



The Northland School Division (NSD)

Board Highlights Regular Board Meeting – February 20, 2021

NSD finalizing a dual credit program agreement with MacEwan University

Northland students will soon be flashing university identification cards! NSD and MacEwan University are finalizing a dual credit agreement that would give students access to an Indigenous Studies course. The course will introduce students to various aspects of Indigenous culture such as historical, sociological, oral and literacy components. Additional opportunities are built into the course which includes meeting with Elders and participating in ceremonies. It's called "dual credit" as students will receive high school credits as well as three credits with MacEwan University.

The trustees are excited that this agreement will enable students to earn university credits while working towards a high school diploma. An event to formally announce the dual credit agreement between NSD and MacEwan University will be communicated in the near future.

Superintendent highlights accomplishments in the latest Education Quarterly Report

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Spencer-Poitras presented the latest education quarterly report to the Board. The quarterly report highlights progress with meeting or exceeding the following priority areas for Northland School Division:

- Excellence in Leadership
- Excellence in Relationships
- Excellence in Learning
- Excellence in Financial Practices

Accomplishment highlight for Excellence in Leadership:

- The Board, with support from the Administration, are focused on making sure everyone feels welcome and valued through excellent leadership practices. This year, administration is organizing activities to boost staff morale. One such activity drew high praise from the hundreds of staff that attended.
- NSD continues to make progress with improving housing for staff.

Accomplishment highlight for Excellence in Relationships

- The Board, with support from Dr. Spencer-Poitras, are meeting regularly with communities to keep them up to date on programming and COVID-19 related topics. Being able to use technology tools such as Zoom (video conferencing) is allowing NSD to meet with communities regularly instead of once or twice a year.

Accomplishment highlight for Excellence in Learning

- NSD is involved in a three-year initiative with SMARTLearning. Working with SMARTLearning is designed to inspire confidence and foster deeper learning by building concepts and competencies for powerful reading and writing across the entire curriculum.
- The Board of Trustees approved the 2020-2023 Three Year Education Plan and 2019-2020 Annual Education Results Report (3YP/AERR) in November <https://www.nsd61.ca/download/315661>.

Accomplishment highlight for Excellence in Financial Practices

- Administration has been monitoring expenses closely and on a monthly basis with the Board. Given the cost pressures and the operations dynamic of the pandemic, particularly for maintenance/cleaning, resources have been carefully used, or reallocated as much as possible to address changing priorities. With 42% of the fiscal year completed January 31st, the division has received 42% of its planned revenues while spending 39% of its planned expenditure budget.
- The division remains on track for its goal of a balanced budget this year.

The Education Quarterly Report also includes a number of good news stories. For example, a number of NSD students experienced an exclusive event presented by the TELUS World of Science – Edmonton team in January. During this exclusive event, NSD students participated in 30-40-minute sessions/demonstrations by the Science in Motion staff. The team provided explanations of daily learning challenges for the students. The challenges included building a lean-to, constructing cardboard snowshoes, learning how to make a snow volcano and spruce gum tea, just to name a few. Click on the website link to view the entire report <https://www.nsd61.ca/download/331691> (page 33).

Positive growth highlighted in the Student Attendance Report

Director of Student Engagement, Attendance and Completion Don Tessier provided an update to the Board about the division's work to monitor and improve student attendance. The report highlights year to year division attendance comparison and attendance statistics for January 2021. Despite challenges during the pandemic, eight schools showed a positive attendance growth in January 2021 when compared to January 2020. Click here to view the entire report <https://www.nsd61.ca/download/331691> (page 59).

Student Services Department highlighted changes with IPPs and specialized service delivery

The Student Services Report highlighted accomplishments and challenges in the 2020-2021 school year. In the spring of 2020, NSD began using a new Individualized Program Plan within Powerschool. The new site is embedded into NSD's student information system. Powerschool is a student information system which enables NSD schools to be more efficient with respect to developing Individualized Program Plans and assessing students on a plan tailored to their needs. Through the spring and fall of 2020, Student Services hosted a number of professional learning sessions to provide training and support for teachers and administrators.

With some families electing to have their children participate in at-home learning, the Student Services Department has been focused on making sure these students still have access to all the learning

materials and support they need. In addition, they play an important role in ensuring schools receive the required personal protective equipment (e.g. masks). Director of Students Services Stephanie Sutherland said with support from Ever Active Schools, NSD received a donation of masks from Canadian Tire Jumpstart. The Board of Trustees expressed their appreciation to Ever Active Schools and Canadian Tire Jumpstart. Click here to view the entire report <https://www.nsd61.ca/download/331691> (page 64).

Trustees learn about a technology tool NSD educators use to support student learning

The trustees learned about another technology tool that is benefiting student learning. The learning tool is called Screencastify. While demonstrating the learning tool, Associate Superintendent Tim Stensland explained that Screencastify allows NSD educators to record video and audio to support lesson plans. Students are also using the learning tool to record themselves reading, which helps support assessment.

NSD students nominated for an ASBA award & Indigenous language and land-based learning update

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nancy Spencer-Poitras initially spoke about the Honouring Spirit: Indigenous Student Awards. The Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) awards recognize First Nations, Métis and Inuit students who model strength and commitment in the pursuit of their personal education path and embrace their own gifts, strengths and potential while celebrating the ways of their people.

This year, Career Pathways school student Mercedes Ominayak and Fort McKay school student Samuel River Cree were nominated for an award. Ms. Ryll, who nominated Mercedes, stated that “Mercede always pushes herself to achieve the very best she can academically, which sets her apart from other students. Mercede shows great courage and commitment in pursuing her educational path and is her own biggest motivator regarding post-secondary.”

Fort McKay school Principal Michelle Wile nominated Samuel. She said, “While Samuel is known for his kindness and care, he also exhibits all of the traditional teachings in his actions and interactions within the school. Samuel is known for his wisdom not only about his traditional knowledge, but also his commitment to literacy as well as many other academic subjects. Samuel demonstrates what it means to do the right thing in every situation, and this is demonstrated through his actions as well as his encouragement to the students in the classroom.”

Spencer-Poitras also updated the work taking place to support Indigenous language education. Supervisor of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Language and Culture and Land Based Learning Debbie Mineault and Assistant Supervisor Connie Twin, have been developing a vision to revitalize the Cree, Dene and Michif languages in the Northland School Division. Language instructors utilize vocabulary flash cards and syllabic blocks and charts to support language development. The goal for the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Language and Culture and Land Based Learning team is to further align resources with the knowledge in NSD communities.

To support this movement, the following strategies have been established:

- Cree Language Instructors are working with Linguistic and Knowledge Keepers Charles Houle and Dene Instructors are conversing with Elder John Janvier and Linguistic Educator Lynda Minoose.
- The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Language and Culture and Land Based Learning team launched a mentorship program. The language instructors with at least 20 years of experience are working with the younger instructors.
- The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Language and Culture and Land Based Learning team established weekly Zoom (video conferencing) sessions. The sessions encourage language instructors to share and model, which helps with creating resources to help students with learning an Indigenous language.
- Utilizing technology tools such as Screencastify to share knowledge.

Stay safe everyone!

View Board Schedule, Agendas, Minutes, Highlights and Attachments on our website at <https://www.nsd61.ca/governance/board-meeting-agenda-minutes>.

Next Regular Board Meeting is Saturday, March 20, 2021

Note: These writings do not constitute the official record of the Northland School Division. They are however, provided as general information relating to action taken at board meetings. For further information, please call 780-624-2060 or 1-800-362-1360.