

## Indigenous Learners

SD8 commits to the focus areas of Aboriginal education, built from extensive community, student and parent consultations: belonging, success, truth before reconciliation, and history and culture.

To support belonging, each school's Aboriginal Education Action Plan designs supplemental and a continuum of supports to increase self-identified students' sense of belonging. Activities include land-based learning, circle learning, and small group academic and cultural support at lunch and after school. The district designs "Culture Camp" learning opportunities on topics such as storytelling, music, Elder connections, and Two-Spirit role models. Each year, the district hosts an annual Pow Wow, where students design personalized regalia, learn dances and teachings from knowledge keepers. Also, at the Pow Wow, there is an Aboriginal Grad Honoring, a grad public acknowledgement, and an honour dance for Aboriginal Grads. Métis Awareness Month is an annual Métis awareness opportunity with honoured Elder teachings, Métis history and culture teachings including handwork, jigging, fiddling and storytelling. The district hosts the wuqanqankimik Walk/Run/Wheel event, honouring teachings from Chief Jason Louie from Lower Kootenay Band: "to take long strides" toward Reconciliation.

To support Success, the district offers students several program paths leading to graduation: through secondary schools, Homelinks Learning, Elev8 online courses, Dual Credit Programs, and Trades programs. For all First Nations students on-reserve, Individual Continuity of Learning Plans support communication between family and school as well as proactively build concrete individual supports. Supplemental tutoring supports are offered as part of the Aboriginal Education program on an individual basis. The Ministry of Education and Child Care provides annual data on the district's six-year completion rate.

The overall six-year completion rate for all students, has increased over the past five years and was at 88% in June 2021. Improving the rate for Indigenous students, which currently is 76%, continues to be a priority for the district. The six-year completion rate for Indigenous students has risen from 58% to 76% in the past five years. Each senior student's Transcript Verification Record (TVR) is reviewed three times per year with a team at each school site, comprised of district staff, the Aboriginal Education school supports, counsellors and principals. These "academic reviews" determine student readiness for meeting graduation requirements and individualize support plans for at-risk students with a concrete plan of action. In addition, these reviews create a team-based approach between the district, district departments, and schools to ensure everyone is working together to support students.

### Next year's plan includes:

- Establishing and sharing the Aboriginal Education Focus Areas district wide and creating tools such as shared resources and shared rubrics to grow, assess, and monitor Aboriginal students' pathways to graduation.
- Continuing to build network of Indigenous Education allies and leaders across the district through professional development, district offerings, guests in schools, learning resource sharing, anti-racism actions, and equity actions.
- Continuing to improve graduation rates for Indigenous Learners supporting all schools with the Aboriginal Education annual action plans while individualizing supplemental student supports.
- Continuing to strengthen relationships with territory partners through ACE (Aboriginal Council of Education) and the Lower Kootenay Band Education Committee.

