Staahtsisttayaaki, 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
Megan Tipler – Associate Director, ELCC & K 12 Initiatives, Rupertsland Institute

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:

A Doodle Poll will be shared to schedule the next meeting as necessary.

Opening Blessings

Staahtsisttayaaki, Dr. Genevieve A. Fox opened the meeting with a blessing, grounding the gathering in Blackfoot teachings and emphasizing relationship, respect, and moving forward in a good way.

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement

Dr. Ryan Sawula welcomed committee members and acknowledged the traditional territories of the First Nations and the homeland of the Métis Nation. The acknowledgement reinforced CASS' ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation and to strengthening relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

Updates from Committee Members

Members shared updates highlighting significant work occurring across Alberta, including:

- **Language revitalization and dual credit initiatives**, notably the launch of Blackfoot 1000 as a dual credit course through the University of Lethbridge.
 - **Regional and divisional initiatives**, including land-based learning, Indigenous mentorship programs, student advisory councils, Elder councils, and professional learning opportunities.
 - **Métis education updates** with Rupertsland Institute outlining staffing transitions and renewed momentum in Métis teacher support and professional learning.
 - **Ministry of Education and Childcare engagement**, with sharing insights from division visits to inform policy, funding, and future investments.
- These updates demonstrated strong regional leadership, innovation, and collaboration in Indigenous education across the province.

Updates for the 2026 Indigenous Education Gathering (Dr. Dianne Roulson and Jason Bigcharles)

Dr. Dianne Roulson and Jason Bigcharles provided an overview of planning progress, noting that committee feedback from the previous meeting significantly informed next steps. Key highlights included:

- A clear intention to **celebrate Niitsitapi, Blackfoot culture**, including cultural performances and ceremonial elements.
- Confirmation of **keynote speakers**, including **Dr. Leroy Little Bear** and **Dr. Marie Wilson**.
- Plans for an **Indigenous teacher panel**, building on the success of the youth panel from the previous gathering.
- Strong response to the **Call for Proposals**, with 48 high-quality submissions received.

Adjustments to the schedule were proposed to create a more balanced flow, increase networking time, and respond to feedback about full agendas in past years.

Elder Sponsorship at the Indigenous Education Gathering

The committee engaged in thoughtful discussion regarding Elder participation and sponsorship. Considerations included:

- The importance of honouring Elders through culturally appropriate protocols, relationships, and meaningful support.
- Keeping full sponsorship for a set number of Elders.
- Recognition of travel, accompaniment, honoraria, and care considerations, particularly for Elders traveling long distances.

Updates for the Cultural Protocol Webinar Series

Dr. Dianne Roulson provided a brief update on the upcoming [Cultural Protocol Webinar Series](#), noting continued interest and participation. The committee will be updated as sessions progress and outcomes emerge.

Closing Blessings

Staahtsisttayaaki, Dr. Genevieve Fox closed the meeting with reflections that reinforced gratitude, shared responsibility, and the importance of continuing the work in a respectful and relational manner.