

# Winnipeg School Division

# Indigenous Education

Winnipeg School Division (WSD) has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to Indigenous Education. This commitment is articulated through policy and implemented through programming. The accompanying poster to this document provides a high-level overview of Indigenous Education in Winnipeg School Division. While extensive, it is not exhaustive, due to the evolving nature of student, staff and community needs.

Indigenous education is defined as the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives and philosophies in all curricular areas to inform all students of the past and contemporary lifestyles and histories of Indigenous peoples of Canada. Indigenous education encompasses the rich traditions and values of the various Indigenous peoples and applies those concepts to relevant issues facing Indigenous youth today through curriculum and cultural activities in positive student-centred learning experiences.

Over the last forty years, Indigenous Education has evolved in Winnipeg School Division from the hiring of a “Native Education Consulting Teacher” in 1979, who supported “Native Awareness” programs in classrooms, and provided training in “Native Culture”, through a Task Force on Race Relations that produced many enduring recommendations and initiatives, to present day – where staff, students and the community are supported by a team of professionals dedicated to providing an education program integrated with Indigenous knowledge and practice across the curricula.

Through its Employment Equity policy, WSD strives to attain a workforce representative of persons living within the boundaries of the division, including Indigenous peoples. To accomplish this goal, the **Community-Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP)** was created in collaboration with University of Winnipeg and Seven Oaks School Division during the 2005-06 school year. The program gives Indigenous employees in Winnipeg School Division the opportunity to study education at the University of Winnipeg over a six-year-period. From September to April, employees work in their respective schools while attending classes part time. From May to July, they are released from their school to attend university and student-teach on a full-time basis.

Additionally, unique to WSD, the **Build From Within** teacher development program brings together Winnipeg School Division, the Faculty of Education at University of Winnipeg, Indspire Canada and other service providers to develop a path for Indigenous high school students to become teachers.

The primary goal of Build From Within is to recognize and build on Indigenous students’ unique strengths and experiences to create competent and motivated teachers who are passionate about their work and want to contribute back to their community as educators.

Starting in Grade 11, Indigenous students spend six years on a journey to become a teacher with Winnipeg School Division. A total of 60 students will participate in two cohorts. Each cohort of 30 students engages in an academically rigorous program featuring classroom internships, as well as cultural, familial, mentorship, employment and financial supports.

The program bridges students from high school through to becoming an educator.

The first step is graduation from high school and completion of a 300-hour Education Assistant Diploma Program. Students will continue as Education Assistants while completing their Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education Degrees at University of Winnipeg.

**“There’s still a need for Native [sic] people to feel the education system is theirs as well as everyone else’s. And kids will feel it’s theirs when they see a reflection of themselves in it.”**

**Donne Green, WSD Native Education Consulting Teacher (1980)**

Winnipeg School Division recognizes the importance of the **Laws of Relationship** as foundational to the beliefs of Indigenous people. Our relationship with the natural world, one another and ourselves is governed by these sacred laws. These three laws guide the growth of all students and staff with respect to **cultural skill, cultural understandings and personal development**.

WSD strives to support **curricula integrated into Indigenous perspectives** for the benefit of all students. This includes units on **Truth and Reconciliation** and work on **Restoring Relationships** to support Indigenous ways of knowing and living.

WSD supports healthy relationships amongst all students, staff, parents and members of the community, and provides a number of programs and services specifically related to Indigenous Education.

The establishment of an **Indigenous Language Committee** was a critical move toward championing the Cree and Ojibwe bilingual language programs, **community language programs**, language exams and related staff.

WSD's **community language program** in Cree and Ojibwe is structured to accommodate a variety of teaching and learning styles, using drama, music and storytelling techniques.

WSD employs 33 **Community Support Workers** for Indigenous students and families. The workers act as liaisons, strengthening each school's connection with both the home and the community. They facilitate workshops for parents, maintain community rooms in schools and promote programs and activities that encourage and support these relationships.

**Winnipeg School Division Celebration Pow Wow** is host to hundreds of students, teachers and staff. The WSD Pow Wow features hoop dancers, jingle dancers, friendship dancers, drummers, chanters, and more. A traditional feast, as well as an Honour Song for graduates round out the event.

**“We know that when languages aren’t used and maintained, they tend to disappear – except for the mainstream language.”**

**Education Minister  
Roland Penner (1987)**



On the accompanying poster, the three overlapping circles in the centre of the sweetgrass illustrate programs, supports and initiatives designed to meet the needs of Indigenous learners.

**Knowledge keepers** in WSD play a vital role in connecting schools and community. They are also responsible for providing support and guidance on culturally appropriate services and programming within schools.

**Literacy Intervention support teachers** provide daily guided instruction using leveled literacy interventions to Indigenous students with the aim of improving achievement in literacy. They also support classrooms by facilitating learning conversations with teachers and strengthening instructional programming.

WSD is committed to offering and developing Indigenous language programming. Presently, **Kindergarten to Grade 3 Cree and Ojibwe bilingual programs** exist at Isaac Brock School.

Off Campus sites such as **Kaakiyow Li Moond Likol, Eagle Circle, Rising Sun, Songide'ewin and Wi Wabigooni** offer Indigenous specific programming for students who prefer learning in smaller classes and contact with fewer teachers.

**Children of the Earth High School** (Grade 9 to 12), established in 1991, and **Niji Mahkwa School** (Nursery to Grade 8), established in 1993, offer academic courses, Indigenous languages (Cree and Ojibwe) and cultural programming.

Children of the Earth, in a joint venture with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine and Brighter Futures, hosts the Medical Internship Program at the Pan Am Clinic. Niji Mahkwa, in a joint venture with University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine and the Winnipeg Foundation, host the Inner-City Science Centre. This is intended to provide Indigenous students with learning experiences that will enhance their knowledge and interest of Science related careers.

Fifteen schools participate in **Building Student Success with Indigenous Parents** initiatives, which promote parent engagement activities that aim to improve student success at school. The focus is improving student success in school by improving parent engagement. Schools engage in an array of activities including pow-wow clubs, star blanket making, nutrition bingo, food fairs, jigging, square dancing, fiddling programs as well as traditional teachings.

Indigenous **Graduation Coaches'** primary role is to increase graduation rates for Indigenous students.

The Graduation Coach supports students in various ways throughout their high school experience. Included in this support:

- providing extra-curricular opportunities to earn extra credit
- connecting student with tutoring opportunities
- connecting with parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss school progress
- assisting with transitions into post-secondary and/or work force

**Morningstar** is an innovative network of student and family support systems based at R.B. Russell Vocational High School that empower students to succeed and graduate with a bright future. Its mission is to be a collaborative network of support that inspires students' commitment in school and beyond. The partnering of services strengthens outcomes for students and their families and continues to build upon this support for students in the future. The Morningstar program provides systems and community support through the Morningstar Skaabe, (helper) mental health support through Morningstar school psychologist and academic support in the Believe, Dream, Dare (BDD) Tutoring Centre.

Through a number of opportunities such as the Career Trek program, and supported by Graduation Coaches and other staff, Indigenous youth are provided with multiple opportunities for **Career Development**. Students are encouraged to consider their future educational path, learn about appropriate supports available to them, and increase their level of leadership skill. Culture is an inextricable component of this process, as students come to value their own identity.

Additionally, the **Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP)** is supported by WSD's Indigenous Graduation Coaches and offers students opportunities to learn and engage with their Indigenous cultures through culturally rich activities that build leadership skills and promote school completion. IYLP began as an idea to create a safe and nurturing program specifically for Indigenous students to call their own. IYLP creates a platform to speak openly among peers and Indigenous staff about their wants and needs. It aims to provide a place where students can be with other Indigenous students and engage in meaningful collaborative learning. IYLP offers cross-curricular opportunities reflective of Indigenous cultures. Additionally, IYLP takes a wholistic approach by providing gatherings throughout the year that focus on student's physical, mental, spiritual and emotional wellbeing.

**“The focus of aboriginal [sic] education programs to date has been to have people streamed into trades and occupational programs. But we need to develop our own thinkers, philosophers and dreamers, and to encourage and achieve increased status in professional programs.”**

**Judge Murray Sinclair (1990)**

Looking forward, Winnipeg School Division seeks to expand upon Indigenous programming. Some highlights include an **Advisory Council on Indigenous Education (ACIE)** which will bring together Winnipeg School Division staff, trustees, parents, community members, and local businesses to discuss next steps in Indigenous Education.

WSD has a rich history, and proven track record, of fostering and forging productive and meaningful partnerships with external agencies, community organizations and the business community, for example, the Business Council of Manitoba. As technology advances, and with rapid globalization, opportunities to engage with all stakeholders to public education are becoming more frequent, and more critical, to strengthening learner pathways to post-secondary education and career entry.

An **Indigenous Professional Network of Educators** will provide Winnipeg School Division Staff the opportunity to collaboratively advance Indigenous Education initiatives.

Expansion of the **Build from Within** program will include the development of a mentoring component, as well as the addition of a Senior Years cohort.

WSD will continue to provide training to new administrators and teachers working in the Professional Support Services group. This training, entitled **A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency** provides participants an opportunity to learn more about Indigenous traditions and perspectives, which in turn are passed onto students. For some Indigenous staff, they are learning about their own culture in-depth for the first time.

In addition to the inclusion of appropriate Indigenous knowledge, practices and Ways of Knowing as a significant part of the training and professional development within WSD, staff will have opportunity to engage with **Restoring relationships: Inquiry and Practice of Indigenous Education** as a way to grow both personally and professionally. This learning focuses on exploring, identifying, healing and restoring broken relationships and laws through Indigenous perspectives and education.

WSD is continually seeking ways to address the needs of students and make education meaningful and inclusive of Indigenous learners. The continuing commitment of Winnipeg School Division to Indigenous Education is expressed in policy and program implementation, and will continue to be updated through revised policy and an accompanying framework. It is imperative that WSD continue to provide leadership in Indigenous Education to continue to develop and enhance the lives of all students of Winnipeg School Division.

**“I am very proud of Winnipeg School Division’s achievements and, in particular, our staff. [...] While the [WSD] board of trustees ensures we committed to that work and more within our strategic plan, the Winnipeg Indigenous Accord and the mutual process of goal setting we commit to within it, has the power to transform the city, the province, the country for the better.”**

**WSD Chair  
Sherri Rollins (2018)**



  
**PUBLIC MEETING**  
**URBAN ABORIGINAL EDUCATIONAL  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**The Winnipeg School Division No. 1**  
will hold  
a  
**Public Meeting**  
 To provide information on the structure and terms of reference of the Urban Aboriginal Educational Advisory Committee.  
The Committee will include the following:  
Parents of Aboriginal Students - WSD (5),  
Manitoba Indian Education Association (1),  
Tribal Councils (1), Organization Representatives (2), Elders (2), Aboriginal Teachers - WSD (1), Aboriginal Students attending school - WSD (2), Trustee (1), Superintendent (1), Principal (1), Winnipeg Teachers' Association (1), Native Education Advisor (1).  
 Constituent groups will meet to name their representatives to the Committee.  
at  
**R.B. RUSSELL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL  
364 DUFFERIN AVENUE  
ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1990  
AT 7:30 P.M.**  
*The meeting will be chaired by The Chairman of the Board of  
The Winnipeg School Division No. 1.*