



MCIEB

Manitoba Collaborative
Indigenous Education
Blueprint

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION GATHERING

theme

Sharing Our Way
Our Gifts



FEBRUARY 8-9, 2024

Victoria Inn Hotel and Convention Centre

14 Breakout
SESSIONS



Fireside Chat with
ASHLEY RICHARD
and **MIHSAKAWAN**
JAMES HARPER

383

people registered

294

attended

80

person waitlist



**STUDENT
PANEL**

FRONTIER FIDDLERS



PREMIER WAB KINEW
MINISTER RENÉE CABLE

KEYNOTE
SHEILA
NORTH



Government bodies, industry partners, **11** post-secondary institutions, **13** community organizations, **12** First Nations, and **12** school divisions attended.

ATTENDEES REPRESENTED THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES:

- 2Spirit Manitoba
- Assiniboine Community College
- Brandon School Division
Brandon University
- Business Council of Manitoba
- Canadian Association for the Deaf and
Manitoba Deaf Association
- Canadian Mennonite University
- Canupawakpa Dakota Nation
- Career Trek
- Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource
Development
- Children of the Earth High School
- Circles for Reconciliation Inc.
- Creative Manitoba
- Cross Lake Education Authority
- Ecole Secondaire Neelin High School
- Food Matters Manitoba
- Frontier School Division
- God's Lake Narrows First Nation
School Board
- Government of Manitoba
- Grassroots
- Indigenous Languages of Manitoba
- Lake Manitoba First Nation
- Lakehead Public Schools
- Louis Riel School Division
- Manitoba Aerospace
- Manitoba Aviation Council
- Manitoba Building and Trades Institute
- Manitoba Hydro
- Manitoba Institute of Trades &
Technology
- Manitoba Inuit Association
- Manitoba Métis Federation
- Manitoba School Boards Association
- Manitoba SchoolNet
- Manitoba Teachers Society
- MCEP/Mashkike Makwa (PACF)
- Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
- North Forge Technology Exchange
- Okimaw Community & HR Solutions
- Opaskwayak Cree Nation
- Park West School Division
- Peguis First Nation
- Pine Creek First Nation
- Poplar River First Nation
- Portage La Prairie
- Prairie Spirit School Division
- PTP Adult Learning and Employment
Programs
- Pukatawagan Education Authority
- Reaching E-quality Employment Services
- Red River College Polytechnic
- Sagkeeng First Nation
- Sapotaweyak Cree Nation
- Selkirk Mental Health Centre
- Seven Oaks School Division
- Southern Chiefs Organization
- Southwest Horizon School Division
- St. James-Assiniboia School Division
- Université de Saint-Boniface
- University College of the North
- University of Manitoba
- University of Winnipeg
- West Region Child & Family Services
- Winnipeg School Division
- Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra
- Yellowquill University College



Ashley Richard



Mihskakwan James Harper



Sheila North

KEYNOTES

Ashley Richard and Mihskakwan James Harper delivered an engaging and entertaining fireside chat. Ashley shared her personal experiences with educational pursuits and opened up about the traumas that hindered her progress in fully embracing her talents as a student. Ashley received encouragement from some of her teachers and pursued post-secondary education, drawing strength from the legacy of her grandmother Mary Richard. Ashley connected with the on-campus Indigenous community and sought support to help navigate her educational journey. Recognizing the need for a change, she switched subjects and enrolled in a program that aligned better with her educational goals and with her gifts. With a new focus, Ashley was highly involved in the Indigenous community on campus and continues to make a difference today. In all of this, she walks the same path as her grandmother.

Sheila North delivered an inspiring and thought-provoking keynote presentation, shedding light on the unique journey of transitioning from the North to an urban environment. With honesty and vulnerability, she openly discussed the obstacles she faced, including moments of adversity, while sharing her unwavering determination to overcome them—a determination she aptly called “relentless.” Sheila spoke passionately about her children and the significant work she is engaged in for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives. As she delved into her personal roots, Sheila emerged as a shining example of resilience—a genuine role model who motivates and inspires us all.

We closed the Gathering with a student panel featuring individuals from various educational backgrounds. The panelists focused their discussion on the challenges they faced in maintaining a balance between student life and personal life. They highlighted the invaluable support they receive from the Indigenous community members, their families, Elders, and post-secondary supports. A key point emphasized by one of the students was the significance of reaching out for assistance when needed, without striving for perfection. Most of the student panelists expressed that their families and the future generations serve as their primary motivation to continue with their education. Notably, one student remarked upon the need for our school system to continue working towards the inclusion of accurate historical narrative about colonialism and Indigenous peoples within classrooms.

Did you miss a breakout session that intrigued you? See below for a synopsis of each breakout session and links for more information!

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1A. Bridging Indigenous Talent and Industry through Innovative Learning Partnerships Terry Brown, Jesse Steckley, Natalie Cloud, Chantel Wilson

Jesse Steckley from the Business Council of Manitoba (BCM) offered details on the Indigenous Education Awards (IEA) program, as well as the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program that started as an offshoot of the IEA program. IEA offers funding to Indigenous students taking a 60% or above course load at recognized post-secondary institutions. The WIL program is now open to any Indigenous student with post-secondary experience or even the intention to pursue post-secondary education. A job fair is held in November and BCM member companies hire students for summer jobs. See websites below for more information. In the Q & A, some attendees asked whether students need to have Indigenous status documentation to apply for IEA. The answer is currently yes, but BCM is trying to work on solutions for those without official documentation. Regarding the WIL program, one attendee asked if companies would provide a mentor to student hires; this is strongly encouraged but not mandatory.

<https://businesscouncil.mb.ca/indigenous-education-awards/>

<https://businesscouncil.mb.ca/work-integrated-learning-program/>

1B. Indigenous Education through Cree Traditions

Demian Lawrenchuk, Gordon Walker, Myron Cook, Lawrence Saunders Jr.

Food Matters Manitoba is working with communities in Northern Manitoba to restore well-being, health, and local food systems through traditional education and highly impactful mentorships on the land. In this session, presenters told stories about their experiences on the land. They shared that learning how to be on the land is a lifelong process. The presenters expressed their hope that more young people will take the time to learn how to be on the land because it is something that has helped to ground them. During the Q & A, an attendee asked about climate change. Presenters responded that people who live on the land knew that things would go wrong because they watched the animals. This presentation contained many traditional teachings that respectfully will not be printed.

1C. Grow Our Own Specialists through Education (GOOSE)

Marlene Head, Jacqueline Ross

The labour market predicts a need for over 700 clinicians over the next five years. The GOOSE program focuses on the clinical or second level services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech/language therapy. To illustrate the need, presenters highlighted Cross Lake, where clinicians only come to the community with over 1600 students in K-12 twice a year. If the weather prevents the trip, they may only come once a year. Enabling community members to train as clinicians will increase access to services for students. There are many barriers to attaining these degrees, including sacrifices involved in relocating to the city, and admission to specialized programs can be challenging if the applicant's first degree did not include prerequisites. The intention of the GOOSE program is

to provide enhanced supports from Chief and Council for those studying in relevant programs, including continued pay while they are in school. Currently, the GOOSE program is gathering support from other First Nations and lobbying governments. The UM School of Psychology has helped to break down barriers, and there is a cohort in the College of Rehabilitation Sciences. One attendee suggested that a mentorship component for post-secondary students should be added to the GOOSE program.

1D. Two Spirit History & Perspectives: Analyzing Two Spiritedness and Policy **Many attendees were eager to engage with Chance Paupanekis, who was unfortunately unable to present.**

1E. Otēnāhk - Where the heart is Ron Cook, Shelley Cook

Elder Ron Cook began his session by introducing himself and speaking about his parents, Walter and Nora Cook, who taught him his language. He also shared about the teachers and Elders he has learned from over the course of his life. Throughout the session, Elder Ron taught attendees different phrases in nēhinawēwin and showed us how values and worldview are integral to the words themselves. This presentation contained many traditional teachings that respectfully will not be printed.

2A. Empowering Indigenous Workforce - local workforce for local construction employment. Heather Paterson, Laurie Guimond, Loretta McGinnis, Ron Castel, Joelle McAuley

The Pathway to Work and Women First programs work in partnership with Indigenous nations to implement pilot training initiatives and are pathways to sustainable employment opportunities. They are delivered in-community and provide wrap-around supports to remove participant barriers. Both programs incorporate a focus on soft skills for success like adaptability and collaboration for job retention. They are federally funded so that communities only need to provide training allowance, training space, and a local space/ employer for practicums. They are cohort-based programs with 16 students and have an 85% graduation AND employment rate. Cohorts have run in Winnipeg and Sagkeeng so far. Program developers created a framework in partnership with Indigenous nations for both programs. The three guiding principles of the framework are that the programs be participant focused, community oriented, and employer connected. The 12-week certification includes a 5-week Workforce Readiness Program that covers time management, budgeting, stress management, professionals in the workplace, and work ethics. One week of essential safety certifications is followed by a 6-week Intro to Trades component, which discusses professional roles and responsibilities such as industry expectations, employment opportunities, role models' stories, etc. Students also learn how to work with tools and equipment in this phase. Students get to keep the tools upon successful completion of the program. All curricular material is informed by Indigenous perspectives. In the Q & A, one attendee asked how remotely they are willing to bring the program. Presenters answered that they have been to Red Sucker Lake and are starting a program in Churchill. This required long-term planning and bringing all equipment up before the program could begin.

<https://pathwaytowork.ca/>

<https://mbtrades.ca/indigenouspreemployment/>

2B. University College of the North- Integrating Indigenous Knowledges in Curriculum **Dr. Ramona Neckoway, Perley Nelson Leaske**

Presenters gave a brief introduction to UCN, where 68% of the student body is Indigenous. UCN strives to be inclusive and respectful of diverse Indigenous and Northern values and has campuses in The Pas and Thompson. UCN integrates Indigenous knowledge by embedding Indigenous values in programs and services, by strategically actioning reconciliation, by providing cultural programming, and by integrating Indigenous research. UCN is governed by a Tri-Council, which includes the Governing Council, Council of Elders, and Learning Council. Two ways in which UCN Indigenizes the classroom are by integrating Indigenous Knowledges in curriculum, and through academic policies. Elders provide direction and insight into curriculum, and any changes are made only with their support. Indigenization of curriculum is supported by academic policy. For example, each course offered at UCN is required to have an Indigenous learning outcome. To support this policy, Indigenous Learning Specialists work with faculty. Each time a new course or a course change is proposed, the proposer needs to answer the question, "How are Indigenous and Northern perspectives incorporated into the content of the new or modified course?" Indigenous Curriculum Consultants play a key role in course and program development.

2C. Empowering the next seven generations at home **Kris Desjarlais, Brad Hack, Dr. Deanna Rexe**

Assiniboine Community College (ACC) staff described their three Indigenization goals: Student success, Community Engagement, and Social and Economic Impact. A key component of their Indigenization strategy is providing training based in Indigenous communities, which allows students to complete their education without relocating from their home communities. ACC offers a wide range of certificate and diploma programs in First Nations communities, ranging from Early Childhood Education to Meat Cutting. These programs are developed using a collaborative process between community partners and ACC, and are often the result of a request from a community. Instructors are primarily hired from within or nearby the community hosting the program to ensure good relationships and flexibility. Instructors are able to adapt the program if something significant happens in a community. Each program has a steering committee that includes representatives from the community and ACC. ACC currently has programs in 34 First Nations communities in Manitoba. Programs are developed based on community needs. For example, the Mini Trades Program is the result of communities noting that they needed a variety of skills rather than a full cohort of one trade to ensure that students will be employed after their training. Drywalling, concrete forming, exterior finishing, painting and more are now offered as part of the Mini Trades Program. In the Q & A, one attendee asked how much of this programming is delivered online. Presenters responded that almost nothing is online, which is made possible by hiring local instructors. One presenter stated, "It can be done. Institutional barriers can be overcome."

2D. Bridge to Opportunities—Canupawakpa Dakota Nation and Fort La Bosse School Division Jason Taylor, Keely Woods, Mike Thiessen, Elder Gloria Eastman (could not attend due to weather)

Students from Canupawakpa Dakota Nation go to Head Start and kindergarten at Wambdi Iyotake School in their community and start traveling by bus to Virden for Grade 1. Many efforts have been undertaken to build bridges between the two schools and communities. The kindergarten students at Wambdi Iyotake learn on the land through experiences such as ice fishing, sharing circles, moccasin games, and more. Teachers take them to the art festival at the school in Virden so that they have experiences at the school before attending there. There is funding in Fort La Bosse School Division for teachers to invite Elders and Knowledge Keepers into their classrooms. They have also mandated that teachers Indigenize at least five of their lessons each year. Canupawakpa hosts Wacipi, a powwow to which all schools are invited. Efforts are being made by both communities to build relationships with each other for the sake of the students. Presenters reminded attendees that building these relationships takes time, openness, and a lot of listening.

2E. Mamahtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With – an Indigenous Education Policy Framework Wanda Spence, Lola Whonnock

Presenters offered a history of the development of the Mamàhtawisiwin framework, beginning in 2015 with a working group that came together to collaborate on a provincial response to support educators in addressing the identified achievement gap for Indigenous learners. The teaching of Mamàhtawisiwin, which means “to wonder and my responsibility,” was gifted by a Northern Cree Elder to the late Chuck Bourgeois who was, at the time, the Project Lead in this work from the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate. A person who goes above and beyond in sharing their gift and connects people to the root of their existence is referred to as “e-mamahtawisit.” Mamàhtawisiwin is the noun form. The presenters listed seven guiding principles of Mamàhtawisiwin:

- Develop shared understandings of the rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews held and valued by all educators and learners
- Respect for diversity
- Student-focused systems
- Shared responsibility across systems
- Shared accountability
- Equity within systems

The Mamàhtawisiwin framework offers school-based and divisional tools for reflection, planning and reporting. The tools are meant to be used in positive ways to support individual and group reflection and celebrate progress toward an Indigenous-inclusive education system that will foster Indigenous student success. Follow this link for the full framework and tool documents: <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/iid/mamahtawisiwin.html>



3A. Indigenous CREATE; Mentoring and Training the Next Generation of Environmental Researchers Working in the Indigenous North

Ashley Wolfe, Dr. Stéphane McLachlan

Presenters described a land-based learning program that bridges Indigenous Knowledge and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math). They work with youth on the land, teaching them how to do water quality tests and bringing in Elders to share traditional knowledge. They ensure data sovereignty, so that communities feel in control of what is being researched. Presenter Robert Spence was unable to attend but the other presenters shared that in Robert's community of Split Lake, the water is so contaminated people do not want to go on the water, let alone fish from it. Presenters spoke about the impact of mines and of Manitoba Hydro on communities. Culturally significant bodies of water have been rerouted, the water is contaminated, livelihoods in the fishing industry are ruined, and more. The CREATE program is community-needs based so that all data collected can be used by the community. Youth are at the core of the program, which also includes mentoring youth into post-secondary education if they are interested. During the Q & A, one attendee asked if there is a way for high school students to become part of the CREATE program. Ashley Wolfe does hands-on workshops with the water testing kits throughout the city. Her contact information is Ashley.Wolfe@umanitoba.ca and you can find more information about the program here: www.IndigenousCREATE.ca

You can find more information about the data collection app developed for Indigenous communities in Canada here: www.ourdataindigenous.ca

3B. Social Change through earning a Bachelor of Social Work at Inner City campus Dr. Eveline Milliken, Dr. Yvonne Pompana, Debra DiUbaldo, Faron Whitequill, Shauna Natrasony

The University of Manitoba Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP) is a four-year program when taken full time, and a six-year program when taken part-time. It is a direct-entry ACCESS program and classes are held from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. so that students can attend to their children's school schedules, and holidays are taken on school holidays. There have been nearly 1000 grads. The program has a whole-person focus, and medicine wheel teachings are integral to the program. Smudging is available in all classrooms, and students have access to ceremony, Elders, and medicines. In the Q & A, one attendee asked why students in this cohort need to be residents of Winnipeg's inner city, and the response was that funding was provided specifically for inner city residents, and there are other social work programs offered at UM for others. Another attendee asked about supports for academic writing, particularly for students who may have learning disabilities. Instructors tailor the program for each learner and offer opportunities for representing learning visually. Students are also able to stand, use fidgets, or adapt in other ways during lectures as these methods can help students to focus.

Eligibility: <https://umanitoba.ca/explore/programs-of-study/social-work-inner-city-program-william-norrie-centre-bsw>

U of M Indigenous Initiatives grant video: <https://umanitoba.ca/social-work/student-experience#inner-city-social-work-program-spotlight>

3C. The Teaching Indigenous Languages for Vitality Certificate: Building Capacity for the Present and Future

Dr. Anke Al-Bataineh, Melanie Kennedy, Carmen Leeming, Heather Souter, Dr. Shelley Tulloch, Nicole Murdoch

The Teaching Indigenous Languages for Vitality (TILV) offers language speakers the tools and framework needed to teach their languages effectively. The methods taught in this course are experiential in nature; they center play, task, and land-based learning. This program was developed in response to what Indigenous communities need, and its goals are to have fluent language speakers teach in the classroom to develop proficient speakers. Presenters emphasized that funding needs to be put into community-based language programs, not only post-secondary language learning. Universities are not the only or the best place to learn languages. To ensure that language specialists are remunerated appropriately, the University of Winnipeg dean of education is meeting with the province to have this program recognized as a post-baccalaureate degree. They are also working with Frontier School Division to create a new pay category for language specialists who do not have Bachelor of Education degrees. Often these specialists are working as Educational Assistants and are paid as such despite being language instructors. In the Q & A, one attendee asked if there is a cost to this program. The response is that for this pilot, they found funders and ensured that students did not have to pay. Universities do charge for tuition, but these presenters are committed to finding funding so that finances are not a barrier.

3D. Engaging and Retaining Students – A Story of Teaching and Learning in New Ways

Tanya Redford, Ben Banman, Nettie Proulx, Audrey Ballantyne, Sharon Hart, Lyndon Bird

Presenters introduced the Red River College Polytechnic Early Childhood Education-Aboriginal Head Start program. It is a provincially and federally funded program offered to adults who live and work in First Nations Communities in Manitoba. Students of the program work Monday through Wednesday and attend classes on Thursdays and Fridays. It is offered 100% online and the result is an Early Childhood Education II Diploma. Indigenous ways of knowing are embedded in the program curriculum and student knowledge and experiences are integral to the learning process. Instructors and students build relationships and make program decisions together. Because of the relational and flexible nature of the program, student retention has increased, and students feel pride and confidence in their abilities and learning.

3E. Two Spirit Identity

Barbara Bruce, Sunday Queskekapow, John Peters, Carol Owens

The presenters shared about the impacts of over 500 years of colonial structures and systemic racism, which have and continue to create disparities for 2S and Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ people (these are not synonymous). They underscored the need for increased awareness about these disparities and the need for policies, procedures, and programs that will support all aspects of 2S health, 2S Seniors and Elders, and housing for 2S people.

Barbara identified the following 3 Rights (in quotations) and asked session attendees, “How can these ‘Rights’ work in education?” A summary of responses follows:



1. “Right to culture: Guidance and support for Elders/Knowledge Keepers who are not versed in 2SLGBTQQIA+ terms, understandings, relationships and rights.”

a. Responses emphasized creating safe opportunities for Elders/Knowledge Keepers to learn about 2SLGBTQQIA+ terms, understandings, relationships and rights. These could include workshops, sharing circles, hearing 2S stories, and building relationships to find common ground. Responses emphasized that this learning is necessary to create safe spaces for 2SLGBTQQIA+ students. One response called for “the de-gendering of ceremonies and the deconstruction of gender roles.” Multiple responses emphasized that “2SLGBTQQIA+ people have always been part of Indigenous communities.”

2. “Right to health and wellness: Develop decolonizing Indigenous gender and sexuality conceptions that includes 2SLGBTQQIA+ as part of Indigenous history and knowledge in the education sector and family/community healing institutions.”

a. Responses focused on creating inclusive environments and incorporating stories and traditional teachings about 2SLGBTQQIA+ people into curricula. This could include looking at the TRC Calls to Action and other important documents through a 2SLGBTQQIA+ lens. It was also noted that we should look to Elders that support 2SLGBTQQIA+ people for guidance.

3. “Right to safety and security: Ensure education systems materials are reviewed for transphobia and homophobia and provide supports for the restoration of appropriate history.”

a. Responses called for the participation of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in curriculum development and review. The education of staff in schools, health and social work environments is extremely important. We should look to Elders for wisdom and ceremonial instruction, and use our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirit. Finally, one participant noted that we need to ensure that the parental rights movement and politicians do not block educational content about 2SLGBTQQIA+ or hinder the rights 2SLGBTQQIA+.

SUMMARY OF ATTENDEE FEEDBACK:

We are grateful for an inspiring gathering where educators, students, community patrons, and advocates met to exchange knowledge and cultivate partnerships centered on Indigenous education. Thank you to all who attended for making this gathering a place of connection and dialogue; thank you to all the outstanding speakers and facilitators for sharing your knowledge; thank you to the volunteers who made this event run smoothly; and our deepest thanks to the Elders who shared their knowledge and guidance so generously.

Our goal is to ensure all Blueprint initiatives are community driven and focus on meeting the needs of Indigenous students. To this end, we asked participants to fill out a short survey at the end of the gathering, and we sent a follow-up email requesting further responses. We received 70 responses and have read each one. Thank you for your feedback and for helping to shape future MCIEB Indigenous Education Gatherings. The following is a brief summary of attendee feedback, which highlights comments that were made multiple times on the post-gathering survey:

- The Gathering was well-organized.
- There was a warm, caring, and supportive atmosphere.
- Attendees appreciated hearing from Elders.
- Many attendees wished they could have attended more breakout sessions and suggested that sessions be repeated more than once to offer more chances to attend.
- Keynote Sheila North was a highlight.
- Attendees appreciated the fireside chat and student panel.
- Most attendees heard about the event through online/social media or through communication at their institution.
- Many attendees would prefer to have descriptions of the breakout sessions at their tables to aid in selecting appropriate sessions.
- There were many more helpful suggestions that we will consider as we plan for next year!

