Westmount Community School’s Métis Cultural Program

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NURTURING CAPACITY
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Preface

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Abstract

The Métis Cultural Program was created by staff and community partners at Westmount Community School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. It combines Métis-based classes with extracurricular activities and seeks to strengthen students’ academic success while improving confidence and developing critical social skills. Research shows that youth benefit from programming that focus, not just on specific skill development, but also on relationship building that reflects the student body in which they serve. This program evaluation provides an in-depth analysis of qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating a strong correlation between this program and improvements in learning and social skill development. Issues covered include possible long-term impacts and next steps to ensure further success for this program for Saskatoon’s Indigenous youth.

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Executive Summary

In 2012, Westmount Community School, in partnership with the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) and the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Education Unit (FNIM) of the Saskatoon Public School Division (SPS), created the Métis Cultural Program. Structured as an academic program as well as a cultural intervention, it combines focused classroom learning time with extracurricular hands-on activities. It seeks to strengthen students’ knowledge of Métis culture and history while improving cultural pride and student confidence, and developing critical social skills by building intergenerational relationships. Research shows that youth benefit from culturally based programming that centers on building knowledge, but also on exploring spiritual aspects that allow students to engage the culture on a deeper level. Furthermore, this program integrates the Michif language into all of its teaching and programming, another essential aspect of teaching about Métis culture and identity.

The purpose of the program is to engage students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 in the Métis perspective. This program aligns with Saskatchewan curricula and meets arts education, English language arts and social studies outcomes. Students are engaged in building Métis cultural leadership skills and experience intergenerational learning opportunities.

It is hoped this intervention program would have a positive impact in the areas of:

- Student engagement and behaviours;
- Academic achievement;
- Self-confidence, pride and self-esteem; and
- Relationship-building and social skills.

Through this program, Métis and non-Métis youth are able to learn alongside each other in a respectful way. In additional, the program allows youth opportunities to speak and sing in Michif, acknowledging that language is central to culture, and knowledge transmission is optimal when the language of that culture is included. The program teaches about Métis and Canadian history, including a focus on leading historical figures such as Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel, as well as cultural aspects such as worldviews and perspectives. Finally, the program includes a large focus on Métis arts and ways of life including the importance of fiddling, dancing, beading, Red River carts, and jigging.

The following evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the Métis Cultural Program in creating a positive impact in the areas mentioned above, as well as the overall view of the program from the perspective of the administration, staff, program partners, and youth participating in the program.

This report provides an overview of this program as well as some of the other programs Westmount Community School offers and includes a logic model that demonstrates the project flow and processes. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative data sets prove that the Métis Cultural Program has been very successful in achieving its short and intermediate goals and is poised to achieve its long-term goals in the near future. In terms of the perceptions of this program, the evidence overwhelmingly supports it, and all participants included in this evaluation greatly value this unique program and unanimously call for its continuation and/or expansion.
Finally, accomplishments, limitations, and next steps are outlined to assist the evaluator and Westmount Community School in moving in a direction that allows this program, and possibly other initiatives, to grow and thrive.
Westmount Community School’s Métis Cultural Program

Program Description

Westmount Community School is located in northwest Saskatoon and is part of the Saskatoon Public School Division. The school offers Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8 programming that strives to nurture the development and growth of the whole child. After-school programs, extra-curricular activities, and community celebrations supplement their academic programs to expand each child’s particular experience, talents, and interests. Parents and caregivers are invited to collaborate with staff to ensure and celebrate student success. Westmount considers itself a school with deep cultural roots. It provides a daily weaving of all cultures into the fabric of the school. It operates under a community-based education model that supports learning by engaging, not just the student, but all the members of the child’s family and community as well. Under this model Westmount Community School believes that, in order for children to meet their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally, all aspects of their lives and experiences must be a regular part of their school experience.

Westmount Community School prides itself on its “spirit of community.” The school showcases this aspect through unique programming, initiatives, and services. The Community Room, for example, is a space open to the public, “where the coffee is always on and the conversation meaningful and friendly. Here, you will find parents working on special projects or engaged in book clubs or parent support groups.” The school creates programming and services based on community identified needs and provides an environmental focus on inclusivity, cultural safety, and community relevance. This spirit of community is also what drives Westmount’s commitment to collaboration and partnerships with outside organisations. This school partners with over twenty outside organizations and agencies throughout the year including: Frontier College, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Urban Native Teachers Education Program, The First Nations University of Canada, the Kiwanis Club, the Kinsmen Hockey League, the Saskatoon Sports Council, and SaskTel, just to name a few.

The Koohkoom Group

In 2012, Westmount collaborated with Health Promoting Schools (HPS), to create a Koohkoom Group to support grandmothers connected to the school who were raising children for the second time. Over the years, the Koohkoom Group has established itself as a dynamic support group engaged in generously giving back to the school and to the Métis Cultural. In fact, one of the founding members and facilitators of this group also teaches weekly Michif classes to the students.

\[1\] Please see Westmount Community School website for more information.
The Taanshi Books Series

In collaboration with the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), the Métis Cultural Program helped to launch Taanshi Books, a series of levelled reading books with Métis cultural themes. The books feature the students, staff, and community of Westmount Community School in the illustrations. The staff is currently working to support a second series of these books. In addition to the literacy resources and language preservation that GDI supports, the institute also offers Métis culture professional development opportunities each year for staff to enhance its knowledge (history, capote making, beading, etc.).

Métis Cultural Events

Field trips and hands-on learning experiences focusing on special Métis locations, such as Round Prairie and Batoche, are regularly integrated into student and staff learning. The Métis Cultural Program has solid working relationships with Parks Canada and the Round Prairie Descendants Society to ensure the students have opportunities to visit these historically and culturally significant areas. On June 14th, 2016, the Métis Cultural Program hosted the first annual Métis Cultural Day along with eighteen other community partners. Over 650 Grade four students from the Saskatoon Public School Division (SPS) attended the event, which began with the raising of the Métis flag outside Westmount Community School. It is hoped this will become an annual event.

Project Background

Métis Youth in Saskatoon

Saskatchewan has a young and growing Indigenous population. In particular, the Indigenous population of the province’s largest city, Saskatoon, is steadily increasing. According to the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples’ Census, Indigenous people account for 9.3% of the total population of Saskatoon, a proportion that is exceeded only by the population in Winnipeg, Manitoba (10.0%) (Statistics Canada, 2008). The majority of Indigenous people in Saskatoon identify as First Nations (53%), while 45% identify as Métis (less than 1% identify themselves as Inuit) (Environics Institute, 2011). As of September 30, 2012 of the 22,075 students enrolled in the Saskatoon Public School Division, 3747 self-declared as Indigenous, comprising 16.97% of total enrolment (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2015). As of 2008, over 50% of these Indigenous youth were attending one of the ten designated “community” elementary schools in the Saskatoon Public School Division (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2015).

In order to realise Saskatchewan’s full potential, the province must improve the educational outcomes for First Nations and Métis populations (Conference Board of Canada, 2013). In 2012, members of the Government of Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MN-S) established a Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People in Saskatchewan (2013). They identified many strategies that would improve learning for Indigenous youth (pre-K to Grade 12).

Two of these strategies identified are:

- To be innovative and flexible in the structure, design, and delivery of Saskatchewan’s curriculum
to meet the needs of First Nations and Métis students;
- To create transformative learning experiences by connecting learning to the land and to community.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2016) announced in their 2015-2016 Annual Report that one of its goals is to collaborate with Métis and non-Métis partners to significantly improve Métis student engagement through focusing on building long-term, effective relationships at school. Furthermore, it acknowledged that those relationships would be further strengthened with a focus on culture. Programs such as the Métis Cultural Program are recognising the work of the provincial government as well as the joint task force. They are implementing the recommendations and expectations of both Indigenous leaders and non-Indigenous leaders by creating holistic, dynamic, community-based cultural programming.

**Language and Identity**

According to recent anti-oppressive educational research, culture is best learned through language, ceremonies, gatherings, stories, music, games, arts and crafts, as well as land-based experiences. In order to foster a positive Métis or Indigenous identity among children, culture must form the foundation of early learning experiences (Battiste 2002; Toulouse, 2008). Furthermore, the Elders and other honoured community members are considered the most important means for cultural knowledge to be transmitted to children (Best Start Resource Centre, 2010). Westmount Community School ensures that learning about Métis culture is deeply rooted in learning Michif. There is no separation between learning the language and learning about the culture. In addition, the transmission of knowledge occurs in an intergenerational context whereby Elders, grandparents, kin, community members, and Knowledge Keepers are responsible for ensuring the most sacred and critical elements of their culture are passed on to the next generation. They are overseeing, not only the continuation of their culture, but also the health and wellbeing of their youth. Métis children are able to develop a full sense of who they are and how they fit into this world and non-Métis students are able to develop deep and meaningful relationships in a culturally safe environment and are free to explore their own unique cultural heritage.

**The Circle of Courage**

Many public school divisions in the province, including the Saskatoon Public School division, implement the *Circle of Courage* model throughout their schools. This model is based on the work of anti-oppressive educators Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern. The model integrates North American Indigenous peoples’ philosophies of child-rearing, best practices in education and youth work, and contemporary research on trauma and resiliency. The Circle of Courage is based on the four universal growth needs of all children: *belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity*. These four needs have been incorporated into the medicine wheel and serve as a foundational pedagogical tool that is used in everyday teaching at schools (Reclaiming Youth Network, 2007). At Westmount Community School, the Circle of Courage is intimately connected to the Métis Cultural Program. Program staff evaluates the students based on the growth needs and use the language provided to assist the students in their learning. For example, a teacher may frame an issue of peer conflict during a
Métis dance performance as the students “having challenges with creating a sense of belonging” while, if there are academic challenges, the teachers may focus on mastery or independence.²

**Objective of the Project**

The Métis Cultural Program was created to:

- Preserve, strengthen, and transmit Métis culture, language, and traditions.

Furthermore, Westmount Community School considers it a priority to maintain and strengthen existing programming while exploring ways to adapt and expand to meet the needs of their growing student body.

Since its inception, Westmount Community School has relied on a collaborative model to ensure the success of the Métis Cultural Program. The following organisations play an integral part in the design and delivery of the program and are essential for its continued success:

- Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP)
- Central Urban Métis Federation (CUMFI)
- Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI)
- Health Promoting Schools (HPS)
- Indian and Métis Friendship Centre
- Norman Fleury
- Parks Canada
- Round Prairie Descendants Society

**Scope of the Project**

The purpose of the Métis Cultural Program is:

- To engage students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 in the Métis perspective.

This program aligns with Saskatchewan curricula and meets arts education, English language arts and social studies outcomes. Students are engaged in building Métis cultural leadership skills and experience inter-generational learning opportunities.

Learning the Michif language is a large component of The Métis Culture Program. The Michif language program has a community Michif speaker, Kokhum Linda Pritchard, who helps with language instruction every Wednesday. In addition, all classrooms in the building display some form of the Michif language, whether it be alphabet cards, posters, charts, or books on display. Simple commands and common phrases are now a part of the everyday vernacular at Westmount, in the halls and in the classrooms. The program launched a choir of students who sing the Métis National Anthem and Michif language songs at community and division events, including the Indigenous Language Festival and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission events. The program continues to expand the number of Michif resources,

² Please see Appendix C on page 65 for a visual representation of the Circle of Courage as it is often presented to youth in Saskatchewan Schools.
songs, and visuals available for everyday use in the program and school. This resource development occurs in consultation with Michif speakers and Elders.

The program is also home to the *Lii Pchi Danceurs Di La Prayrii* (*Little Prairie Steppers*). This jigging troupe performs throughout the school division, city, and province. They dance at numerous events during the school year, including *National Aboriginal Day* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commemorative Celebrations*. Each year, the Métis Cultural Program hosts a *Sweetheart Dance* for the community, with live fiddle music performed by Dallas and Phil Boyer. The dance is well attended (approximately 300 students and families every year). The *Lii Pchi Danceurs Di La Prayrii* also performs at this dance. The Métis Cultural Program also supports the Saskatoon Public Schools Indigenous Song & Dance program. This ten-week program includes jigging classes. In the 2015-2016 school year, there were approximately twenty students from across the division that participated in the jigging classes. In the winter of 2016, in conjunction with the Indian & Métis Friendship Center, Westmount Community School hosted family square dancing and jigging lessons on Monday evenings at the school. On average approximately sixteen participants attended each week.

This program has been developed with the support of local school leaders and administrators for the Saskatoon Public School Davison. It also includes collaborations with SUNTEP graduates, classroom teachers, and teaching and support staff. Specifically, there are traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders, Métis culture teachers, youth mentors, and Michif language instructors affiliated with this program. Finally, partnerships and support from Central Urban Métis Federation Incorporated (CUMFI) and Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) are essential to the success of the Métis Cultural Program.
The structure and implementation of the programming along with the number of staff involved and the Grades included in the program since its inception in 2012 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Sask. Curriculum Connections</th>
<th>Grades Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Métis Culture Teacher (prep release 1.0) Traditional Knowledge Keeper Youth Mentor</td>
<td>Fine Arts – 100 minutes/week LDO(^3) – 50 minutes/week</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>Métis Culture Teacher (prep release 1.0) Traditional Knowledge Keeper Youth Mentor</td>
<td>Fine Arts – 100 minutes/week LDO – 50 minutes/week</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>Métis Culture Teacher (prep release 1.0) Traditional Knowledge Keeper Youth Mentor</td>
<td>Social Studies – 100 minutes/week LDO – 50 minutes/week</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>Métis Culture Teacher (prep release 0.5 and 0.5 Métis Team Teaching &amp; Partnership Development) Traditional Knowledge Keeper Youth Mentor</td>
<td>Health – 100 minutes/week LDO – 50 minutes/week</td>
<td>K-4 (Health &amp; Michif) K-4 (with Métis Culture Teacher) 5-8 (with Youth Mentor)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a compelling need in public education to offer programming that reflects the demographics of the community it serves. Given the high number of First Nations and Métis students enrolled in SPS schools, Westmount Community School is attempting to provide this type of programming. The Métis Cultural Program provides exposure to Métis language and cultural traditions, ways of life, arts, history, and worldviews. It is an inclusive program available to students from Kindergarten to Grade eight. With a Métis population that is young and growing, Westmount Community School is providing an educational experience that is relevant and reflective of its student body. Furthermore, it is delivering this programming in a way that is culturally safe and inclusive.

\(^3\) Locally Determined Option
Brief History of the Project

Historical Overview

In the spring of 2012, Westmount Community School, with the support of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Education Unit (FNIM) of the Saskatoon Public School Division (SPS) began collaborating to create Métis-based programming to be implemented in the fall of 2012. Prior to the implementation of the program SPS, along with Westmount Community School, engaged in extensive consultations with staff, the community, and the division. The Métis Cultural Program began as the only program of its kind in the province. It was created to educate youth on the cultural, historical, and linguistic traditions of Métis people. Through the inclusion of Métis-centered resources, curriculum outcomes are enriched with authentic learning experiences. Paramount to this type of inclusive education is a focus on Métis worldviews, language, identity, and history. In other words, the program extends beyond adding only arts based elements (i.e. dancing, beading, music) to already existing mainstream classes and curriculum. It includes a wider and deeper infusion of Métis culture and identity across all subjects, grades, and learning experiences, coupled with the creation of new core curriculum classes based solely on Métis content. The majority of the daily learning occurs in the Métis cultural classroom with the Métis culture teacher, youth mentors, Michif language teachers, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders.

Students from Kindergarten to Grade eight participate in the program, which extends to many subject areas including Fine Arts, Social Studies, and Health, in addition to weekly Michif language classes. In order to provide the richest possible exposure to Métis culture and language while still attending public school in an urban centre, Westmount has partnered with local community Elders and agencies that are also committed to preserving Métis culture. This includes the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Central Urban Métis Federation, the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teachers Education Program, and the Métis Friendship Centre.

The success of the Métis Cultural Program also relies on the engagement of caregivers and family members. Westmount Community School recognises that parents, grandparents, caregivers, and extended family members also play a vital role in cultural education and knowledge transmission. Family members’ expertise has been utilised to assist in learning beading, dancing, singing, reading and speaking Michif, cooking, sewing, and weaving. These inclusive experiences ensure that Métis knowledge transmission occurs, while simultaneously developing academic, social, and emotional skills and well as increasing culturally relevant leadership opportunities.

Connections to Indspire Principles

Westmount Community School closely aligns with the following Indspire principles:

- **Principle 4:** Cultural/language communities have the right to define success for their own wellbeing.
- **Principle 5:** Learning is viewed as lifelong, holistic, and experiential, which is rooted in language and culture, is place-based, spiritually oriented, communal and open to multiple ways of knowing the world.
- **Principle 6:** Programs, schools and systems are responsive to both the aspirations and the needs of Indigenous peoples.
Principle 7: Recognising the legacy of the colonial histories of Indigenous peoples, education is also a process of decolonisation, which seeks to strengthen, enhance and embrace Indigenous Knowledge and experience through various strategies including but not limited to anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and Indigenous pedagogies.

The Métis Cultural Program acknowledges, “Cultural/language communities have the right to define success for their own wellbeing.” This is evident in the ways in which the Michif language program has been designed and delivered at Westmount Community School. The school and larger Métis community have determined the language expectations for each grade level, as opposed to having the provincial government dictate the curriculum standards. They have collaborated as educators, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers to create their own resources and best practices to run the language component of the program. They respect that community members and Elders are vital educators in our community. They have established an Elder and Kokhum as one of the key teachers of the Michif language in the school. Finally, the program is defining its own benchmarks by developing its own standard assessments to measure student success. Rather than using comparatives or standardised tests, educators in this program are designing their own relevant assessments to measure learning and determine growth.

It recognises that, “learning is viewed as lifelong, holistic, and experiential, which is rooted in language and culture, is place-based, spiritually oriented, communal and open to multiple ways of knowing the world.” For this reason, Westmount seeks to create an opportunity for youth where they are able to learn through an experiential, dynamic, and holistic experience. Fine arts such as dancing, singing, jigging, and beading provide the students with opportunities to learn in an interactive way that is culturally responsive, rooted in spirituality, and holistic. The success of the fine arts component of the program as well as the language component relies on the engagement of people in the community. Specifically, it requires the investment of artists, activists, Elders, family members, Knowledge Keepers, and mentors. The program ensures the learning is communal, intergenerational, and lifelong.

In terms of establishing, “programs, schools and system that are responsive to both the aspirations and needs of Indigenous peoples,” the school operates on a strengths based, community centred model that is not based on identifying personal deficits, problematic family dynamics, or negative community aspects. Rather, the youth identify their personality strengths, personal needs and passions, and the program seeks to find the best possible opportunities for youth beyond their regular academic experience. The youth are encouraged to use the unique cultural aspects of the program as a point of entry into their own cultural and spiritual journey, regardless of whether or not they are Métis. In fact, non-Indigenous students have the opportunity to use this program to explore their own personal, cultural, social, and emotional experiences and needs.

Westmount Community School also, “recognises the legacy of the colonial histories of Indigenous peoples’ education and that there must be process of decolonisation which seeks to strengthen, enhance, and embrace Indigenous Knowledge and experience through various strategies including but not limited to anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogies and Indigenous pedagogies.” It is for this reason that the Métis Cultural Program allows the youth multiple hands-on learning experiences that are designed to educate, inspire, and foster a greater sense of self. Cultural aspects are not separated from the learning experiences. Youth are encouraged to explore and express their own culture while learning and appreciating other cultures. Indigenous ways of knowing and learning are encouraged through the
Michif language courses, Métis dance and music exploration, performance opportunities, community visits, and cultural events at the school.

**Activities Accomplished**

Westmount Community School represents the Métis Cultural Program accomplishments by focusing on these four measures:

- **Tell Them From Me Survey**
  - Assessments are administered to determine effectiveness of the Michif language component of the program

- **Michif Language Development**
  - Increase literacy test scores and improve overall literacy skill development

- **Staff Impact Statements & Narrative Photography**
  - Anedotal data of staff’s perceptions of the program
  - Photographs showcasing program aspects and impacts

- **Literacy Skills**
  - Students (Grades 4-8) report on the impacts of program, cultural diversity of school, and the Circle of Courage
Logic Model

A logic model has been created to demonstrate the inputs, outputs, outcomes, and time frame of the Métis Cultural Program. This model has been instrumental in designing and driving its programming and evaluating its impact. It provides a visual of nearly all aspects of the project as well as its goals. Please see Appendix A on page 59.

Performance Indicator and Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Success Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure high level of student engagement</td>
<td>• Tell Them from Me survey results</td>
<td>Student participation and motivation Increases in student leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff impact statements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Anecdotal reports and interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a high level of academic achievement</td>
<td>• Standardised test performance for literacy and Michif language</td>
<td>Students meeting or exceeding grade level expectations of provincial standardised test and school created assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a school culture that is culturally inclusive</td>
<td>• Demographics of staff, mentors, and students</td>
<td>Presence of Elders, and Indigenous mentors and role models, greater diversity in student body, mentors, and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Narrative photography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creation of school-wide events (i.e. Métis Cultural Days)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase caregiver and community involvement</td>
<td>• Formal and informal conversations with caregivers</td>
<td>Positive feedback and regular communication from parents and caregivers; willingness of staff to adapt and support families/caregivers when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presence of caregivers in building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire and retain highly qualified staff</td>
<td>• Regular performance evaluations, conversations, professional development, networking opportunities; staff impact statements</td>
<td>Low staff turnover; high morale; highly motivated staff; staff seeking own opportunities to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and sustain community partnerships</td>
<td>• Create and sustain successful partnerships (i.e. with GDI; SUNTEP; CUMFI, etc.).</td>
<td>Visibility of community leadership throughout school; high participation in joint community/school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure long-term funding</td>
<td>• Budgets, fundraising initiatives</td>
<td>Program sustainability and/or expansion; staff retention and expansion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation

Data Results

Overview
The data presented below reflects the short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals of the implementation of The Métis Cultural Program. When possible, data sets were compared on certain outcome measures. In order to effectively measure the success of the program, several data sets were used, as well as qualitative and quantitative surveys and interviews. Through a combination of charts, graphs, and thematic analysis, the following outcomes were measured:

- **Short-Term Goals**: increase in academic performance; increase in confidence, pride, and independence (decrease in behavioural incidents)
- **Intermediate Goals**: intergenerational/community engagement appreciation of Métis culture and way of life; sustained partnerships; increase in Métis cultural awareness and Michif language skills
- **Long-Term Goal**: engaged and educated Métis youth; curriculum diversity; educated staff

I. Tell Them from Me Student Survey

Each year as part of a larger provincial initiative, all students from grades four to eight in the Saskatoon Public School Division complete the *Tell Them from Me* Student Survey. This survey helps teachers and principals learn about students’ feelings towards school, alerts them to potential problems that may be occurring at the school, and provides ideas for making the school a safer place. Once the individual surveys are completed, the responses are sent to a database and used to make reports for each school to analyse, showing the combined answers of all the students in that school.4

Each participating school is afforded a certain level of customisation. In this case, since 2013 Westmount Community School has been able to create several survey questions pertaining to the Métis Culture program specifically and the cultural responsiveness of the school in general. Westmount Community School provided a narrative summary regarding the most recent results of the *Tell Them from Me* Student Survey.

Several themes have emerged in the short answer response to the question: “*How has the Métis Cultural Program helped your learning?*” The students reported:

- They enjoyed the tangible, hands-on, and interactive activities such as beading, singing, dancing, learning Michif, and playing games the most;
- Recognition that these activities lead to a greater understanding of Métis culture and history;
- Developing life-long social skills such as sharing, accepting others, and feeling accepted; and

4 For more information regarding Tell Them from Me please see [http://thelearningbar.com](http://thelearningbar.com)
- Internalisation of the Circle of Courage and its components (belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity).

Westmount Community School also asked general questions regarding how successful the school is at recognising and embracing cultural diversity. The student responses indicate the students feel that:
  - All cultures are welcome and accepted at school; and
  - The student body benefits from learning about other cultures and from each other.

Finally, the students reported that community building, knowledge transmission, and acceptance and belonging are best fostered through the following school events:
  - Powwows;
  - Assemblies;
  - Family literacy events or events that include all family members; and
  - After-school programming.

This narrative data demonstrates that the students recognise the importance of interactive learning because it leads to a deeper internalisation of language, culture, identity, and sense of self. Furthermore, they reported awareness that all cultures are valued in the school and that families and community members play a vital role in knowledge transmission and cultural continuity. The results from this survey support the vision that Westmount Community School has for the Métis Cultural Program and confirms that the students are aware of the importance of the program.

II. Michif Language Development

In the 2015-2016 school year, the school conducted its first Michif language assessment and data collection for grades one to three. The assessment measured the students’ abilities across four measures or tasks:
  - Counting orally;
  - Counting to 10 (from Grade one), counting to 20 (for Grade two), and counting to 30 (for Grade three);
  - Colour word recognition (12 colour words in total); and
  - Common word knowledge (32 common words in total).

These measures were then compared with school created grade-level standards.
The following is a data table summarizing their results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counting Orally</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counting 10, 20, 30</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colours</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Words</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above data table demonstrates the following:

- All primary students (those grades one to three) are meeting or exceeding Michif language development grade-level expectations.
- Over 80% of all primary students are meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations for counting orally, while another 54% are able to successfully count to 10, 20, or 30 in Michif.
- Furthermore, over 50% met or exceeded the expectations for knowledge of colour words, while another 78% are able to successfully identify common Michif words.
Task One: Counting Orally

This data table demonstrates:

- On average, the Grade one students were able to count to 18 in Michif during this counting task. Furthermore, 69% of these Grade one students were able to count over 10 in Michif.
- On average, the Grade two students were able to count to 24 in Michif on this counting task. In addition, 60% of these Grade two students were able to count over 20 in Michif.
- On average, the Grade three students were able to count to 25 in Michif. Specifically, 67% of these Grade three students were able to count to 30 in Michif.
Task Two: Counting to 10, 20, or 30

This data table shows:

- On average, these Grade one students were able to count to 8 in Michif (only 2 points below their grade-level goal of 10). In addition, 81% of the Grade one students were able to count to 10 or higher in Michif.

- On average, the Grade two students were able to count to 17 in Michif (only three numbers lower than their grade-level goal of 20). Furthermore, 47% of these Grade two students were able to count to 20 or greater in Michif.

- On average, the Grade three students were able to count to 23 in Michif (only 7 numbers off of their goal of 30). In addition, 33% of these Grade three students were able to count to 30 in Michif.
Task Three: Colour Word Recognition

The data presented here demonstrates that:

- On average, the Grade one students were able to recognise 9 of the 12 basic colour words in Michif. Moreover, 31% of these Grade one students knew 12 colour words in Michif.
- On average, the Grade two students were able to recognise 11 of the 12 basic colour words in Michif. Furthermore, 73% of these Grade two students knew all of the 12 colour words in Michif.
- On average, the Grade three students were also able to recognise 11 of the 12 basic colour words in Michif. Finally, 83% of these Grade three students knew all of the 12 colour words in Michif.
Task Four: Common Word Knowledge

This data table highlights:

- On average, the Grade one students were able to recall 23 common words in Michif. In addition, 56% of these Grade one students knew more than 10 common words in Michif.
- On average, the Grade two students were able to recall 26 common words in Michif. Furthermore, 80% of these Grade two students knew more than 20 common words in Michif.
- On average, the Grade three students were able to recall 25 common words in Michif. Specifically, 67% of these Grade three students knew more than 25 common words in Michif.
III. Standardized Test Performance

As with all schools in the province, student success at Westmount Community School needs to be measured against provincial standards. To effectively measure growth in literacy, the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment is administered in the fall, winter, and spring during the school year. The results of this standardised test is presented below in order to demonstrate what impact programs such as the Métis Cultural Program may have on student achievement.

The following data table represents the literacy achievements of the whole student body, as well as the First Nations and Métis students, for the 2015-2016 school year:

This data table demonstrates the following:

- The majority of the students, whether First Nations, Métis, or non-Indigenous do not meet the standardised grade-level expectations for reading.
- There was a decrease of 1% of the Indigenous students approaching grade level expectations.
- Of those First Nations and Métis students meeting literacy expectations, they showed 12% growth in one school year (from September 2015 to June 2016), compared to 15% growth for non-Indigenous students.
- Of those First Nations and Métis students exceeding literacy expectations, they showed 11% growth in one school year (from September 2015 to June 2016).
IV. Staff Impact Statements

Several staff members and those affiliated with the program have provided testimonials, anecdotal reports, and personal stories highlighting the impacts of the Métis Cultural Program. Several verbatim reports are provided with an analysis at the end of this section.

Staff Testimonial One

“The Métis Culture program has influenced our school in so many ways but I would like to share my thoughts on how it has impacted me! Having the program at Westmount has been one of the best learning opportunities of my educational journey. The Métis Culture teacher has taught me so much during our team teaching time and I've appreciated all of the opportunities that I have been involved in. I’ve learned how to sing two songs in Michif and feel confident teaching all the fancy jig steps. I learned how to bead bracelets with my students and found fun ways to incorporate pieces of the culture into all other subjects. I had the opportunity to lead a station at the Métis Cultural Day and teach hand games to the students. I attended a two-part beading workshop at GDI, beaded my first Métis flower, and sewed together a tobacco pouch. But the most valuable part of my experience has been building friendships with the staff connected to the Métis Culture Program. Their passion to this program is infectious.”

Grade 1/2 Teacher, Westmount Community School

Staff Testimonial Two

“A few things spring to mind: the value of having easy access to a wealth of knowledge about Métis culture, great resources (print and otherwise), and good advice about culturally responsive practices. Exposure to the program has increased my own knowledge about Métis culture that has, in turn, impacted my teaching. Learning how to jig (albeit badly) has been an added bonus. The Sweetheart Dance really brought home to me the impact that the program has had on building a sense of belonging amongst students, families, and community members. My students (and I) really enjoyed having the Métis Culture team come to teach us the Rabbit Dance. I think that it has given them a feeling of relationship with the wider school community. I suspect that it may help ease the transition to Kindergarten and beyond.”

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher, Westmount Community School

Staff Testimonial Three

“I wish the middle years students got more opportunities to work with the team but unfortunately there is only so much time to go around. The biggest impact for myself is the feeling of actually being able to teach and participate in Métis culture within the classroom. I believe that having the program housed within Westmount has built my capacity and allowed me to ask questions and seek clarification when needed.”

Grade 6/7 Teacher, Westmount Community School
Staff Testimonial Four

“Co-teaching with the Métis Culture teacher has been amazing and the kids have gotten so much out of it. They learned how to jig, speak some words in Michif, and many other things. Having her in the classroom has taught me those things as well so I will be able to teach those skills in future years. I never felt that confident teaching about Métis culture before but doing it alongside an expert has been really meaningful to me.”

Kindergarten Teacher, Westmount Community School

Staff Testimonial Five

“I am so appreciative of having the Métis Cultural Program at our school! I have learned so much from everyone involved, and I know the kids have too. It was great to get the opportunity to team teach with the Métis Culture teacher this year. It definitely helped build my confidence in teaching units (dance and social studies) from a Métis perspective. I will be able to teach the skills she taught me to my classes again in the future, no matter what school I’m at. The students also benefit greatly from having the program at Westmount. They are learning Métis values like hard work and honestly. Their ability to learn parts of the Michif language amazes me as well! The Métis Cultural Program offers a unique and very relevant perspective on teaching the curriculum.”

Grade 2/3 Teacher, Westmount Community School

Staff Testimonial Six

“As a teacher, I have enjoyed having the Métis Cultural Program in our building. I have learned so many new things by watching. This year, I was given the chance to team-teach with our Métis Culture teacher. Together, we created a Rubbermaid full of ‘teachables’ to support other teachers on their journey through teaching about Métis culture. I have noticed that by speaking to the children in Michif (certain statements), they are more likely to follow along! By having numbers visually represented along with colours in Michif, it is easy to use the language with the children. More children say ‘marsii’ than thank you! I believe that by allowing teachers more time with the cultural teacher, or support staff, I think we would be even stronger in this area.”

Grade 1 Teacher, Westmount Community School

Staff Testimonial Analysis

A total of six testimonials were provided by classroom teachers (ranging from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 6/7). The staff members each provided their own candid statements on what they perceived to be the importance of the program and the impacts it has had on their teaching, their students, and themselves.

When analysed together, the following themes have emerged:

- All of those who provided impact statements have learned a greater deal of Métis cultural knowledge (including knowledge of the Michif language). This information has greatly influenced their daily teacher practices and was not otherwise available to them.
- Learning this information has led to an increase in their confidence and their ability to teach about Métis culture to their students.
- The students, staff, and school as a whole have developed a sense of pride and ownership.
toward to the Métis Cultural Program

- The students are beginning to internalise aspects of the culture and language because it is present in every aspect of their daily lives at school.
- The Métis Cultural Program staff is invaluable and the program's greatest resource.

V. Narrative Photography

During the interview process in June 2016, Infinity Consulting toured Westmount Community School and, specifically, the Métis Cultural Program spaces and classrooms. Seven photographs of the program spaces have been included in this report along with a brief narrative analysis. These photographs provide additional support when evaluating the importance of the Métis Cultural Program. These photographs showcase exactly how the program’s learning spaces have been purposefully designed and constructed.
This photograph captures the outside of the Métis Cultural office space. This welcoming space provides the title on the office door in both English and Michif. It is here that students, staff, Elders, and community members are able to meet. The large window provides opportunities to invite others to see the space yet provides privacy when needed.
This photograph showcases one of the main bulletin boards in the hallway outside of the Métis Cultural classroom. This bulletin board depicts one of the Métis Cultural Program mottos - “working together” displayed largely in both English and Michif. It also includes photos of the students engaging in program activities that are interactive, intergenerational, and relevant. Finally, it provides contextual labels such as “show your moccasins” to invite viewers into the photographs and gain a better understanding of the students’ pictures.
This photograph is showing one of the interactive classroom display areas in the Métis Cultural classroom. This learning area provides primary students with opportunities to learn more deeply about Métis culture, history, and identity through play and exploration. Some of the relevant items that children are invited to play with include: a Métis sash blanket; plants; books; dolls; babies in a traditional sleeping swing; stuffed animals; a globe; a Métis flag; a grass carpet; a mat; a rocking chair; and photograph posters – all at eye level and easily accessible.
This photograph reveals another interactive learning space within the Métis Cultural Program classroom. This board displays several anchor charts outlining the classroom expectations, self-regulation prompts (in English and Michif), and common responses in Michif (i.e. Marsii). *Kischi marsii* (“Thank you very much.”), and a student photograph poster, demonstrating student learning in a whole group lesson. Finally, it features of teacher-made Michif colour word chart assisting students with learning these words. This is important for students, as it is one of the tasks on the primary Michif language assessment given to Grade one to three students.
In this photograph, an interactive Michif math word wall is shown. This simple pocket chart, with laminated numbers and the corresponding math word in Michif, is an excellent example of the type of teacher-made resources the staff have been creating in order for their students to be successful in all subject areas. It also demonstrates how Michif is integrated into all subject areas, not just literacy. In this case, Michif plays a vital role in numeracy education.
This photograph captures another learning space in the Métis Cultural classroom. Here, a traditional Hudson Bay coat is beautifully displayed, along with a rocking chair. These types of historical items are essential teaching tools. The students are able to see and touch many of the once common Métis household items (wooden rocking chairs) as well as items that were traditionally traded (Hudson Bay coat) by Métis people.
The final photograph highlights one of the most important bulletin board displays within the Métis Cultural classroom. This Michif word wall is essential for successful language transmission. Here, the students are able to see clearly labeled common Michif words separated in columns with different background colours (i.e. yellow words = commands; purple words = days of the week). Sticky notes are used to add the English equivalent as necessary. The students are also able to utilise the counter space below the wall to write and print.
Photography Analysis

When analysed together, the following conclusions have emerged from these seven photographs:

- All of the bulletin boards depicted provided words (i.e. titles and labels). This creates a print-rich environment, which is essential for success in literacy. Furthermore, English and Michif are represented, allowing for both languages to be fully present in the learning environment (see photographs two, four, and seven).

- The bulletin boards and classroom displays portray images of the students learning. Allowing the students to see pictures of themselves and their peers engaged in and celebrating their learning is essential to promote program awareness and positivity. Not only do the classroom walls and bulletin boards show pictures of the students celebrating Métis culture, it also shows them having positive experiences in school, which can greatly impact their attitudes (see photographs two, three, four, and six).

- There are several areas within the classroom where students are invited to play and explore. These ‘invitations to play’ offer primary students with choices as to what items they wish to explore. The rules are limited and they are able to fluidly move between engaging in more traditional academic work such as reading a book, to less formal activities such as playing with a doll. Furthermore, these early learners are able to incorporate culturally meaningful materials into their play experiences (see photograph three).

- There is evidence of anchor charts displaying classroom rules as well as self-regulation tools (red light, yellow light, green light). This demonstrates that during program time the teachers have expectations of students similar to those of their homeroom teachers. However, these expectations are framed in positive ways, supported by the Circle of Courage teachings. Student-friendly, strengths-based language, framed as “I can” statements for example, are easily understood and empower the students to try their best. These charts are further legitimized and grounded with photos of the students learning (see photograph four).

- Both the numeracy word wall and the literacy work wall are interactive, easy to use and read, accessible, adaptable, and contain moveable parts so the students can use them as needed. The students are more likely to engage in active learning and internalise the concepts if the displays are interactive and approachable. If the displays were “hands-off” or passive, for example, it is unlikely the students would use them to enhance their learning (see photographs five and seven).

- Finally, the program classroom showcases several items that are culturally meaningful and relevant. These items range from the public, political, and symbolic such as the sash, Hudson’s Bay coat, and Metis flag, to the private and practical, such as the traditional sleeping swing and rocking chair. Having a combination of these items solidifies that, while Metis people do have a rich cultural history and heritage, they do not merely exist in the past. Displaying a wide range of objects demonstrates that Metis people represent a large, dynamic, and diverse group of people (see photographs three and six).
Qualitative Interviews

As part of the formal evaluation process, in-person interviews were conducted by Infinity Consulting during the evaluation period (June, 2016). Those interviewed included Saskatoon Public School Division personnel (including the Superintendent and consultants) and Westmount Community School staff (including administrators, teachers, and programming staff), Métis Cultural Program partners (including Elders and program consultants), and current Métis Cultural Program personnel. The questionnaire consisted of eight open-ended questions, given in an interview format so that participants could use their own words while someone else recorded their responses. Given the open-ended nature of this interview, the responses generated span a wide range and encompass many experiences. As such, the transcriptions of these interviews were analysed and similar responses were grouped together thematically. However, whenever possible direct quotations have been incorporated into the report to capture the participants’ actual responses.

The breakdown of the interview participants is as follows:

![Interview Participants Chart]
Administrators, Teachers, and Saskatoon Public School Division Employees

There was a total of ten Saskatoon School staff members interviewed. Of these ten interviewees, seven are employed at Westmount Community School, while three are employees at the Saskatoon Public School Division Office.

Q1. Please tell me how long you have worked for Westmount Community School and in what capacity.
- All of the employees interviewed have worked for the Saskatoon Public School Division ranging between 2.5 and 7 years. Their mean for years of service is 4.38 years and, of those seven employees who work at Westmount Community School, their mean for years of services is 4.53 years.
- Of the three Saskatoon Public School Division Office employees, one has been the Métis Coordinator of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Unit for Saskatoon Public School Division for the past five years, one has been a Métis Education consultant for four years and will be the new Principal at Westmount Community School in 2016, and the third has spent the last three years as the Superintendent of Education.
- Two administrators of Westmount Community School were interviewed including the Principal, who has held that position for five years and the Vice-Principal who began in that position in 2015. She also teaches Visual Arts and Drama to Grades 4-8.
- In terms of the program specifically, the Métis Cultural Program Teacher Partner Development Coordinator was interviewed. This participant began at Westmount Community School in 2009 as the Grade 7/8 teacher, then moved to teaching Grade 1 before transitioning to this role four years ago.
- The Traditional Knowledge Keeper and Co-Teacher in the program were also interviewed along with the Community Coordinator, who have been in their positions since 2011.
- Finally, a Grade 1-2 teacher and a teacher librarian, who have worked at the school for two and a half years and six years, respectively, were also interviewed.

Q2. Can you tell me briefly about this program and why you think it is an important program?
- Two of the staff members discussed the progression of the program since its inception in 2011. According to one participant, “The vision of the Métis Culture Program is to continue to build each year. In year one we started with a fine arts program and then in year two we added songs and dancing, in year three we focused on the history of Métis culture and family health and wellness and now, in the fourth year, we’ve incorporated language programming. We have very high expectations of the students in the program.”
- The other staff member acknowledged how the program utilises the Métis Knowledge Keeper, and highlights the importance of culturally responsive thinking. This person noted, “There is a cultural gap in education between learning about First Nations culture and Métis culture and we need more Métis cultural importance in schools. We need all children to learn about Métis culture.”
- 60% named the identity component of the program as the most important part. One staff member described the program as, “a voice for Métis students or any Indigenous students that creates understanding, awareness, pride, respect and acceptance.” Another teacher spoke about how the political and social climate is changing: “Métis people are no longer ashamed or quiet about their language and culture; we need to learn about them as there is a lot to learn about their unique customs.” For one staff member, the importance of teaching this program is also
location based: “The Red River area and Saskatoon areas are the birthplace of the Métis and we are learning the culture in the homeland.”

- Another 50% mentioned that learning the Michif language was one of the most important components of the program as it linked to Métis identity. Specifically, one teacher discussed how, “Michif is now alive in the educational system and we can bring honour and pride to Métis people and help others understand.” Another teacher explained that this is a “highly important program because people need to know how important Michif is and teach all cultures to all children.”

- Two of staff members described how teaching this program fosters inclusion and helps the students develop a sense of belonging. As one of these staff members stated, “The program focuses on Métis culture to bring together both Métis and non-Métis students and teachers and gives understanding of the history of Canada while highlighting the importance of Métis worldviews.”

Q3. What do you see as the main benefits to the youth? Can you provide an example?

- 70% of the staff interviewed mentioned the identity aspect of the program as the greatest benefit because the students are learning about Métis identity (regardless of being Métis or not) and, for those students that are Métis, they are able to solidify their learning by engaging through identification. For one educator this is critical as, “When the youth have awareness and see themselves in their learning, their self-esteem improves. They are reclaiming with pride; if you know who you are it brings strength to follow through with goals and life issues.”

- While 40% identified the cultural aspects the program to be the greatest benefit, another 40% noted that the program instils pride in the youth and considered that the greatest benefit.

- In addition, 30% staff members acknowledged that the Métis Cultural Program has moved beyond being an educational program to becoming an intertwined part of the school and community.

- 20% mentioned that the program removes barriers to learning and another 20% feel the program builds relationships. For these staff members, the greatest benefit is the relationships youth develop with each other, the staff, the Elders, their families, and the community.

- Another 20% of employees discussed the intergenerational piece of the program. By engaging Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and community members to provide key insight to the history, entire families can see themselves as a part of learning. One employee shared the following story highlighting this aspect, “In 2011, one Métis student’s Kokhum expressed behavioural challenges with the student at home and the school expressed concerns with behaviour as well as academic challenges. When the student transferred into Westmount Community School and, subsequently, into the Métis Cultural program she improved behavioural and academically (she is now reading above grade level) at home and at school. The student is now confident and she and her Kokhum have overcome their own fears to self-declare and are proudly moving forward to be a part of the community.”

- One teacher noted that the program provides high expectations for the students, while another two mentioned that it’s important to showcase Canadian history as it really happened.

- One staff member discussed how the culture is taught and explored as a celebration. As they stated in the interview, “I love our dances. The Lii Pchi Danseurs Di La Prayrii (Little Prairie Steppers Jigging Performance) are evolving; some have been dancing for the past four years and some are new. Not all of them are Métis as all students are welcome; the community love it and support it and it bonds the youth because the school has an identity.”
• Finally, one teacher acknowledged, “It’s not just youth that benefit. Everyone in the school benefits. Even I have benefitted. I didn’t know much about Métis culture and now I’m comfortable to teach and participate. The culture is intertwined in all of the schooling not just a program; it’s amazing to have a program like this.”

Q4. Do you see any areas for improvement? If so, what would you recommend? Please provide an example if possible.
• 80% of the staff requested greater professional development for all school staff to increase the effectiveness of the program.
• 80% discussed the need for more staff. Of these participants, 63% felt the program needs a full time teacher rather than a half time preparation teacher, while the other 37% expressed an interest in hiring support staff. In addition, two staff members expressed the need for more Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the program.
• 40% stated that an increase in program resources and curriculum content, “a Métis kit to share knowledge, a living document of building, and have it in all with schools and with technology.”
• 30% expressed the need for greater funding, while another 30% mentioned capacity building with other schools and partners.
• Finally, the staff identified the need to involve higher grades, expand the language component by including more fluent Michif speakers, and provide transportation to students living out of the area to attend.

Q5. What has been the biggest change, positive or negative, that you have noticed in terms of the youth that attend the Métis Culture Program? Please give an example.
• 70% of all staff interviewed identified the sense of pride and belonging in all students, teachers, and the community as the biggest change brought about by the program. According to one staff member, the students at Westmount Community School “walk taller,” while another stated, “This cultural program brings everyone together and the students are inclusive because of it.” Another staff member noted that this sense of belonging occurs because they are able to celebrate the Métis culture and become involved in activities and community events with their families and Elders.
• Finally, 30% stated that the biggest change in the youth is in their positive attitudes, engagement, and willingness to learn. Through interactive learning, community involvement, and integration, this program has managed to successfully, “teach generosity and mastery, change opinions and attitudes of learning, exceed grade level reading throughout the school, and build confidence and teach values.”

Q6. Have you noticed any behavioural changes, positive or negative, since the youth have been part of the Métis Cultural Program? Please explain.5
• 60% of the staff identified the increases in confidence, mastery, and engagement in schoolwork to be the biggest positive behavioural changes. According to one staff member, “They don’t give up as easily now. They try hard in program classes and in their other classes as well.”

5 The superintendent did not answer this questions and she is not directly connected to the children in the classroom.
Another 40% staff members discussed the increase in pride. As one staff member stated, “More pride comes with understanding, belonging, and respect,” while the other said, “Pride has been fostered and there is a high standard of learning and behaving, pride, generosity, and respect.”

40% staff members noted an increase in taking responsibility and accountability for their actions. In fact, one teacher claimed, “They speak well towards teachers and respect and take direction.”

One staff member discussed the community connections and how this influences the students’ behaviour. For example, she mentioned, “Kokhum Linda has been instrumental in building relationships. When the kids first came here there was no family connection to the school, then the Kokhum group took off once they could see what we can do for them.”

Q7. What have youth told you about their experiences in attending the Métis Cultural Program? Please provide an example or two.

- 60% of the staff discussed the emotional changes the youth have identified in themselves since attending the program. As one teacher notes, “The students love the time and consideration they are given,” while another stated, “They seek positive attention and feel safe, accepted and loved.”

- Half of the staff (50%) acknowledged that the students understand how important it is to learn the history and can relate to the information. In particular, the staff mentioned the songs, learning about the Red River cart, building carts, learning Métis history and trivia, fine arts, learning the language, jigging, singing the Métis national anthem, learning to fiddle, performing in the community, and organising the Sweet Heart Dance.

- Another half (50%) of the staff interviewed mentioned that the youth identified the sense of pride the program instilled in them as important. According to two teachers, this is evident in the senior students who are quick to give thanks and are appreciative of the opportunity to be a part of this program. One staff member explained this sense of pride can best be seen during performances for example, “When the National Anthem Song comes on, the youth stand proud and tall.”

- 40% of the staff stated that the students felt the intergenerational relationship piece was the most important part of the program. According to one staff member, “They enjoy their classroom, their time together and the time with Mushum.” Another shared the story of transient students mentioning, “When they move away and come back to the school they have said they are happy to be back and miss Mushum Robert, Aunty Faye, and the program in their other school.” Another staff member explained that the students often confide in the Elders claiming, “When the youth experience tough times they will share it with the Elders.”

Q8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- 50% of the staff added that this program has the potential to grow and expand. According to one staff member, if the staff, “works more on it and builds on it, it will get better every year; the sky is the limit if we keep building and growing each year.” Another staff member stated, “There is a lot of passion for this program by a lot of staff. We are so excited about where this program can go and hopefully is going.”

- 20% of the staff reiterated the need for greater funding.

- One staff member added that the program has huge impacts because the staff learns alongside the students, while another discussed how the program has exceeded school and division expectations.
Finally, the impacts of the program on non-Métis teaching staff cannot be overlooked and as one teacher added, “As a non-Métis person I learned so much. I felt ignorant at how little I knew, but now I am grateful that I have gained the teachings and can feel a sense of belonging and connection to the program.”

Métis Cultural Program Partners

There were a total of six Métis Cultural Program partners interviewed. Of these six interviewees, two are employees from the Gabriel Dumont Institute, two are Elders, and two are Métis language consultants.

Q1. Please tell me how long you have worked for Westmount Community School and in what capacity?
- Two of the employees are employees of the Gabriel Dumont Institute who have partnered with Westmount Community School to assist in implementing the Métis Cultural program. One of these employees has worked as an administrator and provides language support. The other is the Director of Publishing.
- The two Elders interviewed have been involved in the program since September 2015 and March 2016, respectively.
- Two of the participants are language consultants. One is a Métis author and artist who has been involved in the program for one year. He facilitates language and dance workshop and assists with community events. The other interviewee has been a language consultant with the program for the past two years and works closely with the teachers.

Q2. Can you tell me briefly about this program and why you think it is important?
- All of the program partners identified the fact that the program teaches the language, history, culture, and identity of Métis people to be the most important aspects of the program.
- For two partners, this program renews and protects Métis people by teaching their culture and heritage. For one partner this is essential: “*The Michif language is dying and it’s important to hear and very important to the community for kids to learn. This way the older ones can enjoy it. Teaching Métis culture is helping us to thrive and continue on.*”
- Furthermore, two interviewees see the program as a form of decolonisation, reconciliation, and healing. They note, “*It is important to teach respect and understand one another because there is discrimination here.*” The other participant elaborated, “*For Métis people, we have a passion for our language protection and preservation. This program is about healing and helps us reconcile with the general public. It’s the proper perspective.*”
- Finally, two partners elaborated by discussing how this program builds capacity with the community. According to one interviewee, “*The community inclusion is incredible! We tend to focus on treaty education so it so good to shift the focus to include Métis people because this creates a great sense of community and empowerment.*”

Q3. What do you see as the main benefits to the youth? Can you provide an example?
- 83% of the participants identified the cultural identity aspects of the program as the main benefit to the youth. They used phrases such as “*instilling pride,*” “*affirming cultural identity,*” and “*teaching a generation of Métis youth that they are good*” to describe the program’s impacts.
• Half of the partners felt that teaching accurate Métis and Canadian history was the greatest benefit. Furthermore, one partner noted, “When they grow up they will understand each other and maintain respect and possibly teach others throughout their lives.”
• One partner mentioned the inclusion of positive Métis role models, the staff of knowledgeable Métis people, and the program’s attraction of special guests to the school as being the largest benefits to the youth.
• Another partner noted that the full integration of the program allows for community inclusion, particularly during school events and that the language instruction is ground breaking for the province.

Q4. Do you see any areas for improvement? If so, what would you recommend? Please provide an example if possible.
• All of the partners agreed that the program requires greater resources and support from the school division. Specifically, they discussed the need for a more formalised program with a full time teacher (rather than a half time preparation teacher), increased language instruction time, increased programming for older grades, funding for resources and curriculum development, and professional development for teachers and staff.
• This type of investment is critical; particularly to ensure that language aspects of the program are preserved. As one of the language consultants explained, “The death of the language is the death of the culture. The school board knows it’s important but more resources are needed. For example, imagine if they put the same resources into this program as they do with French Immersion. We need fluent teachers and immersion programs where teachers are not expected to take on other teaching roles so they can focus, a school curriculum rather than pilots and partnerships, and more of a presence of Indigenous teachers.”

Q5. What has been the biggest change, positive or negative, that you have noticed in terms of the youth that attend the Métis Culture Program? Please give an example.
• Half of the program collaborators stated the biggest change was in the students’ interest and engagement in learning the hands-on aspects of the program such as the dancing, singing, speaking the language, cooking and eating the foods, beading, and dressing in the traditional regalia.
• Another 50% of the community partners identified positive changes in the youth as a result of the positive relationships formed through the program. For example, the students demonstrated pride and a great sense of responsibility during the Métis Cultural Days when they were able to teach cultural aspects to over 400 children from other schools.
• Moreover, one Elder notes how the students open up and trust other adults in the community and, as one language consultant stated, “When I visit a classroom, the students will greet me in Michif language. This makes me feel welcome and part of the community. It’s very powerful.”
Q6. Have you noticed any behavioural changes, positive or negative, since the youth have been part of the Métis Cultural Program? Please explain.

- According to one Elder, the program allows the youth to form different relationships with her as well as the other staff and the types of “behavioural” issues seen in the classroom are not seen during program time.
- Three other partners also noticed this increase in respect toward teachers, peers, and community members.
- Other positive behavioural qualities mentioned were: an increase in willingness to learn, more pride, increase in confidence, being more welcoming and supportive, and outwardly greeting others.
- Two of the partners noted that, in addition to student growth, the staff also grew professionally and the entire school is, “respectfully engaged in learning the Métis culture and history.”

Q7. What have youth told you about their experiences in attending the Métis Cultural Program? Please provide an example or two.

- 83% of the partners interviewed reported that the children expressed feelings of pride, confidence, joy, and respect when they engaged with the youth at the school. One Elder stated that the students, “respectfully talk to me and greet me as Mushum. They are so proud to show off and both Métis and non-Métis students are learning about the community.”
- 50% of the partners mentioned that the youth are particularly proud when engaging in hands-on learning activities such as dancing, beading, singing, and speaking Michif. According to one consultant involved in the dancing program, “The youth give 110% in the dancing program. The Métis Cultural Program could be the model for programming all over the city, province, and country; the kids want to know about larger and more complicated issues. They are capable of learning about the in-depth issues and this program has the power to teach them that.” Another program partner explained, through singing and the language program, the youth are able to, “retain the information and look for approval from Elders. The language is spoken clearest when singing is involved.”
- Finally, one partner noted that the teachers are also greatly impacted by the program and in particular, “New teachers are experimenting with Métis culture and they feel comfortable to do so.”

Q8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- Two partners added there is a need for more staff and greater collaboration.
- One partner expressed the need for more Michif resources mentioning that, “The teachers do not speak the language fluently so often they are only a few steps ahead of the children.”
- One partner reiterated that, “This is only the beginning and this program is a leading the way for community schools in Saskatoon.”
- Two partners restated the importance of continuing this program claiming, “We want to continue to ensure our children are learning the language and are proud to be Métis.” Furthermore, the other partner noted that, “Healing through culture is true reconciliation. More schools need to get involved using this model.”
- Finally, one program partner acknowledged the tireless work of the staff by claiming, “They must be commended as it is not easy to start something new. It can be political and an uphill struggle; the staff do all this hard work because they want what’s best for those kids.”
Students

Two students who are currently participating in the Métis Cultural Program were interviewed. One of the students is in Grade six, while the other is in Grade seven.

Q1. What do you think is the best part of the Métis Cultural Program? Please share a few examples.
  • Both of the students stated that the best part of the program is learning about Métis culture and language. One student acknowledged that the program teaches youth about Métis language and culture, “so that the traditions don’t die,” while the other mentioned that learning how to dance was the most important part. According to this student, “Every time we dance, it’s fun and we all enjoy it. We are learning the history of Métis people.”

Q2. What do your friends think of the Métis Cultural Program? Can you share any examples (positive or negative)?
  • Both of the students stated that their peers think the program is wonderful. One student mentioned that her friends didn’t want to stop beading because they enjoy it so much, while the other claimed, “They are all excited and happy when they go to the program. They like learning about the history of other people, not just their own history.”

Q3. Is there anything about the Métis Cultural Program you don’t like? If so, please share an example.
  • One of the students wishes the program offered more time and opportunities to the older grades. This student explained in the primary grades they had more class time to learn in the program compared to the older grades.
  • The other participant mentioned in the beginning of the program they didn’t know much about the Métis culture or language so it took a while to get used to the classes.

Q4. Do you have any suggestions that you think might improve your experience in the program?
  • One student mentioned that an increase in staff would allow the students more opportunities to learn, especially Michif. According to this student, expanding the program is essential as, “Métis people have a right to know their history.”
  • The other student did not have any suggestions for improving the program.

Q5. What did you learn while going to the Métis Cultural Program?
  • Both of the students acknowledged learning about the history, culture, and language of Métis people from the program. Specifically, they listed learning jigging, the Métis national anthem, the history of Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, and John Pritchard, and music.

Q6. Would you recommend that other youth from your community attend the Métis Cultural Program? Why or why not?
  • Both of the students would recommend the program to other youth in the community. According to one student, “They would get to learn about Canadian culture and the real history. In Canada, you should know your background.”
  • The other student mentioned that program is essential for Métis youth especially stating, “Métis youth deserve to know about their own culture, language, dances, and anthem.”
Q7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- One student did not have anything to add.
- The other student wished to take this time to thank a few special staff in the Métis Cultural Program stating, “Thank you to Ms. Micklewright and Kokhum Linda, Aunty Faye, Mushum Robert, Aunty Karen for the Métis Cultural Program.”

Results & Conclusions

Overview

This section will provide highlights from the data results presented in the previous section as well as the main conclusions that can be drawn from evaluating the Métis Culture Program. While the purpose of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of this program, the richness of the data gathered cannot be overlooked. For example, the achievement of data focused goals, such as academic student success or positive survey results, should not overshadow the increase in student-identified feelings of cultural connectedness, identity, and pride.

Analysis

These results have yielded a number of conclusions regarding the overall effectiveness of this program. In general, most of the feedback is extremely positive. The data demonstrates an increase in student success at school and an increase in academic skills, sense of self, and extracurricular/community involvement, which will have a positive future impact on the engagement of youth throughout secondary school.
Highlights from the Tell Them from Me Student Survey Data:

- The students reported the Métis Culture Program has helped with their learning because it is enjoying tangible, hands-on, and interactive, which lead to a greater understanding of Métis culture and history.
- Furthermore, they are developing lifelong social skills and internalising the Circle of Courage.
- The students acknowledged that all cultures are welcome and accepted at school and cultural acceptance and community building occurs best through inclusive events such as powwows, dance performances, and family nights.
- Finally, the students reported that they feel their families and community members play a vital role in knowledge transmission and cultural continuity.

Highlights from the Michif Language Development Data:

- All primary students are meeting or exceeding Michif language development grade-level expectations.
- 56% of the Grade one students tested knew more than 10 common words in Michif; 80% of the Grade two students tested knew more than 20 common words in Michif; and 67% of the Grade three students tested knew more than 25 common words in Michif.
- 69% of the Grade one students were able to count to over 10 in Michif; 60% of the Grade two students were able to count to over 20 in Michif; and 67% of the Grade three students were able to count to 30 in Michif.
- 31% of the Grade one students, 73% of the Grade two students and 83% of the Grade three students knew all 12 colour words in Michif.
**Highlights from the Standardized Test Performance Data:**

- Of those First Nations and Métis students meeting literacy expectations, they showed 12% growth in one school year (from September 2015 to June 2016), compared to 15% for non-Indigenous students.
- Of those First Nations and Métis students exceeding literacy expectations, they showed 11% growth in one school year (from September 2015 to June 2016).

**Highlights from the Staff Impact Statements & Narrative Photography Data:**

- All of the staff interviewed learned a great deal of Métis cultural knowledge (including knowledge of the Michif language). They felt this information was not otherwise available to them.
- Learning this information has led to an increase in their confidence and ability to teach Métis culture to their students.
- The students, staff, and school as a whole have developed a sense of pride and ownership toward the Métis Cultural Program.
- The students are beginning to internalise aspects of the culture and language as it is present in every aspect of their daily lives at school.
- The Métis Cultural Program staff is invaluable and the program’s greatest resource.
- The staff has done a tremendous job of creating an interactive, print and picture-rich environment for students where Métis culture and the Michif language is incorporated in all displays.
- All students are encouraged to explore and adapt the learning spaces to meet their needs and foster a deeper sense of understanding.
- The inclusion of many items (ranging from the personal to the political and the modern to the traditional) allows the students to understand that being Métis is not merely a historical distinction. The students are learning that Métis people are a vibrant, diverse, and growing group in Canada today.
Highlights from In-Person Interviews:

- All of the program partners and 70% of the staff interviewed identified that the most important part of the program is teaching youth about Métis identity, while 50% of the partners and 40% of the staff acknowledged that learning Métis culture and history has the biggest impact.

- They identified the biggest positive changes in the youth to be increases in: confidence (60%); pride (40%); interest and engagement (50%); and building relationships (50%).

- 100% of the partners and 40% of the staff called for greater program resources and 80% of the staff expressed the need for greater staffing of the program. To quote one participant, “We need fluent teachers and immersion programs where teachers are not expected to take on other teaching roles so they can focus, and a school curriculum, rather than pilots and partnerships, and more of a presence of Indigenous teachers.”

- All of the staff and program partners interviewed highlighted that this program is unique and groundbreaking. According to one participant, “Healing through culture is true reconciliation. More schools need to get involved using this model.”

- Both of the students interviewed stated that the best part of the program is learning about Métis culture and language, “so that the traditions don’t die,” as “Métis people have a right to know their history.”

- Both of the students expressed the need to provide more opportunities to the older grades and more staff to teach them.

- Both of the students acknowledged learning about the history, culture, and language of Métis people in the program as the most important part and, according to one student, “Métis youth deserve to know about their own culture, language, dances, and anthem.”
Conclusions

Several conclusions can be made from the above analysis:

- The Métis Cultural Program is currently helping many Métis Saskatoon youth build confidence, strengthen their identities, and instil a sense of pride.
- This sense of empowerment extends to all students including those who are non-Métis. All Westmount staff and students feel a sense of ownership of this program and greatly value it.
- The program is unique, ground breaking, and community based. It meets the needs of Westmount learners, reflecting the collaborative nature of the program. Many dedicated organisations and educators have worked tirelessly to create relevant and useful curriculum resources and teaching materials.
- The quantitative data lends itself toward the accomplishment of many of the goals of the program such as an increase in academic achievement, student engagement and motivation, and the full integration and inclusion of Métis.
- The qualitative analysis reveals that the Métis Cultural Program is integral to the development of strong, confident, educated, and empowered Métis youth in Saskatoon.

In order for a program to be considered a best practice, several aspects must be present. The program must be deeply rooted in meeting the needs of the community it serves and it must achieve or exceed its mandate and goals. Finally, the program must follow guiding principles that are supported by current, relevant research. Throughout this evaluation, the Métis Cultural Program has established itself as exceptional in its ability to meet the needs of the youth it serves, adhere to its goals, and focus on creating strong, reciprocal partnerships to guide its programming. Furthermore, it has shown tremendous promise as a ground breaking Métis-based education program with the ability to expand to reach even more youth in the community.

According to recent research, youth need opportunities to learn their own history, language, culture, and traditional skills. Furthermore, in order to engage youth and create a deep sense of connection and belonging, the youth need to see themselves in their educational experience. It has to be relevant and meaningful. As educators, it is important to recognise that schools are part of communities and are responsible for providing programming that reflects the student body. Students need opportunities to learn culture in experiential, real-world contexts that allow for integration and interactive learning. The Métis Cultural Program allows for this type of learning to occur as the program is deeply rooted in transmitting knowledge through practice, whether it be fiddling, dancing, beading, or speaking Michif. Rather than merely learning about Métis culture, they are living the culture every day at school.
Westmount Community School prides itself on providing an intergenerational kinship experience throughout the Métis Cultural Program. Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and youth mentors are all a fundamental part of this program. The youth are able to form lasting relationships with these community members and the community members are also able to engage with families in ways that school staff cannot. These authentic and culturally based relationships provide students and families with a greater connection to the school and increase the likelihood that students will have a more positive school experience. In fact, one of the students interviewed expressed the importance of including adults from the community into the school and program by offering a simple thank you that highlights to importance of including extended family members into the program (i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, and Elders). She stated, “Thank you to Ms. Micklewright and Kokhum Linda, Aunty Faye, Mushum Robert, Aunty Karen for the Métis Cultural Program.”

This program relies heavily on longstanding partnerships and collaborations with Métis organisations. Furthermore, it has been successful in engaging local Métis authors, artists, activists, educators, historian, and linguists to provide the most authentic and valid curriculum resources and teaching tools. What the Saskatoon Public School division or Westmount Community school lacks in resources (due to this program being so new and innovative) the partners, such as the GDI, language consultants, and CUMFI, are able to provide assistance. These community partners have committed to: creating resources, providing professional development for non-Métis staff, running community events such as dances, cooking food, teaching fine arts, forming relationships with family members, and seeking out new and innovative ways to further integrate the program into the school. For example, one program partner managed to secure funding for a side project whereby an entire Métis books series was created, showcasing youth from the program.

The most powerful evidence of the program’s achievements does not lie in the research or in the statistics, but in the perspective of those involved in ensuring its success on a daily basis. According to one partner, this program is a critical intervention that is not only educating and empowering youth, it is ensuring the continuation of a culture that might otherwise be lost. As he stated, “The death of the language is the death of the culture. The school board knows it’s important but more resources are needed. For example, imagine if they put the same resources into this program as they do with French Immersion. We need fluent teachers and immersion programs where teachers are not expected to take on other teaching roles so they can focus, and a school curriculum, rather than pilots and partnerships, and more of a presence of Indigenous teachers.”
Outcomes: Most Significant Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Accomplishments

Since its first year in 2012, the Métis Cultural Program has achieved several milestones including increases in youth engagement and confidence, success in Michif language assessments and an increased school interest in Métis-based activities such as dancing and fiddling. Information gathered based on interviews with Westmount personnel, partners, and youth indicates the Métis Cultural Program is both a reputable and necessary Indigenous-focused education program in the Saskatoon community. Currently, Westmount Community School is doing an excellent job of creating and administering this successful program and several other Métis-focused initiatives ranging from extra-curricular activities (jigging group) to working with authors and artists to creating curriculum resources to strengthen the Michif language component. This program is highly accountable and transparent and creates mutually beneficially partnerships with Mets organisations that put the needs of the youth they serve first. For these reasons, the Métis Cultural Program will continue to be successful, eventually leading to an increase in their long-term goal of creating connected, engaged, and proud Métis youth in Saskatchewan.

One aspect of the program, and of Westmount Community School as a whole, that should not be overlooked is its foundational principle of utilising an intergenerational kinship based approach in its programming. The school does a phenomenal job of ensuring all community members are valued and welcome. This goes beyond creating community spaces or offering refreshments (which are valuable practices as well), and extends into allowing community members to determine what the program needs to be successful and to play an integral part in program delivery. This is evident in program staffing and volunteers. People such as Kokhum Linda (a grandmother and community member), Aunty Faye, Mushum Robert, Wilfred Burton, Norman Fleury, and Davis Werner play a vital role as program educators. These are respected authors, artists, Knowledge Keepers, academics and Elders. However, they are also aunties, uncles, Mushums, Kokhums, and friends who invite the children to see them as both family members and professionals. In this way, the program becomes deeply intimate while still maintaining a high level of academic integrity.

According to one partner, “The community inclusion in incredible! We tend to focus on treaty education so it so good to shift the focus to include Métis people because this creates a great sense of community and empowerment.” This inclusive community model acknowledges and honours the students’ unique stories and needs, their family situations, and most importantly, their cultural backgrounds. In this way, Westmount Community School is addressing several barriers to education many young urban Métis youth face in Saskatchewan; however, they are doing it in a meaningful and empowering way that is consistent with Indspire principles. This program is celebratory. Moreover, it is necessary because, as one Elder stated, “Healing through culture is true reconciliation,” and this program centers on teaching an “entire generation of Métis kids that they are good.”

Lessons Learned

Several lessons have been learned since Westmount Community School began its Métis Cultural Program including:

- Staff sustainability and training is essential;
- Youth strengths and needs must be considered to optimise learning;
• Evaluation (for both students and staff) must be continuous and consistent;
• Training and professional development is important;
• Consultation with families is foundational;
• Professional curriculum resources and teaching tools and materials are needed and necessary;
• Learning must be project based, hands-on, and experiential;
• Mentorship and the inclusion of Métis educators, academics, Elders, and staff are critical; and
• Partner support and collaboration are necessary to capitalise on momentum.

Limitations

There are a few challenges that have been encountered since this program began. One large and complex issue is with regards to staffing. A lack of funding presents two complications. Firstly, the Métis Cultural Teacher is only able to provide 1/2 time preparation release teaching for classroom teachers rather than working as a full time teacher. One language consultant noted that within the school division there is a certain standard of staffing and resources allocated to other language and cultural programs, such as French immersion. He stated that this program should operate in much the same way, with dedicated division supports. Secondly, several partners and staff acknowledged the lack of Métis educators in the program as problematic. While it is not necessary to have solely Métis people running the program, it is important to have fluent Michif speakers and those who know enough about the culture and history to accurately transmit the knowledge. As one partner mentioned in his interview, often the teaching staff are only a few lessons ahead of the learners when teaching Métis culture and Michif.

Another issue is with regard to the creation of a unified model and policy for implementing this program, one that serves as a working document that other schools could use. This would need to include: outlines for professional development, Métis curriculum resources, planning documents, teaching tools, best practices in teaching, assessments of student learning, and evaluation tools. At the present time, a lack of staffing and a lack of funding prevent the creation of such a model, despite its necessity. Every time a current staff member, community member, partner, or Elder leaves the program, something critical is lost. Without proper documentation, solidifying the program will continue to be what one partner called “an uphill struggle.”

Finally, as already mentioned, there are concerns with regard to the lack of financial resources available from provincial governments, partnering institutions, and the school division. Secure, long-term funding would mean that the school could expand to include more teaching time with all grades, more staff, and/or recruit and accept more partners each year. Given all that is known about the needs of urban Indigenous youth and best practices in engagement and education, it would be beneficial to have greater funding options. A lack of financial resources has prevented Westmount from employing full-time, fully trained staff for this program. Despite this reality, the program continues to establish itself as masterful at delivering an innovative program. More funding would allow for full integration and prevent the further loss of the Métis language, culture, and identity that is critical to the health and academic success of so many youth in Canada today.
Next Steps

The evaluative process yielded several next steps in order for Westmount Community School to move forward and continue to achieve success. Through greater capacity building, professional development, curriculum development, and evaluation, the Métis Cultural Program will continue to grow and succeed.

Building Capacity

In order for the Métis Cultural Program to grow and strengthen, it must build capacity. The staff acknowledges that this is an essential piece of program delivery. However, it is also one of the most challenging aspects, as it requires considerable time and resources to build and sustain relationships, encourage investment, and ensure integrity. The current principal and full-time staff have made it a priority to establish relationships with community members, mentors, volunteers, teachers, and funders to achieve better outcomes for their students. Of the utmost importance is to ensure the inclusion of Métis community members when considering staffing, program development, cultural programming, and mentorship.

Professional Development

Repeatedly, the Westmount Community School staff called for greater resources to assist in effective delivery of services and programs. The staff and program partners noted two areas where greater professional development is needed: 1) Michif language acquisition and 2) cultural protocols. Programming should include cultural content and exploration that extends beyond fine arts (i.e. beading) and addresses Métis ways of knowing, colonialism, racism, identity, and spirituality. Further professional development is also needed to expand and strengthen the intergenerational kinship approach offered. While most of the Indigenous students and staff may understand the importance of having aunties, uncles, Kokhums, and Mushums as a regular part of the school experience, this type of inclusion is not typically seen in mainstream education in Canada. Professional development surrounding culturally competent and relevant education practices, rooted in decolonisation education and Indigenous pedagogy, are critical.

Curriculum Development

This program has already done an excellent job of designing and implementing some foundational curriculum resources. They were able to create, for example, Métis teaching kits for the teachers to use in classrooms, and Wilfred Burton created a series of books that feature Métis content coupled with pictures of children participating in the program. The program has also recently created and administered language assessment to measure the success of Grade one to three students as they learn the Michif language. All of this program development serves to establish a foundation for a fully unified Métis curriculum that could one day be implemented division-wide. However, developing solid curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade eight that fully integrates Métis language, culture, history, and worldview across all subject areas is not an easy undertaking or a quick process. More time, collaboration, community consultation, and capacity building is needed to develop this unique curriculum. As the program continues to grow, however, the staff will continue to take great strides toward making this a possibility in the near future.
On-Going Evaluation

A large part of the current success of the program thus far has been the continuous and purposeful evaluation of the program. Since its infancy, Westmount Community School staff and school division personnel have been gathering data from staff members, program partners, youth, families, Elders, and community members. Through their community partnerships and student programming, the Métis Cultural Program has been also working with the youth directly to ensure the program is meeting their needs and is successfully carrying out its initiatives.

While this report is a formal evaluation of the school, it relies heavily on the data already collected and analysed by Westmount Community School staff. It is critical they continue to seek the input of students, staff, partners, and caregivers in order to expose barriers and improve what already works. A close examination of the numbers is also essential including academic performance, student engagement, attendance rates and behavioural incidents, and in the near future, high school graduation rates. This will allow Westmount Community School a greater sense of the long-term impacts the Métis Cultural Program is having in the community.
Interactive Tools

The following web links could be useful and may provide Indspire with additional information:

1. The Westmount Community School Official Website
   ➢  http://www.spsd.sk.ca/school/westmount/Pages/default.aspx
References


Appendix A: Logic Model

**Inputs**
- Staff time and skills
- Collaboration among staff, families, community leaders, Elders, and partners
- Materials and resources (i.e. for school, extracurricular, and after-school programming)
- Training for staff
- Technology
- School, community, and parental involvement
- Administration
- Financial resources/fundraising initiatives
- Planning, research, and evaluation time and resources
- Staff recruitment and student admissions

**Activities**
- Complete all schoolwork, participate in Métis curricular activities
- Ensure attendance, punctuality, positive attitude, willingness to learn
- Provide leadership and useful feedback and learn alongside youth
- Create and evaluate assignments
- Develop and administer tools to best orient, teach, and transition youth
- Ensure youth are safe, learning, and fully engaged in all aspects of program
- Create and sustain partnerships (financial, cultural, and spiritual)
- Increase exposure and hands-on learning
- Assist youth to successfully transfer skills and experiences secondary school

**Outputs**
- School youth (Ages 5-14)
- Westmount Administration and Staff
- Westmount families
- Elders & Community Members
- Partner organizations

**Participation**

**Outcomes**

**Short Term**
- Increase in school interest and engagement
- Increase in academic success, hands-on learning, and extracurricular experiences
- Increase in Métis linguistic and cultural knowledge
- Increase in confidence and independence
- Increase in problem solving skills and social skills

**Intermediate**
- Increase in cultural diversity, awareness, and leadership
- Increase in success at elementary education level
- Increased knowledge and appreciation of self, spirituality, community, and culture

**Long Term**
- Engaged, educated, and culturally aware Saskatchewan youth

**Time Frame**
- One year During Program
- Two years During Program
- Five years After Program
Appendix B: Consent and Interactive Forms

Indspire
50 Generations Drive, Ohsweken, Ontario, N0A 1M0
P: 519-445-3016

INDIVIDUAL CONSENT
(Please print or write legibly)

Name, and role in the: Métis Cultural Program at Westmount Community School of the individual/Personnel, Student (over 18), Community Member, Elder/Knowledge Keeper:

Name: ______________________________________________________________________________
Role: ______________________________________________________________________________

☐ INDIVIDUAL CONSENT
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the aforementioned information.

I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted regarding the research and understand I may ask questions in the future.

NAME: ________________________________
SIGNATURE: _____________________________
DATE: ___________________________

GROUP CONSENT
(Please print or write legibly)

☐ GROUP CONSENT
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the aforementioned information.

I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted regarding the research and understand I may ask questions in the future.

NAME: __________________________________
SIGNATURE: _____________________________
DATE: ___________________________

CONTACT INFORMATION (OPTIONAL)
Please provide your contact information if you would like to be contacted to review your transcript and/or receive a copy of the research results.

EMAIL ADDRESS: ____________________________________________

PHONE NUMBER: ____________________________________________
Dear Parents/Guardians;

I am currently involved in an exciting project with Indspire, an Indigenous-led national registered charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people for the long term benefit of these individuals, their families and communities, and Canada. Inspire is dedicated to helping Indigenous youth reach their potential. Through a letter of understanding with Indspire and Westmount Community School, I have been invited to document the Métis Cultural Program in the Westmount Community School.

I am inviting students to participate in INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS on JUNE 8, 2016 at TO BE SCHEDULED. This INTERVIEW will be audiotaped to provide a clear record of what transpired. All the information provided will be considered confidential and no names will be shared.

I hope you agree to have your student be a part of the conversation. Please see the attached informed consent letter.

Sincerely,

DR. CARRIE BOURASSA
306-519-1745 infinityconsulting@sasktel.net

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT
The undersigned does hereby give permission for our (my) child, _Name of Child: _______________________________________________________________________

to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the aforementioned information. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted regarding the study and understand I may ask questions in the future.

_NAME: ________________________________________________________________________________
RELATIONSHIP: __________________________________________________________________________
SIGNATURE: ____________________________________________________________________________
DATE: ________________________________________________________________________________

Please provide your contact information if you would like to be contacted to review their transcript and/or receive a copy of the research results.

EMAIL ADDRESS: ____________________________________________

PHONE NUMBER: ____________________________________________
May 12, 2016
Westmount Community School
Métis Cultural Program
Infinity Consulting Evaluation

Dear Parents:

I am a Métis consultant (owner and President of Infinity Consulting) hired by Indspire to do an evaluation of the Métis Cultural Program at Westmount Community School. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the Métis Cultural Program for Indspire’s Nurturing Capacity program. Participation is completely voluntary and your decision to participate or not participate will in no way affect your existing relationships, work situation or provision of services.

This study is part of a joint research project between Westmount Community School and Indspire. This research will involve two student researchers who will work on the project in their fulfillment of their degree requirements and will be funded by the Research Contractor (Paulette Poitras and Jenelle McArthur). This opportunity helps build student’s research capacity.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?
The following will take place:

- Individuals (including parents and students) who could be interviewed will be identified and names provided to the researcher for interviewing purposes.
- Collection of relevant demographic data.
- Observation of the Métis Cultural Program and activities.
- Interviews with the Métis Cultural Program staff, students (former and present), parents, Elders (if applicable) and administrators to document their experience and hear their perceptions of the program model.
- Determine the types of collection of various data related to student use of the centre.
- Documentation of specific strategies used for student supports.
- Collect data that shows increase in attendance due to the program and/or increased graduation rates or student performance (to be provided by administration).
- Document how, if any, the Métis Cultural Program reflects the seven foundational guiding principles Indigenous for educational practice.
There will be no remuneration for participating in this research.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
The direct benefits of participating in this study include:

- The ability to voice concerns and hopes about the Métis Cultural Program and the learning that may come from gaining new insights and perspectives;
- The sharing of resources on challenges, solutions and positive outcomes; and
- The opportunity to have your voice heard, your opinions valued and respected.

For the larger scientific community and the community at large, this research may offer insights into the types of programming needed to address the needs of Indigenous students.

Minimal risks
There also may be minimal risks associated with participation as some individuals could experience psychological risks or social risks related to voicing their opinion in a group setting. Care will be exercised if there are issues that need follow up. If deemed necessary, individuals will be provided with names of people who could most appropriately sort through any issues.

CONFIDENTIALITY
In the research gathering session, all the information you provide will be considered confidential. Prior to starting the session, you will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to indicate that you will respect the confidentiality of the interview discussion.

In written reports of this research and oral presentations, excerpts from the research may be discussed but no names will be associated with any quotes. This helps us to represent your voice and opinion without compromising your confidentiality. The audiotapes will only be used for the purpose of creating written records and will not be associated with your name. These audiotapes/computer video files will be kept in locked filing cabinets/ secure password protected computers and will only be viewed by the researchers and research assistants who have signed confidentiality agreements.

Data collected during this study will be kept for five years and stored in locked filing cabinets. All data will be confidentially shredded or destroyed after seven years unless phases of the research are still occurring. Only the researchers and research assistants will have access to the data. All individuals who have access to the data will sign confidentiality agreements.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. It is very important to us that you decide whether or not you would like to share your thoughts with us.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in professional journals, presented at conferences and on Indspire’s website. Feedback about this study will be mailed to you if you choose to provide your address. The results will be available June 30, 2016. If you have any questions at any point during the
study or after the study please contact (Sonia Prevost-Derbecker at Indspire by phone (519) 445-3024 or via email tmartin@indspire.ca.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Carrie Bourassa at 306-519-1745 or infinityconsulting@sasktel.net. This proposal for the planned study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Indspire Ethics Committee.

If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office (contact: Sonia Pervost-Derbecker at Indspire by phone (519) 445-3024 or via email tmartin@indspire.ca).

Thank you for your valuable insight in this research.

I hope you will agree to allow your child to be part of this exciting Nurturing Capacity project and as well, consider volunteering to be part of the study as we also welcome parental involvement.

Sincerely,

Carrie Bourassa, PhD
Owner/President
Infinity Consulting
Appendix C: Circle of Courage Visual Representation

**Belonging**
A sense of community, loving others, and being

**Mastery**
Competence in many areas; cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual. Having self-control, responsibility, striving to achieve personal goals rather than superiority.

**Independence**
Making one’s own decisions and being responsible for failure or success, setting one’s own goals, disciplining one’s self.

**Generosity**
Looking forward to being able to contribute to others, be able to give cherished things to others.