

5. Detailed description: Provide a detailed description of the project including, when possible:

a) Who was involved in the implementation?

Two staff members were troubled by the low attendance and achievement rates of our Indigenous students. We took our data to the Lloydminster Friendship Centre, explained that we knew we had a problem, but we didn't know how to fix it, and asked if they had any insight. They helped us to create a plan to develop cultural programming geared at the young adult stage of life that would be relevant to middle school students.

b) How you measured the impact?

Impact has not yet been measured, as only the initial data was used to inspire the project, and subsequent data has not yet been collected to measure whether the program had impact on that particular data set.

c) Reflecting on the impact that was realized, how successful were you in achieving the desired outcome that was identified (include evidence that supports your conclusion)?

We feel that an impact on achievement data is just an added bonus to finally providing teachings and knowledge that is culturally relevant to Indigenous students and allowing to see their culture at work and in practice in their school. Some students are more settled in class, and are more willing to connect with others that they previously would not have.

d) Other factors that might have led to the impact.

At E.S. Laird Middle School, the addition in programming of a Cree culture class and a Cree language class, both taught by a Cree teacher, is expected to play a role in any additional impact measured.

e) Challenges that were experienced and how those were mitigated (if they were).

Identifying which students might most enjoy the program was challenging. Communicating to staff names of students and times and dates of sessions was sometimes challenging.

Some students that are identified as being good fits, still struggled with attendance and missed sessions. Some students who were identified by their registration forms as First Nations, Metis or Inuit did not identify with their culture. All students were offered the chance to try out the program once with no pressure to continue if they didn't like it. No students quit, but they have brought other students along with them.

f) Policy or procedure changes that were required.

We had to gain clearance in order to be able to smudge in the school. This was easy in our buildings, but might be challenging in some.

g) Lessons learned.

There was an eagerness for cooperation from both the Friendship Center and the schools. It feels like we had talked about doing something like this for years and finally did.

h) Ongoing plans or enhancements.

Relationships have been built with the Friendship Centre, and that has allowed us to extend other programming opportunities to our students. Some of the students participating in the program will be part of a student committee created to help plan our Indigenous Cultural Day later in the year.

i) Suggestions for others.

Make a connection to the Friendship Center in your community. Be open to talk and open to ideas.

j) Costs that were incurred.

Tobacco for inviting elders and knowledge keepers in to talk.

Food provided for students at sessions, as they missed part of their break or lunch hour.

k) Responses/reactions from parents, students, staff.

Positive - staff were supportive, students were cautiously excited and on board, and one knowledge keeper from the Friendship said she was "honored" by the program.

One student expressed her gratitude for a program like this, because she had never received any of these teachings because her grandmother had passed away before she could share them with the student or her mother. She told us that she felt that she finally belonged somewhere.

l) Other