

Ontario First Nation Student Well-Being

Phase II Research Report Presentation

Charting Our Own Path Forward Education Forum

January 18, 2018

Ontario First Nation Student Well-Being Phase II Research Report Presentation

THIS PRESENTATION COVERS:

- ▶ **Background:** Mandate, Focus and Outcomes of Initial Phase I Student Well-Being (SWB) Research
- ▶ **Phase II Research Process:** Purpose/Intent, Participants, Scope, Methods, Questions, Data
- ▶ **Phase II Research Findings:** Defining, Supporting and Measuring First Nation Student Well-Being; Additional Supports Required
- ▶ **Conclusions/Implications**

OFN SWB Research: Background

Mandate: Ontario Chiefs Resolution 45/16 mandated new bilateral Ontario-First Nations Lifelong Learning Table to address priority First Nation education issues (Nov. 2016). Student well-being was identified as a priority in the Lifelong Learning Table work plan

Phase I Research Focus: Environmental scan (April 2017) conducted by COO looked at student well-being across Canada, US and other jurisdictions, incorporating First Nation/Native American/Indigenous perspectives

OFN SWB Research: Background

Outcomes of Phase I Research:

- ▶ **Working Definition of “First Nation student well-being” from Phase I research:**

First Nation learners who, at every stage of their learning journey, are hopeful, confident and thriving in an inclusive, supportive learning environment that is informed by and respectful of Indigenous communities and cultures

- ▶ **Indicators of student well-being:** eg. feeling hopeful and engaged in school; sense of belonging; strengths-based learning

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Process

Purpose/Intent of Phase II Research:

- ▶ Further define student well-being from a First Nations perspective
- ▶ Identify promising practices for supporting First Nation student well-being at the elementary level (K-Grade 8)
- ▶ Identify tools and indicators being used by schools and communities to assess First Nation student well-being and the impact of their approaches

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Process

Phase II Research Participants:

- ▶ COO designed Phase II research to include direct voluntary participation of OFN communities
- ▶ Aug. 2017: COO issued a letter inviting OFN communities to participate in Phase II research
- ▶ 8 First Nation communities expressed interest and agreed to participate: *Aundeck Omni Kaning; Chippewas of the Thames; M'Chigeeng; Migisi Sahgaigan; Sagamok; Saugeen; Sheguiandah; and Wahta Mohawks*

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Process

Phase II Research Scope:

- ▶ Criteria included communities with an elementary school and a strong focus on supporting students, promoting positive relations and cultural identity
- ▶ 4 of the 8 participating First Nation communities do not have their own elementary schools but are working with public schools to incorporate a First Nation approach to student well-being in school
- ▶ Research scope was therefore broadened to include input from either First Nation schools or public schools serving the 8 FN communities

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Process

Research Methods:

- ▶ Sept-Nov 2017: Literature review, community site visits and interviews in 8 FN communities and schools (on/off territory)
- ▶ A total of 84 individuals were interviewed - teachers/educators, parents/community members and Chief/Councillors/education portfolio holders
- ▶ Qualitative research, focused on gaining insights
- ▶ FN ownership/control/access/possession - OCAP

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Process

Research Questions: All participants responded to 4 research questions:

1. What is student well-being?
2. Which programs/initiatives promote student well-being at the school and in the community?
3. How does the school (or how would you) measure student well-being?
4. What other support is needed for student well-being?

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Process

Research Input/Data:

- ▶ The 8 FN communities each received a draft roll-up report of their interview responses to review, and consented to having their input in the final report
- ▶ Input from First Nation schools and public schools was integrated in the research findings (as per Scope)
- ▶ In analyzing input, researchers found *educators'* and *communities'* perspectives on student well-being to be very similar - eg. both educators and community members spoke of student well-being in terms of the Medicine Wheel

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Findings

Defining First Nation Student Well-Being:

- ▶ First Nation student well-being is about holistic balance, ie. having physical, social/emotional, mental and spiritual/cultural needs met and being in balance
- ▶ It means being in a safe and caring environment with strong family and community connections
- ▶ It means students who are able to self-regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviours; who are confident, resilient, responsible for their own well-being and able to meet learning challenges

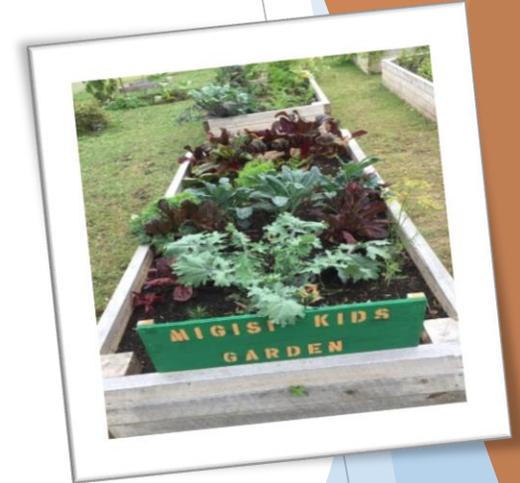


OFN SWB Phase II Research: Findings

Approaches that Support First Nation Student Well-Being:

► PHYSICAL WELL-BEING:

- *School safety* - Safe Arrivals programs, safety plans for individual students with special needs, and “calm rooms”
- *Student nutrition* - breakfast, lunch and snack programs; a “balanced day” schedule to maintain blood sugar levels
- *Physical education and sports* - intramural leagues and community sports programs that support physical health and growth, instil confidence and promote social skills
- *Outdoor education* activities - gardening, watershed repair, canoe trips and land-based teaching incorporating traditional practices



OFN SWB Phase II Research: Findings

- ▶ **EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL WELL-BEING:** Schools are working to:
 - Promote a *sense of belonging* by creating warm, welcoming environments
 - Encourage more *parent engagement*
 - Offer *emotional supports such as counselling*
 - Link to *community mental health services*
 - Offer *empathy programming and assertiveness training*
 - Offer *transition support and intercultural socialization*
 - *Address behavioural issues, reinforce positive behaviours*
 - Utilize practices such as *restorative justice circles*



IMAGE: Antler River Elementary School, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Findings

- ▶ **SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL WELL-BEING** is supported through:
 - *Indigenous language instruction and cultural education* enhanced by community based resource people/materials
 - Use of cultural concepts such as the *Seven Grandfather Teachings* as a framework for character education
 - *Drumming, powwows, dedicated spaces and land-based teachings* that are inclusive and promote cultural pride and understanding



IMAGES: Top: Gathering Place, Glen Orchard Public School (Wahta Mohawks).
Bottom: Migisi Sahgaigan School, Migisi Sahgaigan First Nation

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Findings

► MENTAL/INTELLECTUAL WELL-BEING is supported through:

- Innovative *literacy/numeracy initiatives*
- *Special education* approaches such as one-on-one support, specialists in the classroom, alternative therapies, spaces/equipment to support needs
- *Individual supports and computer technology* to enhance teaching practices
- “*Makerspace*” rooms, *music, arts and career education* to build on students’ strengths and promote confidence and responsibility
- *Tutoring* programs in communities to provide a social setting and help students develop academic skills and enhance their confidence at school



OFN SWB Phase II Research: Findings

System-wide Approaches that Support First Nation Student Well-Being

- ▶ Strong Leadership: eg. an experienced, dedicated Principal
- ▶ Professional Learning Community and Professional Development
- ▶ Cultural Competency in educators
- ▶ Dedicated staff
- ▶ Inclusivity and Reconciliation Initiatives

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Findings

Measuring First Nation Student Well-Being

- ▶ In terms of how schools are measuring First Nation student well-being and tracking the impact of their approaches, the research identified a total of 27 general indicators and over 150 specific measurements for assessing students' physical, emotional/social, spiritual/cultural, and mental/intellectual well-being along with broader system indicators

OFN SWB Phase II Research Findings: Indicators

PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL/ SOCIAL	SPIRITUAL/ CULTURAL	MENTAL/ INTELLECTUAL	SYSTEM-WIDE INDICATORS
Safety	Sense of Belonging	Indigenous Language	Academic Achievement	Attendance
Nutrition	Sense of Trust	Cultural Knowledge	Literacy and Numeracy	Leadership
Physical Activity	Happiness	Cultural Pride	Computer Literacy	Staff
Sleep	Behaviour	Cultural Involvement	High School Graduation	Communications
Health Status	Self-Regulation		Life Skills	PD and PLC
	Empathy and Respect			Cultural Competence
	Peer Relations			Inclusivity
	Confidence			
	Parent Engagement			

OFN SWB Phase II Findings: Additional Supports

- ▶ **PHYSICAL:** Additional or enhanced physical infrastructure, facilities or space; more physical activity programming in school, after-school and in communities
- ▶ **EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL:** Programming that provides positive recognition and builds identity; social/emotional learning programs; programs that promote healthy relationships; mental health counsellors and programming; more communications, parent outreach and support
- ▶ **SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL:** Space designated for cultural/spiritual practices; land based learning; Elders and traditional teachers on-site in schools; more language resources eg. fluent language speakers, language immersion programs, funding and support to fill gaps at primary level

OFN SWB Phase II Findings: Additional Supports

- ▶ **MENTAL/INTELLECTUAL:** More in-class literacy support and testing; more after-school tutoring programs and funding; curriculum enhancements to meet academic standards balanced with Indigenous values, history and practices; more arts programming, career education, student cultural/social exchanges; basic life skills; drug awareness programs. More support and access to professional assessments and specialized services; more facilities, equipment and family supports for students with special learning needs; increased computer technology
- ▶ **SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS:** Professional development, special needs accreditation, cultural competency, recognition of education staff, and more funding for salaries and pensions, school programs and operations, bussing etc, more collaboration and professional information-sharing, and more capacity building to promote community wellness and healthy families

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Conclusions and Implications

- ▶ Global perspectives on student wellbeing as a balance of cognitive, psychological, physical and social development are mirrored in First Nations' worldview - but in non-Indigenous cultures and communities, spiritual/cultural development occurs outside of the school setting
- ▶ First Nation students whose holistic needs are met demonstrate positive self-esteem, resilience, sense of belonging, cultural identity and readiness to learn
- ▶ Despite many challenges, schools and community partners are undertaking inclusive, innovative approaches that successfully promote First Nation student well-being

OFN SWB Phase II Research: Conclusions and Implications

- ▶ In order to fully address First Nation student learning needs, schools and communities require a broad spectrum of additional resources and funding
- ▶ Schools and communities' tools for tracking student well-being are not structured into an overall framework (sample tools were identified in the research, such as the Aboriginal Children's Health and Well-Being Measure, ACHWM). Additional supports are required to enhance the tracking of First Nation student well-being and assess the effectiveness of approaches
- ▶ More community partnerships and dialogue are needed to enhance current approaches and respond to emerging issues