

School: Individual Learning Centre, Whitehorse Yukon

District: Yukon

Team Member: Pat Joe, First Nation Curriculum Integration Teacher

pat.joe@yesnet.yk.ca

School Scan:

Individual Learning Centre (ILC) s a one room school classroom situated downtown Whitehorse, Yukon. I.L.C.is located on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta'an Kwachan First Nation. Since Whitehorse is the Capital of the Yukon, First Nation people and our students are from the communities in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and throughout Canada.

The philosophy of the Individual Learning Center is essential to the daily operations of the school; affecting all staff and student interactions as well as how success is measured amongst the students. The purpose of the Individual Learning Center is to re-engage students in an educational setting in order to provide an opportunity for each student to achieve their high school graduation. It is the philosophy of the staff that every student who enters our facility has the ability to complete their academic graduation requirements. At the ILC, we recognize that it takes a lot of courage for a student to re-engage in their educational journey and inquire about the possibility of completing high school.

The unique relationships built between staff and students greatly contribute to the success of the students at the ILC. The number one goal for the ILC remains "to establish a relationship with every student and to continue to engage with this student". The numerous social, emotional, and economic challenges faced by our students have put up several barriers towards successful education. The mission of the ILC is to remove as many barriers as possible by creating an environment of acceptance, understanding and support allowing for academic achievement to follow. The importance of relationship building is reinforced through the quote: "If we do not establish a significant relationship with each and every student we will not have success." (Bill Bennett, Team Leader ILC 2013).

Program

The ILC is a drop-in learning center for youth aged 15-21 who are looking for an alternative to the regular school system. Our students work independently in a self-paced learning environment with individual support from. Students work towards graduation, either with a B.C. Dogwood or Adult Graduation Certificate. The B.C. Dogwood Certificate requires a minimum of 80 course credits and an Adult Graduation requires a minimum of 20 credits.

The ILC offers flexible hours for students who may have full time employment and/or family commitments that prevent them from having a set timetable. Our hours of operation for students are 8 am to 5 pm.

We offer core subjects grades 8 through 12, a variety of electives, and cultural/ experiential/ land-based educational opportunities. Students are able to cross enroll with other Yukon high schools, as well as access distance learning through the Aurora Virtual School, which is based out of the same building as the ILC.

As of today's date ILC has 174 students and 86 are First Nation, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) ancestry. The staff goals are always to Improve student's achievement, increase FN parents and communities' engagement, improve the graduation rates and improve the transitions to other educational institutions and be more cultural relevant, sensitive and welcoming by integrating First Nation Ways of Knowing in activities and subject areas.

Accomplishments:

- ❖ Offer suggestion on First Nation books, novels and traditional stories
- ❖ Great selections of First Nation library display
- ❖ Prepare ILC students who are graduating for the Annual First Nation Graduation Ceremony.
- ❖ Purchasing materials for regalia and having elders and resource people to help sew and explain the Wolf and Crow Clans symbolism.
- ❖ Regular Elders programs in the school: Diane Smith KDFN Elder and Helen Pruden From NWT to assist with student's identity, sewing and beading, storytelling, traditional medicine, and cooking.
- ❖ Attend community events to celebrate and further understand FN culture
- ❖ Elders Russel Burns works with the students on trapping, hunting and fishing with experimental and land base place learning and to provide Ancestral Technology with the furs and skin as clothing, bone as tools and medicine, and the Circle of Life
- ❖ First Nation celebrations and Workshops: Orange Shirt Day, 45 years since Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow, Mapping the Way, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman, The Peel and attended the Art and Film festivals
- ❖ Integration of First Nation curriculum in subject areas in both pre-contact and post-contact with-in the FN student's traditional territory
- ❖ Assist in the transitions from ILC to Post Secondary by providing information, filling out registrations forms and letters.
- ❖ Cross-culture education for all students regardless if students are aboriginal or non-aboriginal.
- ❖ Supported students in finding their identity. Continually researching and working with students on their FN identity
- ❖ Established relationships with the First Nation communities on field trips to integrate FN curriculum and ways of knowing
- ❖ Established a relationship with Community Education Liaison Coordinators
- ❖ Provided frontline social and emotional support to students, by offering or suggesting counselling from FN and government agencies
- ❖ Provided cultural support to students and offer to learn traditional knowledge together

- ❖ Check FN events and calendars in Whitehorse and encourage students to go.
- ❖ Liaison between and parents, , grandparents, and the First Nation and councillors and community agencies
- ❖ Provide a sense of belonging to the students and staff environment as many students are faced with many barriers some current and historical issues.
- ❖ Provide community connections to the student regardless where the student is from through their traditional oral history
- ❖ Provide traditional food and caring atmosphere regardless if one is First Nation or not.
- ❖ Use Oral /history Storytelling to find who you are and where you come from and have an understanding what the FN values and beliefs are.
- ❖ Integrate FN Ways of Knowing into Field Trips, Math, English and Science Camps, Projects and writing assignments
- ❖ Integrate FN art projects geared towards counselling and healing
- ❖ Participate and engage in the Sharing and Talking Circles and to use circle talks with conflict resolution
- ❖ Staff at ILC are always working to provide a variety of activities with Elders and resource people to achieve a greater understanding of the First Nation students in the school
- ❖ We show by example First Nation culture and values by sharing and respecting one another at all times.
- ❖ Opening Ceremonies and celebrations starts with a prayer from an Elder given thanks to the Creator
- ❖ Smudging
- ❖ Seasonal activities like gathering of berries, roots, edible and medical plants
- ❖ Hunting and preparing and drying traditional foods with the First Nation Elders
- ❖ Discussions of Yukon Land Claims and Self-Government agreements
- ❖ History of land occupation prior to contact and after contact
- ❖ What it means to be Wolf or Crow and your responsibilities
- ❖ Invited Drum Maker/player to the school and the meaning of the drum
- ❖ Visual representing of the Local Language Southern Tutchone on the school entrance.
- ❖ Connect students with role models who can share their experience with students
- ❖ Acknowledging the Traditional Territory of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta'an Kwanchan

Barriers

The Individual Learning Centre a student comes in with the startling facts about every barrier one could think of and it is amazing how resilient and astounding these young individuals are.

Some of the families and students are poor and their social and economic outlook is not very bright but still they come and they all want to graduate.

- Staff at ILC who not only delivers and caters to students' academic needs but also to their social, emotional and physical needs.

Here are some of the barriers: Some of these barriers are in every school

- The effects of the residential school syndrome
- Intergenerational Trauma
- Students and parents have been in the child welfare system or being adopted
- Family has a history of suicide, substance abuse, incarceration and murdered family members
- Loss of cultural and spiritual identity
- Poverty
- Poor living conditions, rent accommodations and change places more frequently
- No living conditions/overcrowding
- Relocating from home community
- Family break-up/separations
- Deaths
- Single parent's families- one income
- Some students must leave their community to attend school
- Early introduction to drugs
- Mental health problems in the family
- Criminal charges/probation

Emphasis on Identity

Encourage student self-awareness grounded in knowledge of family origins, cultural background, place of origin, allegiance and affiliations, citizenship and other identity markers. Student self-expressions via writing, speaking and representation is an opportunity to address and revisit this theme at various stages during their schooling

Acknowledge and celebrate the cultural identities of all students represented in your learning cohorts

Identity: Who I Am and Where I come from;

As a FNMI student I must know my family identity: One needs to know one's cultural identity and strengthen it. There is not one culture for all First Nations. Each Nation has its own culture, customs, beliefs, traditions, and world view. Cultural practices, symbols, and belief systems are influenced by each Nation's unique experience on the land and with each other, and are always connected with the Spirit world.

For the following reasons, student need to know:

“ Who they are and Where They Come From”

- Know who my First Nation is
- Know who I am related to
- Know where I belong/the nation
- Know how I fit into a larger family
- Know where my traditional territory is
- Know where our trails are for hunting and trading
- Our traditional way of life
- Learn my language
- Learn the stories of my FNMI
- Learn the values and beliefs of my people
- Teach the Indian Act
- Outlawing our Cultural Practices
- Assimilation Programs
- Our connections to everything” that everything is connect
-

How will FNMI students achieve this:

Listen to a legend

Research on line

Listen to songs

Research their own FNMI history using Elders and FNMI Government Office

Apply for Status Cards

Assessment

Written Quiz

Multiple Choice

Oral Interview

Drawing a map

A Song

A skit

A dance

An Essay

A commercial

(The individual Student can choose IN WHICH THEY FEEL THE MOST COMFORTABLE WITH...