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- Barry Montour, Ph.D. Education Director, Akwesasne Board of Education
- Robert Antone, Ph.D. Candidate, Executive Director, Kiikeewaniikaan Healing Lodge
- Greg Wilson, Ed.D. Candidate, Data Management Coordinator, Indigenous Education Coalition
- Rebecca Coulter, Ph.D. Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
- Bruce Stonefish, Ed.D. Candidate, Executive Director, Indigenous Education Coalition
- Jarrett Laughlin, Independent Consultant

The IEC would also like to thank the many different First Nation administrators, principals, teachers, educators, Elders, parents, and other community members that have contributed to the different projects and initiatives explored in this report.

The IEC would also like to say anushiik (thank you) to the participants and partners involved in the ‘Defining First Nations Education Standards’ project that has allowed the IEC to gain a wide-ranging scope of First Nations culturally appropriate assessment initiatives across Canada. As well, through participation in this project they have contributed substantially to conceptualizing First Nations culturally appropriate assessment. Some of these partners include:

- First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)
- Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey (MK)
- Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC)
- Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI)
- Blue Quills College
- Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
- Offord Centre, McMaster University
- Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education
- Seven Generations Education Institute
- Assembly of First Nations Education Department (AFN)
- Canadian Council of Learning
- Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

The IEC would also like to acknowledge the Assembly of First Nations for their leadership in moving educational initiatives such as this forward to meet the aspirations and evolving needs of our First Nation communities, education systems, schools, and students.
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INTRODUCTION

The Indigenous Education Coalition (IEC) has been contracted to research and develop a report on the ‘Promising Practices in First Nations Culturally-Appropriate Assessment’. This report is intended to highlight some of the more innovative assessment projects that the IEC has come across in their work in First Nations educational research. The projects/initiatives included in this report were selected due to their efforts to ensure community and culturally-based theoretical methodologies were foundations of their development.

Who is the IEC?

The IEC (ieceducation.com) is a non-profit First Nation educational support organization established in to serve its twelve (12) member communities in Ontario. The IEC offers educational services such as professional development, curricula development, professional networking, student services, educational research, and data collection. The IEC has a wide-spread network of partnerships with First Nations educational organizations, educational boards, universities, and colleges across Canada.

Some of the key affiliations and initiatives that the IEC has been involved in with respect to culturally-appropriate assessment include:

- Performance Measurements and Data Experts Group – AFN/INAC
- Initial discussions on culturally-appropriate Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) – CMEC
- SSHRC Reconceptualizing Culturally Appropriate Assessment – IEC/UWO
- Holistic Early Development Instrument – IEC/Offord Centre, McMaster University
- First Nations Education Standards Project – IEC/Various Partners

In 2010, the IEC in partnership with various First Nation education organizations embarked in a collaborative effort to answer the question, ‘What is the definition of First Nations Student Success?’ Through a series of four (4) workshops, the group worked on developing standards of education with a focus on the following questions:

1. What is the definition of First Nation Student Success?
2. What are First Nation Curriculum Standards – What do we teach our children?
3. What are First Nation Teaching Standards – How do we teach our children?
4. What are First Nation Assessment Standards – How do we know our children’s education system is successful within our definition and standards?

This project included various presentations from First Nation and non-First Nation academics and organizations, and focus groups, which included the participation of First Nations as an essential component.
A key question that came out of this project pertaining to culturally-appropriate assessment was, ‘What is the definition of Cultural Assessment?’ This question prompted the groups to begin discussion on the following sub-questions:

- How do assessments become cultural?
- Are assessments cultural within their theoretical foundation?
- Are assessments cultural by the methods/tools of analysis?
- What are we assessing?
- Are we, or can we, assess learning of cultural knowledge?
- Who has the authority to make assessments culturally appropriate?

It became apparent how essential it is for First Nations to understand the context in which assessment is being used. These discussions in turn also help us understand how important it is that the discussion on developing First Nations education standards needs to be rooted in an understanding of assessing progress or success in education, whether it is based within curricular content, teaching, excellence, or holistic development.

A key resource that was used as a reference for this project was the work done by the Canadian Council of Learning in their 2007 report called ‘Redefining how success is measured in First Nations Inuit and Metis Report on Learning in Canada, 2007”. We were able to use models as a theoretical foundation to begin our discussions. These models include:

1. First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model
2. Metis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model
3. Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model.

In writing this paper, the Indigenous Education Coalition used these models as a focal point to seek out promising practices in culturally appropriate assessment. This paper compiles some of the ground-breaking work being done across Canada to further the field of cultural assessment. These practices, some still in development, were chosen to show how cultural assessment can be used across different contexts, including early years education, First Nations language instruction, holistic development, and education for individual and social wellness.

In addition to showcasing promising practices, this paper is intended to identify some of the next steps that need to be taken to further research and development of culturally-appropriate assessment. These next steps start with the need to identify First Nations self-determination for education, student success and community/social wellness and development. These projects are a step in that direction.
ASSESSING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

The following model of assessment came from a concept that I developed in 1989 concerning Indigenous performance standards for post-secondary curriculum development. The original work was responding to the question: what are the indicators that demonstrate decolonizing and learning about one’s culture? As a result I was able to determine Performance Standards which are statements about reaching certain levels of learning.

These indicators were to guide curriculum development for programs working with Indigenous learners in an educational environment and requires decolonizing western concepts of learning/teaching and implementing culture based wholeness of the Indigenous learner’s experience. With the advent of the invasion, colonialism, and programs of assimilation policies, the Indigenous learner has had to face historic, painful stressors in loss of culture and identity. The policies and programs of assimilation have been failures, leaving cultural voids and disruptions within First Nation learning environments.

Indigenous identity and learning are central to this Indigenous core competences model. The original intent of this model is to give Indigenous learners a progressive step-by-step way to explore their culture and reclaim their place within the culture.
The foundation of this model is based on a holistic human development model of cycles of awareness, struggle, building, and preservation in the following understandings:

- **Awareness** - the gut feeling of curiosity and wanting to know one’s place in the world and at the same time honouring the right of vision and one’s spirit.
- **Struggle** - represents making efforts to deal with the stressors in one’s life and honouring all the emotions and relations in our life.
- **Building** - speaks to the efforts put forth to develop new ways of doing things to create more positive strengths and honouring our capacity to learn.
- **Preservation** - continuing the positive and workable skills and knowledge we use to resolve and find solutions in one’s life as on-going growth.

Each track is about an element of one’s life experience in relation to culture. There are additional tracks moving from self to family, clan, community, and nation, plus the relationship to components of life experiences in environment, economics, leadership, and helping others. An assessment model for those in the helping professional has been designed and utilized at the Kiikeewanniikaan Healing Lodge.

The E.L.C. is called Experiential Learning Cycles and are ever expending cycles of involvement and interaction in one’s life experiences. Each Performance Standard is a benchmark for the learner to measure their growth, knowledge, activities, and functions in a variety of activities. An example of this is when a person learns their Indigenous spirit name, clan, song, thanksgiving prayer, and how to deal with stressors in one’s life; each benchmark representing an ever increasing awareness and level of difficulty and greater inner strength.
The Core Model (see Figure 1) brings together the process of Awareness, Struggle, Building, and Preservation with four humanistic elements of spirit, emotion, mind, and body completing a holistic model of identifying guides to help an individual discover their learning progress in cultural renewal.

The following Experiential Learning Cycles Chart provides the original performance standard, a column of application for adult learners, and a column of assessment questions and statements for children. The four Experiential Learning Cycles are:

E.L.C.1. Developing an awareness of self as an Indigenous person
E.L.C.2. Willingness to struggle with the issues and feelings of being an Indigenous person.
E.L.C.4. Taking steps to strengthen and preserve one’s identity as an Indigenous person.

Each cycle is progressively affirming and designed to be building blocks for self-determination and self-actualization. As an assessment tool it provides guidance to fulfillment of personal development by addressing issues of identity awareness and providing a critical analysis of elements needing further focus. These are tools designed to meet cultural values of caring and sharing and not punitive forms of appraisal. It builds on the positive attributes, always encouraging the learner to reach for more positive aspects and less on the negative aspects of the learner. It will also help in identifying potential problems or issues the learner is dealing with at the time of assessment.

Summary

This is a brief explanation of a topic that bridges curriculum development, learning, self-evaluation and Indigenous identity. The whole person focus is the critical component that ties all of this together in ways that will be helpful to the learner and their support system.
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLES (E.L.C.)

There are four (4) learning cycles to build a progressive process of learning. The self-evaluation is a measuring of each of those stages of learning. There is a choice for self-evaluation for adult learners and for children 5 to 16.

E.L.C. 1. Developing an awareness of self as an Indigenous person

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: SELF EVALUATION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF EVALUATION</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE STANDARDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know my tribe or First Nation</td>
<td>Able to accept and express an awareness of one's Indigenous identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my Anishinaabe/Ojibwe tribe or community</td>
<td>Able to recognize the unique characteristics of being an Indigenous person within the context of present day reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Knowledgeable Accomplished</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the hurts and understand the struggle of being an Indigenous person</td>
<td>Able to understand one's personal identity conflict and can identify the sources of cultural conflict within one's self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Knowledgeable Accomplished</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have explored how my identity is affected by dress and my spiritual needs have not been met.</td>
<td>Able to expand one's knowledge about being an Indigenous person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Knowledgeable Accomplished</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the way I feel about being First Nation (check one)</td>
<td>1: Happy 2: Stuck 3: Sad 4: Scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to learn more about my people.</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy learning about my history and culture.</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
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Final Report
March 31, 2012
a. Able to articulate personal issues and feelings about being an Indigenous person.

I know how my feelings about being an Indigenous person are affected by negative things like racism.

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<th>Basic Understanding</th>
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I know some of the negative things around me that affect me.

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b. Able to begin to struggle with one's personal healing and recovery from the symptoms of Ethnostress and western cultural conditioning.

I am actively involved in my healing and addressing my conditioning.

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<th>Basic Understanding</th>
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I want to be a better person and be able to help myself.

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c. Able to understand internal personal conflict and the aspects of self which require change and can identify positive relating patterns which are consistent with an Indigenous cultural view of self.

I remember those positive things about being Indigenous and can see how I culturally view the world.

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<th>Basic Understanding</th>
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I like being Anishnawbe/Onkwehonwe.

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d. Able to begin a description of a lifelong program of personal healing to improve and to strengthen one's interaction with all one's relations.

I have a lifelong plan of healing and strengthening my Indigenous relations.

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<th>Basic Understanding</th>
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I think about my future.

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</table>
a. Able to allow a continuing awareness of personal issues and feelings about being an Indigenous person to develop and able to use this insight to guide one's personal healing.

My Indigenous teachings are a part of me and guide me in my personal development, and I have my spirit name and clan.

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<th>Basic Understanding</th>
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I know my Anishnawbe/Onkwehonwe name and clan.

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b. Able to actively participate in Indigenous activities and culturally-based approaches for personal growth, development, and healing (e.g., circle, counseling, sweat, ceremony etc.)

I attend ceremonies and support circles, and I learn the language and attend learning sessions about the culture and history.

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I enjoy going to ceremonies, pow wows, and learning the culture.

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c. Able to develop a knowledge base for understanding one's Indigenous identity and able to articulate how traditional Indigenous values and beliefs contribute to one's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

I can teach and explain cultural teachings to others and feel my holistic wellness in my life.

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I try to teach my younger brothers or sisters.

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d. Able to design and to undertake a personal plan of care to overcome the effects of Ethnostress which have affected one's ability to relate with all one's relations.

I have a plan of care that comes from visions of self and my dreams, and have taken steps to remove the stress in my life.

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I can remember my dreams and like to look forward to the future.

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<tr>
<td>PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:</td>
<td>E.L.C.A. Taking steps to strengthen and preserve one's identity as an Indigenous person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Able to identify and participate in Indigenous approaches and experiences that affirm and strengthen one's identity and encourage wholeness as an Indigenous person.</td>
<td>I have my personal song and know what gives me strength as an Indigenous person.</td>
<td>I have a personal song and it makes me feel good.</td>
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<td>b. Able to consistently organize strategies and initiate activities which support and encourage a balanced lifestyle as an Indigenous person and which foster a positive understanding of all one's relations.</td>
<td>I'm actively involved in my whole person approach to wellness and encouraging positive relations.</td>
<td>I like learning how to take care of myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Able to integrate Indigenous values and beliefs into one's personal life and able to develop culturally-driven approaches that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of one's self.</td>
<td>I actively bring the original teachings into my life to support my work and personal wholeness.</td>
<td>The stories from the culture help me feel good about myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Able to design and structure learning experiences which utilize both Indigenous cultural teachings and culturally-based approaches for preserving and affirming a holistic approach to one's personal growth and development.</td>
<td>I have a plan of care that comes from visions of self and my dreams, and have taken steps to remove the stress in my life.</td>
<td>I like being involved in circles of learning about the culture, songs, and stories.</td>
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EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDI)
A HOLISTIC APPROACH
Bruce Stonefish & Greg Wilson Ed.D. Candidates
Executive Director and Data Management Coordinator
Indigenous Education Coalition

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is an assessment that was developed by the Offord Centre of Child Studies, McMaster University in Hamilton in the 1990s. The EDI is designed to be an early years assessment to measure school readiness of children. The instrument is an outcome measure of children’s early development and measures children’s readiness to learn in the school environment in relation to developmental benchmarks in five domains: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge.

The EDI has been completed by schools across Ontario, along with other provinces within Canada and many other countries, including Australia. One of the major critiques of the EDI as an assessment tool is its lack of cultural content, which has been noted by both First Nation communities within Canada and Aboriginal communities and researchers in Australia. While the EDI was being used within Australia, variances in process were developed, including allowing a community Elder to help the teacher in completing the assessment.

The Indigenous Education Coalition (IEC) was approached to help implement the EDI in south-western Ontario First Nation schools. In recognition of the need to develop a cultural component in order to implement it properly, as well as a decision to use the EDI’s capacity for research in cultural assessment, and the IEC’s close proximity to Hamilton, all led to the development of a partnership between the IEC and the Offord Centre. The focus of this partnership was to work together to develop a cultural addition to the pre-existing EDI assessment.

Community Based

With the work that has been done between the IEC and the Offord Centre, the culturally-based EDI will have two components. The first component will be the original EDI as developed and researched by the Offord Centre. It will be the second component that is community based. This component will be used to assess the cultural and spiritual development of each child.

This second component was developed through using community consultation and ensuring that all stakeholders from IEC communities had an opportunity to participate in the development of the questions for this section. The IEC, having twelve (12) member nations, invited representatives from each of these communities to a one-day consultation process that was held in a central location.
There were a wide range of individuals that were invited from these communities. Elders, teachers, parents, chiefs and council members, and First Nation researchers from local universities were invited to participate.

The first part of the consultation was background information provided by the IEC on cultural assessment and its relation to the EDI. Dr. Magdalena Janus, lead researcher of the EDI, then provided the participants with a thorough explanation of the EDI.

Participants were then divided into groups, each one facilitated by IEC staff. Participants were then invited to suggest methods for measuring cultural and spiritual development within a pre-school student. After this process was completed, there was an opportunity for discussion and late revisions to terminology and concepts that were brought forward during the group discussions.

After the process had been completed, as a result of process discussion, it was recognized by the IEC that there should have been a longer discussion around the use of the EDI. Facilitators each then spent time helping participants understand the process for implementing the EDI within a school or community. This consumed time that could have been used developing a wider variety of methods of assessment. It also suggested to the facilitators that some participants were not sure of the reason for the EDI or the actual age group being targeted, which compromised the quality of the answers provided.

Theoretical Framework

One of the teachings within the First Nations of south-western Ontario is of the four quadrants of the medicine wheel. These four quadrants include: physical development, social and emotional development, mental development, along with spiritual and cultural development. The EDI, already focusing on physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills, and general knowledge was seen to have covered three of four areas of the four quadrants of the medicine wheel.

The focus of the new component for the EDI was the development of a section to measure the student’s preparedness for school in the spiritual and cultural quadrant of the medicine wheel. The IEC believed that if the assessment was going to be integrated as a cultural assessment, then it would be necessary for the whole child to be assessed, using all four parts of the medicine wheel.

One of the issues faced using this framework is that not all of the participants felt that the model developed by the Offord Centre was an appropriate starting point for an assessment of First Nation students. They recognized that the IEC was making an attempt to make the assessment more cultural by adding questions for the missing part of the medicine wheel, but they felt that it would be more effective to
develop the whole assessment using First Nation researchers, methodologies, and frameworks. The IEC, while agreeing that there may still be gaps in the EDI’s structure, believed that the time and resources it would take to develop a comparable assessment from the ground up was prohibitive. Additionally, the time that it would take to develop a new assessment would cause current First Nation students to be improperly assessed using the current version of the EDI, which still lacked any cultural component. The IEC also felt that it would be beneficial to have a cultural EDI assessment in use while a more Indigenous assessment, independent of the EDI, that is holistic and cultural, was being developed.

**Connection to First Nation Student Success**

The IEC has been involved in many other projects outside of the EDI project that focus on First Nation student success and the assessment of that success. It was one of the first organizations to put forward a successful application to and make use of the First Nation Student Success Program that was started by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The IEC used resources from this program to research best practices in First Nation student success and integrated a variety of these concepts into the EDI project.

The medicine wheel model that the IEC used to measure the cultural components within the EDI was used at the centre of the Canadian Council of Learning’s First Nation Life Long Learning model. After examining the EDI as developed by the Offord Centre against the medicine wheel from the CCL’s model, that is when the IEC confirmed that the cultural component was missing and needed to be added to the assessment.

The IEC also ensured that the development of the new component for the EDI was developed using community consultation. Research consistently shows that projects that involve First Nation students’ success have a greater chance of success when the community is involved in the grassroots development stage. Therefore, it was imperative to have a community-oriented organization, in this case the IEC, involved to ensure inclusion of the community in the development of the questions that would be used in the spiritual and cultural section of the EDI.

While this new section of the EDI has been tested in very limited numbers across a variety of communities in Ontario, its very use helps communities recognize the depth of cultural teachings within early years programming along with the knowledge possessed by the teacher leading the programming. It has also been noted that with the material that was suggested for this section, it might be necessary for Elders to be more involved in in-class programming to ensure that students receive the material assessed in the spiritual/cultural section developed for the EDI.

**Next Steps**
There are two processes that could be followed in the next steps of this assessment tool. The first is a process that was suggested by some of the participants in the community consultation. Instead of creating an addition that is culturally appropriate for an already existing assessment, start from scratch and develop a whole new assessment. This would take time and many resources, but it is an endeavour that would be rewarding for First Nation communities across Canada and potentially more relevant to their educational assessment needs. The second process is to develop a similar addition for the same missing section of the EDI, but instead of using the medicine wheel, using a cultural model for the framework that is appropriate for a nation or community that does not use the medicine wheel in its teachings.

In either of these processes it would be necessary to include the community, either through community consultation in the development of the assessment tool or by using community Elders or researchers. Providing community schools the opportunity to use the assessments, even in pilot stage, would be beneficial to ensure the community’s participation in the project as well as providing ongoing frontline feedback.

In the last nine months the IEC has not been able to dedicate as many resources as desired to continue working on this project with the Offord Centre. Due to cuts from key proposals, the IEC has had to reduce the number of individuals that were working on student success in the organization. Additionally, the overall number of projects the IEC was working on was decreased, including the EDI project. The IEC is just now resuming working on the EDI project by working to generate guaranteed funding to ensure that the project is able to obtain long-term success for itself and First Nation students.
ASSESSMENT OF EARLY YEARS ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
“Help Me Tell My Story”
Jarrett Laughlin
Independent Consultant, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education

Brief Description of the Project

Current assessment approaches often overlook the many aspects of learning that are integral to First Nations perspectives on learning. Without a comprehensive understanding of such perspectives, the diverse aspirations and needs of First Nations across Canada will continue to be misinterpreted and misunderstood.1 New assessment approaches must be broadened to measure more than simply years of schooling and performance on standardized tests. A more holistic approach to measurement that recognizes all aspects of lifelong learning is needed to measure the individual and collective well-being of First Nations communities.

This is why the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education initiated a project to develop a holistic assessment for First Nations and Métis learners. A holistic assessment has the potential to arm educators with the information needed to recognize, build upon, and celebrate a child’s strengths as they learn in the home, community, school, and on the land.

To begin, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education supported the development of an early years oral language assessment pilot named Help Me Tell My Story. The purpose of this project is to develop an innovative and holistic assessment tool that improves our understanding of success for First Nations and Métis early learners in Saskatchewan.

The development of the assessment tool began in the summer of 2010 through a working committee that includes representatives from Saskatchewan school divisions that support a large proportion of First Nations and Métis learners, as well as representatives from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and the Canadian Council on Learning.

The first pilot assessment was delivered to 325 students in seven schools in October, 2011. The holistic assessment did not only survey children, but also caregivers, teachers, and Elders. An assessment that provides information from

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multiple perspectives ensures a more balanced and holistic assessment for every learner. The results of the assessment are currently being compiled and incorporated into a series of interactive web-based portals developed for parents, teachers, and administrators to access the results.

Community-Based Approaches

To ensure this assessment is rooted in a community-based approach, the design and development of the Help Me Tell My Story assessment builds on the foundational work developed by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learning experts from across Canada in 2007—the Holistic Lifelong Learning Models and the Holistic Lifelong Learning Measurement Framework. This foundational basis ensured that any new and innovative assessment tool will be rooted in a First Nations perspective on learning and ensure the results contribute to a more balanced understanding of what constitutes success.

Second, the working committee further refined this national framework to develop a First Nations, Métis Holistic Early Learning Assessment Framework that was specific to Saskatchewan and ensures the new assessment responds to the local needs of the communities involved. This framework is further described in the next section.

Lastly, the working committee itself was comprised of a diverse group of individuals that reflect a wide range of skills and expertise in the areas assessed (for example, First Nation and Métis consultants, speech pathologists, early learning teachers, school principals, assessment administrators, and curriculum developers).

Theoretical framework behind the assessment tool

Given the amount of work completed by CCL and its Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre in this field, the working committee decided to use the tools developed by CCL as the foundation for the development of its own First Nations, Métis early learning framework. The First Nations, Métis Holistic Early Learning Assessment Framework (see below) is depicted as a circle that reflects a First Nations and Métis perspective of learning and well-being, and begins with the early learner at the centre. Surrounding the early learner are the four dimensions of personal development—spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental—through which learning is experienced holistically.

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Early learning success is defined by the four directions of the circle that reflect both the 'sources and domains of knowledge' and the 'lifelong learning journey.' Each quadrant, or element, is subsequently divided into various learning domains, indicators and measures. Domains are broad areas that describe each of the elements of the framework. Indicators measure the specific aspects of learning for each domain. Specific measures quantify each indicator and have a defined data source and unit.

Furthermore, this framework also recognizes the importance of balance. Every early learner assessed using this holistic framework will have their strengths in learning, and they will also have their weaknesses. This holistic framework recognizes the importance for the learner to increase their performance in learning, but also to strive for a state of balance across all learning domains.

First Nations, Métis Holistic Early Learning Assessment Framework

3Adapted from the Holistic Lifelong Learning Measurement Framework and the Holistic Lifelong Learning Models developed by the Canadian Council on Learning and its Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre in partnership with Aboriginal learning experts from across Canada.
How the assessment is connected to First Nation student success

The decision by the Working Committee to focus on early learners and oral language learning is based on the premise that a child’s early life experience has a lasting impact on their development and future learning success. The focus on oral language development responds to the fact that early childhood is the best time for children to develop language skills. This combined focus for the assessment ensures a foundation for early language development, inherently leading to student success.

Most importantly, however, is the main objective of this new assessment approach to intrinsically tie the process and outcomes of assessment to the learning success of the child in the home, school, community, and on the land. This shifts the conventional mindset from an ‘assessment of early learning’ to an ‘assessment for early learning’.

This new holistic approach does not start or end with the assessment instrument. In the beginning, the process of development, promotion, and delivery of the assessment involved not only the teacher, but the caregivers, children, assessors, and the Elders. After the assessment was delivered, the process continues to feed back the results to everyone in order to inform their actions and learning intervention in the home, school, community, and on the land. A caregiver portal and administrator’s portal are being developed to facilitate the effective movement from assessment results to action. The interactive nature of the portals also facilitates behaviour change through a unique approach to linking assessment results to recommendations that support student success.

Finally, a pre- and post-evaluation from assessors confirm that the new, holistic assessment has addressed the challenges that it was meant to address.

Next steps for this in cultural assessment

Although the evaluation has shown many successes for the delivery of this pilot holistic assessment, it has not yet addressed them all. One important aspect of any good assessment is its ability to provide reliable and valuable information that helps evoke change. Therefore, the development of a series of interactive portals (one for caregivers and one for educational administrators at the school, school division, and Ministry level) will help facilitate the interpretation of the assessment results into appropriate action.
Furthermore, the assessment of four distinct perspectives (child, caregiver, teacher, and Elder) facilitates a shared understanding and appreciation for the roles and responsibilities that support a child’s learning. Such a shared responsibility and its resulting actions by all parties help maximize the potential for learning, especially during the critical early years. School-based assessments that recognize and involve children, parents, and Elders (often excluded from such activities) not only measure learning that goes beyond the walls of the classroom, but fosters the opportunities for learning in the home, community, and on the land.

Beyond this pilot, there are some important next steps planned by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. First, there will be support for school divisions to partner with neighbouring First Nation organizations to replicate this pilot for First Nation schools. This continuation of the project will help provide further evidence of the benefit of a holistic approach to assessment, especially when measuring success in First Nations learning.

Second, there are plans to extend this holistic approach to develop additional assessments that measure learning in different domains (i.e. numeracy) and across different age groups.
ASSESSING STUDENT PROFICIENCY IN THE MOHAWK LANGUAGE: 
“THE KANIEN’KÉHA PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT” 
Barry M. Montour, Ph.D. 
Director of Education 
Ahkwesahasne Mohawk Board of Education

Introduction: Polysynthetic Languages and Indigenous Immersion Programs

The language immersion concept to revitalize Indigenous languages in First Nation schools in Canada was appropriated from the French bilingual programs which were introduced in Quebec in the late 1960's. However, First Nation communities encounter different and unique challenges in their efforts at language preservation and revitalization not faced by the French community. The languages of First Nations are rooted in the North American context, and their structure and syntax holds both the histories and worldview of the continent’s first inhabitants.

The polysynthetic structure of Indigenous languages, in which individual words and phrases are composed of many morphemes that express entire thoughts, does not easily transfer to written forms that are universally understood or accepted, including standardized forms of spelling. With limited media and social activities in Indigenous languages within First Nation communities (i.e. radio, television, print media, movies, community events, etc.), the opportunities for second language learners to be fully “immersed” in the target language is inhibited, and is therefore not comparable to the French context. Hence, rather than being “immersed” in the language, language learners are “submersed” for short periods of time. Once they leave the classroom or school, they are thrust back into the community where English (or the dominant language) is the primary mode of communication.

First Nation language immersion programs in schools focus on oral fluency, comprehension, and literacy, but most often with literacy taking precedence. The formalized structure of a school has not proven to be conducive to learning a second language (Hinton, 2011; Penfield & Tucker, 2011), as the vast majority of students entering these immersion programs have had limited or minimal exposure to the target language prior to entering the program. Hence, the success rate of these programs for producing fluent speakers is difficult to document. However, based on the practical experience and anecdotal evidence from teachers of Indigenous languages, the proficiency level for students enrolled either in immersion or core language classes appears to be quite limited. For those second language learners who have experienced a higher degree of fluency, several factors outside of the school environment contribute to their success: individual motivation and commitment, linguistic support from extended family members and Elders, and participation in cultural activities where the target language is primarily used.
Further, while the transcription and recording of many North American Indigenous languages has been documented, the transmission and acquisition of polysynthetic languages to second language learners has not been studied by linguists. This has left teachers of Indigenous languages to use trial and error methods when developing best practices for their classrooms. Not only are teachers of Indigenous languages left to develop their own teaching materials and resources, but they must also create their own methods of assessing student achievement and fluency.

To address these linguistic issues and concerns, Margaret Peters, Kanien'kéha Curriculum Specialist for the Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education, developed the Kanien'kéha Proficiency Assessment. The assessment continues to be a work in progress, and is regularly updated and revised on an on-going basis with input from the Kanien’kéha teachers.

**Theoretical Framework of the Assessment**

The Kanien’kéha Proficiency Assessment is criterion referenced using rubrics, and is designed as both formative and summative assessment. The use of rubrics for student assessment keeps teacher subjectivity to a minimum, as the design is competency based. Rubrics are designed to assess on different levels: holistic, multiple, and task specific, with the task for performance stated within each individual rubric (Taggart, et al, 1998; Creedon, 2011).

Holistic assessment allows for the design of a rubric that focuses on a completed topic, issue, or concept, and can be summative in nature. Multiple rubrics can be developed to assess student achievement or proficiency that relates to the same topic, issue, or concept, while task-specific rubrics are narrow in focus, and can be developed for one specific task. All tasks can be developed using Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956 & 2000), with the rubrics specifying levels for higher-order thinking and cognitive processes.

The rubrics for the Kanien’kéha Proficiency Assessment were created by referencing the proficiency scale developed by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The ACTFL guidelines identify proficiency for speaking, rather than achievement, and describe levels from novice, intermediate, advanced, to superior.

**Description of the Assessment:**

The Kanien’kéha Proficiency Assessment for language addresses four (4) areas of speaking:

1. **Recitation:** the reciting of formal speeches, addresses, and songs. Included in this area are the Ohen:ton Karihwtéhkwen (Thanksgiving Address), chief titles, Creation Story, Condolence Cane, Atonwa, and the singing of both ceremonial and social dance songs.
2. **Announcing**: this area includes making announcements for school, community, public, or ceremonial events (i.e. when others are going to speak, sing, or dance), together with introducing others for the same purposes.

3. **Introductions**: this area entails students introducing themselves to others (i.e. name, clan, nation, territory, residence, grade, school, teacher, nuclear and extended kinship, etc.) in both formal and informal settings.

4. **Conversational**: this area has students engaging in short or extended dialogues and interactions in Kanien'kéha (question and answer, commands, requests for information, responses, commentary, use of humour, etc.) with peers, school staff members, Elders, and visitors.

All curricula are thematic, using the Ohen:ton Karihwatékwen (Thanksgiving Address) as the foundation (i.e. the People, Mother Earth, the Waters, Plants, etc.) with strands pulled from each theme to develop individual units. These units follow the seasons and ceremonial cycle of the Hotinoshonni, and cover components in language arts (i.e. storytelling), cultural practices, history, science, mathematics, and music (i.e. singing and drumming), which are embedded in every unit.

Each unit includes an assessment on five (5) categories of speaking proficiency:

1. **Volume**: the student speaks in a volume that is appropriate for the situation and is loud enough to be heard by the listener / audience.
2. **Clarity**: the student pronounces words and phrases in an articulate and comprehensible manner, with the appropriate stress put on the morpheme / root of the word or phrase.
3. **Vocabulary**: the student uses appropriate vocabulary in conversation, answers to questions, phrases, songs, speeches, etc.
4. **Intonation**: the student’s language flows with pauses appropriately utilized for meaning or effect.
5. **Complete Sentences**: the student uses full and complete sentences to convey meaning to the listener / audience.

Students are assessed on an on-going basis (formative), with these records then forming the basis for the final unit evaluation (summative).

For example, in the Ratiwé:ras (Thunderer) Unit, students are assessed throughout, but the expectation at the end is that each student will “give thanks to the Ratiwé:ras by learning to recite a basic, intermediate, or advanced level of speech.” The summative rubric is organized as follows:
Rubrics used for the holistic (summative) assessment for reporting periods (Progress and Report Cards) follow the four (4) levels of proficiency.

1. **Level 4 - Advanced**: Almost always speaks and comprehends Kanien'kéha and is able to communicate for prolonged periods of time solely in the language; able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations; will ask, answer, and respond in Kanien'kéha with ease; will almost always initiate and engage in conversations with peers, teachers, Elders, and with other fluent speakers; attains a Level IV on the majority of unit assessments; recognizes differences in dialect; vocabulary and general use of phrasing is of a high order; uses gender, number, prefixes, suffixes, and pronouns in phrasing at a high level; always exhibits confidence in language ability and will take risks; knows when to self correct; when challenged or frustrated, will only rarely revert to English.

2. **Level 3 – Proficient**: Frequently speaks and comprehends Kanien'kéha and is able to communicate for limited periods of time solely in the language; requires limited assistance to comprehend or speak; most times will ask, answer, and respond in Kanien'kéha; generally initiates and engages in conversations with peers, teachers, Elders, and with other fluent speakers; attains a Level III on the majority of unit assessments; vocabulary and general use of phrasing is developing and growing; uses gender, number, prefixes, suffixes, and pronouns in phrasing at an appropriate level; exhibits confidence in language ability and is willing to take some risks; will often self correct; when challenged or frustrated, will only sometimes revert to English.

3. **Level 2 – Developing Proficiency**: Often speaks and generally comprehends Kanien’kéha; requires less frequent assistance to comprehend or speak; can ask, answer, and respond in Kanien'kéha, but does not always
initiate conversations; attains a Level II on the majority of unit assessments; vocabulary and general use of phrasing is developing at a moderate rate; confidence level is increasing, and is willing to take minimal risks; begins to self correct; when challenged or frustrated, will revert to English.

4. **Level 1 – Beginner Proficiency:** Requires frequent and regular assistance to comprehend and speak Kanien’kéha; attains a Level I on the majority of unit assessments; vocabulary and phrases are simple and basic; confidence level is low and is unwilling to take risks; will not self correct; when challenged or frustrated, will always revert to English.

*Community-Based Assessment*

The Kanien’kéha Proficiency Assessment is holistic-and strengths-based. The focus of the assessment is on oral fluency, which parents in the community asked to have as a priority of the Kanien’kéha program. For the 2005/06 school year, the Mohawk Language Immersion Program was redesigned with an oral fluency focus and was renamed the Skahwats:i:ra (One Home, One Family, One Nation) Program.

All students in the program, from K4 to Grade 4, gather together each morning to greet each other, to practice their introductions, take turns reciting the Ohen:ton Karihwakekwen, and to sing traditional songs. This activity pulls the group together and allows each student to start the school day in a traditional family-centred manner, which is steeped in the cultural practices of the Hotinoshonnii. The morning activity allows students to gain confidence and comfort in speaking and conversing with each other in a social setting, as well as to practice and refine the lessons that they learned (or are learning) in their classrooms. This activity allows students to act as role models for the younger learners, and provides opportunities for language learners to interact with other fluent and developing speakers.

The activities include the traditional protocols found within the Hotinoshonnii customs, and include seating order, arrangement of activities (by clan and gender), speaking order, order of events, recitation, and other behaviours (i.e. singing, dancing, wampum, and tobacco burning), and other protocols. All of these school-based activities are transferable to the ceremonies and other social events found at the Longhouse and within the community.

*Indicators of Success*

The Kanien’kéha Proficiency Assessment has proven successful on three levels: student achievement, improved teacher instruction, and transferability of the assessment to other Iroquoian communities.

1. **Student Achievement:**
Students are aware of the expectations for the program and for each instructional unit, as levels of proficiency and achievement are identified at the beginning.

Students transfer their learning to community, ceremonial, and social events, with ample opportunities to share and present at the annual Aboriginal Languages event, school assemblies, ceremonies, meetings, and travels to other Hotinoshonni communities.

Registration, retention, and transfers to the program has increased and allowed the Board of Education to designate one of the schools as a site for the Skahwatsi:ra Program in the fall of 2012 with sufficient enrolment.

2. Improved Teacher Instruction

The focus has changed from a vocabulary and literacy based program to a conversational and oral fluency program, with the increased use of verbs and expanded phrases as opposed to the learning of nouns.

The classrooms are more active and student-centred, with a greater amount of dialogue occurring, which is essential for second language learners. With the focus on language and activity, teachers have had to adjust their classroom management styles, as they are often dealing with behaviours that they did not previously experience.

The program has improved teacher accountability for instructional practices, as benchmarks are set and students are assessed based on their language proficiency, which is evidenced based. The program also reduces teacher subjectivity in assessment.

Community members have commented on the increased incidence of Kanien'kéha use in both the school and at community events.

3. Transferability of the Program to Other Iroquois Communities

The program has been shared with other Hotinoshonni communities, who are adapting it to meet their individual needs (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, and other Mohawk communities).

A network of First Nations teachers, language advocates, and curriculum specialists has been expanded, and their work is now focused on assessment practices and methods (in addition to the previous work of curriculum development and best practices). The network stretches from Quebec and Ontario to New York State.

Further Development and Next Steps
The development of rubrics to assess oral fluency and levels of proficiency in Kanien’kéha will need to be refined and further developed. Locally developed performance indicators will need to be created, with the corresponding rubrics for assessing student proficiency and achievement.

In order for this work to be successful and to have the greatest impact on the revitalization of indigenous languages in First Nation communities, the critical research gap in second language acquisition of polysynthetic languages must be closed. It is imperative that linguists with expertise in both polysynthesis and second language learning theories work in collaboration with First Nation communities to design a research framework and select appropriate methods to investigate how second language learners acquire a polysynthetic language. This will lead to new theories on second language acquisition, which will then allow practitioners to develop effective pedagogies for the transmission and revitalization of Indigenous languages. Without this vital research, the current efforts to ensure the transmission of North American Indigenous languages, particularly those that are endangered, will continue to struggle.
RECONCEPTUALIZING CULTURALLY-APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Bruce Stonefish, Ed.D. Candidate & Robert Antone, PH.D. Candidate

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Project

University of Western Ontario & Indigenous Education Coalition

“Self-Assessment through Self-Visualization”

Background

The Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario and the Indigenous Education Coalition were funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to conduct research and work with First Nation schools/communities to reconceptualize assessment approaches, practices, and tools to make them culturally appropriate. The following outlines the particulars of the project:

Mission: To research, develop, and test community-based and culturally appropriate educational assessment tools for use in partner First Nation communities.

Goals:

- Work in partnership with First Nation communities and schools within the membership of the Indigenous Education Coalition.
- Through the use of First Nation graduate students, conduct preliminary bibliographic research on culturally-appropriate assessment.
- Work directly with grassroots educational workers, Elders, and community members.
- Identify and describe culturally appropriate approaches to educational assessment for First Nations students
- Design and develop tools that can be adopted and used with Aboriginal students in First Nations schools and in provincial school boards
- Develop culturally-based assessment theory, methodologies, and tools.
- Develop assessment tools that may have possible application to other First Nation schools or for use in mainstream educational systems.
- Provide an implementation and evaluation plan for communities wishing to adapt and use the assessment tools.
• Contribute to First Nations definitions of student success.

Partners:

• Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
• Indigenous Education Coalition
• Chippewa of the Thames First Nation, Antler River School
• Mississaugas of New Credit, Lloyd S. King School
• Walpole Island First Nation, Walpole Island Elementary School

Timeframe: 3 Years

Current Progress:

As the project is in the second year, the majority of the initial research has been completed and individual community engagement teams have begun discussions with First Nation partners. The following is a commentary on the developments of the work being proposed to the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and their Antler River School.

Project Highlight:

“Self-Assessment through Self-Visualization” - Chippewas of the Thames First Nation Project

This project is an extension of the cultural revitalization efforts within the Antler River School, as well as the need identified through a community-initiated self-analysis. Their findings are recorded in a report entitled “Chippewas of the Thames Community Story” (2011). The Antler River school has developed a unique cultural program where students are engaged in cultural practices. These practices include a traditional drum group for both boys and girls and also the use of a sweat lodge constructed on the property of the school, which is unique for schools in southwestern Ontario. In working with the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, in this SSHRCC project it was decided that our research and assessment development focus would be on holistic development and community reciprocity.

Culturally-Based Framework:

The following concepts formed the basis for developing a self-assessment strategy for First Nation students entering grade 7 and 8:

• Culturally- and Community-Centered Education
• Puberty Rites and Fasting
• Self-Visualization and Vision Quest
• Identity and Self-Esteem Development
• Personal Wellness and Holistic Development
• Community Roles, Responsibilities, and Reciprocity
• Healthy Choices and Social Awareness
• School Transitions and Self-Confidence
• Medicine Wheel Self-Assessment Tool

It is essential that youth are able to understand cultural teachings on the different stages in life, with particular attention to the Puberty Rites and Fasting practices of the Anishnaabe people. Traditionally, these rites are essential at the age of puberty 12-14 (Grade 7 & 8) for youth to move from childhood to taking their place and fulfilling responsibilities in the communities.

At the time of puberty where youth go fasting for their vision quest, youth need to be taught how to see themselves and how they exist in their society - in their families, communities, nations, and within creation. Through an understanding of holistic development they can become aware of their personal wellness – emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Also with an understanding of communal roles and responsibilities, youth can be equipped with a personal sense of communal inclusion and importance of how they themselves have a reciprocal relationship. Youth need to understand how through healthy choices and social awareness these reciprocal relationships, when nurtured, create support systems that can help carry them as they move from childhood to more mature roles where independence and self-confidence are pillars of wellness and personal vision. By approaching this through a traditional, cultural paradigm and through traditional, cultural practices this project is intended to equip youth with the knowledge to self-visualize personal wellness and foster an understanding of how to create a support system within their friends, family, and community that ensures positive personal growth and development while nourishing young learners’ desire for cultural knowledge and identity.

For the students in this project, there is an immediate need to create healthy, confident individuals, as these students leave their communities and transition into non-native schools, where many times educational success ends for our youth. The type of assessment pursued and developed in this project is far from assessment as it is seen into today's Western academic realities such as those seen in standardized literacy or numeracy tests or other measuring tools and rubrics geared to assess curricular standards of mainstream education.
Assessment Tool:

By using the teaching of the Medicine Wheel and the teachings of holistic development, youth will learn how to use the medicine wheel to self-visualize their own personal wellness. By gauging themselves – mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually – they will be able to determine what type of support they need to seek out. In addition to creating this assessment tool, the program is intended to give them the tools to be able to personally resolve issues through an established family or community network system.
Community-Based Partners:
- Kiikeewaniikaan Healing Lodge
- Indigenous Education Coalition
- Mnaasged Family and Child Services
- Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

Assessment Program:

This assessment program is intended to follow the youth for 1 year:

**APRIL 27TH**  
**CREATION STORY**
Location: IEC  
Teacher: Anishnaabe Elder or Teacher  
Feast: Caterer  
Expenses: Busing, Honorarium, Catering, Facility Rental, Snacks  
Honorarium for Drum  
Activities: Story, Feast, and Meditation  
Invitees: Students, Parents  
Time: 1:00pm – 7pm

**MAY 4TH**  
**STAGES OF LIFE**
Location: School  
Teacher: Anishnaabe Elder or Teachers  
Feast: Caterer  
Expenses: Busing, Honorarium, Catering, Facility Rental, Snacks  
Honorarium for Drum  
Activities: Story, Feast, and Sharing Circle  
Invitees: Students, Parents  
Time: 1:00pm – 7pm

**MAY 11TH**  
**PUBERTY RIGHTS**
Location: IEC Indigenous Enviro-Education Centre  
Teacher: Anishnaabe Elders or Teachers (Male and Female)  
Feast: Caterer  
Expenses: Busing, Honorarium, Catering, Facility Rental, Snacks  
Honorarium for Drum  
Activities: Story, Feast, and Sharing Circle  
Invitees: Students, Parents  
Time: 1:00pm – 7pm

**MAY 18TH**  
**SWEATLODGE/FASTING**
Location: Kiikeewaniikaan Healing Lodge  
Teacher: Traditional Elders or Teachers (Male and Female)  
Feast: Caterer  
Expenses: Busing, Honorarium, Catering, Facility Rental, Snacks, Materials, Honorarium for Drum
Activities: Story, Sweat, and Feast
Invitees: Students, Parents
Time: 1:00pm – 7pm

MAY 25, 26, 27 FAST
Location: Kiikeewaaniikan Healing Lodge
Teacher: Anishnaabe Elders and Teachers (Male and Female)
Feast: Caterer
Expenses: Busing, Honorarium, Catering, Facility Rental, Snacks
Materials, Honorarium for Drum
Activities: Sweat, Fast, Sweat, Feast/Giveaway
Invitees: Students, Parents
Time: Friday 1pm – Sunday 2pm

June 8th, 11th, 15th Drum Teachings
Location: Antler River School
Teacher: Anishnaabe Elders and Teachers (Male and Female)
Feast: Caterer (15th)
Activities: 8th – Drum Making 1-3:30pm
11th – Drum Painting 1-3:30pm
15th – Drum Birthing/Feast 2:00 – 5pm
Expenses: Honorarium, Catering, Snacks, Drum Materials
Time: Various

June 29th Revisiting My Vision
Location: Antler River School
Teacher: Anishnaabe Elders and Teachers (Male and Female)
Feast: Snacks
Activities: Learning a Song, Story, Sharing Circle
Expenses: Honorarium, Snacks
Time: 1pm – 3pm

September 21st Family Support For My Vision
Location: Antler River School
Teacher: Project Coordinator (Community Youth and Family Worker)
Feast: Catered
Activities: Family Teachings, Sharing Circle
Expenses: Drum Honorarium, Honorarium, Catering
Time: 5:00 – 7:00pm

December 14th Community Support For My Vision
Location: Antler River School
Teacher: Project Coordinator (Youth and Family Worker)
Feast: Catering
Activities: Youth Circle, Community Circle, Feast, Social, Youth Introductions
Expenses: Catering, Honorarium, Drum Honorarium
Time: 2pm Youth
      3pm Community Circle
      4pm Feast & Social

March 8th Celebrating my Vision
Location: Antler River School
Teacher: Project Coordinator (Community Youth and Family Worker)
Feast: Catering
Activities: Feast, Giveaway (4 Gifts), Social
Expenses: Gifts, Honorarium, Drum Honorarium, Catering
Time: 5:00-8:00pm

Next Steps: Academic Indicators of Success

Key components of this project will be to ensure that this is a community-supported effort, as the success of this initiative will depend on community involvement and support systems created for the participating youth. This will include a network of principals, teachers, community program workers, community leadership, Elders, and parents, as well as other family members and friends of the students.

As we move forward it will be important for project coordinators and key participants to convey to students their commitment to assisting and supporting the youth in personal development and wellness. As the project moves forward we can rely on the many other quantitative modes of academic achievement, such as attendance and report card marks, as well as qualitative research, such as relying on personal commentary from teachers and parents on the progress of participating students, to provide more community-based input. In looking at this long-term there may be data produced that analyzes the academic success of different cohorts in years to come and their personal or academic success as they transition to and through secondary education. Ideally, it would be great to return to collect data from graduating cohorts to gain a qualitative perspective on influences to their student success.

This type of self-actualization assessment tool, when coupled with age appropriate cultural practices, could possibly be refined and used with other ages of First Nations youth or adult learners. Due to the nature and causes of First Nations social existence, education is a healing process. We believe that education, personal wellness, and cultural esteem, when put together, can ultimately change the lifelong educational experience of First Nations people and their success within it.
CONCLUSION: NEXT STEPS

It should be very clear that this paper is highlight promising practices, many of which are in their infancy and require continued support. In most cases additional resources will be essential to ensure that the outstanding efforts underway can continue in their research and development. In order to continue the development of these in a manner that is respectful and community-based in First Nations grassroots, these projects need to identify financial resources from year to year for their development. Unfortunately, there are very few avenues to find funding for educational research outside the scope of mainstream and public standards of education.

These projects were initiated by First Nations communities in their identified need for more appropriate assessment tools that are based on a more reflective awareness of their cultural worldview and needs of holistic and educational development in their communities. Within these projects a seed has been planted where further research will be needed where First Nations perspectives and input are central through all future phases of development and assessment evaluation.

There are two common threads within the promising practices in this report: the concept of holistic development of both the learner and the community, and the environment that surrounds and is essential for supporting the learner; and the concept that assessment tools need to have a foundational focus in First Nations worldview of lifelong learning and wellness. An essential understanding that needs to come forward is that First Nations have unique needs in cultural revitalization and social awareness to begin a healing process through education to recover socially from the historical legacy left behind by residential schools and Indian policy.

There have been over fifty (50) reports since the 1971 National Indian Brotherhood’s “Indian Control of Indian Education Policy Paper”. All of which have echoed the same sentiments calling for the following four (4) educational needs:

1. culturally appropriate curriculum
2. culturally appropriate teaching practices
3. language inclusion
4. jurisdiction

It is essential to understand how these four connect, especially in relation to the research and development to culturally appropriate assessment, as ‘Assessment is Jurisdiction.’ This is why the work that the IEC is doing on First Nation Education Standards is critical. First Nations must have the opportunity to define their vision of First Nations student success and, with that, be supported in their endeavor to create standards for curricula, teaching, and language development. Support means the financial resources and authority to create and implement First Nations
standards of education, including curricula standards, teaching standards, and assessment standards.

Once First Nations have the opportunity to clearly identify standards on:

- what they want their children to be taught, and
- how they want their children to be taught

Then they can develop assessment theories and tools to determine or assess whether their communities are successful within their aspirations and vision of lifelong learning. In that sense ‘Assessment is Jurisdiction’.