



What We Heard Report Superintendent's Youth Council



December 3, 2024 Meeting



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Overview

The Superintendent’s Youth Council held its first meeting on December 3, 2024, bringing together 10 students—eight in-person and two virtually—to share their ideas, provide feedback, and help shape decisions impacting their education and communities. This report summarizes key themes and suggestions shared by council members, highlighting their vision for an inclusive and engaging school experience.

Students emphasized the importance of respectful communication, active participation, and creating action-oriented solutions during meetings. They also shared valuable insights on enhancing classroom engagement, improving extracurricular activities, and strengthening connections through field trips and community-focused initiatives.

Key feedback included ideas for creating school and community showcase videos to support attraction and retention efforts, suggestions for removing outdated playground equipment, and expanding extracurricular opportunities such as hockey teams and cultural workshops. Students also expressed a desire for field trip exchanges to build relationships between schools and enhance learning experiences through hands-on and cultural activities.

This report reflects the diverse perspectives of the 10 Youth Council members and highlights actionable steps to enhance their educational experience and sense of belonging within the Northland School Division.

Youth Council Feedback



This section of the report summarizes the key themes NSD heard from members of the Superintendent’s Youth Council.

What is important to you when hosting the Superintendent’s Youth Council meetings?

- 1. Respect**
 - Respect for backgrounds, opinions/perspectives, and time.
 - Respect everyone attending.

2. Participation

- Actively participate in the meeting.
- Have the courage to talk and "speak your mind."

3. Communication

- Engage in respectful dialogue.
- Listen closely to everyone.
- Share thoughts and ideas with others.

4. Focus and Presence

- Be present during the meeting.
- Avoid distractions like phones.

5. Action-Oriented Approach

- Emphasize forming a plan that is action and solution-oriented.
- Encourage hands-on and constructive ideas.

Attraction and Retention Questions

● Individual school video

- **What would we want to include in the video?**
- **What would the video look like?**
- **What do you need to bring back for next time to create the video?**
 - **Short clips**
 - **Interviews**
 - **Pictures**
 - **stories/history of the community**



What to include in the video:

1. Community Highlights:

- Nature & Activities:
 - Beautiful natural features such as lakes, bays, and wilderness.
 - Recreational activities like fishing, hiking, camping, canoeing, and boating.
 - Land-based practices such as hunting, trapping, berry picking, and harvesting traditional medicine.
- Culture & Traditions:
 - Cree and Métis cultural elements, including language, traditions, and land-based learning.
 - Community celebrations and gatherings.

2. School Highlights:
 - Facilities & Programs:
 - New/up-to-date schools and technology.
 - Unique learning opportunities such as land-based learning, Cree classes, and traditional knowledge.
 - Extracurricular options like sports, arts, and academic support.
 - Community Connection:
 - Schools connected to local culture and history.
 - Engaging community-based learning experiences like culture camps and community involvement.
 - Supportive Environment:
 - Friendly staff and students.
 - Free lunches, bus services, and guidance support.
3. Unique Selling Points:
 - Focus on the quiet, safe, and supportive environment compared to urban areas.
 - Opportunities for traditional and modern learning experiences.

What the video should look like:

- Visuals:
 - Short clips showcasing nature, recreational activities, and cultural practices.
 - Footage of school facilities, classrooms, and extracurricular activities.
- Interviews:
 - Stories from staff, students, and community members to highlight experiences.
 - Personal testimonials about the unique aspects of the schools and communities.
- Storytelling:
 - Use local stories and history to connect emotionally with viewers.
 - Showcase the welcoming and kind nature of the community and school environment.

What to bring back for next time:

- Content:
 - Pictures and short clips of the school, students, and community events.
 - Stories or interviews that reflect the cultural and educational aspects of the community.
- Resources:
 - Historical insights about the community to include in the narrative.
 - Ideas for how to capture engaging and authentic footage.

Classroom Engagement and Extracurricular Activities

- What classes do they find engaging?
- How can we make the ones that are not engaging more interesting/real?
- What is missing in your school?
- What could go?
- Northland Games suggestions
 - When?
 - Where?
 - What events?
- What extracurricular activities do you have? What do you want?
- What else would you like to tell us?



1. Engaging classes:

- Popular and engaging subjects include:
 - Art, Music, and Physical Education (P.E.).
 - Hands-on classes like Cooking, Outdoor Education, Woodworking, and CTF (Career and Technology Foundations).
 - Poetry and creative writing are also highlighted for self-expression.

2. Making classes more engaging:

- Suggestions for improvement:
 - Incorporate hands-on activities and real-world applications (e.g., taking Math

outdoors).

- Use better supplies and resources for classes like Art.
- Include more opportunities for student involvement through engaging questions and interactive projects.
- Provide variety and ensure teachers are accessible for individual needs.

3. What's missing in schools:

- Resources:
 - Working water fountains and healthy lunch options.
 - Access to more music programs, library books, and better Art supplies.
- Activities:
 - Workshops in Beading, Drama, and Art.
 - Clubs for Religion, Arts & Crafts, and Homework Support.
 - After school programs in Art, Soccer, etc.
- Infrastructure:
 - Larger gymnasiums and improved playgrounds.
- Support Services:
 - Mental health supports and guidance.

4. What Could Go:

- Few suggestions, but some noted removing outdated playground equipment or facilities not actively used.

5. Northland Games suggestions:

- Timing:
 - Host the event at the end of the school year.
- Location:
 - Suggested sites include Grouard, Anzac, or Wabasca.
- Events:
 - Swimming, Volleyball, Track & Field, and Moose Camp activities.
 - Adding Hockey and Football as new options.
 - Best not to have boys compete against girls.

6. Extracurricular Activities:

- Existing activities:
 - Sports (Volleyball, Baseball, Badminton).
 - Tutoring, Dance, and Chess.
 - Clubs for Debate, Cooking, and more.
- Desired additions:
 - Hockey teams, Drama clubs, and after-school programs for various interests.
 - Practicum and work experience opportunities for high school students.
 - Certifications (e.g., Chainsaw Safety, First Aid, Food Safe).

7. Additional Comments:

- Gratitude expressed for current opportunities, with requests for continued engagement and improvements.
- Desire for a better connection between students, teachers, and the community.
- Improved access to outdoor and cultural learning opportunities.

Can you remember?

- **A staff member that you really got along well with?**
 - **What made them special?**
 - **What qualities did they have that you really liked?**
 - **A staff member you really struggled with?**
 - **What did you disagree on?**
 - **Did something happen that hurt your relationship with them?**

Positive experiences with staff: Students appreciated when staff supported their interests and ideas, such as forming a team or club based on student suggestions. They valued teachers who demonstrated care and inclusivity, making everyone feel welcome and heard in the classroom.

Challenges with staff: Some students shared experiences where they felt their voices were not heard, such as being accused unfairly without an opportunity to explain their perspective. These moments highlight the importance of fostering open communication and trust between students and staff.

Field Trip Research Questions

- What is in Alberta to see and learn about?
- How would you get there?
- Where would you stay?
- What would you do?
 - Fun
 - Learning



Feedback from online students

- Drumheller (from Anzac/Janvier to Drumheller by bus with an overnight and visit to TWOS in Edmonton on the way down).
 - Students participated in a mock planning exercise to determine the cost of a field trip.
- Learning: Dinosaurs, Science, physical and social history.

Summary of all feedback

1. What is in Alberta to See and Learn About?

Popular Destinations:

- Drumheller (Royal Tyrrell Museum):
 - Learn about dinosaurs, paleontology, and Alberta's prehistoric history.
- Jasper/Banff National Parks:
 - Explore mountains, glaciers (e.g., Athabasca Glacier), ice fields, and local wildlife.
- Edmonton:
 - Telus World of Science: Interactive science exhibits and planetarium shows.
 - Fort Edmonton Park: Learn about Alberta's history through immersive experiences.
 - Galaxyland: Fun recreational learning at an indoor amusement park.
- Metis Crossing (Smoky Lake):
 - Discover Métis history, culture, and traditions.
- Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump (Fort Macleod):
 - Learn about Indigenous hunting practices and the significance of the buffalo.
- Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park:
 - Study Indigenous rock art and Alberta's cultural history.
- Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village:
 - Experience Ukrainian culture and history in Alberta.

Specialized Topics:

- Chuckle Creek Wildfire (Paddle Prairie):
 - Understand natural disasters, rehabilitation, and the regrowth of plant life.
- Local Landscapes:
 - Explore unique Alberta ecosystems, such as the larch forests, rivers, and grasslands.

2. How Would You Get There?

- Transportation:
 - Bus: Ideal for group trips with stops along the way for rest and meals.
 - Carpooling: An option for smaller groups or local destinations.
 - Air Travel: For distant field trips or when time is limited.

3. Where Would You Stay?

- Lodging Options:
 - Hotels (e.g., Drumheller field trip budget includes hotels with 2 people per room).
 - Tents or cabins for camping experiences in Jasper or Banff.
 - School or community facilities (for overnight stays with activities).

4. What Would You Do?

Fun Activities:

- Hiking, skating, and skiing in the mountains.
- Swimming or zip-lining in adventure parks.
- Exploring amusement parks like Galaxyland.

Learning Opportunities:

- Guided tours of cultural and historical sites.
- Interactive workshops, like fossil digs in Drumheller or crafting at Métis Crossing.
- Hands-on science experiments at Telus World of Science.
- Exploring water systems, plant life, and animal habitats in the mountains.

5. Fun and Learning Combination:

- Trips that blend recreation with education are highly recommended:
 - Example: A trip to Jasper includes both glacier hiking (fun) and learning about mountain ecosystems (educational).
 - Drumheller combines dinosaur exhibits (educational) with fun exploration of the Jurassic forest.

Additional Suggestions:

- Develop a school exchange program: Host local activities and connect with other communities.
- Plan trips to explore natural disasters' impact and cultural restoration projects.
- Incorporate diverse activities like workshops, hiking, and team-building games to enrich the experience.

Next Steps

The Superintendent's Youth Council will meet virtually on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025. The council will also gather for an in-person meeting on Monday, May 5, and Tuesday, May 6, 2025. During the December 3rd meeting, students discussed the topic of attraction and retention. They divided into groups to brainstorm ideas, including creating videos to showcase Northland school communities. For the next meeting, representatives from each school have been asked to prepare the following:

Content

- Pictures and short clips of the school, students, and community events.
- Stories or interviews highlighting the cultural and educational aspects of the community.

Resources

- Historical insights about the community to enrich the narrative.
- Ideas for capturing engaging and authentic footage.

The feedback in this document will be shared with youth council members, staff, students, parents/guardians, community members and education partners.

Exploration of new initiatives

- **Field trip exchanges:** NSD will explore the possibility of organizing field trip exchanges between schools within the division to foster connection and learning.
- **Playground equipment updates:** Youth Council members suggested removing outdated playground equipment. NSD will look into updating equipment at schools where improvements are needed.