

The Listening Stone Project Year Three

Starting Points, Turning Points, Learning Points

Lessons From The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry 2015-2016



SD Dion Consulting ♦ Indigenous Research & Education

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Remember that wisdom means listen as well as speak.
(Sylvia Maracle, 2016)

In her Convocation Address to Faculty of Education graduates in June 2016, Sylvia Maracle reminded the audience that we are all treaty people and that our relationship requires attention. She admonished the audience of Educators that “in many ways it is the education system that must change the most,” and went on to explain creating space where change will occur requires our combined efforts. Listening to her words, I found myself thinking about participants in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry and the space you are creating that is contributing to change.

Year three of the Listening Stone project was another year of learning with Educators and Community Members across the province. Both productive and challenging, it offered a unique opportunity to gather data from Year One District School Boards as they began their inquiry work. Interviews were done in May and June just three months after Year One Boards started. I am especially appreciative of those participants who were willing to share their initial observations, questions and concerns. It takes courage to describe what you do not know. From these interviews we were able to gather a good description of the context within which the work begins, identify needs and explore what is required to support change. Participants from DSBs in Year Two/Three were equally forthcoming, sharing their ongoing work, their progress and their frustrations. These stories reflect a deep commitment by Educators across the province to continue the work of learning to create education systems that support Indigenous students and learning from First Nation, Métis and Inuit experiences and perspectives for all.

Kwatanushiik



Susan Dion
September 2016
Toronto, Ontario

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Listening Stone Year Three: Starting Points, Turning Points, Learning Points reports on Year Three of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry (CI). It documents what was accomplished, examines strategies to support Indigenous Student Well-being and Achievement, and identifies challenges Educators and Community Members continue to work through in accomplishing change. This report is based on the findings of *The Listening Stone Year Three Project*, a research and evaluation project requested by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE).

Now in its third year, the Indigenous CI expanded from 15 District School Boards (DSBs) in Year One to 23 in Year Two, and now includes 44 participating DSBs. The primary goal of Year Three is to increase student well-being and achievement. This is supported by two additional interconnected goals of increasing the knowledge, understanding and awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives for all students, and increasing engagement with First Nation, Métis and Inuit community partners. The CI is supported and directed by the Leadership and Implementation Branch of the Student Achievement Division, of the Ontario Ministry of Education. Individual boards facilitated the formation of Collaborative Inquiry Teams within schools with high numbers of self-identified First Nation, Métis and/or Inuit students. Each DSB designated a Board Lead who worked to facilitate the involvement of school communities and community partners. CI designs and inquiry questions were grounded in local contexts, and directed by school-based CI teams in collaboration with local First Nation, Métis and Inuit community partners.

Informed by voices of participating Educators and Community Members, the *Listening Stone Project Year Three* report documents a significant impact on Indigenous Education. Data gathered between May-June 2016 shows that the initiative is impacting at the classroom, school and board levels. Educators describe change in their relationships with Indigenous students, families and communities, and the ways in which this change is affecting not only Indigenous students but all students' understanding of Indigenous perspectives, histories and cultures. Year Three of the *Listening Stone Project* focuses on understanding change accomplished over time. Looking specifically at DSBs as they begin the CI process alongside DSBs participating for a second or third year provides the opportunity to identify key elements that support DSBs' work in accomplishing the inquiry goals.

Overall, this research demonstrates the importance of long-term and sustained support for Indigenous education, with positive outcomes increasing with the length of participation in the CI. Those in Year One consistently describe *starting points* in their work: recognizing the presence of Indigenous students, raising awareness about the initiative in the school community and sometimes across the DSB, engaging parents, families and Community Members in the initiative, and assessing current knowledge and understanding of Indigenous history, culture and knowledge. In Years Two and Three, respondents note important moments or *turning points* in the process: seeing the impact of their own learning on Indigenous students, realizing how much they don't know, seeing themselves in relationship with Community Members. All participants also note important *learning points* in this initiative including: the impacts of colonialism, the significance of Residential Schools, knowledge and appreciation of Indigenous culture and worldviews.

While challenges remain, the positive impacts of participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit CI are clearly evident. As noted in reports from previous years, three specific areas require attention: support for parent and community involvement; support for teaching Indigenous languages; and ongoing supports to deepen teachers' knowledge of Indigenous history, culture and perspectives. These findings demonstrate the importance of long-term commitments to Indigenous education and the perseverance required of staff, students and Community Members.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research informing this report includes analysis of interviews with 98 Educators participating in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry, 12 Community Member participants, 12 Community Member surveys and 104 Educator survey results.

The research has generated seven key findings.

1. Educator participation in the CI demonstrates genuine commitment and readiness to engage with further learning about Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives. Teachers increasingly recognize the need for ongoing professional development, understanding that integrating Indigenous content is important for all students.
2. The CI facilitates development of crucial relationships between schools and Indigenous Community Members. These relationships support student well-being and achievement, contribute to the learning being undertaken by Educators and facilitates the creation of positive home-school relationships.
3. Particularly among participants in the second and third year of the CI there is an increasing recognition of the need to move beyond single “special events” type programming toward a consistent integration of Indigenous histories, cultures and knowledge across the curriculum.
4. Participants in this Collaborative Inquiry emphasize the importance of direct connections and peer supports. Many Community Members and DSB Educators emphasized the importance of the Face-to-Face gatherings as sources of mutual support, information sharing and advice. There was also interest in finding other ways of sharing the results of the Inquiry across DSBs and the province.
5. Anecdotal information from Educators as well as Community Members indicates that the CI is making a positive contribution to student well-being and achievement. In particular, the inclusion of Indigenous content has had a notable and positive impact on student engagement, oral communication, active engagement in the classroom and perseverance. Community members report that students feel they are being heard and that strengthened partnerships between school and community are helping students stay in school. The development of appropriate measures for documenting student well-being and achievement remains a necessity.
6. Overall, there is clear evidence that the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry is improving relationships between students, Educators and communities. Evidence of the commitment and willingness to continue with the CI is a positive indicator of the strengths and benefits of the initiative.
7. The First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry bolsters the work of Indigenous Educators, tutors and support workers in schools. In particular, Native Language and Culture teachers report a positive shift in both awareness and attitudes toward them and their work. At the same time, many note that increased support for Indigenous language and culture programming is still needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nine key recommendations result from this research.

1. Building on the significant and positive impacts of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry, it is recommended that the initiative be continued.
2. Educators report that the CI makes a significant contribution to increasing their knowledge understanding and awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives. While the progress made is positive, ongoing supports for Educators' learning, in the form of professional development and supports for participation in community-based events, is recommended.
3. Educators consistently report positive impacts from participation and ongoing commitment to the First Nation, Métis and Inuit CI. They also clearly express the need for further direction and support for understanding the Collaborative Inquiry process. Ongoing access to expertise in the CI process is recommended.
4. Face-to-Face sessions remain a crucial means of sharing information and supports and building on the successes of the initiative. There is ongoing evidence that mechanisms for shared leadership and information sharing are needed in order to ensure continuity and consistency. In addition to Face-to-Face supports, online and other repositories of information and resources could be considered.
5. Community Members raise important questions about the nature of their involvement in school communities. Rather than a focus on community engagement reliant on one-time invitations after a project or initiative has been developed, a partnership approach with an increased emphasis on collaboration and co-planning is recommended. This approach would also support the development of meaningful school-community relationships, and provide an opportunity to clarify the appropriate roles and responsibilities of teachers and Community Members.
6. While there have been important improvements in connections between schools and Community Members, this continues to be an area in need of attention. Initiatives that support work with Native Language and Culture teachers and Board Leads as key contacts, invitations to parents and grandparents to participate in classrooms and outreach to local service providers might be considered to further build community connections.
7. Some evidence reveals the CI has improved relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in schools. It is recommended that student groups and networks of peer support and Student mentorship programs be supported at the school and DSB level. In addition, peer supports for Indigenous students in schools, DSBs and provincially be further explored and supported.
8. The data on student well-being and achievement is positive but remains largely anecdotal. As recommended in previous years of the CI, support for the development of culturally appropriate mechanisms to assess changes to student well-being and achievement is recommended. In particular, measures could be developed with significant input from Indigenous Community Members, and Native Language and Culture teachers.
9. This Collaborative Inquiry has provided opportunities for Educators to begin accessing Indigenous focused resources. Classroom teachers would benefit from assistance in identifying exemplary resources and assistance with how to use those resources in their teaching. This is especially important for the French Boards. Participants in these Boards confront a particular challenge in identifying appropriate French language resources.

Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society. (TRC, 2015, p. 4)

1. INTRODUCTION

Initiated in 2013, the *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry Initiative* (CI) is contributing to education and dialogue about Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives, and addressing Indigenous student well-being and achievement. Informed by the voices of participating Educators and Community Members, the *Year Three Listening Stone Project Report* focuses on the work being accomplished in District School Boards (DSBs) across the province of Ontario. In its third year with 44 participating Boards, the initiative is contributing to positive impacts at the classroom, school and board levels. Teachers, principals, support staff and superintendents describe the changes in their relationships with Indigenous students, families and communities and the ways the Inquiry is affecting not only Indigenous students, but all students' understandings of Indigenous perspectives, histories and cultures.

Year Three of the *Listening Stone Project: Starting Points, Turning Points and Learning Points* focuses on understanding change accomplished over time. Looking specifically at DSBs as they begin the CI process alongside DSBs participating for a second or third year provides the opportunity to identify key elements that support a DSB's work in accomplishing the inquiry's goals at different stages. Starting, turning and learning reflect the cyclical process of change. One of the most significant impacts of this CI is the way it engages Educators in the work. From an Indigenous perspective, observing Educators' willingness to turn toward the issues and challenges that concern *First Nation, Métis and Inuit* students, families and communities is a significant marker of change. In stark contrast to the historical relationship when teachers turned away from this learning, the research documented in this report demonstrates that many educators are now turning toward Indigenous people, hearing our voices and learning from our perspectives. This CI supports sustained engagement and dialogue transforming the relationships between Indigenous people and institutions of formal schooling.

In the stories that Educators tell, I hear the impact of this turn toward the learning that happens and the change accomplished as a result of that learning. The process happens again and again: learning accomplished in year one informs what CI teams do and learn in year two; and actions and insights from year two further advance the work in year three. Starting, turning and learning thus capture the ongoing process of turning to learn from and with Indigenous people.

1.1 Background, Overview and Current Context

Since 2007, school boards in Ontario have made progress in establishing First Nation, Métis and Inuit student self-identification policies, advisory groups and Indigenous Education system leads. However, the 2013 Ontario Ministry of Education Progress Report baseline data shows that gaps exist for many Indigenous students. Through a series of discussions about how to respond to student needs, Ministry of Education Student Achievement Officers came to realize how little they know and understand, how much they have to learn, and that they really have to work alongside members of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Community Members in the regions to do the learning (Grady, 2013, p.3). The aim of this Collaborative Inquiry Initiative is to engage with communities, increase knowledge and understanding of Indigenous history, cultures and perspective, and ultimately have a positive impact on the well-being and achievement of Indigenous students and all students. .

This Collaborative Inquiry initiative is not happening in isolation. Actions and interactions within institutions of Education are informed by what is happening in the broader social political context. In recent years, Indigenous activists, artists and scholars have worked successfully to bring Indigenous issues into public discourse. In December 2012, the Idle No More (INM) movement exploded across Canada, with public round dances, teach-ins, meetings, blockades, protests, and substantial writing and artistic intervention. As the Kindo-nda-niimi Collective explains, INM provided “an important moment for conversations about how to live together meaningfully and peacefully, as nations and as neighbours” (2015, p. 23). Public discussion and historic events surrounding the work of Truth and Reconciliation highlighted the importance of attending to the history and ongoing trauma of the Indian Residential School system. The Commissions’ Final Report and Calls to Action released in June 2015 is having a significant impact. Public attention has also increasingly turned to missing and murdered Indigenous women. From the first small rallies in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, beginning in 1991 (see Culhane), rallies, vigils, feasts and gatherings now take place in growing numbers and frequency across Canada. Demands for a national inquiry were heard and in August 2016 the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Girls and Women began its work. A joint inquest into the deaths of seven Indigenous students in Thunder Bay focuses attention on the needs of secondary school students from remote communities in northern Ontario who must leave home to attend secondary school. Combined, these efforts and movements contribute to raising awareness among Educators of the need for Indigenous education.

1.2 About the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry Initiative

The *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry Initiative* is engaging Educators, students and Community Members in a sustained investigation. Primarily aimed at addressing the academic well-being and achievement of Indigenous students; secondary goals include increasing the knowledge and understanding of Indigenous people’s experiences and perspectives for all staff and students and increased participation of Indigenous Community Members in schools within a provincially funded public school system. This initiative began with 15 District School Boards, expanded in its second year to include 22 Boards, and now involves 44 participating District School Boards from across the province. Each participating Board receives funding, and working in collaboration with Indigenous Community Partners creates a project unique to their community context. During the 2015–2016 school year, members of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry Teams participated in web conferences and received support from the Student Achievement Division.

1.2A District School Boards Participating in the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry

2013–2014 15 Boards Funded to Participate in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry		
Northeast Boards	Southern Boards	French Board
Algoma	Thames Valley	CSC Catholique Franco-Nord
DSB North East	Grand Erie	
Near North	Toronto	
Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic	Simcoe County	
Rainbow	Hastings Prince Edward	

Table 1A Participating District School Boards 2013–2016 (Boards Participating for a Third Year Identified as Year Three)

2014–2015 7 Additional Boards Funded to Participate in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry			
Northwest Boards	Northeast Boards	Southern Boards	French Board
Kenora Catholic	Huron-Superior Catholic	Kawartha Pine Ridge	
Superior North Catholic	Moose Factory Island	Lambton Kent	
		Ottawa-Carleton	

Table 1B Participating District School Boards 2014–2016 (Boards Participating for a Second Year Identified as Year Two)

2015–2016 22 Additional Boards Funded to Participate in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry				
Northwest Boards	Northeast Boards	Southeast Boards	Southwest Boards	French Boards
Northwest Catholic	Sudbury Catholic	Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic	Bluewater	Nouvel-Ontario
Superior-Greenstone	Northeast Catholic	Limestone	Greater Essex County	
		Ottawa Catholic	DSB Niagara	
		Renfrew County	Niagara Catholic	
		Upper Canada	Waterloo Catholic	
		Durham	Hamilton-Wentworth	
		Durham Catholic	Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic	
		Trillium Lakelands		
		York Region		
		CDSB Eastern Ontario		

Table 1C Participating District School Boards 2015–2016 (Boards Participating for the First Year Identified as Year One)

Participants from 41 of the 44 participating District School Boards took part in this research project. The research team made a concerted effort to hear from all Boards however in three cases conflicting schedules, the limited data collection period and heavy workloads resulted in the lack of participation.

1.3 The Listening Stone Project

The Listening Stone Project Year Three: Starting Points, Turning Points, Learning Points is focused on research and evaluation. The purpose is to document, evaluate and learn from the First Nation, Métis and Inuit CI. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) commissioned the project with the intention of learning about and from the initiative. The aim is to expand understanding of what supports Indigenous student well-being and achievement, what supports Educators' learning and what supports engagement with community partners. As Principal Researcher, I work closely with the Internal Team Lead: Leadership and Implementation Branch of the Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education on the design and implementation of this minor research and evaluation project. I identify and work in collaboration with an experienced research team, and am responsible for the interpretations and findings that inform this report.

1.3A Overview and Research Context For Phase Three

Year Three of the Listening Stone Project presented a unique opportunity. During the 2015–2016 school year, Ministry-supported initiatives were paused and CI teams started or restarted their work in late February or early March. During the spring Face-to-Face gatherings, Boards were unable to present on their inquiry projects because they were just beginning their work. This context meant the Listening Stone research team was in a position to gather data as the Year One DSBs were beginning their inquiry process, providing baseline data that had not previously been collected. Interviews and surveys were developed with a focus on asking participants in Year One Boards about their starting points and questions for Year Two/Three Boards focused on documenting their progress and their understanding of what contributed to their capacity for accomplishing the CI goals.

Research Goals

In year three of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry the stated goals include a primary goal with two supporting goals.

Primary Goal

- Increased First Nation, Métis and Inuit student well-being and achievement.

Supporting Goals

- Increased knowledge, understanding and awareness of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives for all staff and students.
- Increased community engagement with First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the *Listening Stone Project Year Three* is to learn from participants' experiences and perspectives. Documenting the achievements and challenges provides knowledge and understanding of the work accomplished, and is useful in determining how to provide ongoing and effective support in DSBs across the province.

Research Rationale

This research and evaluation project will:

1. Provide knowledge and understanding of participants' questions and concerns as they begin their inquiry projects.
2. Document participants reflections on progress accomplished during the first three years of the inquiry.
3. Identify supports required to assist CI teams as they move into the 2016–17 school year.

Research Questions

1. To what extent did the First Nation, Métis and Inuit CI Project **make progress** in achieving these three Collaborative Inquiry goals:
 - Increase student well-being and achievement
 - Increase community engagement of First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners
 - Increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives for all staff and students
2. What questions and concerns do Year One and Year Two/Three participants bring to the Collaborative Inquiry?
3. Reflecting on their accomplishments during their years participating in the CI, what are Year One, and Year Two/Three participants planning and working to accomplish now and in the next year of the inquiry?
4. What would Year One, Year Two/Three participants find most helpful in accomplishing their goals?

Research Methodology

Writing about Indigenous approaches to research and theory, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains that decolonization "is about centering our concerns and world view and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (p. 39). In keeping with Indigenous Research Methodologies, this research is guided by the following principles: respect for existing knowledge and relationships within community, respect for Indigenous worldviews and traditions, action in support of the development of capacity and skill building, collaboration throughout the process and ongoing response to community requests for involvement (Absolon and Wilett, 2004).

Specifically, this Minor Research Project will make use of a variety of research methods for gathering data including:

- Phone interviews of Collaborative Inquiry participants, including both board staff, community partners and Ministry of Education participating staff.
- An online survey allowed for the collection of quantitative data from school board and community participants.

Working in close collaboration with Internal Team Lead: Leadership and Implementation, Student Achievement Division, the Lead Investigator developed a comprehensive plan for data collection. The

Data collection phases of the project were from May–June 2016. Data Analysis was completed in June–August 2016, findings were shared with Ministry staff at the end of August 2016 and presented in the Regions in the October–November 2016.

Research Data is stored in a locked file cabinet in the Dion Consulting Office; on completion of the final report, data will be submitted to the Ministry of Education in a manner that maintains the confidentiality of all participants and remains the property of Ontario Ministry of Education.

Ethical Review Process

In April, Director, Leadership and Implementation Branch The Student Achievement Division communicated with each of the DSB Directors introducing the Evaluation and Research Project. Additionally, the Principal Investigator sent a letter of introduction to each of the participating DSB Directors (see Appendix A). Each potential participant was contacted through email and invited to voluntarily take part in the research project. Prior to the start of each interview participants were asked for their consent. Each participant was informed that they could pass on any question, and/or stop the interview at any time. In service of protecting anonymity, aggregate data is presented. Participants are identified by the role they occupy, not by their DSB. See Appendix A for copies of the letters of introduction and statement of consent. Copies of the interview schedule and the survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

Limitations

This minor research and evaluation project is limited by five key constraints.

- 1) Time was a constraining factor in two ways. First, as addressed in the research context, the shortened CI period meant that DSB Teams did not have time to accomplish the work they had planned. Second, the shortened time frame for active work on Ministry initiatives meant that many Educators were overwhelmed trying to address a range of work at the same time.
- 2) The data collection phase is short lasting only four to six weeks.
- 3) Although one of the goals of the inquiry is to positively impact Indigenous Student well-being and achievement, most participants have not yet developed strategies for documenting impact on students. Evidence in support of this goal is limited to anecdotal observations.
- 4) Relationship of the Principal Investigator to the participants has little time to develop. Although steps are taken to establish a positive relationship between the PI and participants, limited time together means that in most instances the relationship is new.
- 5) Data collection is limited to participants' observations and interpretations. There is no opportunity for on-site observations by the research team.

1.3B The Research Team

Principal Investigator

Dr. Susan D. Dion is a Potawatomi/Lenape scholar who has been working in the field of education for over 30 years. Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University in Toronto, she is Director of the Master of Education Cohort in Urban Indigenous Education. Her research interests include the social and political contexts of education; disrupting memories of post-invasion First Nations-Canadian Relations; Indigenizing and Decolonizing Education; feminist post-structuralist theory and violence prevention in Indigenous communities. Dr. Dion is widely consulted by diverse community

groups, workplaces and institutions on developing methods for building more equitable, respectful relationships between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people. This is Dr. Dion's third year as principal investigator on the Listening Stone Project.

Research Assistants

Angela Salamanca was born in the mountains of Colombia and has been an uninvited guest in Canada for 16 years. She is project coordinator for *Walking The Prevention Circle* that researches capacity-building systems and practices with Indigenous communities. Salamanca completed her Masters in Urban Aboriginal Education at York University in 2015. Her interests are centred on creating policies that work towards decolonizing curricula and spaces of schooling for all. This is her third year working on the Listening Stone Project.

Michael Dion is an independent Potawatomi /Lenape researcher/creative writer. He is co-author of the *Braiding Histories* stories. M. Dion provided assistance conducting telephone interviews and participating in data analysis. This is M. Dion's third year working on the Listening Stone Project.

Susanne Waldorf is an educator, PhD candidate and a new mother. She is a former high school teacher currently completing graduate studies in Social Justice Education at OISE/UT where her research focuses on the learning trajectories of anti-colonial Educators. She has worked with Dr. Dion on several research projects; this is her second year working on the Listening Stone project.

Jennifer Wemigwans is a new media producer, writer and scholar specializing in the convergence between education, Indigenous knowledge and new media technologies. Dr. Wemigwans takes pride in working to invert the conventional use of media by revealing the potential for Indigenous cultural expression and Indigenous knowledge through new technologies, education and the arts. This is her first year working on the Listening Stone Project.

1.4 Data Collection

Data collection was completed in May–June 2016. Data Analysis was completed in July–August and the final report was written during August–September 2016.

Data Sources	Total
Interviews with Year One Board Participants	68
Interviews with Year Two/Three Board Participants	30
Online Survey of DSB Participants	104
Interviews with Community Members	12
Online Survey of Community Members	10
Total	224

Table 1D Data Collected

1.4A Interview Data

Most of the interviews were completed individually over the phone with the exception of two instances when people requested a group interview, and on five occasions interviews were done in person. To protect the anonymity of participants I am not differentiating between the in-person and over-the-phone interview participants.

Interview questions for participants from Year One Boards focused on gathering their impressions of the CI as they began the process. Questions for Year Two/Three Participants focused on understanding their

experience of the CI after having participated for two or three years. Participation in the CI was based on the individual's experience, not on the Boards' experience. Thus a participant could be in Year One even if their DSB had been participating for two or three years.

Direct quotes from the participants are included in each section of the report. The following abbreviations are used in the citations.

Citation Key

Teachers	T
Principals/Vice Principals	P
Centrally Assigned Support Staff	CASS
Board Lead (In Aboriginal Education)	BL
SWST	SWST
Superintendents	S
Community Members	CM

1.4A Survey Data

I created an online survey and emailed the link to DSB First Nation, Métis and Inuit CI Team Leads requesting that they share the link with their team members. The link was also sent directly to Educators who filled out and submitted contact cards during the spring Face-to-Face sessions. In total, 104 people from 28 of the 44 participating DSBs participating in the Collaborative Inquiry responded to the survey. Primarily the survey questions asked respondents to address the DSB success in achieving the goals of the CI. A separate survey was developed for Community Members. The link to this survey was distributed directly to CMs who had completed contact cards during the Face-to-Face Gatherings and through the DSB Aboriginal Leads.

Survey Participants	
First-Year Boards	47
Second- and Third-Year Boards	57

Table 1E

Do You Self-Identify as an Indigenous Person?	
Yes	28%
No	72%

Table 1F

Participants' Position	
Teacher	57%
Central Support Staff	4%
Principal/Vice Principal	16%
SWST	5%
Other	18%

Table 1G

1.5 Final Report: Section Descriptions

The Report is organized around the three CI goals. Section One provides an introduction and overview of the research project as well as a detailed description of the research team, project goals, objectives and research questions. The research methodology and data collection processes are also included.

Section Two: *Increase Knowledge, Understanding And Awareness: Learning From Educators*, focuses on the roles and responsibilities Educators have in relation to the CI, what they are learning, what they identify as key challenges and key accomplishments. Wanting to understand the context within which participants are working, I asked participants to describe their perceptions of the status of Indigenous Education in their DSBs. This provides a picture of where DSBs are at when they begin the CI, what steps they are taking to support progress as well as plans for next steps. The section concludes with a description of the ongoing challenges participants confront.

Section Three: *Engaging With Community Partners Educators Perspectives* outlines Year One and Year Two participants' experiences of working with their Community Partners. It includes a description of the challenges DSBs are confronting in their efforts to establish positive working relationships with the local Indigenous communities.

Section Four: *Indigenous Well-being and Student Achievement* draws on both interview and survey data from Educators to address the ways in which the CI is providing opportunities for integrating Indigenous cultures in schools and classrooms, and cultivating relationships between Educators and Indigenous students in service of improvements in well-being and achievement.

Section Five: *Learning from Community Members' Experiences and Perspectives* draws on interviews and surveys of Community Members to examine the CI from the perspective of community partners. Providing a unique viewpoint, CMs are supportive of the initiative and report positive impacts. They also ask important questions about the nature of collaboration.

2. INCREASE KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS: LEARNING FROM EDUCATORS

[T]he lessons Raven brings us are ones that demonstrate the complicated nature of living, knowing and being. (Brayboy, 2008, p.345)

Educators participating in the Collaborative Inquiry occupy distinct positions and approach the work informed by their unique perspectives. In this section of the report, drawing on both interview and survey data, I share the stories Educators tell about how they are experiencing the inquiry including who they are in relationship to the initiative, what Year One participants are hoping to learn and what Year Two/Three participants say about what they have learned and what both groups describe as the most significant challenge Educators confront when teaching Indigenous content. Year One participants provide a *Starting Point Story* that is the story of their Boards as they begin the inquiry process. Data from Year Two/Three participants reflect the learning accomplished and their next steps. I conclude with a discussion of survey questions posed to Year Two/Three participants as they describe the impact the First Nation, Métis and Inuit CI is having in their classrooms, schools and DSBs.

Participating in the Collaborative Inquiry, Educators learn the lessons that Raven brings. Education is complicated and contradictory, as are the lives of their students. Recognizing the complications, the contradictions and the complexities makes it possible for teachers to work in support of the CI goals.

2.1 DSB STAFF Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry

DSB Interview Participants	Year One	Year Two/Three	Total
Teachers	32	12	44
SWSTs	4	5	9
Board Leads	11	1	12
Principals	7	6	13
Centrally Assigned Support Staff	12	3	15
Superintendents	2	3	5
Total	68	30	98

Table 2A District School Board Interview Participants

Key Quotes

I was asked by the school administration to get involved, they asked because I had previously taught at the First Nations high school, I was interested in this already and was interested in seeing a better connection for our First Nations students and the education system. (T5, p.1)

I wanted to support the teachers. They had a genuine interest to learn and growing a relationship with the nearby Native community. (P9, p.1)

We recognize that we needed to find out what we don't know. Also recognize that there are a lot of staff at one school in particular that were interested in learning more about First Nation culture. The CI would be an excellent way to learn. (BL1, p.1)

I was asked to participate by my principal. I'm the Anishanaabemowin teacher and Special Education teacher as well as a Community Member so it was a natural fit. (T28, p.1)

Discussion

Teachers, principals, Board Leads, Superintendents and Centrally Assigned Support Staff (CASS) from all Boards are involved in this CI for a variety of reasons. For some, participation is motivated by personal interest, while for others it is the result of their particular role and/or responsibilities within the school board. Many participants describe their growing awareness of the need to address the gap in Educators' knowledge and understanding. Participants made positive statements reflecting their interest including "it's long overdue; it's absolutely necessary; it's an important learning opportunity."

Motivated by a commitment to serve their families and communities, many self-identified Indigenous Educators are choosing to participate in this initiative. Providing these Educators with opportunities to be responsive to the needs of Indigenous students is key to retention of Indigenous Educators. Native Language and Culture teachers are especially appreciative of the positive impact the CI is having in schools, particularly the validation and legitimacy accorded their position as teacher and the importance of native language instruction.

2.2 Increasing Knowledge, Understanding and Awareness: Starting Points For Year One Boards

Key Quotes

Evolving, previously there had been no conversation. Now there is community involvement. Students and families are self-identifying. (CASS7, p.1)

I believe they want to implement First Nations Studies, but in actuality it doesn't happen as much as they talk about it happening. Some stuff gets cancelled at the last minute or doesn't happen because other things take priority. (T17, p.1)

We are developing we've had a lead for 8 or 9 years now. We are really starting to make an impact in the schools. I am getting a lot of requests for resources, information and often for the "Blanket Exercise." I am going into schools often. So I really see it blossoming. (BL, p.3)

Discussion

In DSBs participating for the first year, most Educators describe themselves, their school and their Board as being at a *starting point* or as *beginning the journey*. In these DSBs, attention to Indigenous Education is described as inconsistent; in some schools it is becoming a priority, while in others it receives very little attention. The idea that Indigenous Education only matters in schools with a high percentage of self-identified students persists. Although most participating DSBs have an identified Board Lead in Aboriginal Education, many leads describe their work as challenging, even wearisome, as they work to convince teachers, principals and superintendents of its significance. In some DSBs classroom teachers and Board Leads express frustration, explaining that in their DSBs Indigenous Education is still considered an "add on" and not a priority. In many Year One Boards, interview participants explain that the inclusion of Indigenous Education is dependent on the presence of "champion" teachers. These are individuals who have a commitment to Indigenous education and work very hard to integrate it into their classrooms and in their schools.

Although Year One Boards were constrained by the labour disruption during the 2015–2016 school year, many were able to get the initiative started prior to the end of the year. Many focused on planning and in some instances organizing initial learning experiences for both staff and students. These first steps provided opportunities to:

- Raise awareness of the initiative across the school community or in some cases across the DSB,
- Engage with students, families and Community Members, and
- Assess current knowledge and understanding of Indigenous issues.

As expected, the majority of Year One Boards are in an initial stage of increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness among Educators. Many participants describe a sense of movement from isolation to having clusters of supportive colleagues interested in learning and sharing their knowledge.

2.2A Questions and Concerns: Year One Boards

Key Quotes

I hope to learn how to foster stronger connections between our school and Community Members in order to ensure that our students and their families understand that we're committed to investing time and energy into their success. (T37, p.1)

The goal should be to embed this in all learning rather than have it be a special project. I would like to integrate these teachings into the curriculum – make it how we do business in our classrooms. (T3, p.1)

I do worry about other staff not involved judging the teachers in the CI. "Oh sure it's easy in art but I can't do it in math," their peers will have to do more work, many teachers will resist change. (P8, p.1)

Anytime that I talk about FNMI in my room – some children have heard things at home that are negative and they bring that into the classroom. Sometimes that is difficult to deal with when students bring that up. We talk about it, respond to it and try to dispel that untruth. (T15, p.1)

Discussion

Aware of the increasing attention to Indigenous issues, interview participants from Year One Boards accept that they need to expand their understanding. Phrases such as *respecting difference*, *appreciating cultural differences*, *learning about the culture* and *learning how to teach about the history* were used frequently. The starting point for many Educators includes positioning Indigenous students and Indigenous content as a problem to be solved. With reference to being overwhelmed it is not uncommon for Year One participants to start with some feelings of resistance. Hoping that the challenge is something that can be addressed, checked off and moved on from to other topics of importance, some Year One participants are looking for quick and uncomplicated answers.

There are genuine expressions of commitment from teachers who appreciate that this inquiry is about their own learning to support the achievement of Indigenous students and to integrate Indigenous content across the curriculum for all students. They want access to resources and assistance in learning how to use the resources. Some Educators recognize the need to deepen their understanding of colonialism and its ongoing implications in students' lives, how the absence of Indigenous representations contributes to the alienating learning environments and importantly how Indigenous worldviews inform students' ways of being in schools. Primarily teachers in Year One Boards are struggling to make sense of the conflicts and contradictions that Indigenous students confront in schools and want to be able to provide them with the skills to successfully navigate those challenges. Some teachers are coming to understand that the Indigenous student achievement gap means that something is "not working" in schools and that they have a responsibility to create change. Many admit that while they want to do something, their capacity to respond is complicated because they don't know what to do or how to do it.

Year One Interview Participants referenced the CI objectives and expressed frustration with the past year, specifically talking about needing more information, direction and support to investigate and understand the complexities of doing collaborative inquiry.

In spite of these frustrations, overall commitment to the CI is high. Educators express a willingness to continue doing the work of learning. They spoke overwhelmingly in favour of the Face-to-Face sessions and talked about the usefulness of these sessions. Hearing an overview of what other Boards are doing provides ideas on how to move forward. They appreciate opportunities for learning from the presentations and then the time for follow-up conversations. After the Face-to-Face sessions in April 2016, people felt more informed and consequently inspired and motivated to proceed with their own plans.

Native Language and Culture teachers are observing a change in other teachers' attitudes toward them and appreciate the work their colleagues are doing. They see a positive shift in awareness and attitudes even after initial planning sessions. They are particularly appreciative of opportunities to gather and learn with a team of Educators committed to increasing their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives.

While there is some confusion about how to do this work, most participants express a clear desire to do the work in response to a need that they themselves can identify. Participants from Year One DSBs express the need for:

- Information about the collaborative inquiry process,
- Support in learning how to establish Community Member relationships,
- Understanding of the challenges Indigenous students experience in schools, and
- Direction on how to support non-Indigenous students in working through their lack of knowledge and their fear of saying the wrong thing.

Overall, participants from Year One DSBs express a commitment that derives from an awareness that something has to be done, recognizing that they are in a position to act, and hopefulness about having a positive impact on their students. The CI is providing a much-needed sustained conversation about a specific topic clearly of need and interest to Educators. The financial support is especially appreciated to assist with bringing in Community Members in support of teachers' and students' learning.

2.3 Increasing Knowledge, Understanding and Awareness: Year Two/Three Boards

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not at All	Fair	Good	Very Good	NA
Provided me the opportunity to build on the learning I started in my previous year.	0	5%	13%	58%	24%
Had a significant impact on what the school was able to accomplish.	0	7%	20%	49%	24%
Had a significant impact on what I was able to accomplish.	0	9%	13%	56%	22%
Had a positive impact on FNMI students.	0	2%	22%	54%	22%
Had a positive impact on all students.	0	6%	15%	57%	22%

Table 2B

Key Quotes

I've never been involved in any PD that has had more impact on kids' success, school improvement, teachers' learning and my own learning. (P1, p.1)

I have more resources because of the CI. My interest has grown and I now know that there is a need for this information in the classroom. (T21, p.1)

I have learned how easy it is to integrate the First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspective into the curriculum, and how meaningful it is for the students. Students who were previously hesitant to come to school are now coming to school and eager to learn. (T22, p.1)

I have gained a perspective that I didn't have before. Working with the CI students, parents and Community Members have impacted my knowledge of culture and FNMI history. (P7, p.1)

Discussion

Participants from Year Two/Three Boards describe the impact this initiative is having on their teaching. They credit their learning to participation in a number of events including:

- Collaborative Inquiry planning meetings and discussions,
- Presentations at the Face-to-Face sessions,
- Working in collaboration with Community Members,
- Increased access to both human and text resources, including Board-supported PD sessions,
- Listening to the voices of Indigenous students, and
- Exposure to cultural events in their schools and classrooms.

Educators talk about the role of dialogue and the opportunity to learn in relationship with Indigenous people as having the most significant impact on their knowledge and understanding. Some talk about how participation in the CI has motivated them to pursue additional learning experiences outside of the Board including visiting art exhibits, watching films and attending public lectures.

Seeing how the inclusion of Indigenous content positively impacts their students, these Educators are motivated to continue their learning. Being part of the collaborative inquiry allows them to be learners and brings them together with other Educators who have a shared commitment and interest in addressing Indigenous education. They are developing complex understandings and appreciation of the

issues reflected in their comments and questions about sovereignty, the meaning and significance of status, treaty rights and the reserve system. They recognize that while events are important they want to integrate First Nation, Métis and Inuit content across the curriculum.

Year Two/Three Educators explain that each year they become more comfortable participating in the inquiry, particularly with regard to occupying the position of learner. As Educators they feel the need to be knowers, the Collaborative Inquiry gives them permission to be learners and in some instances contributes to creating professional learning environments where there is trust, where they are not being judged and where there is a shared collective commitment to learning. They recognize the seriousness of their work, they have come to be comfortable with their fear and lack of knowledge, and recognize the emotional work of learning including how guilt, fear and pity can impose limits. While many Year Two/Three Educators are conscious of how much they are learning, the more they do the more they realize how much more they need to do, and how much their colleagues, especially those not participating in the CI, have to learn.

These Educators are aware of how their learning is changing their relationships with students, community and family. They describe a sense of collective effort to shift the atmosphere of the school and in some cases the District School Board. They consistently report that a knowledgeable and supportive principal makes all the difference. In some DSBs there have been challenges with continuity, specifically with regard to leadership. Within school boards people change positions, and when a CI Team Leader moves into a position that takes them off the team, leadership suffers. Sharing leadership responsibilities would both build capacity and ensure that when people move, someone would be in place to take over leadership.

Narrative

Educators I spoke with shared stories of how participating in the Collaborative Inquiry is changing the school environment, changing their understanding of themselves and positively impacting their relationships with Indigenous students. Indigenous Educators are particularly astute at noticing what is different and the impact of that difference on both teachers and students. The following narrative reflects observations shared during an interview.

I am Anishnabe Kwe.

I am a mother.

I am a granddaughter.

I am a Community Member

And I'm a teacher.

We are having conversations

About the Royal Proclamation

About Treaties, Residential Schools

And the TRC

This is happening, happening in a good way

It's part of our Collaborative Inquiry.

Working with Elders, artists, and wisdom keepers, my colleagues are interested, they're asking questions and they are listening. They are invested and committed even open to change. We are creating a different kind of environment. I see it happening. They say; it's new ideas on how to support students, new books in the library and guest speakers at the assembly. I see it's in how they talk to students, how they listen to students. And the books aren't just in the library they are on the teacher's desk.

I walk the hallways of the high school, I hear the kids talking, laughing. I see that one of our kids is running for student council, posters are on the walls everywhere, announcements and assemblies are happening and our students are there. In the hall, I pass a group of boys, young men really, I eavesdrop a little and they're making plans for the talking circle on Wednesday. They're arguing about the big drum – that's ok with me. Its very cool seeing all the different things happening.

This educator describes the ways in which, with a focus on cultivating relationships, the CI is shifting the place of Indigenous Education in schools. Rather than doing one lesson on an Indigenous topic and determining the material covered, teachers are making an investment in learning and the school environment is changing. Reaching out to community partners and taking the time to build relationships is critical to the process, and while this takes time, the results are definitely worth the effort. This educator went on to say that the CI creates a safe space for Educators to take risks. Her colleagues are beginning to ask more challenging/deeper questions, even seeing how engaging with this history can be hard on Indigenous students. Perhaps most importantly, the CI is bringing committed Educators together to support each other's learning. Working in isolation can be discouraging and exhausting, while working as part of a CI team is inspiring and revitalizing.

2.4 Impact on Learning Environments: Year One And Year Two/Three DSB Participants

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not at All	Fair	Good	Very Good	NA
Indigenous authored books are regularly on display in my school library.	6%	13%	27%	37%	17%
I regularly hear Indigenous language spoken in my school.	26%	17%	19%	19%	19%
I consistently see positive representations of Indigenous people displayed in my school.	5%	15%	23%	48%	9%
FNMI students are active participants in school extra-curricular activities.	2%	13%	21%	40%	24%
FNMI parents are active participants in our school community.	14%	32%	19%	18%	17%
FNMI students are regularly the subject of positive attention in my school community.	2%	17%	33%	34%	14%
Teachers in my school are knowledgeable of local FNMI histories and cultures.	6%	29%	39%	19%	7%

Table 2C

Key Quotes Year One and Year Two/Year Participants

We made an effort to make it clear that our school is on Algonquin territory. We have a bulletin board when you walk into the school that says welcome in different languages. (Y2/3 T12, p.1)

The students who we don't normally hear from you suddenly hear from. For example, I gave an assignment to write a biography of an FNMI leader and my FNMI students who we don't normally hear from had the best projects. (Y2/3 T18, p.2)

We're trying to increase Indigenous programming, content and visibility within our schools and for the benefit of supporting our Indigenous learners and also support students willing to learn about Indigenous people. (Y1 T13, p.1)

I think the status has improved. There is a greater awareness, it is a priority and we have a keen principal. There are 2 large mosaics. We have the Seven Grandfather Teachings painted on a wall. (Y1 T25, p.1).

Discussion

When asked to assess the overall impact of the CI on their school and DSB environment, survey participants report positive impacts. Echoing what interview participants report survey participants acknowledge that while progress is being accomplished a lot of work remains to be done.

These results suggest there are three areas that continue to require specific attention. First: parent involvement is an ongoing concern. While progress is being made in some DSBs the majority of participants recognize that improving relationships with parents is a priority. Second: the need to further support the teaching of Indigenous languages. Third: the challenge of addressing teachers' knowledge of Indigenous histories and cultures. This issue identified by all participants is addressed in the following section.

2.5 Significant Challenges Educators Confront: Year One And Year Two/Three DSB Participants

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not At All	Fair	Good	Very Good	N/A
Is having a positive impact on my knowledge and understanding of FNMI history, culture and perspectives.	0%	2%	12%	75%	11%
Is having a positive impact on my capacity to teach FNMI content.	0%	9%	13%	61%	17%
Is increasing the use of FNMI resources in my teaching.	1%	7%	18%	56%	18%
Is creating opportunities for me to hear FNMI Students' Voices.	4%	5%	16%	60%	15%
I regularly (once a month) include FNMI content in my teaching.	0%	8%	19%	46%	27%

Table 2D

Key Quotes Year One and Year Two/Year Participants

A lack of knowledge or a lack of comfort level with teaching it; if you are unsure and don't have a good handle on it, you're afraid to say something or afraid to say the wrong thing. (Y1, T7, p.1)

Fear of offending saying or doing the wrong thing. No background knowledge of history, culture, not well informed of current issues. Don't even trust the resources we have. (Y1, CSS7, p.1)

Definitely a lack of understanding that results in lack of confidence (Y2/3, T1, p.2).

They are overwhelmed; they don't know where to start so they don't. More human resources. I felt after the Face-to-Face there was a renewed determination. (Y2/3, T23, p.2).

Discussion

The Collaborative Inquiry continues to have a positive impact on participants' knowledge and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives, with 87% of survey participants reporting a good to very good impact. Additionally, 76% report good to very good opportunities for Educators to hear the voices of Indigenous students. Keeping in mind the survey results combine Year One and Year Two/Three and knowing that it takes time to translate that learning into teaching, it is not surprising that while 74% report a good to very good impact on capacity to teach only 58% report good to very good integration of Indigenous focused content across the curriculum.

These results reflect an increase in Educators' knowledge and understanding; they also reflect a persistent challenge. The lack of knowledge and the fear of making mistakes continue to be the most significant challenge Educators' face when teaching Indigenous content. This applies for both Year One and Year Two/Three Educators. In total, 93% of all interview participants identify teachers' lack of knowledge, and their fear of making mistakes, as the most significant challenge Educators confront.

While these results are contradictory, I understand them as a positive indicator of Educators' growing awareness of the need to integrate Indigenous content in their teaching. As Educators become aware of the need to teach the material, they become conscious of their own lack of knowledge and understanding. Additionally, Year Two/Three interview participants report an increasing awareness of the complexities of teaching this material. They are concerned with reproducing stereotypical representations, uncertain about how to address the impacts of colonialism and have questions about Indigenous worldviews.

The Listening Stone Year Three research reflects Educators' commitment to increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives. While the majority of participants acknowledge that pockets of intense resistance to teaching this content continue to exist within most DSBs, the more common response to the Collaborative Inquiry Initiative are expressions of interest and support.

2.4 Overall Experience First Nation, Métis and Inuit CI: Year One And Year Two/Three DSB Participants

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not at All	Fair	Good	Very Good	NA
I would advise my colleagues/Community Members to get involved in the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry.	0%	3%	10%	78%	9%
It will be beneficial for me to participate in the CI again next year.	1%	5%	6%	78%	10%

Table 2E

Key Quotes Year One and Year Two/Three Participants

The more people that are part of this and taking this inquiry into their classroom and getting the word out about who these groups of people are that live among us is really important. (T15, p.2)

I really enjoy the meetings that I go to and I'm learning. It's challenging – I'm just starting. (17, p.2)

I'm very passionate and confident of the impact on the well-being of the community. This has been an opportunity to share and celebrate. (T24, p.2)

There is definitely an excitement about it. I like seeing the process. I hope we can stay authentic. We need to change the way we teach. (T24, p.2)

Discussion

In part the success of any project is determined by the commitment of participants. Eighty-eight percent of the survey participants express a Good to Very Good likelihood that they would advise their colleagues to get involved in the CI and 84% believe that it will be Good to Very Good for them to continue participating in the inquiry for another year. This ongoing commitment to accomplishing the goals of this initiative will contribute to overall improvements across the participating DSBs.

2.5 Next Steps: Topics for Discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Sessions

Reviewing the data on Increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of Indigenous people's histories, cultures and perspectives for all staff and students, I have identified four key topics for discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Gatherings:

- A Review of the Collaborative Inquiry Process
- An Overview of Post-Contact History
- Cultural Appropriation
- Addressing Resistance

3. CULTIVATING POSITIVE COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS: EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

Students often express the importance of Elders in helping them get and maintain a sense of balance inside and outside of school, and we contend that training by Elders will greatly enhance both the formal and informal acquisition of education. (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, p.145)

Community Members are key to the success of this Collaborative Inquiry. They support Indigenous student learning and well-being, contribute to Educators' learning and contribute to positive community school relationships. Bridging the gap between the world of Indigenous students and institutions of formal schooling, Elders and other Indigenous Community Members make being in school not only possible but a positive experience.

3.1 Engaging Community Members: Year One Boards

Key Quotes

I would say it's growing and developing. (BL3, p.1)

This is just becoming a better time and we realize that we have these wonderful resources, and this is a good opportunity there are good relationships but they have not really been explored and strengthened due to lack of understanding of how we can work together. This CI is providing the bands and schools an opportunity to link their ideas. This relationship is not good with every school and every community but we are getting there. (SWST2, p.1)

I think the relationship we have is very good but limited, very small scale. It's growing ... but there is just a very small group of us that know about it and are tapping into that resource at this point. Up until this year I would say non-existent, extremely limited. (T1, p.1)

Could be better, but it is better than in the past. Our First Nation guidance councillor saw that the staff and administration were willing to follow up on concerns and in effect were more open to the harder, more serious conversations. (P1, p.1)

Discussion

Year One Educators describe taking the time to consistently attend community events as a means of establishing relationships. In one case a school principal went to the reserve community to meet with the Education Director to initiate dialogue on co-planning for the CI. Going to the community and starting conversations demonstrates commitment and respect for Community Members' time and contribution.

Cultivating community partnerships continues to be challenging for some DSBs. Realizing that as much as they would like to have positive relationships they can't be forced some CI Teams are taking a unique approach. Some teams have started planning introductory events on their own with the hope that once Community Members hear about their efforts possibilities for making connections will open up. For example some DSBs have started with inviting a speaker from the local university to give a talk or inviting an Indigenous artist to give a talk to students. These events send a message to the community that the school is taking this initiative seriously.

Factors that impact the ease with which CI Teams are able to establish positive relationships include the number of self-identified students in the schools. In some instances schools with smaller self-identified

populations have a more difficult time engaging Indigenous Community Members. In these situations it is simply the result of smaller communities having limited human resources. Specific local contexts also present challenges. In some DSBs students from different reserves attend the same school, and relationships between reserve communities can be acrimonious adding to the challenge school staff confront when inviting people to work collaboratively. Recognizing that cultivating these relationships is going to take time, DSBs are using a variety of strategies to overcome the barriers. Attending to the local context sometimes means having to go outside the immediate local community and invite Elders, Artists and Knowledge Keepers from farther away.

Many of the First Year Boards continue to struggle with engaging the community, but recognize it as a priority and continue to develop strategies for working through the challenges.

3.2 Engaging Community Members: Year Two/Three District School Boards

Key Quotes

It has been positive it has given our students a chance to be out in the community more and for us to bring community into our schools. (T2, p.1)

There is a more comfortable relationship with community because our staff went to them and asked for support, so I think there is more of a trust built in there. (SWST6, p.1)

Since the beginning of our CI we've included an Elder that works with our board and she has become a star in the board, she does lots of work. We've looked at different ways of connecting communities with certain schools there are a lot more gatherings and parents are starting to be more comfortable coming into the schools. (SWST7, p.1)

We've tried to make the school more welcoming we host family night with dinner. We've noticed a huge success with technology, teachers connecting with 60-70% of parents using technology. Perceptions of school have changed. (P1, p.1)

Discussion

While all participants agree that establishing community partnerships is a critical component of a successful Collaborative Inquiry, many also agree that it can be challenging. DSB members continue to use a variety of strategies for creating successful partnerships. Working with Native Language and Culture teachers and Board Leads as key contacts, inviting parents and grandparents to participate in classroom events, and reaching out to local service providers have proven to be successful strategies. In some cases principals and Board Leads begin by attending Indigenous community events as a way of demonstrating interest and commitment. The majority of Year Two/Three DSBs interview participants report having established working relationships with local Indigenous Community Members

3.2 Engaging Community Members: Learning From the Surveys

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not At All	Fair	Good	Very Good	N/A
Is increasing my knowledge of FNMI community concerns.	1%	4%	24%	62%	9%
Is having a positive impact on school and local FNMI community relationships.	1%	7%	21%	61%	10%
My school community has good relationships with the local FNMI Communities.	3%	7%	28%	50%	12%
I have good relationships with the local FNMI Communities.	3%	7%	28%	50%	12%
I am confident approaching FNMI CMs to visit and work with students in my class.	2%	11%	20%	52%	15%
FNMI CMs are regular (once a month) visitors in my school.	17%	17%	22%	29%	15%

Table 3A

Discussion

Survey participants report that the CI is having a positive impact on school-community relationships with 82% of participants rating the relationships as good to very good and 78% reporting their personal relationships as good to very good. Engaging Community Members contributes to Educators' knowledge of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Community concerns; 86% percent of survey participants report an increase in their knowledge.

With only 51% reporting regular Community Member school visits, this is an area for continued growth.

3.3 Next Steps: Topics for Discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Sessions

Reviewing the data on engaging with Community Members, I have identified three key topics for discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Gatherings:

- The Role Of Community Members In The CI
- Strategies For Engaging With Indigenous Community Members
- Strategies For Working In Collaboration With Community Members

4. FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT STUDENT WELL-BEING AND ACHIEVEMENT

The students who feel the safest, the most comfortable, and the most enthused are those who received some form of cultural education in school. (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, p.145)

When teachers create learning conditions where students, ... can demonstrate their possession of knowledge and expertise, they are then able to see themselves, and be seen by others, as capable and competent. (Bartolome, 2008, p.130)

Understanding the deep chasm that exists between the world of Indigenous people and Institutions of formal schooling requires engagement with history. The CI supports Indigenous student well-being and achievement in two critical ways. First it not only encourages, it requires engagement with Community Members who bring Indigenous community experiences, knowledge and perspectives into the schools. Second, it creates opportunities for Educators to cultivate positive relationships with students creating possibilities for the recognition of students' knowledge and capacities.

4.1 Indigenous Student Well-being and Achievement: Year One District School Boards

Key Quotes

We need to build up students' identities and build confidence. Some of the students don't even know about the residential schools. We need to address their cultural needs and need more resources to do so. Some students are not eager to come to school. (T17, p.1)

We've seen trouble with mental health issues, anxiety disorders with some students, high absentee rates. Parents have not been given resources to fix the problem. As a result it affects the students' well-being and achievement. Some turn to substance abuse. (P9, p.2)

They feel like they don't belong in school. They really isolate themselves from other kids. They are really withdrawn in class and attendance is a huge issue because I think they just don't see themselves as part of the school community. (BPS3, p.1)

Engagement. I look at attendance and I'm concerned with that. I want to know how to engage students so that they want to attend and are able to attend. I'm not trying to put it on the students – I think we have to change what we're doing to make them want to be here. ... This is where I see the student voice piece as being really important. Now we need to figure out what we do with student voice. How will that translate into the school? (S4, p.3)

Discussion

Educators in Year One Boards are beginning to build relationships with Indigenous students. The starting point for many is recognizing that they have Indigenous students in their schools and that Indigenous education is important for all students. In some DSBs where the Indigenous student population is not immediately visible, Educators are anxious to have students self-identify. They want to know who the students are so that they can assess and respond to their needs.

In other Year One DSBs where Indigenous students are clearly visible, Educators are aware of and describe the marginalization and alienation students' experience. Many draw on dominant discourses to explain students' experiences referencing poverty, family and community disruption and disengagement as the root causes of poor attendance and low achievement. At this early stage of participation in the inquiry, some Year One Participants suggest that developing confidence and pride will address the problem of Indigenous student achievement. Teachers want students to feel more comfortable and are

searching for answers in an effort to address the problem. Some participants rely on the idea that Indigenous students learn differently, leading to the conclusion that special hands-on programs and programs that focus on outdoor education will lead to greater success.

Year One DSB Participants who organized initial projects report surprise that students respond so positively to the inclusion of Indigenous content. In most cases first steps are events based; for example, inviting a guest speaker, attending a pow wow, holding a feast or completing an introductory unit focusing on Indigenous art or literature. Most initial steps focus on the inclusion of positive representations of Indigenous identity.

When asked to identify the significant barriers to Indigenous Student Well-Being and Achievement, Year One interview participants reported the need for:

- Human resources to assist with how to respond to the needs,
- Assistance with how to document impact,
- Improved relationships with parents and Community Members,
- Cultural awareness training for staff in order to support students who are struggling, and
- Supporting students with transitions.

Interview participants suggested that Indigenous students would benefit from having positive role models, programs to teach cultural awareness and curriculum resources to support all students' learning about Indigenous people. Many identify students' social/emotional needs as the most significant barrier to well-being and achievement.

4.2 Student Well-being and Achievement: Year Two/Three District School Boards

Key Quotes

Academically we are seeing that oral communication has improved. Also, we have done circle talks with students where each student has the opportunity to speak and be heard. Students who are having difficulties with peers began asking to do a circle talk between them. (T22, p.1)

With the vocabulary projects we could see the change because of better grades on assignments. ... They have gained a positive self-identity and openness. There is a difference in how teachers, staff, and admin treat them and this has made a difference. They know that things have changed. They are being listened to-they have voice. (T26, p.2)

Lacrosse Day with lessons, kids arrive in droves they tell me that when they want to be here they find a way. ... First and for most all students are learning about local history and culture. Staff and student are together and this has created excitement in the school. Also increased student achievement in reading and writing. (P11, p.2)

Families are starting to feel more comfortable with raising questions or coming forward with concerns. Aboriginal support workers are starting to feel more comfortable in coming to the school. The satisfaction level for students and families is greater and the comfort level for teachers is greater now than it used to be. (S2, p.1)

Discussion

When asked to talk specifically about the impact on Indigenous students, interview participants' voices reflected warmth, energy and optimism. Participants report an overall positive impact on Indigenous students, including observed improvements in:

- Attendance
- Engagement
- Enthusiasm
- Attention
- Participation

Interview participants spoke with enthusiasm about their observations, and told stories about what students are accomplishing. They also talked about next steps and shared statements about ongoing challenges including:

1. Documenting the impact on students' well-being and achievement.
2. Moving from an events approach to integrating the content across the curriculum, particularly at the secondary school level.

Educators are conscious of the positive impact of an events approach on students' engagement and attitude toward schooling, and they now want to move forward in developing a program to achieve full integration of Indigenous topics across the curriculum. They describe improved oral communication skills and overall improvements in attention, active participation and perseverance. Some note improvements in students' interest and capacity in completing assignments. Most have questions and concerns about how to maintain interest and further cultivate skill development and the ongoing challenge of addressing gaps in students' learning that make it difficult for students to successfully manage the grade-appropriate curriculum.

4.4 Student Well-being And Achievement: Learning From The Survey

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not at All	Fair	Good	Very Good	NA
Increased FNMI students' feelings of belonging at school?	2%	7%	22%	54%	15%
Increased FNMI student attendance rates?	6%	13%	25%	24%	32%
Increased FNMI students' participation in the school community?	2%	8%	30%	43%	17%
Had a positive impact on FNMI student achievement.	1%	12%	33%	31%	23%
Is having a positive impact on FNMI student-teacher relationships.	1%	4%	22%	58%	15%
Is contributing to improved relationships between students.	2%	12%	24%	46%	16%

Table 4A

Survey participants continue to report positive impacts on Indigenous students, particularly on student-teacher relationships. These results show overall improvements in how students are experiencing the school environment. Improved relationships with teachers and peers are reflected in improved feelings of belonging and improvements in participation.

4.5 Next Steps: Topics for Discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Sessions and 2016-17 Webcasts

There is growing awareness among all Educators that the lack of Indigenous content impacts all students. Taking a proactive stance, teachers are locating resources, asking for assistance and taking the first steps to provide Indigenous-centred learning experiences for students. In some situations Indigenous students want an opportunity to gather on their own; in other situations they want their non-Indigenous peer group to be involved in the learning. Working in collaboration and sometimes relying on the students for guidance, teachers are working to increase Indigenous student well-being and achievement.

Reviewing the data on Indigenous Student Well-being and Achievement, I have identified four key topics for discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Gatherings.

- The relationship between worldview and learning,
- Documenting impact on indigenous student well-being and achievement
- Responding to gaps in students' learning, and
- Recognizing the role of emotion in learning about and learning from the history of Indian residential schools and the impacts of colonialism in the lives of all Canadians.

5. LEARNING FROM COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

They need to make educational opportunities for students to come together in community with people who bring out their holistic better selves. (Battiste, 2008, p.90)

Community members took part in the data collection process through both surveys and individual interviews. The online survey was circulated to Community Members through the Board Leads and/or directly by Research Assistants who had contact information that was collected during the spring Face-to-Face sessions.

Community Member Interview Participants	
Year One Participants	4
Year Two/Three Participants	8
Total	12

Table 5A

Community Member Survey Participants	
Year One Participants	2
Year Two/Three Participants	8
Total	10

Table 5B

Grandmothers, parents, members of Indigenous service provider agencies, First Nations Artists, Elders and Community Education support people are working in collaboration with DSB CI teams. In some cases Community Members are invited by the principals or teachers at their children's or grandchildren's school. In other situations Board Leads or Native Language and Culture teachers know and invite Community Members who are active leaders in their communities to participate in the CI.

5.1 Community Members Sharing Knowledge and Building Relationships

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not At All	Fair	Good	Very Good	N/A
Is having a positive impact on my knowledge of the local school board.	10%	0%	40%	30%	20%
Is having a positive impact on my knowledge of the local school.	20%	10%	50%	20%	0%
Is having a positive impact on my relationship with teachers at the local school.	10%	0%	30%	30%	30%
Is providing an opportunity for me to share FNMI community concerns with the school staff.	10%	10%	40%	30%	10%
Is having a positive impact on school and local FNMI community relationships.	10%	10%	20%	50%	10%

Table 5C

Key Quotes

I think that the schools are more open in creating those partnerships. For the most part everyone is really happy. Students are feeling like they are being heard. Without the Ministry of Education support and this initiative I don't think that work would have taken place. It has focused efforts. The communities I work with feel like the partnerships are stronger and kids are succeeding and staying in school. (CM5, p.2)

It's just easier access-some of those barriers where people just don't know how to talk to each other are starting to slowly come down. In general teachers are looking for connections. They are interested and

they're opening their eyes. I think we are in a good place. I know we have a long way to go but I am excited where we are and moving forward. (CM8, p.1)

I have learned that it's very important to understand each other. The CI allows schools to take active steps toward cultivating relationships and earning the trust of families. (CM9, p.3)

Discussion

Survey results and interview data show that Community members appreciate participating in the initiative that provides opportunities to develop their understanding of the education system, cultivate relationships with teachers and most importantly spend time with students. Elders, grandmothers, artists and Wisdom Keepers are conscious of the need to bring Indigenous Knowledge into the classrooms and contribute to cultivating positive relationships between families and teachers.

5.2 Community Members' Observations of Impact on Students

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry:	Not At All	Fair	Good	Very Good	N/A
Is having a positive impact on FNMI students' feelings of belonging.	10%	10%	20%	30%	30%
Is having a positive impact on FNMI student attendance rates.	22%	11%	11%	33%	22%
Is having a positive impact on FNMI students' participation in the school community.	10%	10%	20%	40%	20%
Is creating opportunities for me to learn from FNMI students.	10%	20%	20%	30%	20%
Is contributing to improved relationships between FNMI students and their teachers.	10%	10%	30%	40%	10%
Is contributing to improved relationships between FNMI students and their peers.	10%	10%	20%	40%	20%

Table5D

Key Quotes

They learn about themselves and how special they are, their uniqueness and their unique gifts. They are excited back in the classroom they share what they learned from their kokum. (CM2, p.2)

We have a Student Voice program. Informal lunches with mini discussion that have morphed into a lot more kids involved in the Student Voice, they are participating, showing initiative and sharing ideas. (CM2, p.2)

Having Indigenous people in the schools and having them visible is making a difference. (CM5, p.3)

Kids are bothered by not being represented in the curriculum [they say] "our stories are not really told." (CM7, p.1)

Discussion

Community members are particularly attentive to the needs of students. From their perspective the CI is having positive results. They report a significant impact on students' relationships with their teachers; 70% identifying good to very good improvement and 60% observing a good to very good increase in Indigenous students relationships with their peers. This shift is a promising indicator of improvements in the learning environment.

Community members are equally aware of the ongoing chasm that exists between the world of Indigenous students and institutions of formal schooling and identified key concerns.

- *The History of Colonialism*: In response to a growing awareness of colonialism and its consequences, all students are angry and upset about not knowing the history. They want access to these stories and as Community Members (and Educators) report students appreciate and are engaged in lessons that allow them to make sense of current conditions.
- *Resources*: Community Members are aware of the gap in teachers' knowledge and would appreciate working in collaboration to identify resources that provide positive representations of Indigenous people and Indigenous culture.
- *Indigenous Knowledge*: Students need access to cultural practices that allow them to develop their awareness of Indigenous knowledge. Beyond fluff and feathers, students need to know not just that Indigenous people made "pretty baskets" rather how the knowledge in basket making was of use in the past and continues to be of use now.
- *Scope*: Community Members observe the need for clarity about the scope of teachers' responsibilities. They want the opportunity to explore with Educators what content is appropriate for teachers to cover and what should be left to Community Members.
- *Representing Themselves*: Indigenous students benefit from having opportunities to share stories of their communities including stories of success. Students need opportunities to teach each other (including FN Students from different First Nations communities) about their communities, nations and cultures.

Narrative

More than one Community Member told stories about High School students who manage to get themselves to school but cannot cope with being in class. Loretta's story retold by a Community Member sheds light on the experience.

Loretta is a young First Nations' mother of three school age children. She is working hard to take care of her kids and support her children in school. Loretta remembers when she was leaving her home community to attend school. She was just so happy to be going and she was prepared. Her mom and dad were proud of her and "they really wanted me to be a good student and graduate from high school with good grades, maybe even go to college." Loretta continues, "I remember my first few days at the high school. It was a big school with so many classrooms and so many teachers. The work was confusing, and I didn't know how to do it. I was ashamed and scared because you know I wanted to go. I tried to figure it out but it was hopeless, I couldn't do it and when I went back to school the next day the teachers just got mad at me for not doing my homework." Loretta goes on to describe how eventually she simply stopped going to school. Hanging out with other students at the mall was easier than the frustration she experienced at school. She knew that she was disappointing her parents, she started drinking and getting into trouble to avoid facing the feelings of failure. Now she is the parent, taking care of her kids. She sees what is happening in the school and is a part of it so that her kids will do better. Seeing the Elders at the meetings makes talking to teachers easier. She knows the language teacher even the principal is coming out to the community and it is different. Loretta thinks her kids will be ok in school.

Loretta's story is a reminder that Indigenous students' like all students, want to be successful, they want to fit in with and be accepted by their peers. They have hopes and dreams including wanting to make their parents proud. Illustrating connections between the lack of grade-appropriate skills, an overwhelming school environment, school practices that penalize rather than support, the need for peer acceptance Loretta's perspective sheds light on students' actions

The Community Member who shared this story was able to explain how the Collaborative Inquiry is contributing to change.

- The CI is contributing to improved relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peers.
- Some schools have set up peer mentoring programs that include social activities cultivating the creation of community within the school.
- Having more communication with the parents helps the students feel better at school.

Community Members make sense of the dynamics at work in the students' experiences of school.

4.3 Community Members Describe Observations of the School Environment

The Collaborative Inquiry And Impact On School Environments	Not at All	Fair	Good	Very Good	NA
I consistently see positive representations of Indigenous people displayed in the local schools.	10%	20%	20%	30%	20%
FNMI students are active participants in school extra-curricular activities.	0%	10%	20%	20%	50%
FNMI parents are active participants in the local schools.	10%	20%	20%	10%	40%
FNMI students regularly receive positive attention in the local school.	10%	10%	50%	10%	20%
Teachers at the local schools are knowledgeable about FNMI histories and cultures.	20%	50%	0%	20%	10%

Table 5E

Key Quotes

We saw a shift with some teachers. We found some champions who thought, oh, this is pretty cool. And they [teachers] were afraid and now they had a little bit of knowledge and wanted to know more. So that was the first step. (CM10, p.5)

I feel like the people who are doing the work, [those] who want to do the work, I have great relationships with the front line people at the local High School. (CM11, p.6)

We're just starting to develop the partnerships needed for this work. (CM4, p.1)

Parents in the community are happy I am here because they know I understand their kids and can look out for them. (CM7, p.2)

Discussion

Community members observe and appreciate the work Educators are doing to improve their knowledge, understanding and awareness, they see the positive impact the learning is having on school environments. From their perspective a lot more needs to be done. Community members we spoke with are concerned with how the knowledge gap impacts what gets taught about Indigenous people,

histories and cultures, how it gets taught and who is doing the teaching. They expressed interest in supporting Educators in choosing resources and guest speakers.

Many of the Community Members we spoke with are involved in doing classroom visits. They want teachers to be specific when inviting them into the classroom; that is, having a topic in mind, not just making an open invitation. They want teachers to participate and learn with their students and they want students to be prepared for the visit.

Community members know that if an event has significance, principals, superintendents and trustees are present. Attendance sends a strong message to students, families and the broader community that Indigenous education matters.

4.4 Community Members' Ongoing Participation

Participation in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry	Not at All	Fair	Good	Very Good	NA
I would advise my colleagues/Community Members to get involved in the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry.	0%	10%	20%	50%	20%
It will be beneficial for me to participate in the CI again next year.	0%	0%	20%	70%	10%

Table 5F

Key Quotes

Again at the heart of it is building relationships. You need trust, friendship and mutual respect to maintain balance and move forward. (CM8, p.1)

I think it's great. Anything that can promote our culture in a positive way is important. (CM6, p.1)

So that is one thing that I am really excited about that the relationship is continuing. ... So just opening the doors as much as possible wherever there are local opportunities. (CM8, p.2)

I am a traditional Grandmother and I teach the little ones our culture. I am Mohawk. I teach at grade schools and high schools. I talk about the Sacred Teachings. We have started a "Grandmothers Circle," I feel special and honoured to do this for the students. (CM2, p.1)

Discussion

Similar to the responses from Educators, the majority of Community Members are committed to ongoing participation in the Collaborative Inquiry initiative. Expressing appreciation for what involvement offers, 70% report a good to very good likelihood that they would advise others to participate and 90% of Community Members report that it would be good to very good to participate again next year.

Community Members raised questions about the meaning of "engaging with" and "partnership." One participant cautioned it is important to cultivate relationships with classroom teachers; in some schools where Indigenous community liaison workers are delegated the relationship building tasks it can result in a situation in which Indigenous people (community liaison workers, language and culture teachers, Board Leads) are positioned in opposition to non-Indigenous Educators. There is some concern among Community Members of a move away from inviting Community Members in from the start to do co-planning to limiting engagement through a consulting role. In more than one instance, participants commented on DSBs coming to the community for approval of a plan rather than inviting them in to co-plan. Community Members would like the DSB team to have more time to listen and learn from and

with Community Members. They would like to have more opportunities to meet and engage with classroom teachers working in collaboration to co-plan events that provide learning experiences for both teachers and students.

Similar with Educators' responses Community Members express appreciation for the Face-to-Face sessions that allow for sharing of strategies and approaches to the initiative. They learn from attending the meetings and are inspired to continue the work. They would like to see the results of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry Initiative shared more widely across the province: "the presentation needs to be made to more than just the champions in the room" (CM10, p.7).

In closing, a Community Member reflected "when those kids come up to you and are excited about who they are and are looking for opportunities to share what they've learned" (CM8, p.2) you know it's a good thing happening.

4.5 Next Steps: Topics for Discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Sessions

Reviewing the data from *Community Members*, I have identified four key topics for discussion at the Fall 2016 Face-to-Face Gatherings.

- Working In Collaboration With Community Members
- Working With Community Members To Identify Resources
- Responding To Gaps In Students' Learning

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Appendix A

Letter of Introduction to the Directors of Education

To: Directors of Education

Date: April 25, 2016

From: Dr. Susan D. Dion
Educator/Researcher
SD Dion Consulting – Indigenous Research and Education

Subject: First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry Initiative
The Listening Stone Project Year Three: Learning From the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry Initiative

As you are aware, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) has commissioned a study regarding the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry initiative. As the Principal Investigator (PI) for the study, it is my pleasure to provide some additional details regarding the information being gathered in April and May 2016.

During the 2015-2016 school year your board, along with 43 other boards, participated in the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry initiative. The purpose of this initiative has been to Increase student well-being and achievement, support positive relationships with FNMI communities, and Increased knowledge, understanding and awareness of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives for all staff and students. Some DSBs are continuing work started in previous years others are participating for the first time.

As an Indigenous Researcher/Educator, with more than 25 years of experience, I am pleased to be leading the team capturing the stories generated by the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry initiative. Informed by Indigenous research practices and protocols, my work is guided by the following principles: respect for existing knowledge and relationships within community, respect for Indigenous worldviews and traditions, action in support of the development of capacity and skill building, collaboration throughout the process, and ongoing response to community requests for involvement (Absolon and Wilett, 2004).

My work will involve gathering information from both FNMI Community Members and board participants in the FNMI collaborative inquiry. The focus of the work is to gather stories that reflect what has been accomplished through this initiative relative to the following goals:

Primary Goal:

- Increased student well-being and achievement

Supporting Goals:

- Increased knowledge, understanding and awareness of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives for all staff and students
- Increased community engagement of First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners

Provincial findings will be captured in a final report entitled: ***The Listening Stone Project Year Three: Learning From the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Focused Collaborative Inquiry Initiative 2015-2016.***

In May participants will be invited to complete a survey; and, if interested, take part in individual phone interviews. All identifying markers will be removed from the data. Participants will be asked to provide informed consent verbally and/or electronically. Anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of the data will be ensured. Findings will be reported in summary format, individual boards will not be identified.

Assisting me will be the following: Angela Salamanca, M.Ed., Faculty of Education, York University; Krista Johnston, PhD, Gender and Women's Studies, York University; Michael Dion, First Nations, Researcher/Writer.

Highlights of the findings will be shared with the Council of Directors of Education (CODE) who will share this information with the Ministry of Education and participating school boards. Most importantly, the project will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of how to respond to the needs of Indigenous students.

I would be most pleased to answer any questions or concerns that you may have about this project. Thank you for your leadership and support in this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Susan Dion Ph.D.
Lead Investigator
sdion@edu.yorku.ca.
Phone: 416 435-8930

Assent Script for Over-the-Phone Interviews*

Date of Interview: _____

Name of Researcher: _____

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a researcher with the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry Initiative called the Listening Stone Project led by Dr. Susan Dion. Can I ask you questions about your experience participating in the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry? Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous

You can say "pass" if there are any questions you do not want to answer. If you want to stop the interview at any time, just say so. The interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes depending on your responses. Your name will not appear on the interview transcript. I will only describe your role as _____ (Teacher/SWST/Principal/Board Lead/ Centrally Assigned Support Staff/Community Member)

Appendix B

Interview Schedules and Survey Questions

LSY3 Interview Questions Educators For First Time Participants

Note to RAs please use this interview schedule if this is the participants first year taking part in the CI. It is based on the individual's experience not the school or the school board.

- 1) How and why did you become involved in the FNMI CI?
- 2) How would you describe the status/priority of FNMI Education in your School Board, and in your school community?
- 3) What do you know about the FNMI CI?
- 4) How do you feel about the FNMI CI?
- 5) What do you hope to learn from participating in the FNMI CI?
- 6) What are your current concerns with participating in the FNMI CI?
- 7) How would you describe current relationships between your school and the local FNMI Community?
- 8) What would you say is the most significant need in your school and or Board with regard to FNMI student achievement and wellbeing?
- 9) What are the most significant challenges teachers confront in teaching FNMI content?
- 10) Is there anything else you want to share about the FNMI CI?

LSY3 Interview Questions For Second/Third Year Participants

Interview Questions Educators who participated in either year 1 and or year 2.

- 1) Describe your involvement in the FNMI CI – explain any differences over the years of the inquiry initiative.
- 2) How has being a part of this CI impacted your learning and your work?
- 3) In what ways has the CI continued to affect school-FNMI community relationships?
- 4) What would you do next to further cultivate positive relationships between local FNMI communities and your school communities?
- 5) What strategies did your FNMI CI team use to gather evidence of impact on students?
- 6) Did and if so how did FNMI students benefit from participating in this initiative for a second/third year?
- 7) How did FNMI students respond to participating in the initiative for a second/third year? What stories do they tell about their learning?
- 8) What would you say is the most significant need in your school/DSB with regard to FNMI student wellbeing and achievement?
- 9) What are the most significant challenges teachers confront in teaching FNMI content?
- 10) Is there anything else you want to share about the FNMI CI?

On line Survey Questions DSBs Educators

1. What District School Board are you associated with?

- 1a) Rainy River
- 1b) Lakehead
- 1c) Keewatin Patricia
- 1d) Thunder Bay Catholic
- 1e) Near North
- 1f) Northeast Catholic
- 1g) DSB North East
- 1h) Nipissing Catholic
- 1i) Rainbow
- 1j) Simcoe County
- 1k) Toronto
- 1l) Grand Erie
- 1m) Hastings Prince Edward County
- 1n) Thames Valley

- 2a) Lambton Kent
- 2b) Ottawa-Carleton
- 2c) Kenora Catholic
- 2d) Superior North Catholic
- 2e) Huron Superior Catholic
- 2f) Moose Factory Island
- 2g) Kawartha Pine Ridge

- 3a) Bluewater
- 3b) Durham
- 3c) Durham Catholic
- 3d) Greater Essex County
- 3e) Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic
- 3f) Hamilton-Wentworth
- 3g) Niagara Catholic
- 3h) Waterloo Catholic
- 3i) Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic
- 3j) Catholic DSB of Eastern Ontario
- 3k) Limestone
- 3l) Ottawa Catholic
- 3m) Renfrew County
- 3n) Upper Canada
- 3o) Northeastern Catholic
- 3p) Nouvel-Ontario
- 3q) Sudbury Catholic
- 3r) Northwest Catholic
- 3s) Superior-Greenstone

2. What is your position/or association with the DSB?

- a. Teacher
- b. Principal/Vice Principal
- c. Support Staff
- d. SWST
- e. Student Support
- f. Other: _____

3. Do you self-identify as FNMI? Yes/No

4. This was my (not you school board but you personally)

- a) First Year Participating in the FNMI CI Yes/No
- b) Second Year Participating in the FNMI CI Yes/No
- c) Third Year Participating in the FNMI CI Yes/No

When responding to the questions use this scale 0-not at all 1-fair 2-good 3-very good 4-Not Applicable

Participation in the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry:

- 5. Is having a positive impact on my knowledge and understanding of FNMI history, culture and perspectives.
- 6. Is having a positive impact on my capacity to teach FNMI content.
- 7. Is increasing the use of FNMI resources in my teaching.
- 8. Is increasing my knowledge of FNMI community concerns.
- 9. Is having a positive impact on school & local FNMI community relationships.
- 10. Is having a positive impact on FNMI students' feelings of belonging at school.
- 11. Is having a positive impact on FNMI student attendance rates.
- 12. Is having a positive impact on FNMI students' participation in the school community.
- 13. Is having a positive impact on FNMI student achievement.
- 14. I would advise my colleagues/Community Members to get involved in the *FNMI Collaborative Inquiry*.
- 15. Is creating opportunities for me to hear FNMI Students' Voices.
- 16. Is contributing to improved relationships between FNMI students and their teachers.
- 17. Is contributing to improved relationships between FNMI students and their peers.
- 18. It will be beneficial for me to participate in the CI again next year.
- 19. My school community has good relationships with the local FNMI Communities
- 20. I have good relationships with the local FNMI Communities
- 21. I am confident approaching FNMI Community Members to visit and work with students in my class
- 22. FNMI Community Members are regular (once a month) visitors in my school

23. I include FNMI content in my teaching on a regular (once a month) basis
24. Indigenous authored books are regularly on display in my school library
25. I regularly hear Indigenous language spoken in my school
26. I consistently see positive representations of Indigenous people displayed in my school
27. FNMI students are active participants in school extra-curricular activities at my school
28. FNMI parents are active participants in our school community
29. FNMI students are regularly the subject of positive attention in our school community
30. Teachers in my school are knowledgeable of local FNMI histories and cultures

If this was your second or third year participating in the FNMI CI please respond to these additional questions.

Participating in the FNMI CI for a second/third year:

31. Provided me the opportunity to build on the learning I started in my previous year.
32. Had a significant impact on what the school was able to accomplish.
33. Had a significant impact on what I was able to accomplish.
34. Had a positive impact on FNMI students.
35. Had a positive impact on all students.

Interview Questions FNMI Community Members Participating in Collaborative Inquiry

1) Describe your involvement with your local District School Board?

If they have not been involved with the FNMI CI proceed to Question 9

2) As a participant in the CI what was the most significant learning event for you?

3) Has the CI affected school – community relationships? How would you describe the impacts?

4) What would you suggest the DSB do to further cultivate positive relationships between local FNMI communities and the school communities?

5) Did this project have a positive impact on the relationship between FNMI students and the whole of the school community including their peers, teachers, and principals?

6) How did FNMI students benefit from this project?

7) How did students respond to the initiative, what stories do they tell about their learning?

8) Ask all Community Members these questions

9) What would you say is the most significant need with regard to FNMI student achievement and wellbeing in your local community?

10) How would you describe the current relationship between the FNMI community and the school community?

11) What could classroom teachers do to improve home-school relationships?

12) What changes need to happen in schools to improve education for Indigenous students?

13) Is there anything else you want to add?

On line Survey Questions Community Members

- 1) Is this your
 - a. First Year Participating in the FNMI CI
 - b. Second Year Participating in the FNMI CI
 - c. Third Year Participating in the FNMI CI

- 2) Do you self-identify as FNMI? Yes/No

When responding to the questions use this scale 0-not at all 1-fair 2-good 3-very good 4-Not Applicable

Participation in the FNMI Collaborative Inquiry:

- 3) Is having a positive impact on my knowledge of the local school board.
- 4) Is having a positive impact on my knowledge of the local school.
- 5) Is having a positive impact on my relationship with teachers at the local school.
- 6) Is providing an opportunity of me to share FNMI community concerns with the school staff.
- 7) Is having a positive impact on school & local FNMI community relationships.
- 8) Is having a positive impact on FNMI students' feelings of belonging at school.
- 9) Is having a positive impact on FNMI student attendance rates.
- 10) Is having a positive impact on FNMI students' participation in the school community.
- 11) Is creating opportunities for me to learn from FNMI Students.
- 12) Is contributing to improved relationships between FNMI students and their teachers.
- 13) Is contributing to improved relationships between FNMI students and their peers.
- 14) It will be beneficial for me to participate in the CI again next year.
- 15) I would advise other members of my community to get involved in the *FNMI Collaborative Inquiry*.
- 16) I consistently see positive representations of Indigenous people displayed in the local schools.
- 17) FNMI students are active participants in school extra-curricular activities.
- 18) FNMI parents are active participants in the local schools.
- 19) FNMI students regularly receive positive attention in the local school community.
- 20) Teachers at the local schools are knowledgeable about FNMI histories and cultures.