



High School Graduation Coach Program Evaluation

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Preface

Nurturing Capacity:

The *K-12 Indspire Institute* is focused on dramatically increasing high school completion rates among Indigenous students by building strong foundations in their K-12 education. Through various programs, resources and events, the *Institute* fosters collaboration between educators, communities, and others to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

Indspire conducts research to identify and document educational best practices from across Canada and shares these successful practices through the *K-12 Indspire Institute*. Indspire also champions Indigenous approaches to education, those that honour Indigenous culture, values, and world views.

Methodology

Three established researchers with extensive education, evaluation, and community experience were consulted to recommend a documentation approach to explicating best practices. Together, these researchers brought experience in different areas, methods, analysis and reporting to the research, which proved to be a great strength.

The researchers participated in a variety of research team sessions to explicate a documentation approach that would represent the educational program in ethical and respectful ways. It was decided that the documentation process should be restrained to using the voices of its participants and stakeholders as much as possible.

Every attempt was made to approach the process from an ethical standpoint and to collect data in a variety of ways to help inform the audience about the various aspects of the programs that would be participating in research conversations. It was determined that documenting “best practice” should be conducted using an evaluability framework. Evaluation methodology is aptly suited for systematically examining program design, process and objectives. By borrowing from the evaluability framework, this research was able to document best practices based on the High School Graduation Coach Program (HSGCP) documentation and consultation with program participants and stakeholders. The research process utilized informed consent, re-iterative consultation, triangulated data collections, and the OCAP principles.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to acknowledge and thank the Edmonton Catholic School Board and the educators and youth who created a space to share and help us understand the good work that is taking place within the High School Graduation Coach Program. It is with the best of intentions that we tried to capture the spirit, the energy, and the good feelings of working alongside one another in this process of sharing educative wise practices.

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Executive Summary

High School Graduation Coach Program (HSGCP) has been implemented with success in a variety of contexts. First founded in the state of Georgia, USA, the HSGCP successfully increased the high school graduation rate of African American students. The program was adapted to meet the needs of Indigenous students in South Dakota and then again to meet the needs of urban FNMI students in Edmonton.

The program, adopted by Edmonton Catholic Schools and championed by Pam Sparklingeyes, Program Manager of Aboriginal Learning Services, centres around the creation of a full-time graduation coach position at the school and a space for FNMI students to meet with this coach, tutors, and other students. When the HSGCP was introduced at St. Joseph High School in Edmonton, graduation rates of Indigenous students increased from 14.9% to 60.4%.

Prior to the implementation of the HSGCP, Edmonton Catholic Schools had created the Braided Journeys Program. The Braided Journeys Program (BJP) is intended to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) youth to become leaders of character, vision, and action. FNMI youth are provided multi-component, culturally-based programs that challenge their creativity, build on their skill set, and increase their support network. In addition, youth have the opportunity to develop citizenship skills, thus, enhancing self-esteem and confidence. Participants also gain skills from a variety of cultural and leadership activities. HSGCP became a part of the Braided Journeys Program and was able to leverage not only the BJP's material and infrastructure resources, but also human resources, allowing for a smoother introduction.

HSGCP has been implemented with success in a variety of contexts. In 2009, Edmonton Catholic Schools established the High School Graduation Coach Program at St. Joseph High School in central Edmonton and this exemplar may serve as an Indigenous education support model for the establishment of future program sites. The program's establishment at St. Joseph's High School in Edmonton has helped to highlight its various benefits:

- Approximately 130 Secondary Indigenous students per year receive graduation coach services through the Braided Journeys Program at St. Josephs High School.
- Students come and go freely. Physically, the Braided Journeys Room is simple; the number of staff employed is minimal.
- Staff members are able to offer an innovative program that provides comprehensive, in school support for Indigenous students.
- The program offers students a home place in which they are able to feel a sense of belonging.
- The freedom to come and go as they please also enables them to take personal and social responsibility for their own learning.
- It is imperative to the program's belief system to hire Indigenous people with various educational and post-secondary experiences to serve as mentors and, in this case, graduation coaches.

In order for students to realize these benefits, researchers have identified 6 key areas of focus:

- Relationships and Mentoring
- Transitions
- Culture
- Career Counselling
- Academics
- Parental Engagement

The program, even in its limited realm, has contributed to the marked improvement in Indigenous student results at St. Joseph's High School; these improvements are supported by the following data markers:

- From 2008 through 2011 the program has increased FMNI graduation rates from 14.9 % to 60.4%.
- Estimated retention rate for the 2012/13 academic year is 85% (approximately).
- Anecdotal evidence from parents, coaches, and students support the paradigm altering abilities of the program.

General Description of the Program

“Aboriginal people in Alberta are culturally diverse – from the Dene in the subarctic north to the Woodland Cree in the boreal forest and the Blackfoot of the southern plains and the Métis throughout the province. From time immemorial, First Peoples lived close to the land, and so it shaped each groups culture – the collection of beliefs, values, and knowledge they share”¹ (Aboriginal Peoples, p.2). In Canada and Alberta today First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) people represent a significant and growing demographic; specifically in Alberta, they make up approximately 6% of the population or about 240,000 people. Statistics Canada² (i.e. 2001, 2006, 2011) has released numerous studies describing the growing FNMI population in Canada, with almost half of this population reported to be under the age of 24 years. For Alberta, the 2001 census reported that 44.3% of FNMI people were under the age of 20 years. The increase in the general FNMI population implies that there is also a corresponding increase in the number of FNMI youth in secondary school systems.

Graduating from high school is a contributing factor to both economic success and quality of life. In 2009, when the High School Graduation Coach Program (HSGCP) was started in Edmonton, Alberta, the graduation rate of Indigenous students in Alberta was 31.4%, well below the general Alberta population graduation rate of 79%. The identification of this educational gap within FNMI student populations has had a profound effect and caused education stakeholders to take notice and prioritize identifying ways of increasing Indigenous high school graduation rates.

The HSGCP originated in the USA and introduced in Alberta through Edmonton Catholic Schools. The City of Edmonton is situated in the North Central Region of Alberta and has a population of approximately 800,000 people. Edmonton Catholic Schools is a school district that serves over 37,000 students, of which 8,897 are secondary students. The HSGCP was first implemented at St. Joseph High School in 2009. St. Josephs is located in North Central Edmonton, which is a geographic area with a large number of urban Indigenous families comprised of many linguistic and cultural groups.

While FNMI students come from cultural communities that are immersed in a variety of traditional languages and protocols (e.g. Cree and Dene), Edmonton Catholic Schools is situated in an urban setting where most programming takes place in English.

Brief History of the Project

HSGCP has been implemented with success in a variety of contexts³. First founded in the state of Georgia, USA, the HSGCP successfully increased the high school graduation rate of African-American students. The program was adapted to meet the needs of Indigenous students in South Dakota and then again to meet the needs of urban FNMI students in Edmonton.

¹ Alberta Education (2013) Aboriginal Peoples of Alberta: Yesterday, today and tomorrow. Available from: <http://www.idmarch.org/document/%20Alberta/4H6K-show/Aboriginal%20Peoples%20of%20Alberta%20Yesterday,%20Today,%20and>. Retrieved: March, 2014

² Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html>

³ The Edmonton Catholic School Board web page as well as the HSGCP summary (http://ideas.education.alberta.ca/media/78985/ecsd_abor_grad_coach_final_online.pdf) was used to access portions of this data.

In 2009, Edmonton Catholic Schools established the FNMI High School Graduation Coach Program at St. Joseph High School in North Central Edmonton. Prior to the implementation of this program, Edmonton Catholic Schools had created the Braided Journeys Program:

The Braided Journeys Program (BJP) is intended to support FNMI youth to become leaders of character, vision, and action. FNMI youth are provided multi-component, culturally-based programs that challenge their creativity, build on their skill set, and increase their support network. In addition, youth have the opportunity to develop citizenship skills, thus, enhancing self-esteem and confidence. Participants also gain skills from a variety of cultural and leadership activities.

HSGCP became a part of the Braided Journeys Program and was able to leverage not only the BJP's material and infrastructure resources, but also human resources, allowing for a smoother introduction. Due to the success of the HSGCP at St. Joseph High School, it was subsequently implemented at Archbishop Oscar Romero and St. Francis Xavier High Schools in 2012-2013 and Archbishop O'Leary High School in 2013-2014.

Developmental Focus

Approximately 130 FNMI secondary students per year receive graduation coach services through the Braided Journeys Room at St. Josephs High School, a resource room with tables, chairs, computers, and a large wall of windows. The Braided Journeys Room adjoins an office for the graduation coach, a tutor, and an Indigenous liaison. Students come and go freely. The room is simple and the number of staff employed is minimal; however, this innovative program provides comprehensive in-school support for FNMI students. The program offers students a home place in which they are able to feel a sense of belonging. The freedom to come and go as they please also enables them to take personal and social responsibility for their own learning. While the program offers a variety of supports, it has 6 specific areas of focus:

- Relationships and Mentoring;
- Transitions;
- Culture;
- Career Counselling;
- Academics; and
- Parental Engagement.

It is key to the program belief system to hire Indigenous people with various educational and post-secondary experiences to serve as mentors and, in this case, graduation coaches.

Relationships and Mentoring

Every September the graduation coach meets with each FNMI student to exchange contact information, introduce the services of the graduation coach program, and start a career plan. At a minimum, there are monthly check-ins. The graduation coach monitors absences, late slips, behaviour referrals, class performance, and the number of graduation criteria met, as well as the participation of the student in school events. The mentoring motivates students, opens up exploration of possible careers, and supports all of the program activities that follow.

Transitions

For some students, the first step into a new school or a different classroom can be incredibly hard. It helps that one of the first faces FNMI students see upon entering school is that of their graduation coach. The graduation coach at St. Joseph High School, Anita Lafferty, waits by the front door to welcome students, paying particular attention to grade 10 students, many of whom she met at transition functions a few months earlier or at registration and orientation days. Because more FNMI students drop out in grade 10 than either grades 11 or 12, the graduation coach program focuses on the transition between junior and senior high. It starts in the first month of grade 9, with the graduation coach meeting with feeder schools to plan activities for the year. The coach visits the schools once a month thereafter. Over the year, grade 9 students become aware of the program; they ask their grad coach questions about high school and explore career aspirations through vision boards and career inventories.

Transition activity then moves to the high school and becomes more oriented to supporting peer interaction. It includes tours, social mixers, preparation classes, and summer school – including the Career and Life Management Program – which lets students experience high school classes and accumulate credits in July and August. There is also a 24-hour summer transition camp, culminating in a campfire session where questions and concerns are anonymously submitted on paper, discussed by the group, and then offered to the Creator in a burning ceremony. Once school starts, transition support continues with special events – icebreakers, games, and social mixers for grade 10 students – as well as an orientation session for newcomers in the higher grades.

Transition support picks up again as students prepare for post-secondary study. Group tours are arranged with local institutions. Students have the opportunity to spend a week at post-secondary schools, such as MacEwan University in Edmonton.

Cultural Activities

Cultural activities and student clubs serve to develop a sense of belonging and provide access to positive role models and peer support. Cultural activities include pow wow dancing, smudging, Elder visits, drumming, feasts, outdoor education camps, creative arts, and traditional ceremonies. Students participate in the Literacy Mentorship Program, where they read to elementary students, and clubs like the Rainbow Spirit Dance Troupe and Rainbow Spirit Drum Group. They also have access to an artist-in-residency.

Career Counselling

The graduation coach asks students what they aspire to and helps them understand the paths that will lead them there. In addition to helping students sign up for the right courses, the coach keeps post-secondary school information on site, helps students get information that is not at hand and assists students to apply for scholarships and post-secondary assistance.

Academics

The graduation coach and other team members (e.g. tutors) introduce themselves to all teachers at the first high school staff meeting. The team ensures the teachers understand the significance of Indigenous history and culture; they make classroom resources and workshops available as well. The graduation coach monitors student academic performance and, at a minimum, will discuss it with the student's parents after the first semester. Tutoring is one of the most used services in the program, and is often provided or arranged by the graduation coach.

Parental Engagement

Developing parental engagement has been perhaps the biggest challenge for the graduation coach program. Many FNMI parents have negative associations with school, often as a result of family experience in residential schools. The graduation coach personally connects with a minimum of four parents each month to discuss their children's academic standing and the activities, services, and interventions accessed. After the first semester, the coach contacts all parents to discuss their children's success in the first semester. A newsletter keeps parents updated about program activities.

Graduation coach Elyse Wood says, "I find that once I have phoned home once or twice, the parents start calling me to raise their concerns, to seek community resources, and to update me on what's going on in the student's personal and family life. As a result, parents start to feel safe and the school starts to become a community hub" Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD).

The graduation coach program also encourages parental engagement through special events like "Bannock and Tea" during "Meet the Teacher" evenings. A Christmas Feast in December is one of the most effective means of bringing parents in for the first time, and it also attracts grade 9 families from feeder schools. A special grade 12 honouring ceremony is held in May involving students, parents and administration.

Documenting Best Practices with an Evaluability Framework

Methodology

Documenting “best practices” using an evaluability framework is an evidence-based methodological approach to accurately describe all of a program’s core components, processes, and goals that have a proven ability to achieve an intended effect.

The researchers used the evaluability assessment methodology to conduct a systematic, objective, and effective assessment of HSGCP. Using an evaluability approach developed by Rutman⁴ lends itself to evidence-based documentation of the best practices used by this program through four strategic steps:

1. Collect and assess all the written documentation that describes the program in terms used by the program administrators.
2. Develop a diagram of the program components and relationships between components in relation to the processes and goals outlined in a logic model.
3. Interview key stakeholders, program staff, and FNMI students to capture their experiences of HSGCP and to explore their perceptions and interpretation of the program diagram and logic model.
4. Validate the program structure, processes and goals to develop an accurate depiction and documentation of the HSGCP.

Program Document Analysis

Several unique HSGCP documents were analyzed, including brochures, webinars, and assorted materials. Each document was parsed for factual references about the HSGCP structure, service relationships, processes, and goals. The recent development of this program meant that there was limited material available for analysis; however, we were able to develop a rudimentary program diagram and logic model. These documents were used in the interviews with stakeholders, program staff, and FNMI students (see Figures 1 & 2). The interviews were then used as a subsequent source of information for confirmation of the program diagram and logic model.

Participants and Procedures

The documentation of best practices with the program diagrams and logic model evaluation was conducted as an interview with several different stakeholders. Participants were asked to meet with the researcher to complete an interview based on a review of the HSGCP diagram and logic model and to explore experiential narratives describing the program. All participants were informed of their rights as participants and volunteered to participate. Following the interviews, a preliminary final document was created and reviewed by the HSGCP administrators to discuss and complete the program documentation.

⁴ Rutman, L. (1980). *Planning useful evaluations: Evaluability Assessment*. Beverly Hills, CA, USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five stakeholders and several students to gather their experiences and opinions about the HSGCP as a way of collaborating the documented program. Each of the interviews was voice recorded and transcribed. Interview transcripts were probed for interim accounts that identify elements that speak to the process and success of the program. Then each researcher read the interim account to code more specific themes that became apparent. Nine distinct themes were identified from these interviews.

Interview Schedule

The consultation used a structured semi-qualitative interview procedure based on the HSGCP diagrams and logic model. Participants were guided through a step-by-step procedure that examined, first, the structure of the HSGCP and, second, the processes and goals of the program outlined in the logic model. In both parts of this interview, the participants were queried about the accuracy and veracity of the program diagram, processes, and goals. Each participant was asked to confirm, add or make changes to these documents using their best understanding and experience of the HSGCP, regardless of other's expectations. The information from the interviews was then integrated into a finalized comprehensive HSGCP diagram and logic model.

Final Document Preparation

The objective of the preliminary final document meeting was to confirm the main components of the HSGCP structure, processes, and goals and finalize any remaining inconsistencies that were found. A final version was generated and prepared for the HSGCP administrators and the Indspire Institute.

Program Structure

After analyzing HSGCP documents, an evaluation diagram was developed that mapped HSGCP structure, service, and service relationships (see Figure 2). In discussing the diagram with program participants and stakeholders, it was mentioned that the evaluation diagram could also be reshaped to acknowledge the multiplicity within Indigenous ways of knowing. In response to this feedback and co-constructed process, another possible program diagram was created (see Figure 1). This diagram emphasizes the student and family at the centre of the HSGCP with the support of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Graduation Coach and so forth. This diagram recognizes the interconnected Indigenous community as an important component of HSGCP. This diagram also recognizes the importance of reciprocity in research and relationships alongside educators, youth, and community members.

The evaluation model (see Figure 2) is also a representation of programming, organized in a hierarchical manner with the more impactful elements of the HSGCP program at the top and the specific services and outputs arranged at the bottom. Services are grouped together under a central component to reflect their contribution to a major program activity or strategy. Seven major components of the HSGCP were identified:

1. Career Planning;
2. Administration/Common Space;
3. Academics;
4. Transition Programming;
5. Relationships/Mentoring,;
6. Parental Engagement; and
7. Culture.

Services are not component specific and may be related to other program activities, denoted by directional-lines that connect services across components (e.g. graduation coach is related to FNMI parents). To examine the performance indicators, short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes related to program components, please see the logic model.

Figure 1.

HSGCP Model Diagram – Responsive Co-constructed model

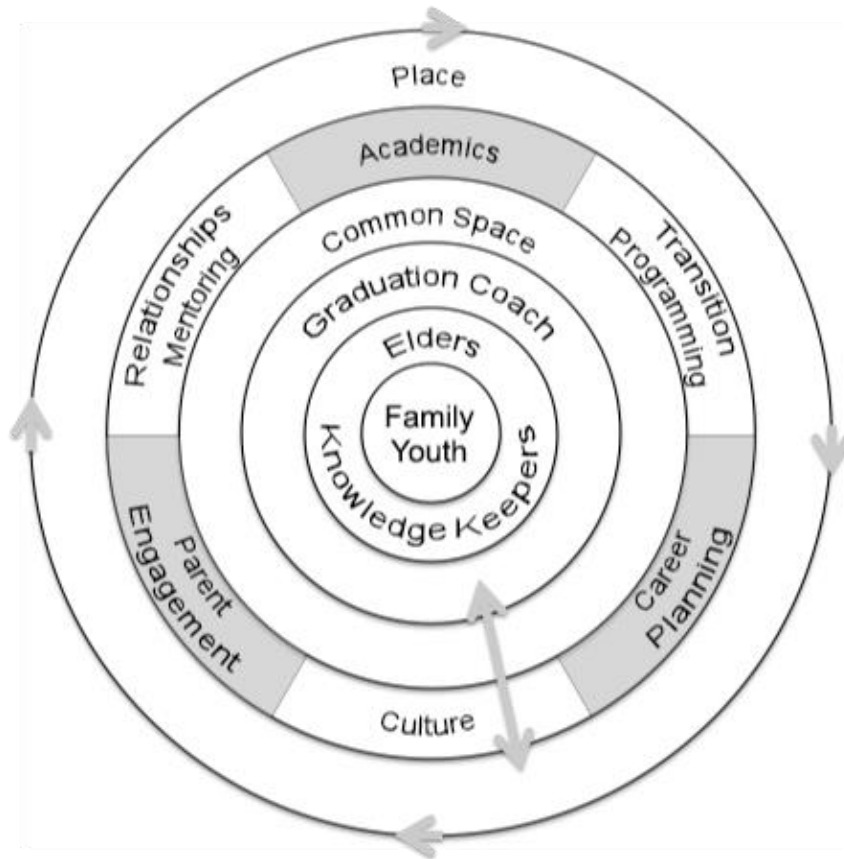
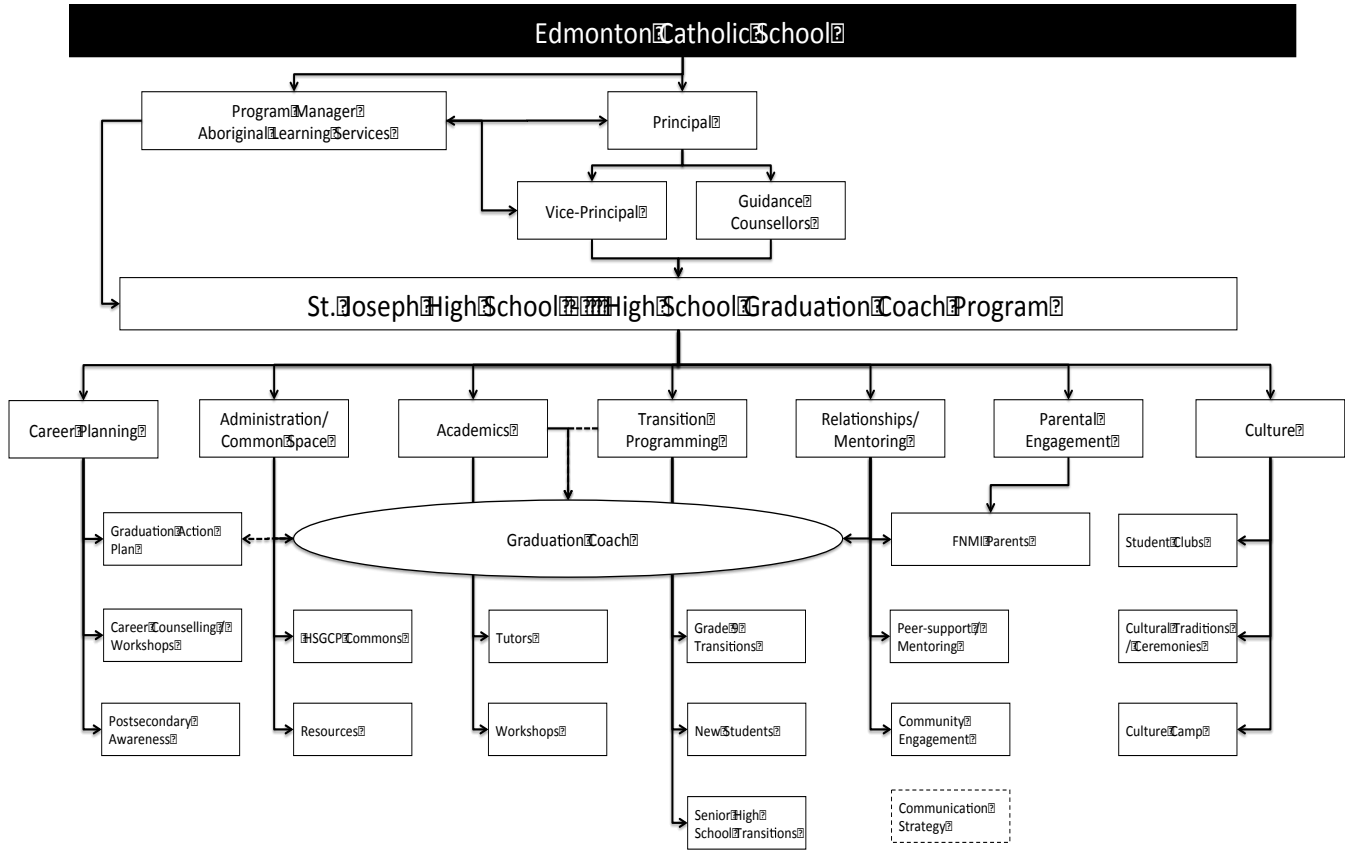


Figure 2.

HSGCP Model Diagram – Evaluation Version



Logic Model

The St. Joseph High School Graduation Coach Program (HSGCP) logic model is a thorough expression of the current components, strategies, outputs, and outcomes based on program documents and stakeholder interviews. The information provided within the HSGCP logic model is an approximation of the current practices, not a precise and detailed description. The model was developed as a tool for documenting this program as a best practice for FNMI high school support. In this manner, the logic model is a comprehensive explanation of how the HSGCP administrators structured and focused their services to best meet their FNMI student needs and academic objectives.

Graduation coach

Administration/ Facilities

Strategies / Major Activities:

- Full-time position, provide ongoing support, mentorship, and guidance to FNMI students.
- Connect with and coordinate activities with internal (e.g. teachers) and external stakeholders (e.g. parents, community).
- Advocate on behalf of students and educational issues related to students.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators:

- Establish a full-time presence in the HSGCP space that supports, mentors, and offers guidance to FNMI students, non-Indigenous students and staff.
- Develop and maintain ongoing activities with internal (e.g. teachers) and external stakeholders (e.g. parents, community).
- Provide support in improving awareness of FNMI student and educational issues.

Short-term Outcomes:

- Increase awareness of the graduation coach position with students and St. Joseph staff.
- Increase contact between the graduation coach and St. Joseph students and staff.
- Ensure the HSGCP space is a safe and conflict free space.
- Increase awareness of FNMI educational issues.
- Increase awareness of FNMI initiatives at St. Joseph's High School.

Intermediate Outcomes:

- Increase the perceived importance, effectiveness and accessibility of the graduation coach has in facilitating FNMI learning and achievement.
- Increase the perception of the graduation coach as a knowledgeable person for support and guidance on FNMI issues.

Long-term Goals / Impact:

- Create a home at the school; a safe and comfortable place for FNMI students can express themselves, effectively learn, and socialize with everyone.

Graduation coach

Administration/ Facilities

Physical Location

- Common Room
- Kitchen
- Office x 3

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provide a welcoming and culturally responsive space.
- Provide a space that is practical and equipped to facilitate learning.
- Provide a space that supports positive peer interactions and support.
- Provide an office space for graduation coach, administration.
- Provide an office space for private consultations and tutoring.
- Office space for Indigenous liaison.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Establish a welcoming and culturally responsive space that is used by FNMI students, non-Indigenous students and staff at St. Joseph. The room is called Braided Journeys Room.
- Establish a space that is used by FNMI students to work on course assignments.
- Establish a space that is used by FNMI students to socialize and support each other with school activities.
- Establish an office that is used by the graduation coach to run program and meet with students.
- Establish an office that FNMI students use for tutoring and private meetings.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the perception with FNMI, non-Indigenous students and staff at St. Joseph that the HSGCP space is welcoming and culturally responsive.
- Increase the number of FNMI students that visit the space.
- Increase the number of FNMI students that access the space to use the resources and work on course assignments.
- Increase the use of the space for FNMI student socialization and peer support.
- Increase awareness of where to find the graduation coach.
- Increase awareness and use of the office for student tutoring and meetings.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the number of FNMI students benefiting academically from use of the common room and services.
- Increase the number of FNMI students benefiting socially from use of the common room and services.
- Increase the number of non-Indigenous students and staff at St. Joseph who visit and use the common room and services.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Graduation coach

Administration/ Facilities

School resources and funding:

- Tutors
- Youth workshops
- Professional fees/ honoraria
- Travel expenses
- Supplies equipment

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provide resources that facilitate learning and participation in classroom and school activities for students. Provide financial support for:
 - Tutors to support academic learning
 - Snacks/meals for effective learning
 - Registration fees for FNMI students attending conferences & workshops.
 - Professional fees and honoraria to respect Elders' and cultural instructors' support
 - Field trips, post-secondary school visits and career conferences
- Workshop materials, classroom/office supplies, and computer stations for student and office use.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Identify and apply for funding that ensures that necessary activities can be offered to FNMI students, non-Indigenous students and staff at St. Joseph.
- Identify and supply the appropriate resources that can facilitate and enhance learning experiences for FNMI students, non-Indigenous students and staff at St. Joseph.

Short-term Outcomes

- Secure funding that ensures that necessary HSGCP supported activities.
- Increase the sources applied to for funding that ensures that necessary HSGCP supported activities.
- Increase the number of resources available for HSGCP supported activities.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Expand secure funding of HSGCP.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Graduation coach

Academics

Tutors

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provide tutoring on a daily basis for all courses that are needed by FNMI students.
- Provide postsecondary tutors for senior level classes related to core post-secondary courses.
- Visit secondary schools and provide tutoring sessions to grade 9 students.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Established tutors who understand FNMI student needs in all of the needed courses.
- Maintain good relationships with post-secondary stakeholders to ensure ongoing support with post-secondary core courses for FNMI students

Short-term Outcomes

- Promote tutoring services.
- Increase the number and/or quality of tutors.
- Increase the number of FNMI students with need who access tutors.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase academic success of students accessing tutors.
- Increase year-to-year retention of students accessing tutors.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Increase in the number of FNMI students graduating from St. Joseph's.
- Improved perception of FNMI educational attainment and success in and outside of St. Joseph's.
- Increased FNMI graduation rates.

Graduation coach

Academics

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provide comprehensive, individual, in-school support to FNMI students.
- Creates individual action plans for academic success for each FNMI student (sets goals that are high, but attainable, and helps students figure out how to achieve the goals)
- Meets with each FNMI student at a minimum of once per month to check-in.
- Support school engagement throughout St. Joseph's High School for FNMI students by ensuring quality student-teacher relationships and effective instruction (academic, emotional, social).
- Identifies and develops FNMI educational resources and workshops for FNMI students and to support course curriculum.
- Monitor HSGCP students course progress and behaviour:
 - Absences
 - Late slips
 - Behaviour referrals
 - Class performance
 - Tutoring supports
 - Credit recovery
 - Graduation criteria
 - Participation in events
- Identify and connect with FNMI students experiencing difficulties achieving academically, socially, or personally and provide timely support.
- Contact and develop relationships with FNMI students' parents in order to discuss student progress: academic standing, activities, services and any needed interventions.
- Provides orientation to newcomers with planned activities, current student mentors, and introductions to instructors and staff.
- Support peer mentoring, role modelling, and socializing between FNMI students and non-Aboriginal students.
- Develops and manages after-school programming for workshops, tutoring and social activities.
- Meets with St. Joseph High School instructors and staff to maintain relationships and teach about FNMI educational issues and culture.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Comprehensive, individually tailored action plans and in-school support for all FNMI students.
- Connect with FNMI students frequently throughout the academic year.
- Ongoing engagement for positive student-teacher relationships using effective academic, emotional, and social instruction.
- Orientation is provided to all new FNMI students that prepares them for first day of classes and provides social support with other students, instructors and staff.
- Monitoring HSGCP students' academic progress and behaviour leads to the identification of students experiencing difficulties and an intervention is provided.
- Relationships with FNMI students' parents helps to support student academic development and achievement.
- Peer-support that offers mentoring, role modelling and friendship is well established between FNMI students and non-Indigenous students.

- A diverse set of after-school programming is offered to support academic achievement and social activities.
- Well-developed relationships with instructors and staff who are knowledgeable about FNMI educational issues and culture.
- Ongoing development of FNMI educational resources and workshops to support students learning, in and out of the classroom.

Short-term Outcomes

- Successfully connect with all new and existing FNMI attending St. Joseph's.
- Successful development of comprehensive, individually tailored action plans for each FNMI student.
- Increased provision of in-school support for all FNMI students.
- Increase the amount and frequency of contact with FNMI students throughout the academic year.
- Increased promotion of positive student-teacher relationships.
- Increase the number of senior students that act as peer-support (mentoring, role modelling) to younger or new FNMI students.
- Increase the amount of socializing between FNMI students and non-Indigenous students.
- Increase identification and development of after-school programming for academic achievement.
- Increase identification and development of after-school programming for social activities.
- Increase awareness by instructors and staff about FNMI educational issues and culture.
- Increase number of FNMI educational resources and workshops offered to students and classroom instruction.
- Maintain comprehensive and timely monitoring HSGCP students' academic progress and behaviour.
- Increased earlier identification of students experiencing difficulties.
- Increased ability to provide timely and effective interventions to students experiencing difficulties.
- Increase number and quality of relationships with FNMI students' parents.
- Increase involvement of FNMI parents' support for academic development and achievement.
- Increase instructor and staff teachings about the use of effective academic, emotional, and social instruction with FNMI students.
- Increased satisfaction with the orientation that is provided to all FNMI newcomers.
- Increase preparedness for first day of classes for new students.
- Increase peer social support with senior FNMI students for new students.
- Increase familiarity with the St. Joseph's instructors and staff for new students.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increased academic achievement by FNMI students.
- Increased involvement in HSGCP and St. Joseph's.
- Increased sense of belonging in HSGCP and at St. Joseph's.
- Increased retention of students from year to year.
- Increased academic knowledge and skills needed for academic success.
- Well-used in-school academic and social support activities.
- Increase success and reduce attrition of students accessing tutors

- Decrease in the number of FNMI students with academic difficulties.
- Increase in the number of educational difficulties that are solvable by HSGCP services.
- Increase the number of academic resources available for FNMI students.
- High rate of parental knowledge and involvement in HSGCP services.
- Increased FNMI inclusion and acceptance in St. Joseph's.
- Inclusive use of Indigenous cultural knowledge in school activities and classroom curriculum.
- FNMI students felt knowledgeable and prepared for their arrival at St. Joseph's.
- FNMI students feel that they are part of a strong and well-accepted FNMI community at St. Joseph's.
- FNMI have strong and accessible relationships with their instructors and staff at St. Joseph's.
- High rate of FNMI student involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Graduation coach
Workshops/ Camps

Strategies / Major Activities

- Identify and provide workshops that support academic learning and success
- Leadership skills
- Strategic learning
- Time management
- Exam prep

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Provide structured learning workshops to improve academic and personal skills that lead to academic achievement.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increased identification and development of workshops needed by FNMI students.
- Increase of participation of FNMI students in workshops.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Improved access to workshops that improves the overall academic success of FNMI students.
- Improved course grades by FNMI students accessing workshops.
- Improved social and personal skills leading to improved self-esteem for FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Graduation coach

Relationships / Mentoring - FNMI Parents

Strategies / Major Activities

- Graduation coach introduces parents to the HSGCP.
- Graduation coach enlists parent support in assisting with their child's academic success.
- Graduation coach maintains ongoing communication with parents about the HSGCP and their child's progress at St. Joseph's.
- Graduation coach involves parents in HSGCP activities to help support them and their child, while offering increased appreciation for education. Early September, meet all FNMI students

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Parents are actively communicated through emails, phone calls, and semesterly newsletters.
- Attempt to make at least one check-in per month.
- Parents are invited to St. Joseph's for:
 - Family Pow Wow Nights
 - Ben Calf Robe Annual Pow Wow
 - Parents / Grandparents Circles
 - High School Christmas Feast
 - FNMI Grad Luncheon

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase FNMI parents' awareness of the HSGCP and St. Joseph's curriculum.
- Increase the amount of parents to communicate with the graduation coach about their child's progress.
- Increase the number of parents who actively support their child's academic achievements.
- Increase the number of parents who attend HSGCP activities.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the positive influence of FNMI parents' in the HSGCP and at St. Joseph's.
- Increase FNMI student achievement as a result of their parents' active support.
- Increase the perception of the outside community inside of HSGCP activities.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Restore the social and cultural systems that once guided youth to FNMI students.
- Increase the perception that FNMI students are part of an inclusive society.

Graduation coach

Relationships / Mentoring

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provides ongoing mentorship to all FNMI students.
- Actively engages with all FNMI students to develop a strong understanding of the unique characteristics and needs of each student.
- Promotes FNMI students engage with other students to develop strong supportive social networks.
- Promotes FNMI families get involved in student school and social activities to improve support for academic success.
- Develop alternative supports and options for curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of FNMI students at risk.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- As a primary responsibility, the graduation coach purposely develops close relationships with all FNMI students and engages these students in actively developing their academic skills and academic success.
- Offers an assortment of social and learning activities to help FNMI students engage with each other students to develop strong supportive social networks.
- Invites the outside community (i.e., parents, community stakeholders) school and student activities to improve opportunities for mentoring and support.
- Works with teachers and administrators to develop credit recovery and alternative options and to adapt curriculum and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of identified at risk students

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number of relationships with FNMI students.
- Increase familiarity with FNMI students' unique qualities and academic ambitions.
- Increase the number and type of activities that promote FNMI peer engagement and support.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who participate in social learning activities.
- Increase the satisfaction FNMI students have for activities that develop their academic skills.
- Increase the satisfaction FNMI students have for peer-support activities.
- Increase the number of outside community that participate in HSGCP activities.
- Decrease the number of students who are at-risk of failing or dropping out by improving course supports.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the first year retention rates.
- Increase sense of belonging at St. Joseph's.
- Increase the level of self-reliance or reliance on peer support.
- Increase the awareness of the amount of outside community support available to FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Graduation coach

Relationships / Mentoring - FNMI Parents

Strategies / Major Activities

- Graduation coach introduces parents to the HSGCP.
- Graduation coach enlists parent support in assisting with their child's academic success.
- Graduation coach maintains ongoing communication with parents about the HSGCP and their child's progress at St. Joseph's.
- Graduation coach involves parents in HSGCP activities to help support them and their child, while offering increased appreciation for education. Early September, meet all FNMI students

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Parents are actively communicated through emails, phone calls, and semesterly newsletters.
- Attempt to make at least one check-in per month.
- Parents are invited to St. Joseph's for:
 - Family Pow wow Nights
 - Ben Calf Robe Annual Pow wow
 - Parents / Grandparents Circles
 - High School Christmas Feast
 - FNMI Grad Luncheon

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase FNMI parents' awareness of the HSGCP and St. Joseph's curriculum.
- Increase the amount of parents to communicate with the graduation coach about their child's progress.
- Increase the number of parents who actively support their child's academic achievements
- Increase the number of parents who attend HSGCP activities.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the positive influence of FNMI parents' in the HSGCP and at St. Joseph's.
- Increase FNMI student achievement as a result of their parents' active support.
- Increase the perception of the outside community inside of HSGCP activities.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Restore the social and cultural systems that once guided youth to FNMI students.
- Increase the perception that FNMI students are part of an inclusive society.

Graduation coach

Relationships / Mentoring - Graduation Coach

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provides ongoing mentorship to all FNMI students.
- Actively engages with all FNMI students to develop a strong understanding of the unique characteristics and needs of each student.
- Promotes FNMI students engage with other students to develop strong supportive social networks.
- Promotes FNMI families get involved in student school and social activities to improve support for academic success.
- Develop alternative supports and options for curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of FNMI students at risk.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- As a primary responsibility, the graduation coach purposely develops close relationships with all FNMI students and engages these students in actively developing their academic skills and academic success.
- Offers an assortment of social and learning activities to help FNMI students engage with each other students to develop strong supportive social networks.
- Invites the outside community (i.e., parents, community stakeholders) school and student activities to improve opportunities for mentoring and support.
- Works with teachers and administrators to develop credit recovery and alternative options and to adapt curriculum and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of identified at risk students

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number of relationships with FNMI students.
- Increase familiarity with FNMI students' unique qualities and academic ambitions.
- Increase the number and type of activities that promote FNMI peer engagement and support.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who participate in social learning activities.
- Increase the satisfaction FNMI students have for activities that develop their academic skills.
- Increase the satisfaction FNMI students have for peer-support activities.
- Increase the number of outside community that participate in HSGCP activities.
- Decrease the number of students who are at-risk of failing or dropping out by improving course supports.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the first year retention rates.
- Increase sense of belonging at St. Joseph's.
- Increase the level of self-reliance or reliance on peer support.
- Increase the awareness of the amount of outside community support available to FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Graduation coach

Relationships / Mentoring - Peer-supported Mentoring

Strategies / Major Activities

- Support the development of peer-mentoring opportunities between senior and younger FNMI students.
- Develop opportunities for FNMI students to develop leadership skills.
- Provide opportunities for FNMI students to contribute to their community and model leadership in the areas of economic and social development.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Provide ongoing opportunities for FNMI students to get their social needs met through HSGCP activities.
- Established structured activities that promote multi-grade peer interactions leading to positive peer relationships and mentorship.
- FNMI students utilize their leadership skills through participation in activities like the Leadership Club, Taste of St. Joe's Booth, Display, Ben Calf Robe, and mentoring junior and elementary students.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase in the number of peer supports and social activities available to FNMI students.
- Increase the effectiveness of peer-support activities at engaging FNMI students to network.
- Increase in the number of FNMI students accessing peers or social activities.
- Increase in the size/number of FNMI student's social networks.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the sense of belonging experience by FNMI students.
- Increase the sense of overall support for FNMI academic achievement at St. Joseph's.
- Maintain peer-support mechanisms across all grades for FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Graduation coach

Relationships / Mentoring - Community Engagement

Strategies / Major Activities

- Promote relationship with junior high feeder schools and postsecondary institutions.
- Promote mentorship opportunities with professionals from different industries.
- Promote activities with FNMI communities near or around Edmonton.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Junior high feeder schools invite graduation coach to present about HSGCP, and send junior high students to participate in transition activities.
- Post-secondary community invites FNMI students to campus to learn more about institution or participate in summer camps (e.g. MacEwan Summer Camp, Norquest Summer School).
- Post-secondary mentors and tutors engage with FNMI students at HSGCP workshops and tutor sessions.
- HSGCP hosts “Meet & Mentor” and “Lunch & Learn” sessions where community members come to discuss their careers, activities and offer guidance to interested FNMI students.
- FNMI communities host culture camps for St. Joseph’s students.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number of junior high feeder schools who invite graduation coach for presentations.
- Increase the number of junior high students to attend HSGCP transition activities.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who attend post-secondary community activities.
- Increase the number of post-secondary representatives who visit HSGCP for workshops and tutor sessions.
- Increase the number of post-secondary representatives who become mentors to FNMI students.
- Increase the number and variety of community member career presentations.
- Increase the number and variety of community members who become mentors to FNMI students.
- Increase student attendance at FNMI communities hosting HSGCP activities.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the awareness and knowledge that potential FNMI students have for HSGCP.
- Increase the awareness and knowledge that FNMI students have of post-secondary opportunities.
- Increase the awareness of community support for FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Transitional Programming

Senior High School Transition program

Strategies / Major Activities

- Support the transition of FNMI students from high school to post-secondary school.
- Provide FNMI students who want attend post-secondary school with knowledge and support to explore and prepare to attend a post-secondary institution.
- Ensure that all FNMI students obtain the correct requirements to be able to apply and compete for post-secondary acceptance.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- HSGCP monitors and encourages FNMI students achieve the requirements needed to attend a post-secondary institution.
- FNMI students are provided with opportunities to take post-secondary tours to ask questions and get familiar with the campus (e.g. Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Grant MacEwan, University of Alberta, and Norquest College)
- FNMI students are supported in attending post-secondary summer camps; stay on campus for up to 1 week and get to know different aspects of the environment, expectations, and skills needed to succeed.
- Career planning provided to FNMI students to clearly identify ways to achieve future career aspirations.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase attractiveness of post-secondary education for FNMI students.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who achieve the requirements to apply for post-secondary schools.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who consider and apply to post-secondary education.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who attend post-secondary summer camps.
- Increase the knowledge and relationships that FNMI students have with post-secondary communities.
- Increase awareness of scholarships and bursaries available to FNMI students
- Increase scholarships and bursaries.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the acceptance rate for FNMI students at post-secondary schools.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who successfully transition to post-secondary schools.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who are role models for younger students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Increase in the number of FNMI students graduating from St. Joseph's.
- Increase the value placed on high school and post-secondary education by FNMI students and their communities.

Transitional Programming

Grade Nine Transition

Strategies / Major Activities

- Develop transitioning that addresses the high dropout rate FNMI students between grades 9 and 10.
- Introduce HSGCP to the FNMI students in their first month of grade 9 in the feeder schools; followed by HSGCP visits once a month to increase awareness, answer questions, and explore career aspirations (e.g. vision boards, career inventories).
- Prior to starting grade 10, in July and August, potential students begin participating in HSGCP peer interactions at St. Joseph's.
- Tours, social mixers, preparation classes, summer school, 24-hour summer transition camp
- Earn 3 credits for career and life management course.
- Senior FNMI students host incoming students at FNMI open house; build relationships, teach about expectations, courses, and school.
- Involve parents; building relationships and develop communication
- Meet graduation coach first day.
- Organize special events at the start of grade 10: icebreakers, games, and social mixers.
- Develop High School Prep Classes

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- FNMI students in grade 9 and their parents are aware and knowledgeable about the HSGCP.
- Establish HSGCP as a viable option for FNMI students in grade 9.
- Encourage and support successful transition for FNMI students in grade 9 into and through first year in high school
- Provide support for educating FNMI students about transition issues and actionable steps for career aspirations.
- Provide tutor to feeder schools to increase academic skills and achievement needed for grade 10.
- Prepare future grade 10 students by involving them in HSGCP activities, peer interactions, camps, and pre-term courses in and out of St. Joseph's.
- Establish a strong relationship with the graduation coach before first day of classes.
- Feel prepared for high school classes.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase contact with prospective FNMI students and their parents.
- Increase awareness of HSGCP services for incoming FNMI students and parents.
- Increase attendance of FNMI student and parents at HSGCP transition activities.
- Increase knowledge of FNMI student transition issues.
- Increase peer-support and social network between FNMI students.
- Increase relationships with HSGCP staff and instructors.
- Increase attendance of incoming FNMI students in grade 10.
- Increase academic success of incoming FNMI students in grade 10.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the transition of FNMI students from junior high into high school.
- Increase academic success of FNMI students in grade 10.
- Decrease in transition issue behaviours, such as absences, late slips, and behaviour referrals.
- Increase in FNMI students in grade 10 who participate in HSGCP academic and social activities.
- Increase in the retention of FNMI students who transition to grade 11.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Transitional Programming

New students (not from grade 9 feeder schools)

Strategies / Major Activities

- FNMI students see the graduation coach as soon as they register.
- Orientation session for new FNMI students who come in after grade 10.
- Graduation coach works with students to develop an action plan and to engage with HSGCP students.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- New FNMI students meet the graduation coach and are immediately supported with structured activities and peer support.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase attendance of new FNMI students.
- Increase attendance of new FNMI students at HSGCP transition activities.
- Increase peer-support and social network with new FNMI students.
- Increase the frequency that new FNMI students have contact with HSGCP staff and instructors.
- Increase academic success for new FNMI students.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase academic success in FNMI students.
- Decrease in transition issue behaviours, such as absences, late slips, and behaviour referrals.
- Increased participation and support for HSGCP academic and social activities.
- Increase in the retention of FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Career Planning

Post-secondary Awareness

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provide FNMI students the opportunity to attend off site information and developmental opportunities with post-secondary schools.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- FNMI students are able to attend several post-secondary school tours or participate in post-secondary summer camps.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number of opportunities that FNMI students have to learn about post-secondary schools.
- Increase the number of FNMI students that attend post-secondary tours and camps.
- Increase the awareness about the expectations that exist at post-secondary schools.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase in the number of students who apply to post-secondary schools.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who successfully transition into post-secondary schools.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Increase in the number of FNMI students graduating from St. Joseph's.
- Increase the value placed on high school and post-secondary education by FNMI students and their communities.
- Increase the success that FNMI students have in their post-secondary education or career.

Career Planning

Career Counseling and Workshops

Strategies / Major Activities

- Provide FNMI students with opportunities to learn about different career options, the skills and requirements needed for different career options, and workshops to begin learning these skills.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- HSGCP has community members present about careers at job fairs, information sessions, Meet & Mentor, Lunch & Learn, Encounters With Canada, Youth Empowerment & Education Conference, and Enbridge Mentors (women only).
- HSGCP supports preparatory workshops for developing academic skills to assist with high school and post-secondary course (e.g., study skills, budgeting, communication skills, life choices, career planning, and cultural teachings)

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number and diversity of professionals who offer presentations to FNMI students.
- Increase the number of students who attend career presentations.
- Increase the number of community mentors that support FNMI students.
- Increase the number of workshops offered to FNMI students.
- Increase the number of students who attend workshops.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the amount of awareness that FNMI students have about their career options.
- Increase the motivation and dedication of FNMI students for their chosen career aspirations.
- Increase the level of academic competency and success of FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Career Planning

Graduation Action Plans

Strategies / Major Activities

- Expose FNMI students to career possibilities and develop an actionable plan to help students achieve these career aspirations. Career action plans include career assessments, career profiles, resumes and job training plans

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- Support each FNMI student in their pursuit of a career aspiration by:
 - Clarifying their goals
 - Developing a paths to their goal
 - Guidance with right courses, experiences, post-secondary school
 - Support applying for school, scholarships

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the support for and understanding of FNMI students' action plans.
- Increase the FNMI students' achievement of their action plans.
- Increase the number of supports that can be used in action plans for FNMI student success.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase academic achievement for FNMI students in relation to their career aspirations.
- Increase sense of support and satisfaction for the use of action plans for FNMI students.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Culture

Cultural Ceremonies / Traditions

Strategies / Major Activities

- HSGCP supports FNMI culture and cultural knowledge by offering all students opportunities to participate in cultural ceremonies and traditions.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- FNMI and non-Indigenous students actively participate in cultural activities throughout the years; such as, pow wow dancing, smudging, Elder visits, smudging, drumming, feasts, outdoor education camps, creative arts, and traditional ceremonies, the sweats, and beading.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number of opportunities that FNMI students have to participate in and learn about cultural ceremonies/ traditions.
- Increase the knowledge that FNMI students have of FNMI culture.
- Increase the sense of pride that FNMI students have for their culture.
- Increase the number and quality of the relationships that FNMI students have with FNMI knowledge keepers and Elders.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Develop a deeper understanding of FNMI culture and cultural identity for FNMI students.
- Model FNMI holistic learning as a valuable component of education for FNMI students.
- Increase the visibility and positive impact that FNMI culture has at St. Josephs.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Develop FNMI students' sense of belonging at St. Joseph's.
- Develop a sense that FNMI culture belongs and contributes to educational experiences.
- Provide educational experiences that resonate with traditional FNMI culture; where adults and FNMI role models provide friendship, guidance and support to youth.
- Increase the value of education for and with FNMI communities.

Culture

Annual Culture Camp

Strategies / Major Activities

- Promote FNMI culture outside of the classroom and in a setting that best reflects FNMI teaching and learning.
- Develop positive relationships with FNMI communities by inviting FNMI students to participate in their community activities and learning experiences.
- Develop leadership and peer support among FNMI students.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- FNMI students and non-Indigenous students at St. Joseph's participate in several days of activities that exemplify FNMI culture; e.g. games, canoeing, skinning a moose, building a sweat lodge, and ceremonies.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number of FNMI students who attend summer camp.
- Increase the number of FNMI community members who get involved in summer camp as role models and mentors.
- Increase the number positive FNMI culture learning opportunities that are offered at summer camp.
- Increase the number of positive mentoring and peers support activities.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Develop a deeper understanding of FNMI culture and cultural identity for FNMI students.
- Model FNMI holistic learning as a valuable component of education for FNMI students.
- Develop stronger relationships between FNMI students and their communities.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Culture

Student Clubs

Strategies / Major Activities

- HSGCP supports the experiential learning of FNMI students through their participation in student clubs in an out of school.
- HSGCP directly supports student clubs related to FNMI culture and community.
- HSGCP supports community-building activities that create mentor, role models, and peer support with and for FNMI students.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- FNMI students participate in over 10 different student clubs related to FNMI culture.
- FNMI students participate in a leadership club that sees grade 12 students mentoring grade 10 students.
- FNMI students provide support to FNMI communities through the Literacy Mentorship Program, Rainbow
- Spirit Dance Troupe and Rainbow Spirit Drum Group.
- FNMI students meet and learn from an artist-in-residence.

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the number of students who participate in extracurricular activities.
- Increase the number of cultural extracurricular activities that are available to FNMI students.
- Increase the number of FNMI students who act as mentors and receive mentorship.
- Increase the number of opportunities for FNMI students to be mentors or role models in the community.
- Increase the number of opportunities for FNMI students to learn from their communities.
- Increase the number of activities and support offered to FNMI communities.
- Increase the number of culture knowledge keepers who teach and mentor FNMI students.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the holistic learning and development of FNMI students.
- Develop FNMI leaders who can give back to their communities.
- Develop lasting relationships with FNMI communities and students.
- Increase the sense of strength and resource that FNMI communities have for and from students.
- Increase the transfer of cultural knowledge to FNMI youth.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Same as above

Parental Engagement

FNMI Parents

Strategies / Major Activities

- HSGCP encourages parents to become active participants in FNMI students' education.
- HSGCP facilitates and maintains an open dialogue with parents and their children, and between parents and the school.
- HSGCP encourages parents actively to visit and participate in activities at St. Joseph's.

Outputs and/or Performance Indicators

- HSGCP actively contacts parents through emails, newsletters and phone calls to discuss student progress, academic performance, behaviour issues, and community resources.
- HSGCP works with parents to ensure that their children have the support and resources to achieve academic success.
- Parents engage with HSGCP and their child's education by participating in different activities held at St. Josephs:
 - Bannock and Tea event
 - Meet the Teacher evenings
 - Christmas Feast
- Honouring ceremony for Grade 12 students

Short-term Outcomes

- Increase the positive perceptions and attitudes that parents have for St. Joseph and HSGCP.
- Increase the positive communication between parents and HSGCP.
- Increase parents' knowledge of how to support their children at St. Joseph's.
- Increase the positive support that parents offer to their children to achieve at school.
- Increase the number of parents who attend HSGCP events.
- Increase the number of positive interactions that occur between parents and St. Joseph's instructors and staff.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Increase the positive perceptions and attitudes that parents have towards education.
- Increase the acceptance and involvement of FNMI parents in their children's education.
- Increase the amount of support that FNMI students receive from their parents and community for their educational pursuits.

Long-term Goals / Impact

- Increase in the number of parents with FNMI students graduating from St. Joseph's.
- Increase the value placed on high school and post-secondary education by FNMI parents and their communities.

Documented Program Success

Measures of Success

- Increased FNMI high school graduation rates
- From 2008 through 2011, the program has increased FNMI graduation rates from 14.9% to 60.4% at St. Joseph, compared to:
 - 71.2% for other students at St. Joseph;
 - 48.8% for FNMI students and 81.4% for others students at Edmonton Catholic Schools; and
 - 43.9% for FNMI students and 74.8% for other students in Alberta.
- Estimated retention rate for the 2012-2013 academic years is 85% (approximately).

Stakeholder Interviews and Assessment

Two school site visits were conducted to speak with stakeholders (i.e. program manager, graduation coaches, tutor, students). A semi-structured interview with Program Manager of Aboriginal Services Pamela Sparklingeyes, graduation coaches Danita Large and Jeremy Albert, Braided Journey Program Liaison Amanda Woodward, and tutor Les Skinner⁵

Pamela Sparklingeyes (Program Manager of Aboriginal Services)

Program philosophy and details

"We need to shift from the mentality when schools and liaison programs move from crisis situations to proactive and intentional supports. Academic and career support are pro-active supports."

"Part of our success is that we don't want to do the 'helicopter model' where a liaison goes to two...three...or four schools in a week. This job is about relationship building. It is intertwined... relationship should be throughout all components of the program."

"One of the strengths of the program is the partnerships developed. This is a piece that I would like to emphasize as being important. For example, we have a female mentoring program with a corporation it is a pilot that we just started. We want to figure out ways to work with industry. We go for a lunch and learn monthly from professionals in industry. It is important for female students to have access to mentors...speakers...female aboriginal engineers and recruiters. We have to introduce youth to possibilities."

"I believe in having the youth or the child at the centre of the program. The graduation coach brings all the pieces together. You need the graduation coach to help with surrounding community around the child."

"This grad coach position provides a structure for the community to get involved...space...time and opportunity. This is a safe place."

⁵ Each of the semi-structured interviews was voice recorded, transcribed and coded by the researchers to identify important themes.

Vision for future

"My ultimate goal would be that a graduation coach is in every school in Alberta. I speak as much as possible to make this happen. If this program is best practice we should get an opportunity for funding. Even within our own district we would like to expand but the funding is at times a challenge."

"We need full time staff that is the difference within our program. It is different than other districts to have a full time graduation coach. If a school or district implements programs or liaisons part time it might as well not have anyone because the program will not work."

What is the importance of a designated physical space within schools?

"This program is a similar model that takes place in post-secondary schools. If every post-secondary institution in Canada feels it is important to have a place for aboriginal learners then high schools should also think this way. We need to think outside the box. We sometimes teach the way we are taught but youth need these places in schools. Often what happens is that a school will tell you that they do not have space but if they search for a space they will find it. We need a space for belonging. Some of what we do is what Dr. Martin Brokenleg speaks to...belonging and one caring adult to make a difference."

What do you look for in a High School Graduation Coach when tasked with hiring?

"We are able to attract the right people at the right time. I typically look for people with a strong education background. I want students to work academically. This is an academic setting not a crisis setting. I want the Graduation Coaches to help with career choices also. We need to create spaces without stigmatization. It needs to be open to all students and be welcoming and inclusive. It takes a special person."

Reflecting on process and expansion

"We had no idea how the other programs would unfold in a 'traditional school'. We had so many wonders and questions on how this might work and how staff might respond to it. It is going better than we could have expected. We have great staff and great school administrators and staff."

What are the roles of Administrators and Counsellors in relation to the High School Graduation Coach position?

"We are connected very closely with the student services in schools. We have very strong communication with administrators, student services and work experience. We have to have dynamic people within this job as communicators. We need synergy. We need the administrator on side to keep with the philosophy in the program. People are attracted to strong programming."

Tracking the data

"We all do an education plan first thing. We introduce our program to students and look at the schedules. We have an actual formula." (research conversation Jeremy Albert)

"We have a plan for what each Graduation Coach program has to deliver on a monthly basis. Monthly meetings...we need to extend to students who do not come to the space. Some students might only need career choice advice and at minimal that is what they would get in our program."

"Some (students) might only what minimal contact but we have a process. We should go between schools (4 sites) and it should be the same expectations in the job in each place. We have an accountability piece and we do monthly reports to be accountable. We need clear reporting and accountability tools. A grad coach needs to report to people who know about the program... not just the school administrator because they only know some details and have so much to do with their job descriptions. Communication is key. We keep data on everything. My job is important because I can relate to the programs and discuss and advocate with administrators about program needs. This is important and different about our program."

Building Capacity

"Looking forward we have developed something that is best practice in Alberta. FNMI (First Nations, Métis & Inuit) services branch acknowledged that this program is best practice and successful practice. The grad coach job was my dream position when I first started with the district. It is what I wanted to do and the program is up and going. I like being involved with the youth. I am grassroots and frontline. I am so proud of this program."

"One of the biggest challenges is the year to year funding cycle. I write grants which is quite time consuming. The writing and reporting takes time. The amount of time spent and the difficulty in planning when funding is not a core practice is the biggest obstacle. If we could get steady funding it would make the program more sustainable."

Donita Large (High School Graduation Coach)

Where is your community Donita?

"I am from Saddle Lake...Kehewin area and I went to school in St. Paul and then transitioned to the city."

How long have you worked at this school and within the "High School Graduation Coach Model?"

"I am new to this job. I am not a teacher. I am a Social Worker and Adult Educator by training, but now I am a Graduation Coach. I also have worked in addictions and adult education in my career."

On education or work experience to be a Grad Coach...

"I believe it is what I bring to the job that is important, not my title"

"I have many experiences in different places with adult education...this helps me navigate the school system"

"This job to me is about hope"

"This job to me is about creating identity and creating connections"

"Many of my own school experiences help me in this job...my experiences help me understand what youth are going through in schools."

Experiences as a High School Graduation Coach

"Our job is not just a 9-5 job it is so much more than that. We spend lunch and afterschool with the youth because we have to do so much more to build relationships. We (Graduation Coaches) do things as a team, we have to help each other out. We come together and support each other in this way. We do it together. When the team shows up we support the youth; parent nights, celebrations, we support the youth and community beyond 9-5. Everyone pitches in this gives us strength. We are a family."

"We have 65 self-identified FNMI students in this school. There is a total of 1600 students. In years past the school has a small room for a part time liaison. It was welcoming but not the same support."

Program Details

"The model for the High School Graduation Coach is based on an American model, an adapted model made for schools. There is no prescription for what works, each site is different we have a basic plan but each place is different."

"One on One time with students is critical. Teachers want you to connect with students at the end of each block (class). I try to meet 2-3 students for one to one session each day. We do not take traditional lunch because students need time at lunch and a space to connect. Communication is key and coordination is important".

Tracking the data

"If I were to work with a student at this school I would look at Power school (Online School information system) to look at a student profile as it tells me a student's attendance, current marks and missed assignments. When I meet with a student I go over their progress. I do attendance checks, ongoing not daily. Academically I get to know youth...look at each one of them differently and identify needs. I try to meet students once a month but some students you need to meet often. We look at time management, academics, post-secondary, any obstacle keeping them from success."

Process...

"This year at the beginning I started with grade 10s, then 11s and 12s... this semester I am working with Grade 12's as they are preparing for graduation. For contacting students sometimes I use texts, Remind 101 app, call classes. I use Powerschool to contact parents. I keep track of parent contacts and one to one sessions on spread sheets.

We also use a monthly activity report. A one to one mentoring session is when I spend more than 15 minutes with a student. We also keep track of attendance of every organized activity we put on, meetings we have with staff, parent contacts, tutoring sessions, youth leadership (volunteer) activities. The activity reports help us keep track."

"I do not track every student who comes in the Braided Journeys room".

On Transition to Post-secondary, resumes and an evolving speakers' series

"We try to help the youth get grounded...help them with funding...help them with connecting. We help youth look at identity. It is important to sit with them and have these new conversations about where we come from...these conversations also change the family conversations at home and in communities." We help out with post-secondary transitions and help students with resumes. We bring in guest speakers to help the youth think about these opportunities that they have".

Amanda Woodward (Braided Journey Program Liaison)

Where is your community Amanda?

"I am originally from Grande Prairie. I met my first Elder there and I was taught pow-wow."

How long have you worked at this school and within the "High School Graduation Coach Program?"

"I am at this school this year for the first time but I also work at other schools in the district."

Amanda Woodward discusses her career path

"I did not have a post-secondary plan at first. I went and worked with a dance troupe after high school."

"I eventually found my way to a job as a native support worker much different than the graduation coach model...this model is very specific and outlined"

"I think identity is so important in schools with youth."

"I started a family and it led me to Edmonton teaching regalia with the Braided Journeys program (Regina Catholic School Board) and then a job working directly with youth. I have been working here for 10 years now. My job was a pilot project now it shows how it is good to have an aboriginal person and program within schools. It is more efficient having someone here and it can lead to increases in graduation rates."

Amanda Woodward on the importance of leadership in schools

"Leadership I would say is so important. Edmonton Catholic Schools wants aboriginal staff members in schools. At first my job was working on crisis issues in many schools. In this new job we do more than just work with aboriginal students."

Amanda Woodward on evolving job within schools

"I was doing meetings at one point to help and mentor workers...my job has changed often. My job is now supporting the 'grad coach model' in 4 (different school) places. This model is going to grow...retention...transition from each grade level is important and lastly completion. It is important to have a home away from home. These places are at university or college...why not in high school? It is a place to eat...a place to come to. We have supplies...academics...paper...pens...computer stations...connections. We also have tutoring. My job is to make relationships in schools".

Amanda Woodward highlighting High School Graduation Coach leadership camp components

"We do a camp...a leadership camp with the youth during the school year. We get to see youth outside of school this changes the relationship. We need a staff member (certified teacher) to come out and work with the youth for our 3 day leadership camp. It changes the staff once they come out and see the kids in a different way...by the forest...the trees...the lakes. It is a health and wellness day for everyone."

Les Skinner (Tutor)

Why did you get involved?

"When I went to this school it was different. I was Métis and have Métis values. I am very independent and sometimes I had difficulty in school. I did fine in school academically. I did not think that I could do it or even get a chance for university. I had a Native Liaison that at times would come to our school and I could meet with them. The random Liaison that came helped out but there was someone new every year. When I was in grade 12 I had some people come in and help us out in school."

This whole room (physical space) we have now makes a difference. We are not ashamed like I was in school. No one wanted to participate in this place now we feel good."

Reflections as a tutor within the program

"The most important thing is that I want youth to feel what they are capable of. I help tutor them. Thinking differently is not a bad thing that I teach them. There needs to be a space where we can confront ideas. I help students learn about their culture and identity. I want them to feel grounded in themselves with inner confidence."

Student Conversations

In-between classes, we had small opportunities to speak to students about their experiences within the program, which provided another lens into how participants were experiencing the program. Below are small excerpts from these conversations.

What does the HSGCP do for you as a student and specifically how does having a place within a school shape your school experiences?

Student #1 – Jade

"I had experiences with aboriginal liaisons...programs...people. In elementary much of the aboriginal programming was random. In this program there are always people here to help with school and life".

Student #2 – Anonymous

"I was failing English and I got some help with tutoring in this room. I want to be an electrician. If this program was not here I would not graduate this year. I needed help with my English and tutoring. I learn a lot about my culture and about myself. I am embracing my culture and teachings and lessons...my eyes are opening. This is the one place in school where we can be ourselves."

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

During our analysis of the research conversations, common themes about lessons learned began to emerge. These conversations added contextualization to how the program was organized, a glimpse into the experiences of those involved in the program, and the important elements that contribute to its success. Furthermore, these participant descriptions of the project provided us with convergent support for the logic model. We present their ideas below in a narrative way that will allow us to elaborate on how the space felt, how students came and went, and how we made sense of this space.

Theme 1 - Importance of Relationships

This is where it all begins. You will see in each of the themes below that without relationships this program would be impossible to run. This is not easy work and we know from our own experiences that building relationships with high school youth is difficult, time consuming, and at times subsuming. But this grass roots work alongside youth and community is the work that, from our opinion, has made this program successful. From the graduation coaches, to the program coordinators, to the administrators, to the students, to the tutors, to the parents and to the community, we see the groundwork being undertaken to ensure that students are supported in the ways they need. While we could elaborate on this extensively, we see this theme as being a part of each theme that follows.

Theme 2 - A Full-Time Person

We see in the participants' words above that a full-time point person is of utmost importance to this program. Of course not just any person will do; rather, this person needs to have a background in education, experience working with Indigenous youth, and a knack for building relationships with not only the students, but parents and the community. As Pam Sparklingeyes mentions above, without a full-time person, the program becomes like many other one off programs that lack relational capabilities and a context for not only the in-school life of the students but also their out-of-school life.

Theme 3 - Structure of the program

The structure and organization of the program also seems to be a key for both students and facilitators. It seems that this structure allowed facilitators to keep track of students. Not in an authoritative way, but in a way that enabled them to see when students were making progress or when perhaps more support was needed. The fact that there are attendance checks, academic checks, and a reporting of these check-ins by the graduation coaches shows that there is a process-oriented paper trail of how students may or may not be progressing. In many ways, this becomes a formative assessment from which both students and facilitators can learn and that can shape program delivery.

While these structures may be seen as accountability measures, we see them as much more than that. In some ways, it seems that the students saw these structures as valuing that their interactions were important. The structure upholds high expectations, and allows students a 'touch stone' space where they know they can go if help is needed. In the words, it is clear that the students had not experienced this type of structure prior to the HSGCP. In previous program opportunities, the students talked about people stopping by once in a while to help out, but not feeling like the people were truly invested in the youth.

We also picked up on the fact that although the program has specific criteria, it is not a one size fits all, canned program. The relational aspects of the program allow for graduation coaches to conduct a needs assessment on what types of support may be needed. While some students may utilize the program once a semester, others are engaged on a weekly basis. The fact that this program accounts for the contexts and lives of the students involved is a major strength in our eyes.

Theme 4 - A Physical Place to Call Home

A welcoming, inviting space may be seen as simply an additive to a successful program. This does not seem to be the case here. A place to call home within the school provides an opportunity for students to engage in their identities, who they are and are becoming, in a safe, informative, and comfortable environment. Having a place to come home to, a touch stone place, a place for connecting, enhances the relational aspects between students and staff. The practical application of this space affords the resources to complete school work, engage in tutoring, and interact with other students.

Theme 5 - Awake to Identity/Culture

Identity was a word that came up often during our conversations with both staff and students. While the ceremonies and conversations were opportunities to gain knowledge about FNMI culture, they also seemed to be an opportunity for students to feel pride about their cultural heritage, ancestors, and identities. Identity was central to each specific place and could be seen through the physical art on the

walls, posters, and messages that are both hopeful and forward-looking for Indigenous youth as they negotiate the school landscape. Identity is a theme that is also re-visited in the practices, including transition camps and engaging with youth at the junior high level to ease the transition and identity-making process in high school. Paying particular attention to identity within the youth is a theoretical underpinning of the program.

Theme 6 - Connections to Community

The connections made between community organizations, members, and the HSGCP also became important in strengthening not only the current status of the program, but the sustainability of the program. Connecting with community organizations afforded students opportunities to see successful FNMI role models within their own community. These connections also allowed students opportunities to participate in events that would not have been available to them had they not been involved in the program. These connections and partnerships are an important aspect of the future sustainability of this program.

Theme 7 - Preventative not reactionary

This program is exceptional because it spends energy, time, and resources on responsive engagement strategies for FNMI students within schools. This program has taken the task of sustaining FNMI learners within schools as opposed to reactionary measures. While this may seem simple, if we take a quick glance at the educational change literature, we unfortunately see that change is often reactionary and not preventative or responsive. Each of the themes above plays a role in why this preventative program is helping us to gain knowledge and understanding about how we might prevent FNMI students from leaving high school early, and sustaining them in meaningful and educative ways while they are in school.

Theme 8 - Transitions

This program is attentive to the transitions of FNMI youth. The people involved are aware of how difficult the transition to grade 9 can be; therefore, they have aspects in place that allow for the high school graduation coach to connect on deep levels with students early and often. We also heard conversations about the outdoor school experiences that allow the students to see the staff members in a different light, as non-teachers perhaps. This focus on building relationships early and often seems to be a strength of this program. While the program could merely focus on graduating as many FNMI youth as possible, the transitions beyond high school are also important components. Providing the youth with opportunities to be engaged in university settings, vocational settings, and work experiences enables what we see as a smoother transition out of high school. While at this time we are not aware of data that tracks where the youth go when they leave high school and the program, it is clear that this transition beyond the program is important.

Theme 9 - Creating a forward looking story – changing the story

The last theme is perhaps the most important. To the researchers, this program, and more importantly the people working within it, are shifting the stories of the youth with whom they work. They are not only changing the present stories, the stories for now, but they are changing the future imagined stories of who the youth can and will become. While the stereotypes and dominant stories of FNMI youth are systemic, this program offers glimmers of hope, glimmers of disrupting not only the stories of the FNMI

youth but the stories for FNMI youth as they move forward into a life as a high school graduate and, within this, a journey that is filled with hopeful and optimistic trajectories.

Final Reflection

At the completion of one of the researcher's conversations, he left feeling hopeful and optimistic about the great work being done alongside Indigenous youth and families in schools. The HSGCP provides consistency and a home, in a sense, for FNMI youth as they negotiate the urban school landscape. Words such as identity, culture, sustaining, and forward-looking crossed his mind as he thought about the importance of safe places within schools for both youth and staff. These connecting places are what is so important to consider in this work that is being done in schools. Below is a narrative highlighting an experience within the program, as the researcher engaged in semi-structured interviews.

Honouring a shared process

Within each school setting, a certain rhythm evolves guiding the research process and conversational relationship. It is different each time and within each place. In this particular school, Jeremy Albert, the graduation coach, initially greeted me with a welcoming handshake and invited me in for a tour of the school and a cup of tea, as we considered how the research conversations might take place. Jeremy has a quiet and welcoming presence, creating a space for sharing and listening to experiences between us. The significant marker within this conversational relationship is the ongoing student presence that shaped and reshaped the research conversations around programming on this day. Students and family members often entered the room and the conversation with ease and a sense of place...adding thoughtful commentary and sharing their stories that are connected to the High School Graduation Coach Program. The thoughtful words and ideas from several students and in particular through the guidance of Jeremy I was hopeful in my attempt to captivate the spirit and energy within a highly effective program where youth and family are central to the commitments of educative programming.

Through the transcription process certain parts of the research conversation stand alone and stay with me as I listened to the conversations from this day...these words are the embodiment of the program...they stand alone. I reflect carefully on the words and notes etched within my journal...the words that emerge prominently are from a young man named Tim, who has participated in the High School Graduation Coach Program alongside his mentor Jeremy Albert. The young man's words and his voice reverberate throughout the research conversations and they weave their way throughout the careful documentation process that I am engaging in.

I recall the moment when Tim walked slowly up to the table where we (Pam, Jeremy, and I) were discussing ideas around the philosophy and principles of the HSGCP program. Tim sat down and shook my hand as we were introduced to each other. I asked Tim, "Tell me...tell me what is the best thing about this HSGCP program? Tim carefully thought about his response as it was marked by the silence between us. He then started to share and explained to me as he looked across the table carefully sharing his words.

"I didn't have a life before this place. I wanted to give up. This changed everything for me. Jeremy changed my school story. I was going to leave...this changed everything for me".

The words of Tim and the relationship that has evolved over time between him and Jeremy is not lost on me as I write up findings from these research conversations. The significance of a young person

explaining to me in articulate and passionate words about how a person and a place can change his story is relevant and continues to guide my writing process. The words he shared tell the story of how the program he participates in is a place of connecting, a place of belonging, a place of identity making for Indigenous youth and their families as they negotiate the school landscape. I do believe as I write these final words on the HSGCP program that Tim says it best when he shares with me his inner most thoughts: "this changed everything for me...this changed everything for me."