



# InTouch

## Aboriginal Education Update

In February our Board was invited to present to the Ministry of Education our Aboriginal Education initiatives and strategies.

The presentation addressed the four strategic goals set out by the Ministry:

- Using data to improve student achievement
- Supporting First Nation Metis and Inuit (FNMI) students
- Engagement and awareness building
- Supporting educators

At Monday night's Board meeting, Janine Landry, our Aboriginal Outreach Worker and Omer Belisle, Superintendent of Education, provided Trustees with an update on the progress of our Aboriginal Education initiatives.

"Our Board is committed to help revitalize Indigenous Languages of this area. We have expanded the program to include NSL at nine of our schools," he said.

He added that our Board now has three counselors working with our FNMI students who provide cultural support, advocacy, academics, college/university applications, as well as personal counseling.

"We now have one full time counselor at each high school as well as a full time counselor who works with two of the three feeder schools," he said.

Ms. Landry discussed our outreach initiatives with remote First Nations communities, our after school homework program at FWFN, as well as the progress of the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee. The two also informed the Board of the professional development sessions with Dr. Lisa Korteweg and our English Literacy Development (ELD) teacher, Tesa Fiddler. The two provided cultural sensitivity training to all teaching staff at the elementary and senior elementary schools.



## Early Dismissal Days for the High Schools Returning

In recent years, the Board has implemented Early Release Days in the two high schools. A number of benefits were achieved, which included:

- Improved student achievement by providing additional professional learning for teachers
- Supporting secondary students in obtaining their required volunteer hours

"Early Release Days are those during which the school day is compressed. Periods are shortened and students bussed home early. Teachers remain at school to participate in structured professional learning that is aimed at increasing their instructional knowledge and skill," explained J. P. Tennier, Superintendent of Education.

He added that there are a number of benefits for those involved. "All teachers are available to work together on intense and focussed professional learning and there are significant savings in PD costs, specifically supply teacher costs."

Rob Murphy, Secondary School Coordinator, said that the shortened days also assist students who are required to accumulate 40 hours of volunteer work to graduate.

"Students attend their four scheduled classes for a shortened period of time (50 minutes vs 75 minutes). Then they are transported home by bus at noon and scheduled into community service placements in the afternoon," he explained.

He added that secondary staff work with Volunteer Thunder Bay to ensure placements for students.

The Board obviously agreed with the success of the program and approved four (4) annual Early Release Days.

## Section 23 Schools and Alternative Ed. Update

In the spirit of academic hope for all students, the Thunder Bay Catholic School Board provides education for a number of the region's at-risk youth.

Education Officer, Dave Bragnalo, provided Trustees with an update of our Section 23 and Alternative Education programs.

"We have staff at a number of facilities throughout the city. We have people at the Creighton Youth Services, including Kelso (secure custody), McKittrick (open custody) and McGuire (open custody). We also have staff at Kairos (open custody) and at the Sister Margaret Smith Clinic (addiction treatment)."

He added that we also have teachers at the Dilico Youth Services and at the Day Treatment Centre.

Mr. Bragnalo was also encouraged by the success of some of our Alternative Education programs.

"These are great programs that are staffed with deeply committed teachers who really are making a difference in the lives of these students."

**ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS 2014-2015**

Site	# Students	# Staff	OSSD Awarded	
			Semester 1	Semester 1
College Jump Start - Confederation College	23 Students	1.66 Full Time	23	2
Late Leavers Gateway Site Windsor Ave.	36 Students	1 Full Time	49	3
Gateway Program - Windsor Ave	25-40 Students	3.5 Full time	19	
OPS Program Gateway Site	11 Students	1 Full Time	43	

## Upcoming Anniversaries and Dedications

The Office of the Director of Education is responsible to present the Board with a listing of all anniversaries, dedications and school openings for the coming academic year.

"As a reminder, for 2014-15, we will celebrate the following: St. Margaret School 60th Anniversary on May 12, 2015; Holy Cross School Dedication of a new addition will be June 11, 2015; and St. Martin School Dedication of a new addition will be held on June 17, 2015," said Pino Tassone.

