



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

School Board: Moosonee District School Board

Contact Person and Email Address: Betty Gunner, FNMI Lead

Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Aboriginal Focus Group Activities (AFGs)

Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy

Attachment: AFG Newsletter

Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

The focus is on practices that excite, engage and increase student confidence, achievement and well-being. In the brief description please provide answers to the following questions: Where the program/initiative/strategy is delivered (school/board locations)? Who is responsible for delivering and monitoring the program/initiative/strategy? Who is the target audience? Are there any community partnerships involved? Are there any staffing or budget implications? Are there any special resources required? What are your indicators of success, etc.?

We invite knowledge keepers, elders and community people into the school to share their cultural knowledge, skills and experiences with students from kindergarten to grade eight through AFGs. This initiative is a hands-on experiential-learning program delivered in the classroom, in the community and on the land. Cultural experiences include beading and sewing, cooking traditional foods, stories and legends, native art, trapping and fur preparation, soapstone carving, moss bags and tikanagans, traditional teachings in a teepee, making and setting snares, step-dancing, and tamarack bird-making. These activities have taken place throughout the school year in keeping with the Cree people's annual cycle of life.

AFGs are an extremely effective way to engage our First Nations students. Boards considering this approach need to give a respectful honorarium and the necessary resources to the elders, knowledge keepers and community members who take the time to share their cultural traditions, skills and experience. Coordinating community partners, classrooms, resources and staff is also essential in order for AFGs to be successful.

What has been the impact on Student Learning?

We have found AFGs to be culturally responsive to our children and their community. These experiences have been well-received by the students, staff, families and community members. Moreover, this finding has been supported by positive student and staff feedback from several surveys conducted this year.

Significantly, we have found an enhanced sense of cultural identity among our students, as well as positive student engagement and a noticeable decrease in aberrant behaviour. The same amount of care that is given to provincial curriculum must also be given to cultural curriculum to ensure success for Indigenous students.