

Chasing the Dream

The Long Road of
Rebuilding Community

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Introduction – Aanii, Boozhoo

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the traditional and ancestral territory of the First Nation people in our respective communities in which we are learning, working, and organizing today. We pay our respects to the members past and present with honor and gratitude. Our citizens have stewarded this land throughout the generations, and I am confident that we will work together in harmony with the best of intentions today.

Manitoulin Island – Mnidoo Minising

- Zhiibaahaasing First Nation
- Sheshegwaning First Nation
- Aundek Omni Kaning First Nation
- M'Chigeeng First Nation
- Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory
- Sheguiandah First Nation



Ojibwe, Odawa,
Pottowatami People -
The Anishinabek

It is winter-time and for the Anishinabek people, winter is the time for telling stories. We embed teachings into those stories and it is one of the ways we pass information to the next generation – we listen and digest information in order to make sense of our world through experience and through language.



Nanabush – The Great Teacher

In those stories, one of the Anishinabe teachers is a being named Nanabush, or Nanaboozhoo who imparts lessons through his adventures and misfortunes. A being who has the ability to communicate with nature and shape shift. So much so that when he left, he said he would return in one form or another.





Greetings and Welcome

We have been patiently waiting so much so that we have internalized that anticipation into our greeting. That is why I said Aanii, Boozhoo – its actually in the form of a question. Hello, are you Nanaboozhoo, returned home in a different form to continue your teachings? For us, teachings are embedded in Anishnabemowin – Ojibwe.



Colonization – Indian Residential School System



For FN people all across Canada, the colonization of FN territories brought with it an attempt to stamp out those lessons entrenched in the languages by removing students from their connections to it.

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Family Ties

My aunts and uncles attended those very IRS we see in the news – The Spanish IRS on the North Shore of Manitoulin was one of them. My father was sent to a similar Catholic boarding school after my grandmother passed away at an early age - all attempts to put out the fire in them, to lessen the desire to learn and dim their flame – these attempts lasted a century – but it failed. In the 60's and 70's FN educators and leaders took matters into their own hands and started to rewrite history.

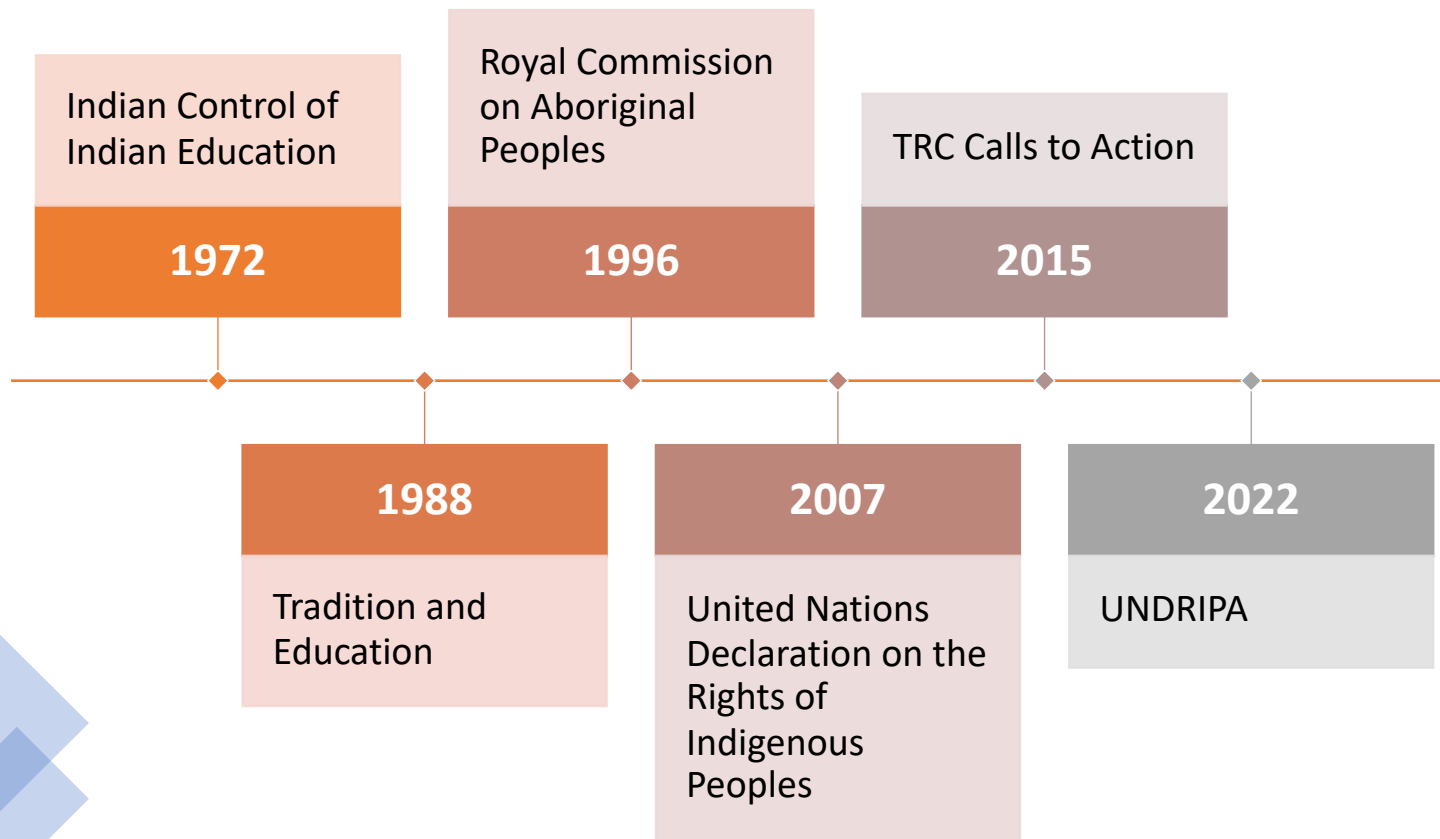
Taking a Stand



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First Nation people insisted that we had the right to educate our own children and start undoing the damage caused by the federal system. The ICIE policy paper paved the way for the 1988 Tradition and Education paper which gave rise to the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and the 2007 United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People report. The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission laid out a path forward and most recently helped UNDRIP become legislated into Canadian Law in the form of an Act - Bill C-15.

Calls for Change



Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission:
Call to action -> *Data*
on Systemic Gaps

Call # 10

Funding should be
sufficient to close gaps in
a generation.

Call #9

We call upon the federal
government to prepare
and publish annual
reports **comparing
funding** for the
education of First
Nations children on and
off reserves, **as well as
educational** and
income **attainment of
Aboriginal peoples in
Canada compared
with non-Aboriginal
people.**

Article 14 Bill C-15

- 1) Indigenous People have the right to establish and control their educational systems providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
- 2) Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education without discrimination
- 3) That indigenous people have access to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

MCHIGEENG FIRST NATION

The tenets of Article 14 are not new to us. We've known them for decades and have been at the root of educational reform in many communities across Canada, including my own community of M'Chigeeng.

We were the first community in Canada to assume local control our education system in the early 80s and started laying down the foundation for change. We understood the daunting task of assuming responsibility of a broken system, the uphill battle of underfunding and underachievement and we knew that the national graduation rate of 27% was not unlike ours - not to mention the state of the Ojibwe language was in crisis.



Legal name – Indian Associations
Coordinating Committee of Ontario Inc.

- A not-for-profit federal corporation since 1982

Purpose - to serve the needs of First
Nations in Ontario by:

- Discussing issues and deciding on priorities
- Coordinating an annual all Ontario Chiefs conference including post conference activities
- Formulating positions and policies by facilitating discussion, planning, monitoring and evaluation of issues

Inadequate Levels of Support Funding

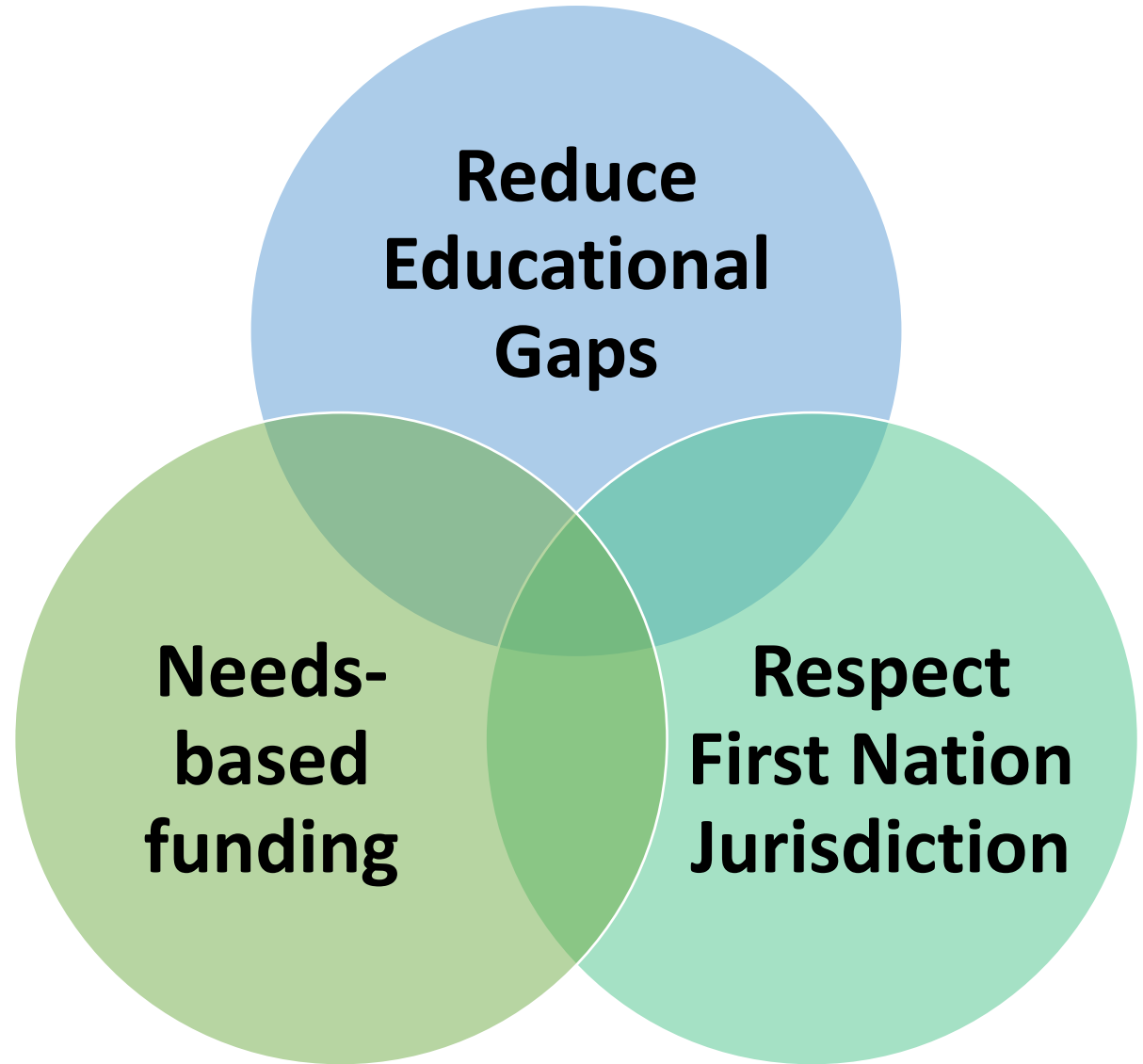
2010 – National FN Graduation rate is approximately 36% compared to the Canadian rate of 72%

2017 – 44% of 18-24 yo FN youth have completed high school cf. to 88% of non-indigenous

Special Needs Identification and Placement rates is 3-5 times the rate of provincial K-12 schools



Recap on
Why is
Change
Needed?



Road to no where?

First Nation educators are aware that attempting to fix the broken machine of education was not going to be easy nor quick. We needed to adopt a strategy moving forward that would help us understand our past and paint a new vision of the future.



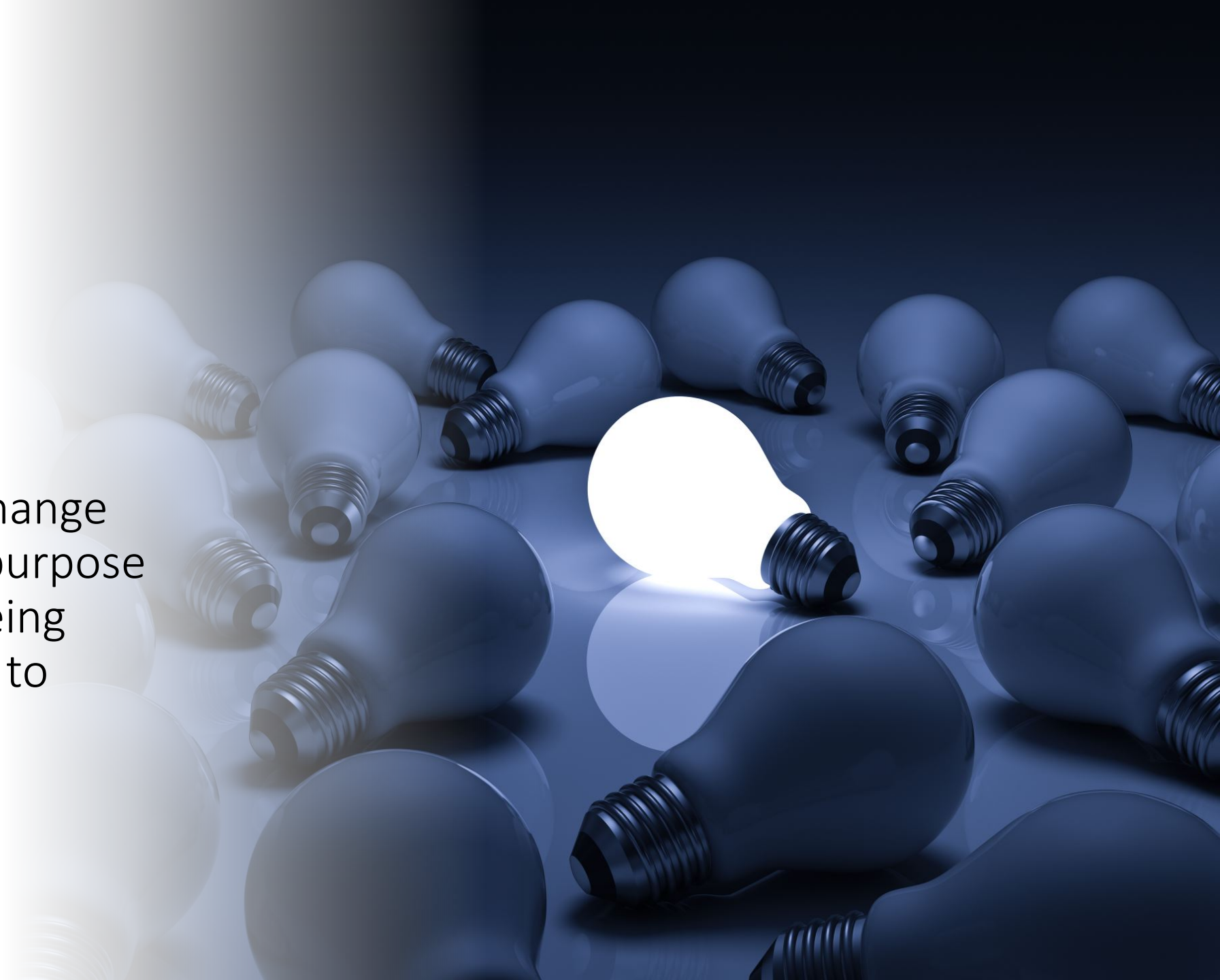
Education Reform

Thankfully, this is not a new concept and there exists a body of work that spells out how any system can approach it. We adopted the work around Professional Learning Communities of Dufour and Eaker, in what we came to know as Paradigm Shift – or as we also refer to 6, 4,1



One Big Idea

We are going to change the fundamental purpose of schools from being places of teaching to places of learning.



The Balanced School Year

A school year that is not entirely based on an agricultural calendar.



A school year that allows access to the outdoor classroom when it is great to be outside.



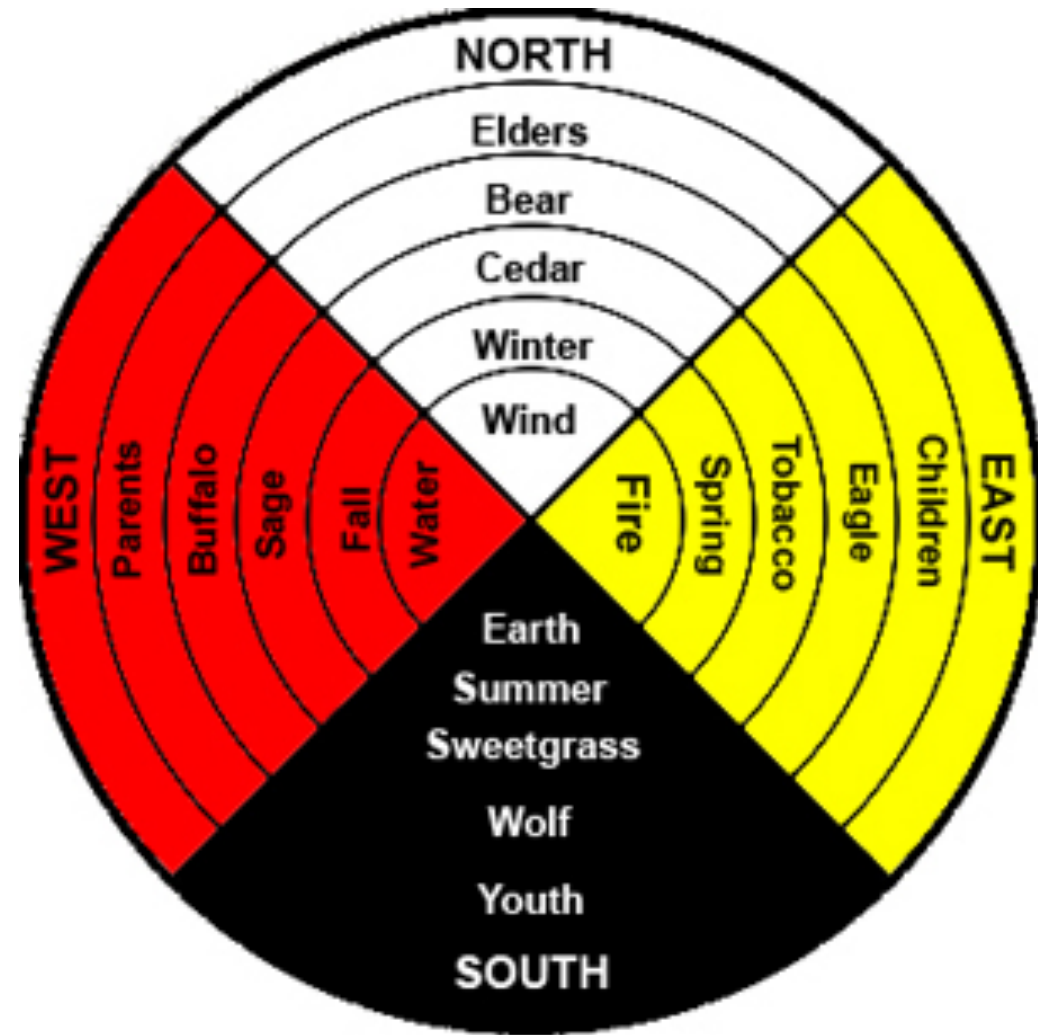
A school year that fits MFN style of thinking...balance.



A school year that allows rest periods for both staff and students.

Medicine Wheel example

- Inclusive of all four seasons...and the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical components of self...



First Nation Education Systems

- Answer 4 key questions:
 - Are we clear in what our students need to know and demonstrate to meet our definition of success?
 - Are we clear in how they demonstrate learning?
 - Are we clear in our response when they aren't learning?
 - Are we clear in how communities can privilege education?
- Professional Learning Communities
 - Common mission, vision, values, goals
 - Collaborative groups
 - Collective Inquiry (challenge status quo)
 - Action oriented
 - Continuous Quality Improvement
 - Results Oriented

Professional Learning Community Process

This is where our relationship with The Learning Bar came into play. Back then, Confident Learners only existed as a research based idea and not a formal program. TLB team was looking for like-minded and willing partners in education that were willing to tackle one of the pillar subject areas – literacy.

We quickly realized that TLB was a PLC like us – a learning organization meaning they had adopted and were practicing those essential characteristics to move systems forward and seeking out the answers to the 4 key questions mentioned earlier.

Common mission, vision values and goals



On a mission with a
Vision of Success

Children grounded in
who they are,
equipped with the
tools to succeed inside
and outside of school.

Forming
collaborative
groups –
rethinking
professional
development

Balanced School year provided us with time - early dismissal for students every Wednesday – it was during these times that we held Ojibwe language classes for teachers, Teachers Study Groups, and Professional Learning Community networking time.

PLC Wednesdays allowed divisions to meet further to discuss their divisional goals and divisional plans. Dialogue, especially in the primary division was designed to be focused on ways to discuss student by student and skill by skill improvement.

Research and evidence-based goals

Primary division –

All students need to read at or above Level 3 (provincial standard) by the end of grade 3.

Rationale

89% of students who read AT grade 3 by the END of grade 3 go on to graduate on time, across all socio-economic populations.

Collective Inquiry

Teacher efficacy was low. A lot of work had to be done in challenging the status quo and having teachers believe that they could make a difference. That just because this has been the way, doesn't mean it has to stay that way.

Classroom practice had to change



Teacher Study Group Topics

Quality Instruction	Engagement	Context	Learning Time
Understanding literacy skill development	Understanding student engagement	Building strong teacher-student relationships	Maximizing classroom learning time
Using literacy data	Using engagement data	Maintaining high expectations	Improving school attendance
Setting visible and challenging instructional goals	Setting visible and challenging goals for engagement	Managing student behaviour	Increasing learning time outside of school
Applying high yield teaching strategies	Applying strategies to increase engagement	Creating a culturally relevant and inclusive learning environment	Developing collaborative practices with families and communities

Critical Friends Framework:

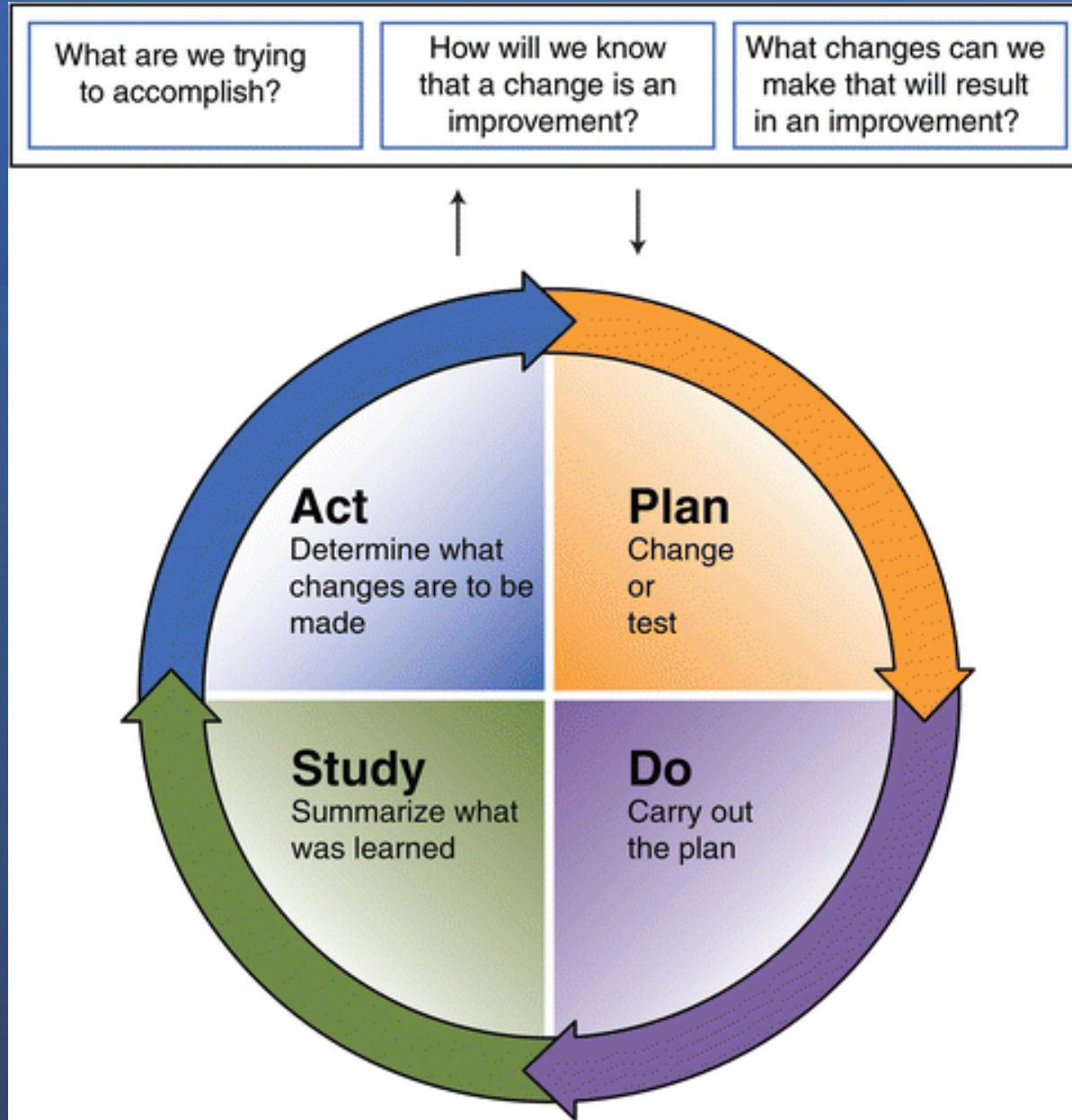
- Before formal performance appraisals the interested participants come together to discuss the performance appraisal.
- They decide which Competencies for the 3 Domains, Commitment to Pupils, Professional Knowledge, and Teaching Practice should be covered.
- Establish a modified observation guide
- Assign Critical Friends and carry out pre-observation, observation, and post-observation meetings

Action Orientation

Seek out new methods of teaching literacy – requires us to adopt a new pedagogical approach that involves the science behind the process – to know that each step on the staircase of reading has ‘look fors’ in student understanding

If students miss steps along their literacy pathway, gaps are created that can cause issues for student later that we as educators have to actively seek out the answers to .

Continuous Quality Improvement



Results Orientation

- In each CQI cycle the staff (through divisional goal setting) required data-oriented goals. These results will drive instruction moving forward in a time-sensitive manner.



Confident Learner and Early Years Evaluation

This is exactly what the CL and EYE program allowed us to do. Through the teachers assessment process we learned (in real time) student placement on their individual literacy pathway and importantly, informed daily instruction

This forced teachers to challenge their own teaching practice and re-evaluate their own success, along with that of their students to revisit areas of concern before moving on to the junior division where they encounter a curriculum that is no longer focused on learning to read by rather focused on being able to read in order to learn – Confident Learners – as it is laid out – helps our system of educators answer those first 2 questions.

Putting the pieces together

- Student engagement/attendance
- Changing classroom Instruction
- Understanding *learning to read* and *reading to learn*
- Evidence-based planning and progress monitoring
- Leading collaborative culture shifts – the PLC process
- Instructional Leadership



Key Questions 3 and 4

The new design of this literacy program we used provides teachers and administrators with on-site professional development along the way. Online course content about the Science of Reading and the Science of Assessment gave educators the background knowledge that we just don't get enough of in teachers college in terms of literacy instruction.



Instructional Leadership

What do I know about teaching literacy?

Weekly check-ins with TLB assigned literacy coaches coupled with coaching sessions for administrators around instructional leadership and leading with intention are in line with creating data focused teams.

As a former Education Director it was always troubling for me to read the stat that 80% of PD that happens off-site stays off-site. Having dedicated experts help the staff in their teaching and evaluation practices was invaluable to me as an administrator.

Are we clear about how the community privileges education?

IF a student has perfect attendance for 18 years in K-12 they still only spend 9% of their time at school. Over 90% of their time is spent in the care of their family. In our case that could be in a community that is still suffering the inter-generational trauma of the residential school system.



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Adult Caregiver Empowerment

Lack of confidence in skillset

Embarrassment or shame

Teachers lack of confidence

Learning together

Milestones

Take 15

Forming partnership

Deconstruct colonialism





“Today a reader,
tomorrow a
leader.”

- *Margaret Fuller*

Thank You!



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