



First Nations Schools Association Conference



April 10-11, 2026 | Vancouver



***Collaborate to Inspire,
Empower, and Grow***



The First Nations Schools Association Conference is an opportunity to learn about a wide range of effective practices in classroom instruction, school administration and key areas of professional growth.

Guest Speakers



Dr. Kevin Lamoureux

Dr. Kevin Lamoureux is a faculty member at the University of Winnipeg and a well-known public speaker. As an award-winning scholar, he has published several books including the popular *Ensouling Our Schools* (with Dr. Jennifer Katz), has written many academic articles, and has taught for several universities, colleges and institutions across Canada. He formerly served as Associate Vice President of the University of Winnipeg and Education Lead for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Dr. Lamoureux has been seen on TV, in the media, documentaries, and is a three-time TEDx speaker. He has worked with and presented for education, justice, health, government, the private sector, academia and community-based organizations. More than anything, Dr. Lamoureux is committed to Reconciliation and a better Canada for all Canadians.



Dr. Pamela Palmater

Dr. Pamela Palmater is a Mi'kmaw lawyer, professor, author, and social justice activist from Ugpi'ganjig (Eel River Bar First Nation). She has four university degrees, including a Doctorate in Law from Dalhousie University specializing in Indigenous law. Dr. Palmater currently holds the position of full Professor and Chair in Indigenous Governance at Toronto Metropolitan University. She was one of the spokespeople and public educators for the Idle No More movement and advocates alongside other movements focusing on social justice and human rights. She is frequently called as a legal expert before parliamentary, senate and United Nations committees dealing with laws and policies impacting Indigenous peoples and is considered one of Canada's Top 25 Influential Movers and Shakers by the Financial Post.



The First Nations Schools Association is a registered non-profit society that represents and works on behalf of the First Nations controlled schools in BC. It supports schools in creating effective, nurturing and appropriate educational environments that provide students with a positive foundation in all academic areas. www.fnsa.ca

Registering

Phase 1

Registration opens Thursday, **February 19, 2026, at 12:00 pm**. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Until Tuesday, February 24, 12:00 pm First Nations schools can register a maximum of **10 people**. This includes each school's FNSA Authorized Representative and principal.

On the registration form there will be a dropdown with school names. The school name will continue to appear until all 10 spots are filled.

Phase 2

After February 24, 12:00 pm, there is no limit on the number of people a school can register. Registration will close when capacity is reached.

Registration

Find registration on the FNSA Website at <https://www.fnsa.ca/fnsa-events/conference-agm/> or link directly to the registration form <https://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/event/2026/FNSA>

Registrants will receive an automatic email acknowledging registration.

Registration Rate

Regular Registrants: \$475

FNSA Authorized Representatives: \$250 (*max 1 per school, with code*)

Changes

To cancel a registration or make changes, please use the change request link at the bottom of your registration confirmation email or contact fnsaconference@fnesc.ca.

Schools will be invoiced starting in March.

Alternatively, payment may be made by credit card during online registration or by phoning in payment to CivicInfo at 250-383-4898 after registering.

Policies

Payment must be received by April 1, 2026, or the registration may be cancelled and individuals will not be admitted to the conference.

Cancellation: Full refunds up to and including April 1, 2026; no refunds after. Substitutions allowed.

Support

fnsaconference@fnesc.ca

Accommodation

The booking link will be available on the event website on **February 20, 2026 at 12:00 pm**.

The Westin Bayshore Hotel
1601 Bayshore Drive, Vancouver
Rooms from \$349+tx
Book by Monday, **March 9, 2026**, for the negotiated rate.

Sharing Table

Schools are invited to bring flyers or brochures about resources of interest to BC First Nations schools for our Sharing Table. Please drop off your items at the Information and Directions station in the foyer when you arrive at the conference.

Health

Please stay home if you are feeling unwell. Only registered participants are eligible to attend.

Meals

Buffet breakfasts and lunches with a variety of food options will be offered. Please indicate any special dietary needs or severe allergies on your registration form.

Photography & Filming

This is a public event where photography and videorecording will take place. The images and recordings will be used by FNSA and FNESC for promotional purposes. In case of questions, please contact fnsaconference@fnesc.ca.

Friday, April 10

7:30 AM Registration & Breakfast

8:50 AM Traditional Welcome

9:00 AM Opening Remarks

9:10 AM Student Cultural Performance

9:30 AM Keynote Address by Dr. Kevin Lamoureux, Speaker and Professor, University of Winnipeg

10:30 AM Break

11:00 AM Workshop Session 1

- 1A** Weaving Culture, Creation, and Land: A Whole-School Approach to Land-Based Learning
- 1B** Supporting Students with Autism
- 1C** Little Voices, Living Language
- 1D** Sharing Ways of Integrating Language into the Classroom with Ms Juanita and Sunshine
- 1E** Importance of Connectedness
- 1F** Start With What You Love: A Hands-on Workshop for Land-Based Unit Design
- 1G** Learning Together: Shifting Math Instruction Through Collaboration and First Peoples' Principles of Learning
- 1H** Strengthening Student Involvement with Community Elders Through a Lasting Legacy Project
- 1I** Seeing the Whole Child: Tracking, Assessment, and Supports for Diverse Learners
- 1J** Having Fun with Language Learning
- 1K** Breaking Down Barriers: Flexible Pathways to Student Success
- 1L** Common Ground, Common Tongues: Growing our Language Together through Routine Instruction
- 1M** Continuing the Conversation with Keynote Speaker, Dr. Kevin Lamoureux

12:30 PM Lunch

1:45 PM Workshop Session 2

- 2A** Weaving Culture, Creation, and Land: A Whole-School Approach to Land-Based Learning
- 2B** Supporting Students with Autism
- 2C** Little Voices, Living Language
- 2D** Sharing Ways of Integrating Language into the Classroom with Ms Juanita and Sunshine
- 2E** Importance of Connectedness
- 2F** Start With What You Love: A Hands-on Workshop for Land-Based Unit Design
- 2G** Learning Together: Shifting Math Instruction Through Collaboration and First Peoples' Principles of Learning
- 2H** Strengthening Student Involvement with Community Elders Through a Lasting Legacy Project
- 2I** Seeing the Whole Child: Tracking, Assessment, and Supports for Diverse Learners
- 2J** Having Fun with Language Learning
- 2K** Breaking Down Barriers: Flexible Pathways to Student Success
- 2L** Common Ground, Common Tongues: Growing our Language Together through Routine Instruction
- 2M** Supporting Great Attendance - What You Can Do!

3:15 PM End of the day

Saturday, April 11

7:45 AM Registration & Breakfast

8:45 AM Opening of the Day and Recognition of the FNSA Board

9:10 AM Keynote Address by Dr. Pamela Palmater, Author, Mi'kmaw Lawyer, and Activist

10:10 AM Break

10:30 AM Workshop Session 3

- 3A** Collaborate to Inspire: On the Land Learning
- 3B** Secwepemc Immersion Program in the Early Years
- 3C** Honouring Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Reconciliation in Action through Culturally Responsive & Relevant Assessments
- 3D** Employing Indigenous Arts through STEAM to Foster Student Learning
- 3E** From Lived Experience to Classroom Practice: Indigenous Pedagogies for First Nations Learners
- 3F** First Nations Language Teacher Mentor Apprentice Program for First Nation Schools
- 3G** Danam Tik'waxawa'yu dlu k'uwalla
- 3H** An Indigenous Approach to Getting Started with Physical Literacy
- 3I** Walking Together: Land-Based Learning and Meaningful Assessment
- 3J** Skyzeh Habi Yikh - iCount
- 3K** Promoting Parent and Family Engagement
- 3L** Purposeful Pathways: Building an Experiential Adult Learning Centre That Works
- 3M** Planning for Language Teachers: Using Cultural Calendars

12:00 PM Lunch

1:00 PM Workshop Session 4

- 4A** Collaborate to Inspire: On the Land Learning
- 4B** Secwepemc Immersion Program in the Early Years
- 4C** Honouring Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Reconciliation in Action through Culturally Responsive & Relevant Assessments
- 4D** Employing Indigenous Arts through STEAM to Foster Student Learning
- 4E** From Lived Experience to Classroom Practice: Indigenous Pedagogies for First Nations Learners
- 4F** First Nations Language Teacher Mentor Apprentice Program for First Nation Schools
- 4G** Danam Tik'waxawa'yu dlu k'uwalla
- 4H** Motivational Strategies for Indigenous Learners
- 4I** Walking Together: Land-Based Learning and Meaningful Assessment
- 4J** Skyzeh Habi Yikh - iCount
- 4K** The Important Role of EAs
- 4L** Purposeful Pathways: Building an Experiential Adult Learning Centre That Works
- 4M** Planning for Language Teachers: Using Cultural Calendars

2:30 PM Break

2:45 PM Door Prizes and Reflections

3:15 PM End of the Day

Workshops (alphabetical)

An Indigenous Approach to Getting Started with Physical Literacy (3H)

Dwayne Roberts, Project Manager for Indigenous Programs – Learning in Motion, Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council

Developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities and educators, and guided by the leadership of ISPARC, this workshop weaves Indigenous perspectives into physical literacy through the lens of the First Peoples' Principles of Learning. Participants will explore practical strategies to support the development of students' physical literacy and learn how to use storytelling as a meaningful way to connect with Indigenous communities and integrate physical literacy within the classroom and across the school day.

Breaking Down Barriers: Flexible Pathways to Student Success (1K 2K)

*Shaun Beveridge, Adult Education Teacher, Chilliwack SD / Sqwá First Nation Adult Education Centre
Dianne Parkinson, Education Director, Sqwá First Nation*

This workshop will explore innovative strategies that remove barriers and empower learners through flexible, collaborative approaches to adult education. The presenters will share practical methods for helping students achieve both academic and professional goals. Participants will learn how to leverage tools such as Workforce Training Certificates, dual-credit opportunities with post-secondary institutions, and prior learning assessments to support graduation and career readiness. Flexible learning models, including self-paced progress, resubmissions for mastery, and in-person, online, and hybrid options, will be discussed. Participants will explore strategies for improving engagement, attendance, and goal setting through collaboration with district teams and community partners.

Collaborate to Inspire: On the Land Learning (3A 4A)

*Sandra Eustache, Principal, Skil' Mountain Community School
Carissa Richard, K-2 Teacher, Skil' Mountain Community School*

This session will explore how collaborative, on the land learning can inspire students through meaningful relationships with community knowledge keepers, the land, and themselves. The presentation will share an ongoing partnership between our school and Earth-kin and how this collaboration has supported student learning through land-based, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive practices. During the session, participants will hear stories from the program, reflect on student impacts, and engage in dialogue about building authentic partnerships with community organizations. We will also share practice considerations for implementing land-based learning, including scheduling, safety, trauma-informed practices, and alignment with curriculum and Indigenous education goals. This presentation will invite educators and leaders to consider how collaboration can inspire learning that is grounded in land, relationships, and respect.

Common Ground, Common Tongues: Growing Our Language Together through Routine Instruction (1L 2L)

*Jenn Stump, Primary Teacher, Tl'etinqox School
Wanda Dick, Primary Teacher, Tl'etinqox School*

This workshop is designed to support classroom teachers in intentionally embedding language development into everyday instruction through existing routines and schedules. Rather than adding new programs or lessons, the session focuses on maximizing the language-learning potential of familiar classroom moments across the school day. Teachers will examine how daily routines – such as arrival, transitions, whole-group lessons, small-group instruction, independent work, play, and dismissal – Throughout the session, teachers will reflect on their current schedules and identify simple, realistic shifts that can strengthen language use without increasing planning time. Concrete examples, sample language prompts, and routine-based strategies will be shared to demonstrate how language can be woven naturally into instruction from the beginning to the end of the day.

Continuing the Conversation with Keynote Speaker, Dr. Kevin Lamoureux (1M)

Guest Keynote Speaker and Professor, University of Winnipeg

Dr. Kevin Lamoureux is a prominent Anishinaabe educator, author, and faculty member at the University of Winnipeg, specializing in Truth and Reconciliation. Known for his work on inclusive education and decolonization, he has served as a consultant for school divisions and organizations across Canada. In this workshop, learn more about his perspectives and his work.

Danam Tik'waxawa'yu dlu k'uwalla (3G 4G)

Donna Cranmer, Namgis Artist / Educator

This hands-on workshop explores the cultural significance and traditional practice of creating *danam* (cedar bark rope) within Kwakwaka'wakw culture. Participants will learn about the many uses of cedar bark rope in daily life and the knowledge embedded in this practice. Through guided instruction, participants will learn to spin two- and three-ply cedar rope and create a cedar bark necklace and bracelet accented with abalone. Each participant will leave with their own set of *danam* tik'waxawa'yu dlu k'uwalla (cedar bark necklace and bracelet) accented with abalone. They will also gain knowledge of spinning cedar bark which they can bring to their schools and students. *Max. 40 people per session.*

Employing Indigenous Arts through STEAM to Foster Student Learning (3D 4D)

Chibuike Okika, Teacher, Tl'etinqox School

Lorianne Duran, Teacher, Tl'etinqox School

This semi hands-on workshop will explore how Indigenous arts can be meaningfully and thoughtfully integrated into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education to deepen student learning, engagement, and cultural understanding. Participants will examine how Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing naturally align with STEAM principles through storytelling, visual arts, music, weaving, beadwork, carving, and land-based design practices. Rather than treating art as an add-on, the workshop positions Indigenous arts as a powerful bridge that connects scientific inquiry, mathematical thinking, engineering design, and technological innovation. Participants will reflect on how these approaches support holistic education, identity, collaboration, and critical thinking, while aligning with curriculum competencies and inclusive, culturally responsive teaching practices.

First Nations Language Teacher Mentor Apprentice Program for First Nation Schools (3F 4F)

Aaron Keitlah, Vice Principal / Language Teacher, Maaqtusiis Secondary School

Peter Campbell, Education Assistant, Maaqtusiis Secondary School

Jacqueline Ahenakew, Language Coach, FNESC

This workshop introduces the First Nations Language Teacher Mentor Apprentice Program (FNLTMAP), designed to increase language fluency among staff working in First Nations schools. The program provides one-on-one language practice with a language Mentor (a fluent or proficient speaker, identified by the community as an appropriate Mentor). This program seeks to build on and enhance the oral skills of language learners who work in First Nation schools strengthening the ability of schools and communities to offer more First Nations language programs. This program is also intended to contribute to school and community succession planning as language champions and fluent speakers transition into retirement. Attendees will gain information on planning, implementing, and assessing a FNLTMAP.

From Lived Experience to Classroom Practice: Indigenous Pedagogies for First Nations Learners (3E 4E)

Shahin Agah, Principal, Kitasoo Xai'xais Community School

This workshop explores pedagogical approaches designed to support First Nations learners by honouring Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and learning. Participants will engage with key Indigenous pedagogical concepts such as learning through relationship, land-based and experiential learning, storytelling, observation, and collective responsibility. Emphasis will be placed on understanding learning as a holistic process that supports intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical development, while affirming the importance of identity, culture, and community in student success. Participants will explore how

Indigenous pedagogies can be applied across grade levels and subject areas. The session also addresses challenges educators may face within systems that do not fully align with Indigenous worldviews, offering respectful and practical approaches for navigating these tensions.

Having Fun with Language Learning (1J 2J)

Gina Salazar, Language Teacher, Stzuminus Education Society

Peter McKay, Principal, Stzuminus Community School

In the process of language revitalization, we often revert to western methods of learning which include paperwork, memorization tactics, quizzes and exams. In the process of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, everything we learn is done in the moment through interaction, song, story and daily living. This workshop will demonstrate the fun ways that language can be taught and retained through songs and interactive in-person games.

Honouring Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Reconciliation in Action through Culturally Responsive & Relevant Assessments (3C 4C)

Seema, Grade 7/8 Teacher, Tl'etinqox School

Patsy Grinder, Language Teacher, Tl'etinqox School

In this workshop, the presenters will talk about making connection in terms of reconciliation and culturally responsive and relevant education and assessments. This workshop will give participants a lens to explore and imply practical assessment strategies which includes honouring the Indigenous ways of knowing while aligning with the BC curriculum's competencies. The session highlights formative assessment practices and the use of descriptive, constructive feedback to capture student growth in meaningful ways. Emphasis is placed on valuing process, student voice, and self-regulation – elements that are often underrepresented in conventional assessment systems. Participants will leave with a concise and clear plan for designing assessment practices that are culturally inclusive.

Importance of Connectedness (1E 2E)

Rebecca Burrows, Senior Manager, First Nations Schools Programs, FNESC

Diana Erickson, Coach, K4-9 Instruction, FNESC

Research shows that students who feel a genuine sense of belonging at school are more likely to do well, attend school more often, graduate, and make healthy choices. This feeling is often described as *school connectedness*. Connected students believe their families, teachers, and school staff care about them and are partners in supporting their success. This workshop will facilitate conversations about how school staff can build positive connections with students and create a sense of belonging that will encourage students to excel.

Learning Together: Shifting Math Instruction Through Collaboration and First Peoples' Principles of Learning (1G 2G)

Lisa van den Munckhof, Teacher, Senpaq'cin

Natalie Crespo, Teacher, Senpaq'cin

This workshop shares a collaborative journey as educators and how learning with and from each other has shaped a shared approach to math instruction grounded in the First Peoples' Principles of Learning. Through sustained co-planning, reflection, and dialogue, the presenters describe how their approach to math shifted from a focus on speed and performance to one centred on connection, confidence, and growth. Participants will engage in collaborative math tasks and reflect on their own beliefs about learning and assessment. The session highlights how intentional collaboration between educators can transform teaching practice while creating more inclusive and supportive learning experiences for students.

Little Voices, Living Language (1C 2C)

Leah Hill, Videographer, Wilp Si Wilaxsinsxwhl Simgigyet Elementary

Liz Williams, Principal / Manager, Wilp Si Wilaxsinsxwhl Simgigyet Elem.& Wo'umxhl Simalgyex Daycare

Through storytelling, land-based activities, everyday routines, and creative documentation methods such as photo, video, and audio recording, this presentation explores how culture and language can be naturally woven into early learning spaces. Participants will learn how documentation becomes both a teaching tool and a living archive – supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer while strengthening children's connection to identity, land, and community.

The workshop will highlight practical strategies for working respectfully with young learners, educators, and knowledge keepers, and will discuss ethical considerations when documenting language and culture with children. This session is designed for educators, cultural workers, language revitalization teams, and community members interested in early-years approaches to preserving and strengthening Indigenous language and cultural practices.

Motivational Strategies for Indigenous Learners (4H)

Claire Shannon-Akiwenzie, Facilitator, Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council

This workshop will explore the concept of physical literacy and examine how developing students' confidence, and competence in movement skills can significantly enhance their motivation to engage in physical activity. Educators will gain practical strategies to create supportive, inclusive environments that foster long-term participation and a positive attitude toward physical activity. Together, the group will examine common challenges and barriers that may impact student motivation and engagement in physical activity. Participants will consider how to meet students where they are at by understanding their needs through a holistic lens. This session will also offer practical strategies to support and inspire students along their physical literacy journey.

Planning for Language Teachers: Using Cultural Calendars (3M 4M)

Clayton Grice, Director, First Nations Languages and Culture, FNESC

This session will provide an exciting opportunity to explore a new Framework designed to assist Language and Culture teachers with year, unit, and lesson planning, using seasonal rounds or cultural calendars as a foundation for effective plans. Feedback about the Framework and other possible supports for Language and Culture teachers will be welcome during the workshop.

Promoting Parent and Family Engagement (3K)

Barb Kavanagh, Consultant, FNESC

Jan Haugen, Director, Executive Services and Community Support, FNESC

When families and schools work together, transformative change is possible – benefitting students, families, schools, and communities. Effective family engagement doesn't happen on its own; it requires thoughtful planning and ongoing attention. To help make that possible, this session will explore a new *Toolkit for Schools: Promoting Family Engagement – What's Possible?*

Purposeful Pathways: Building an Experiential Adult Learning Centre That Works (3L 4L)

Velma Sutherland, Band Administrator, Sik-E-Dakh Adult Learning Centre

Kathleen Combs, Principal / Educator, Sik-E-Dakh Adult Learning Centre

This workshop presents the Sik-E-Dakh Adult Learning Centre as a community-driven, experiential alternative that integrates academic upgrading with land-based learning, trades exposure, and community leadership programming. A core outcome of this model is the intentional transition of adult learners from Income Assistance (IA) dependency to education, training, and employment, reducing IA participation from approximately 90 applicants to 30 through supportive, strengths-based programming rather than punitive measures. Participants will explore how collaboration between education, social development, food security, and training partners can inspire learner engagement, empower adult students, and grow sustainable community capacity. The workshop will provide practical tools, learner pathway examples, and implementation lessons that can be adapted by other First Nations communities.

Secwepemc Immersion Program in the Early Years (3B 4B)

Janice E. Billy, Secwepemc Immersion Teacher, Chief Atahm School

Candice Day, Nursery Immersion Program Lead, Chief Atahm School

After over 30 years of Secwepemctsín immersion education, Chief Atahm School has seen the success of many young language speakers. As language acquisition research points to the significance of the early years, the presenters will share steps that were taken to ensure the success of our N/K immersion program with building capacity, developing a team approach, finding and using best practices, and Language Nest practices. This workshop explores how Chief Atahm School is rebuilding the N/K program by prioritizing the language speaking experience in the program leadership as well as utilizing natural language acquisition methods such as Total Physical Response (TPR). Janice and Candice will share and demonstrate some of the core immersion activities that anchor the N/K program such as classroom routines, math activities, reading, singing and outdoor education.

Seeing the Whole Child: Tracking, Assessment, and Supports for Diverse Learners (1I 2I)

Alysha Mihalcheon, Lead Teacher / Grade 7 / Learning Support, nkmaplqs iʔsnamamayʔtn iʔkl squilxʷtət, OKIB Cultural Immersion School

Kristen Tardiff, CEA, nkmaplqs iʔsnamamayʔtn iʔkl squilxʷtət, OKIB Cultural Immersion School

This workshop is designed to support educators in developing practical, sustainable systems for tracking student behaviour, habits, and learning needs in a way that directly informs instruction and assessment. The session will explore why tracking matters and how it supports assessment and referrals related to ASD, ADHD, Speech and Language (SLP), Occupational Therapy (OT), and Functional Behaviour Assessments (FBA). Through individual examples, participants will examine key “look-fors” that help identify strengths, challenges, and emerging needs, supporting early intervention and informed decision-making. The workshop will also differentiate between how to use a calm space and heavy work, giving opportunities for students to regulate in a way that fits their needs.

Sharing Ways of Integrating Language into the Classroom with Ms Juanita and Sunshine (1D 2D)

Juanita Eugene, Language and Culture Teacher, ɬaq̓amník Elementary School

Sunshine Capilo-Joseph, Education Assistant, ɬaq̓amník Elementary School

This workshop invites educators into a living, relational approach to Indigenous language learning, one rooted in collaboration, reflection, and care. Participants will experience a language lesson that models how Indigenous language can be gently and respectfully woven into everyday classroom life, even when educators are still learning themselves. Participants will explore ways to integrate language through greetings, transitions, songs, games, visuals, storytelling, and daily routines supporting language revitalization in ways that are meaningful, age-appropriate, and culturally respectful. Emphasis is placed on building confidence, honouring community knowledge, and keeping language visible, valued, and alive. Their work highlights mentorship as a reciprocal process where experience and emerging perspectives support one another, and where learning flows both ways for the benefit of the whole school community.

Skyzeh Habi Yikh – iCount (3J 4J)

Susan Derksen, Principal, Witset Elementary & Secondary School

Cathy Lorenzon, Senior Teacher, Witset Elementary & Secondary School

This workshop introduces Skyzeh Habi Yikh – iCount (“House of Learning for Future Chiefs”), an alternative education program designed for students who have struggled in traditional school settings. Grounded in trauma-informed and relational practice, the program plans around the child rather than the timetable. Participants will learn how individualized pathways support graduation and how our program includes hands-on and land-based opportunities such as trades exposure, arts, language and culture, land guardianship training, and emergency medical responder certification. A Grade 11 student will share lived experience, offering insight into how meaningful, skills-based learning can re-engage students and open future pathways.

Start with What You Love: A Hands-On Workshop for Land-Based Unit Design (1F 2F)

Elaine Colgate, Vice-Principal, Chief Atahm School

Amanda Harvey, Teacher, Chief Atahm School

This hands-on workshop invites educators to explore a land-based, inquiry-driven planning process that connects passion and place to meaningful classroom learning. Using examples from Chief Atahm School, presenters will share how units have been thoughtfully designed around traditional cultural and seasonal practices – such as shaping an aquatics unit around the salmon run, or aligning ecology learning with seasonal plant growth. Participants will explore ways to respectfully involve Elders and community knowledge holders, and how learning can be strengthened by bridging traditional ecological knowledge with Western science and contemporary tools. Teachers will see how this approach moves from big ideas to units to lessons, while remaining flexible and responsive to students. Practical planning strategies will be shared, including ways to support inquiry, reflection, and growth-focused assessment that honours multiple ways of knowing and learning.

Strengthening Student Involvement with Community Elders Through a Lasting Legacy Project (1H 2H)

Lillian Wilson, Intermediate Teacher, Witset Elementary School

Antoinette Austin, Teacher / Elder, Witset Elementary School

This workshop explores how legacy projects can strengthen students' connections to their schools and communities while fostering belonging and confidence. Participants will gain knowledge in how a classroom teacher and students can create legacy projects with the involvement of Elders in the community. The presenters will show examples of previous legacy projects, including books, button blankets and songs, and will demonstrate how students' breath life back into our elders and how elders' breath life back into our students. The workshop will demonstrate how legacy projects can be linked to the curriculum. The plan for the workshop is to present a practical mini-legacy project.

Supporting Great Attendance - What You Can Do! (2M)

Barb Kavanagh, Consultant, FNESC

Colin Cook, Specialist, First Nations Schools Data and Reporting, FNESC

This workshop will focus on the critical topic of student attendance, reviewing why attendance is such an important issue, some of the reasons why students might not always attend school, and how school staff, families and communities can work together to help all First Nations students achieve success by being in school as much as possible. The workshop will share information and materials, including research-based strategies that can be used to encourage students to attend school regularly and on-time.

Supporting Students with Autism (1B 2B)

Cindy Lee Matthew, Team Lead, Instructional Coach, FNESC

Nancy Fulton, Specialist, Neurodivergent Exceptionalities, FNESC

This workshop will focus on practical strategies to support students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in school settings. We will explore behaviour as a form of communication, consider factors that can influence behaviour, and examine ways to proactively support students through thoughtful environments, routines, and responsive approaches.

The Important Role of EAs (4K)

Karen Linkert, Director, Instructional Services, FNESC

Education Assistants (EAs) play a key role in ensuring that students are successful and helping schools meet their missions by assisting students to learn, grow, and reach their full potential. The job of an EA can be complicated, and effective EAs are enthusiastic learners, welcoming opportunities to understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This workshop will foster discussions about the complex responsibilities of EAs and a range of resources that have been created to help.

Walking Together: Land-Based Learning and Meaningful Assessment (3I 4I)

Roxanne Ilagan, Teacher, Senpaq'cin School

Leah Powder, Teacher / First Nations Health Promoting Schools Coordinator, Senpaq'cin School

This interactive session invites you to experience how Senpaq'cin's Fire Friday program creates authentic, culturally grounded learning opportunities that empower students and educators alike. By connecting students with the land, food sovereignty, and revitalizing culture, we strive to inform learners at all levels and fill gaps in traditional knowledge left by colonial systems – helping to foster resilience, curiosity, and belonging for all. The session emphasizes collaboration, shared planning, and intentional assessment as key components of successful land-based learning. Presenters will share strategies for aligning land-based activities with academic goals while honouring Indigenous ways of knowing. Participants will have opportunities to engage in hands-on activities, access tools for assessment, and reflect on practical approaches to learning. We also invite you to bring any seeds you may have for a seed exchange or just take some from our garden home with you.

Weaving Culture, Creation, and Land: A Whole-School Approach to Land-Based Learning (1A 2A)

Suzanne Smith, Vice Principal, Seabird Island Community School

Natasha Jollymour, High School Science Teacher, Seabird Island Community School

This workshop explores Seabird Island Community School's K-12 land-based program. Every Wednesday, our entire school engages in a full day of Culture, Create, and Land rotations. Students participate in storytelling, ceremony, food preparation for over 200 peers, culturally relevant art, and land-based learning like foraging and biodiversity studies. Participants explore how inter-grade mentorship, community involvement, and land-based education foster reconnection to land, culture, and each other. We will share how our weekly practice provides authentic experiences to develop core and curricular competencies. We are also excited to share our next steps to further develop our land-based learning initiatives.