

*ANIMATING THE INSPIRING SUCCESS POLICY FRAMEWORK:
AN EDUCATION SECTOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION
RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

In this document you will see an attempt to introduce and bridge the pathways between contemporary western education and *Indigenous Knowledge*. The challenge with this bridge is the examination of our own experiences and how that experience affects our worldviews and paradigms about knowledge acquisition.

In order to move forward successfully on implementation of the framework, we must be prepared to test our assumptions and examine our personal biases and prejudices. The contemporary education system must make room for other “ways of knowing and doing”, including individuals’ openness to make room within their own paradigms the worldviews and perspectives of others.

The foundation of this initiative is to broaden opportunities for all students by ensuring all students are celebrated for the knowledge they bring and the ways in which they seek to extend that knowledge. For Indigenous peoples there is no separation between education and life per se, in the words of Elder Danny Musqua, “We were put on this earth to learn – learning is what makes us human”. In other words, life is about *seeking knowledge* – about understanding the world around us and the fostering the interconnections that are required to sustain it.

The goal of this project is to allow all stakeholders within the education sector to reflect organizationally and personally on the key areas to give insight into making positive changes in the system. It should encourage individuals to evaluate and shift behaviours and practice based on the feedback and benchmarks provided in the framework. This work is, by no means, exhaustive nor does it establish a final destination; however, it allows for consistent growth and progress and fosters development of the conditions needed for ongoing dialogue through an ethical space of engagement.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The Ministry of Education's renewed policy framework – *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework (Inspiring Success)* along with the previous Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) require Saskatchewan school divisions to develop and enact explicit priorities and goals for First Nations and Métis Education. In addition, as part of the education sector's commitment to improving outcomes for First Nations and Métis children and youth, school divisions are required to report – publicly – their progress toward achieving these Métis and First Nations Education goals. More recently, the education sector has re-committed to transforming First Nations and Métis Education and improving outcomes for Métis and First Nations children and youth over the next decade through the new Provincial Education Plan (PEP) framework.

The research explicated herein has several purposes. First, we investigated, collaboratively, with an advisory committee made up of education leaders nominated by the SSBA and member divisions, relevant professional organisations (e.g., LEADS), and government, the connections among the policy frameworks, PEP, school division priorities and goals, and other related documents (e.g., Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) *Calls to Action*) to:

- Examine, critically, metrics for First Nations and Métis Education progress presently used across the Sector,
- Identify and address opportunities and challenges associated with measuring/evaluating school divisions' efficacy in Métis and First Nations Education,
- Co-construct a set of sector-wide measurable accountabilities for First Nations and Métis Education that will:
 - Inform policy development (e.g., PEP, school board strategic plans, etc.),
 - Address opportunities for and challenges to improvement, and
 - Account for TRC *Calls to Action* and *Inspiring Success*.
- Develop and validate an *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* (i.e., a school division self-evaluation tool) for divisions to monitor and report performance related to sector-wide Métis and First Nations Education priorities.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its report with 94 *Calls to Action* – many of which refer specifically to Education. In 2018, Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education renewed and released the *Inspiring Success* policy framework – reaffirming the centrality of Indigenous knowledge systems, cultures, and languages to the sector's structures, policies, and curricula – ultimately, to ensure an equitable and inclusive system that benefits all Saskatchewan learners. In 2019, the SSBA *Indigenous Constituency* met with the Minister of Education to discuss the creation of a responsibility framework for Indigenous Education. In May 2019, the SSBA Executive approved the creation of a *Working Advisory Group* to address this task.

ARTICULATING OUR UNDERSTANDINGS

Since all agreements are grounded in laws of various kinds, it would be possible merely to adopt an existing accountability framework from elsewhere for use in Saskatchewan's education sector. Several provincial programs and policies (e.g., Invitational Shared Services Initiatives, Following Their Voices, etc.) incorporate the spirit and intent of the *Inspiring Success Policy Framework* and draw on its goals to guide policy development and decision making. However, few school division-level administrative procedures and policies are grounded directly in the principles articulated in *Inspiring Success*. In other words, a practice may be legal – but it might not be appropriate in a First Nations and Métis education context. We identified *Inspiring Success* as the foundation of this work because:

Inspiring Success is the umbrella for all actions related to First Nations and Métis education. It offers a comprehensive approach to improving student engagement and achievement through policy, programs, curriculum, building partnerships, shared decision-making and accountability, and helps ensure alignment of ministry and sector actions with the goals of [education plan]. *Inspiring Success* supports the infusion of Indigenous content, perspectives and ways of knowing into renewed curricula to benefit all learners; teaching Indigenous cultures, languages and histories in the classroom; building positive relationships; reconciliation; and mandatory treaty education (*Inspiring Success*, 2018, p. 2).

As was stated earlier, the committee set out to develop what we believed would be an *accountability framework*. However, as we expressed our hopes and aspirations for this work, our focus shifted away from the external or extrinsic motivation implied by the notion of “accountability” to the internal or intrinsic world of “responsibility”. Evoking the notion that each of us bears responsibility to foster the growth and development of all children, we present – in this document – a *Responsibility Framework*.

The intention of the creation of this *Responsibility Framework* is to articulate the understandings that will establish the *ethical space* within which dialogue can take place and progress may be made. “Shifting our perspectives to recognize that the Indigenous-West encounter is about thought worlds may ... remind us that frameworks or paradigms are required to reconcile these two solitudes” (Ermine, 2007, p. 201).

Developing a common understanding of ways in which we can animate *Inspiring Success* to guide policy and practice will support school divisions, First Nations Education Authorities, and other education stakeholders in creating a culturally

Ethical Space

Ethical space, produced by contrasting perspectives of the world, entertains the notion of a meeting place ... or neutral zone between entities or cultures ... [that] offers itself as the theatre for cross-cultural conversation in pursuit of ethically engaging diversity. (Ermine, 2007, p. 202)

sustaining environment for (i) assessment; (ii) reporting, tracking, and interpreting results; and (iii) engaging the community in shaping and monitoring success. “Despite good intentions, multiple programs, curriculum renewals, provincial strategies, and other initiatives, outcomes for students in general and for Indigenous students in particular have remained perniciously stagnant” (Tunison, 2018, p. 2). Ermine argued that common understanding is an essential early step to disrupt the *status quo*. “The ethical space, at the field of convergence for disparate systems, can become a refuge of possibility in cross-cultural relations and the legal order of society, for the effect of shifting the status quo of an asymmetrical social order to a partnership model between world communities” (Ermine, 2007, p. 203).

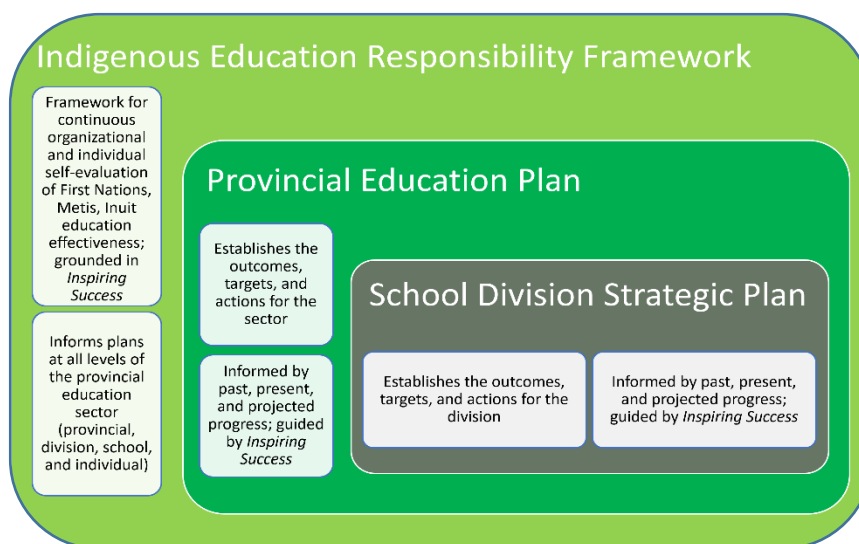
This document and the assessment frameworks defined herein are the product of careful consideration about a vision for the future founded on *Inspiring Success* and are designed to spark reflection and discussion regarding where we are and where we aspire to go.

Achieving the goals of *Inspiring Success* will take Saskatchewan’s PreK-12 education sector down the path of reconciliation. *Inspiring Success* will transform how all parties work together in governance, partnerships, policy improvement, and in the design and implementation of education programming to achieve improved student learning outcomes (*Inspiring Success*, 2018, p. 6).

ALIGNMENT AND FOCUS

Directly aligned with *Inspiring Success*, the *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* is intended to support strategic improvement planning at all levels across the education sector (see diagram below). In particular, it will guide the development of the Provincial Education Plan by operationalizing the five critical policy goals established in *Inspiring Success*. It will also support school divisions in their continuous efforts to establish effective First Nations and Métis education plans and to assess the effectiveness of those plans through the lens of the goals outlined in *Inspiring Success*.

In so doing, school divisions will be better equipped to assess their progress on the First Nations and Métis education priorities identified in their strategic plans. This information will also be helpful to feed into the Ministry of Education’s reporting cycle related to the First Nations and Métis education outcomes in the Provincial Education Plan.



ASSESSMENT CONSTRUCTION

Inspiring Success adopted the white birch tree as a conceptual framework for its critical policy goals. Pictured on page 8, the graphic depicts lifelong learning as being rooted in *Languages and Cultures* and nourished by *Relationships*. The support structure – or trunk – is the *Provincial Education Sector* and nourishment flows through *First Nations and Métis peoples’ Historical, Contemporary, and Future contributions to the Sector* to the rest of the organism. Encompassed by *First Nations and Métis Content, Perspectives, and Ways of Knowing*, the whole child’s development is fostered through the four dimensions of the medicine wheel – *Spiritual, Mental/Intellectual, Emotional, and Physical* aspects of a “good life”. The five critical policy goals identified in *Inspiring Success* correspond to these dimensions and conditions. These goals include:

- All learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the worldviews and historical impact of First Nations and the Métis Nation.
- Equitable opportunities and outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners.
- Shared management of provincial education system by ensuring respectful relationships and equitable partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples at the provincial and local level.
- Culturally appropriate and authentic assessment measures that foster improved educational opportunities and outcomes.
- First Nations and Métis languages and cultures are valued and supported.

The *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* assessment tool consists of a series of five rubrics – one for each of the critical policy goals identified in *Inspiring Success*. Recognizing that learning is a lifelong journey, each rubric includes *Stepping Stones* intended to guide both the Sector as a whole and individual Provincial School Divisions on the journey to animate *Inspiring Success* by infusing the policy goals into their own policies and procedures.

Recognizing that all journeys start somewhere and require strategizing along the way as the traveler moves from one territory to another and encounters obstacles along the way, the *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* rubrics are based on a three-point continuum from *observing* through *supporting* to *disrupting*. At each point on the continuum, we seek to describe what the individuals who inhabit organizations – especially those with formal leadership roles – would be doing.

Observing is the entry-level point to each *Stepping Stone’s* strategizing continuum. At this stage, most of the action rests in observing what is taking place but, for the most part, resists actions that might challenge the

IERF Strategizing Continuum

Observing is watching what is taking place but mostly resisting actions that challenge the *status quo*.

Supporting is supporting and encouraging changes – but ones that tend to nibble at the edges of the *status quo* leading to improvements but surface-level ones.

Disrupting is developing and implementing policies and practices that *disrupt* the *status quo* to the point that outcomes for First Nations and Métis children and youth are on par with their peers.

status quo. At the *Supporting* stage (the middle point), the division (including senior leaders and trustees) are usually engaged in some significant actions that support and, occasionally, inspire change – but those changes, while important and welcome, tend to nibble at the edges of the *status quo* leading to improvements but surface-level ones. *Disrupting*, the third continuum stage, is grounded in anti-racist/anti-oppression scholarship and embodies the vision of *Inspiring Success* and, by extension, the *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* because it describes what it would take to disrupt the context in which formal schooling takes place to the point that the outcomes for all First Nations and Métis children and youth are on par with their peers.

USING THE INDIGENOUS EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

School divisions will employ their own processes and protocols for reporting, and the *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* will support those processes. This framework creates the opportunity for division- and individual-level reflection on First Nations and Métis education within the school/school division. A multi-layered approach (e.g., board, senior division officials, school/SCC level) may be considered to bring self-assessment from various reference points across the school division in order to capture and report appropriately the scope of First Nations and Métis education implementation occurring within the school division.

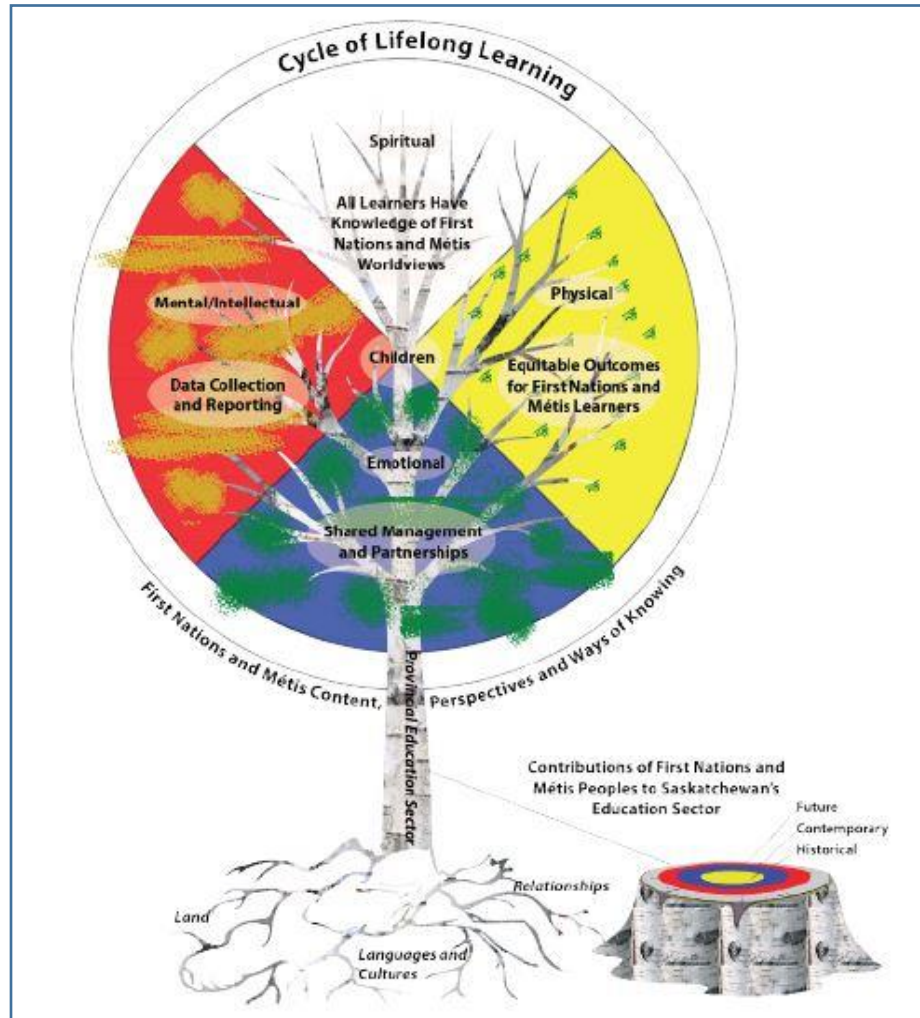
SUMMARY

In the short term, the *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* is intended as a tool for reflection and assessment of actions taken in service of Indigenous education. However, it should also be seen as a rich resource that describes concrete actions that, if implemented, could truly change the PreK-12 educational landscape for the better. Finally, given that the *Indigenous Education Responsibility Framework* is founded on the critical policy goals identified and reaffirmed in *Inspiring Success*, school divisions and the sector overall ought to review their policy handbooks and administrative procedure manuals over the long term to ensure that they create the conditions and allow room for actions that *Inspire Success*.

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RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK FOUNDATION AND ELEMENTS

THE WHITE BIRCH TREE



CRITICAL POLICY GOALS

- All learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the worldviews and historical impact of First Nations and the Métis Nation
- Equitable opportunities and outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners
- Shared management of the provincial education system by ensuring respectful and equitable partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples at the provincial and local level
- Culturally appropriate and authentic assessment measures that foster improved educational opportunities and outcomes
- First Nations and Métis languages and cultures are valued and supported

IERF Strategizing Continuum

Observing is watching what is taking place but mostly resisting actions that challenge the *status quo*.

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Disrupting is developing and implementing policies and practices that *disrupt* the *status quo* to the point that outcomes for First Nations and Métis children and youth are on par with their peers.

All learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the worldviews and historical impact of First Nations and the Métis Nation

Stepping Stone	Strategizing		
	Observing	Supporting	Disrupting
Intentional and developmental exposure, experience, and engagement in learning for all staff	Sponsors occasional cultural events and/or projects. Informs teaching and administrative staff about events.	Sponsors and/or creates regular developmental exposure opportunities for all staff to learn about Indigenous worldviews and cultures. Leaders frequently participate and all staff are encouraged to participate in at least some of these opportunities.	Creates multiple developmental exposure opportunities for all staff to learn about Indigenous worldviews and cultures. Clearly communicates expectations that all staff engage in these opportunities and provides time for them to do it. Increases staff engagement in community-based events to extend their learning.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			
Investigate, acknowledge, and respond to truth, history, and land	Mentions historical truths about this land and Indigenous peoples that impact the present day during public events. Permits individuals to pursue opportunities to extend knowledge. Occasionally asks Indigenous peoples for advice but messages are filtered through non-Indigenous leaders' perspectives.	Acknowledges the historical truths about this land and Indigenous peoples that impact the present day. Policy, practice, and public events sometimes address truth – usually indirectly. Incorporates Indigenous peoples' perspectives and sometimes gives them the floor to speak their own truths about “safe” topics. Encourages individuals to pursue opportunities to extend knowledge.	Intentionally addresses truth in policy, practice, and public events – usually explicitly. Actively seeks opportunities to extend knowledge and promotes the learnings and teachings of others to move this work forward. Provides resources for individuals to pursue opportunities to extend their knowledge as well.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			

<p>Relationships with Indigenous peoples in the local territory</p>	<p>Rarely takes the opportunity to communicate and engage with Indigenous peoples. Rarely engages Indigenous peoples of the territory in relationship-based projects; when it does happen, it is usually near the end of development and/or implementation.</p>	<p>Accepts opportunities to meet Indigenous peoples. Seeks to engage Indigenous peoples of the territory in relationship-based projects aimed at improving the educational experiences of children and youth. Interacts with Indigenous peoples as they would with non-Indigenous, as in a partnership, friendship, or professional transaction.</p>	<p>Actively seeks opportunities to meet and collaborate with Indigenous peoples. Consistently engages Indigenous peoples throughout all relationship-based projects through co-governance of initiatives that pertain particularly to Indigenous children and youth but affect all students. Policy, administrative procedures, and strategic plans are infused with Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous peoples are consistently present to contribute their perspectives and experiences.</p>
<p>Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):</p>			
<p>Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):</p>			

Equitable opportunities and outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners

Stepping Stone	Strategizing		
	Observing	Supporting	Disrupting
Aware of and challenge bias and stereotypes	Within the context of the <i>Education Act</i> and other relevant regulations; the division reviews structures, policies, administrative procedures, and strategic plans occasionally when questions arise by discussing with groups of teachers, families, and community members.	Within the context of the <i>Education Act</i> and other relevant regulations; structures, policies, administrative procedures, and strategic plans are systematically reviewed with groups of teachers, families, and community members using a critical lens informed by anti-racist/anti-oppressive theoretical frameworks.	Within the context of the <i>Education Act</i> and other relevant regulations, regular systematic reviews of structures, policies, administrative procedures, and strategic plans with groups of teachers, families, and community members result in changes that reflect anti-racist/anti-oppressive theoretical frameworks – making them more equitable and inclusive.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			
Learning is the “constant” but context matters	Policy and practice decisions are informed through community discussions but often absent of First Nations and Métis voice. There is a common research-informed language and practice related to educational practice and policy matters.	Policy and practice decisions are informed through discussions with local First Nations and Métis representatives. There is a common research-informed language and practice related to educational practice and policy matters, but schools retain flexibility to respond to local communities’ needs.	Policy and practice decisions are made by committees that include local First Nations and Métis representatives. The community’s needs are actively met because the relationships built through developing and using research- and community-informed common language and practice ensures that community’s voice is present at all times.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			

Everyone can and will succeed	Academic success is important but not essential – other things (e.g., having a safe place to go, providing a meal, etc.) are just as important. Teacher practice reflects their belief that “all students are the same.”	Academic success is important and there are multiple paths to success. Success in other areas is promoted as well. Teacher practice reflects their belief that all students can and will succeed.	Academic success is essential and is achieved and recognized through a holistic perspective. Teacher practice fosters development of the “whole” learner as an essential component of academic success.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			

Shared management of the provincial education system by ensuring respectful relationships and equitable partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples at the provincial and local level

Stepping Stone	Strategizing		
	Observing	Supporting	Disrupting
Trust and authentic engagement	Division develops policy, administrative procedures, and strategic plans; then it seeks input from local First Nations and Métis community.	Division engages with local First Nations and Métis community as policy, administrative procedure, strategic planning, and practice decisions are made.	Division and local First Nations and Métis communities have shared commitment, equitable representation, and active voice as they work collaboratively on policy, administrative procedure, strategic planning and practice decisions.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			
Data/information management	Data are collected and stored following the Registrar’s Handbook for School Administrators guidelines and other relevant policies. There is little or no communication with families/caregivers regarding (i) the data that are collected, (ii) the intended uses of those data, and (iii) the ways in which findings from data analysis will be communicated. Data are stored indefinitely for division’s use.	Within the context of the Registrar’s Handbook for School Administrators and informed by other relevant policies, the division is open and clear about the data that are collected, the purpose of collecting them, the way in which they will be used (and not used), how results will be communicated (and to whom), and how they will be disposed of when no longer needed.	Within the context of the Registrar’s Handbook for School Administrators and informed by other relevant policies, data handling protocols are developed collaboratively with local First Nations and Métis communities, to guide data collection, use, communication, and disposal. First Nations and Métis families/caregivers are invited into dialogue regarding data collection and handling processes.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			

<p>“Ethical space of engagement”</p>	<p>Division provides an annual one-day seminar for employees and trustees led by an outside expert. Employees and trustees are encouraged to reflect on their implementation of that training through their personal learning plans.</p>	<p>Division hires a consultant to develop and implement a training program for creating and sustaining equitable environments and relationships. All employees and trustees participate in annual seminars based on this program. Employees are expected to reflect on their implementation of that training through their personal learning plans.</p>	<p>Through partnerships between the division and local First Nations and Métis communities and individuals, all staff and trustees participate in ongoing training for creating and sustaining equitable environments and relationships. All employees are engaged in regular reflection regarding their implementation of that training through their conversations with their supervisors regarding their personal learning plans.</p>
<p>Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):</p>			
<p>Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):</p>			

Culturally appropriate and authentic assessment measures that foster improved educational opportunities and outcomes

Stepping Stone	Strategizing		
	Observing	Supporting	Disrupting
Multiple pathways/definitions of success	Assessments tend to rely primarily on “mandated” tools and processes that are set division wide. Reporting takes place via division-sponsored progress reports and parent-teacher interview days; teachers phone home when “there is a problem.”	Purpose and process of assessment incorporates a blend of division-wide and classroom-based tools and is clearly communicated. Reporting takes place primarily via division-sponsored progress reports and parent-teacher interview days; but occasional telephone calls or emails are used as well.	Purpose and process of assessment is clear because, while division-wide tools are used as required, a majority of assessments are co-constructed among teacher and students. Teachers, families, and students clearly understand progress because there is an open line of communication that blends division-sponsored progress reports and parent-teacher interview days with regular communication with families and ongoing dialogue with students.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			
Instruction and assessment reflect both Saskatchewan curriculum and local knowledge and experience	Students are sometimes aware of the outcomes being assessed. Educators accept local ways of knowing concepts underlying outcomes being taught as evidence of “enrichment” but not part of the core assessment plan.	Students know the outcomes being assessed. Educators discuss with local Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers about community’s way of understanding concepts underlying the outcomes and local knowledge is sometimes accepted as a means of demonstrating achievement.	Students know the outcomes being assessed and teachers facilitate and accept multiple ways to demonstrate mastery of outcomes. Educators actively seek advice from local Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers about the community’s way of understanding concepts underlying the outcomes and local knowledge is valued and welcomed as a means of demonstrating achievement.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			

<p>All persons with a stake in student outcomes (i.e., families/caregivers, students, teachers) are intentionally included in assessment of school and division progress</p>	<p>All persons with a stake in student outcomes (i.e., families/caregivers, students, teachers) are told about the staff's vision for the organization and direction of the school and the division.</p>	<p>All persons with a stake in student outcomes (i.e., families/caregivers, students, teachers) are asked about their vision for the organization and direction of the school and the division.</p>	<p>Representatives from groups of persons with a stake in student outcomes (i.e., families/caregivers, students, teachers) are engaged in committees discussing their vision for the organization and direction of the school and the division.</p>
<p>Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):</p>			
<p>Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):</p>			

First Nations and Métis languages and cultures are valued and supported

Stepping Stone	Strategizing		
	Observing	Supporting	Disrupting
Territorial languages knowledge, support, and integration	The division develops culturally sustaining programming and expected practices policies.	In discussion with local First Nations and Métis communities and individuals, the division develops culturally sustaining programming and expected practices.	Through partnerships between the division and local First Nations and Métis communities and individuals, culturally sustaining programming and expected practices are defined, developed, and implemented.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			
Representative workforce reflects the community	The division has stated publicly that it has a commitment to developing a representative workforce.	The division's commitment to a representative workforce is evidenced in policy and procedure documents and hiring decisions are sometimes influenced by these policy and procedure statements. First Nations and Métis employees are invited to join a mentorship program.	The division's workforce composition reflects local demographics. First Nations and Métis employees are provided with an appropriate mentor and relevant supports.
Evidence of progress (What was the net effect of the implemented actions?):			
Next steps (Based on the net effect of actions, what are the next steps the division commits to in order to improve?):			