



The Pen Pal Project:

Children coming together in friendship

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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.

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Executive Summary

The Pen Pal Project is an initiative that brings together youth from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and the neighbouring community of Caledonia, Ontario, following conflict related to a land rights dispute. Out of concern for negative impressions forming amongst youth about the children from each community, a teacher from Six Nations, assisted by community agencies and volunteers, began a pen pal project between communities. Starting with two classrooms and 40 students in 2006, the initiative expanded and grew to become the Pen Pal Project coordinated by the Pen Pal Committee. By 2009 approximately 250 students participated. In 2010 over 600 students represented Junior Kindergarten to Grade 7, and later Grade 8. In 2011, 1200 students participated and by 2013, 2000 students pen paled. The students write letters to each other throughout the year and attend an annual gathering to meet their pen pal face to face and participate in joint fun and educational activities and cultural exchange.

Project Vision

The Pen Pal Project provides a venue for relationship building between First Nations communities and their neighbours. Today, the vision for the project remains consistent, to:

- Encourage Indigenous communities and their neighbours to meet, build relationship, understanding, and share in cultural exchange as a means to a respectful thriving future.

Project Goals

In nurturing these relationships, the project set goals for students to engage neighbours in relations of peace through a pen pal letter and cultural exchange. With peace as a starting point, the goals for the Pen Pal Project are to:

- Build positive stories and perceptions of youth in neighbouring communities.
- Foster an appreciation of cultures in each community through education and exchange.
- Encourage themes of friendship, respect, and diversity to build relationships of peace.
- Connect cultural, literacy and relationship building skills to the Ontario Curriculum.
- Share message of peace and friendship with communities in Ontario, Canada and abroad.

Curriculum and Activities

The project features a curriculum framework drawn from pivotal teachings of the Hodinohso:ni: (Iroquois, in English) associated with concepts of peace, building relationships and transformative change. Teaching and learning strategies seek to unite culture, curriculum and instructional methods, not separate from a way of living, experienced as participatory. Fostering relations of friendship within neighbouring communities, the goals and activities of the project reflect Hodinohso:ni: knowledge central to philosophy, values and traditions. Sample activities include;

- Cultural Awareness: Elders, speakers & interactive demonstrations.
- Literacy Skills: Story-telling, spoken word, photography, stenciling.
- The Arts: **Visual Art**; painting, tile mosaic, **Dance**; Hodinohso:ni: social, friendship & smoke dancing, English Country. **Music**; Hodinohso:ni: social songs & contemporary musicians.
- Experiential Learning: Interactive games, Old School Games, sky art*

*Sky art is a performative strategy that brings learning to life such that students **do the action** of the curriculum content they study. Two sky art activities are accessible on line. See The Tree of Peace

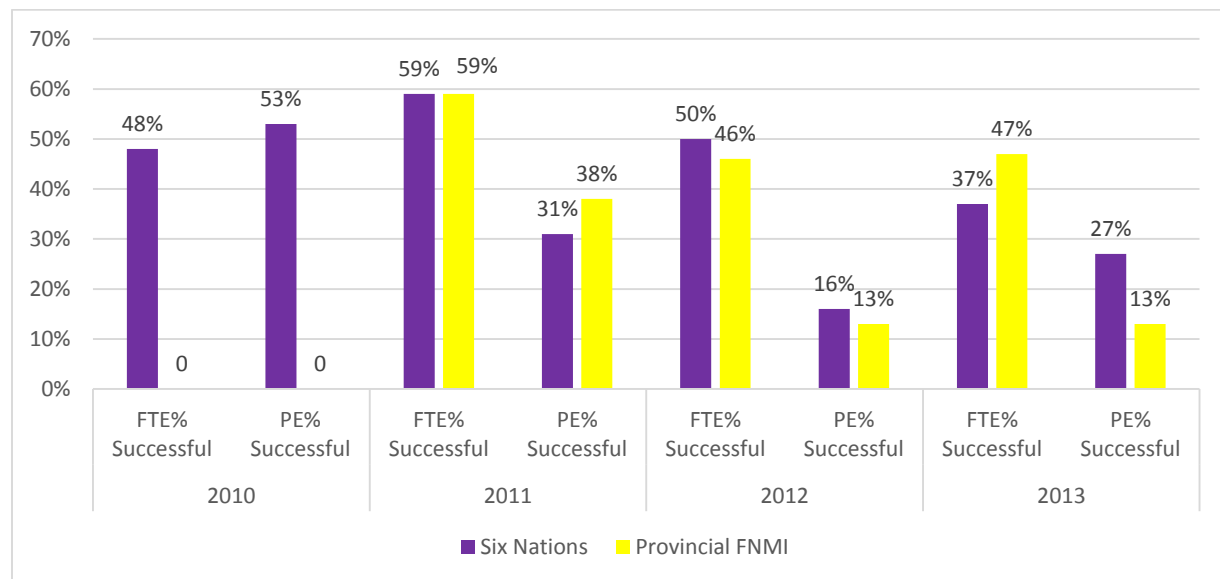
Hugging the Earth <https://vimeo.com/24670790> and The Living Wampum Belt <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hITJ7I-y5k>

Evidence of Success

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

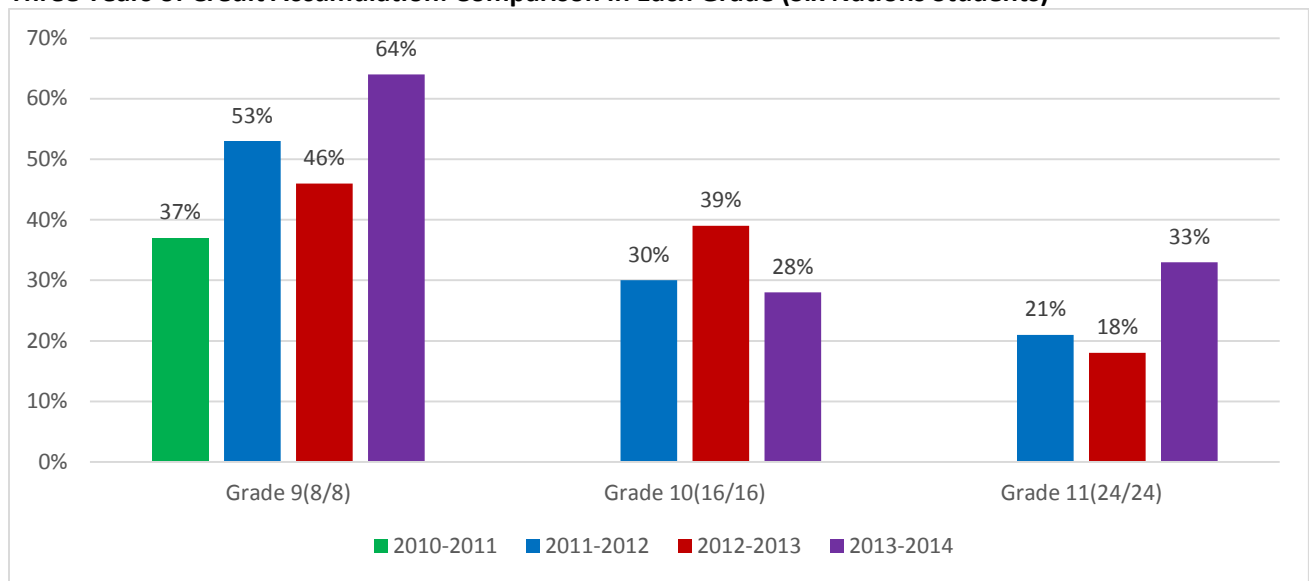
Three Years OSSLT Comparison Between Six Nations and Provincial FNMI Results

All students working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) take this test. Successful completion of OSSLT is the primary way to meet the literacy requirement for the OSSD. Students may write the OSSLT more than once. Students who are unsuccessful on the OSSLT may be eligible to take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) in order to satisfy this graduation requirement.



The most recent data from 2012 and 2013, which account for results of Pen Pal recipients, indicate improved literacy rates from the two previous pre-Pen Pals years.

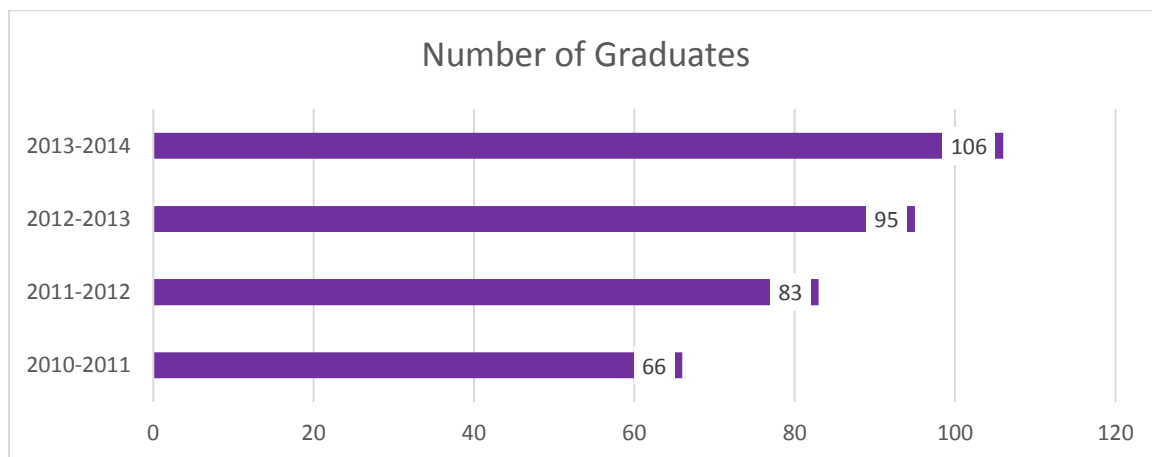
Three Years of Credit Accumulation: Comparison in Each Grade (Six Nations Students)



In 2011-2012, 53% of Six Nations Grade 9 students, including 1st time Pen Pal recipients, completed 8/8 credits, an increase from 37% in 2010-2011 without Pen Pal recipient data.

Graduation Rates of Six Nations Students

Research shows that successful completion of eight credits in Grade 9 and 16 by Grade 10 keeps students on track to graduate with their peers. Over three years, the graduation rate of Six Nations students climbed as credit accumulation percentages reflective of incoming Pen Pal recipients increased.



Increased numbers of Six Nations graduates consistently reflect success of Pen Pals recipients.

1.0 Context

Six Nations of the Grand River is the highest populated Ogwehoweh¹ community in Canada with a total of 25,660 members, of which 12,271 live in the community proper. United under the Great Law of Peace, the Hodinohso:ni: (Iroquois, in English) consists of five nations: the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, joined later by the sixth nation, the Tuscaroras. Pressured for their alliance in European colonial wars, many Hodinohso:ni: chose re-settlement in their lands prescribed by the 1701 Treaty Area, and later the Haldimand Proclamation in what is now, Canada. Others remained, where communities exist today, in original lands among the Finger Lakes across current-day New York State.

Bordered by several counties, the city of Brantford, Ontario, and the New Credit First Nation, Six Nations at Grand River Territory is the only community on Turtle Island (North America) that has all six Hodinohso:ni: nations living together. The acreage at present covers some 46,000 acres (190 km), approximately 5% of the original 950,000 acres (3,800 km) set by the 1784 Haldimand Proclamation.

Six elementary schools at Six Nations serve a total of 1340² students. Five are federal schools, while the sixth, Cayuga and Mohawk Immersion, is a private school. Averages of 540 students annually attend off-territory secondary schools of the Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) through a tuition agreement between Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and GEDSB. The Grand River Post-Secondary Education Office funds an average of 790 students each year.



On the morning of April 20, 2006, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) took action against a small group of Ogwehowehnéha³ from the Six Nations community who had in February 2006 set up a peaceful protest halting the further construction of a housing development upon disputed land. Caledonia, Ontario, usually a quiet town of 11,000 became the flashpoint for the eruption of conflict related to very long standing land rights disputes between Ogwehowehnéha of the Grand River Territory and the Crown, represented by the Canadian federal government. This was a very distressing time for both Six Nations and Caledonia communities as conflict overflowed to the streets and was magnified by the media.

To dispel violence arising from conflict, a team of community helpers from both communities came together in peace and understanding for a common goal: to promote respect, unity and connectedness with the people from Six Nations and Caledonia. Suzie Miller, a team member and teacher from Six Nations at that time, witnessed the growing divide between children from the respective communities. Determined to change the negative impressions and images presented to young people, she began the Pen Pal Project with two classrooms. Her class of Indigenous students at Six Nations began writing letters to a classroom of non-Indigenous students in Caledonia, with a plan to have them meet at the end of the school year.

¹The term *Ogwehoweh* is a Cayuga word meaning Real People, a name Hodinohso:ni: call ourselves and other peoples of Indigenous ancestry. In this study, the terms *Ogwehoweh*, *Hodinohso:ni:* and *Indigenous* are used interchangeably, and where appropriate the legal term *Aboriginal* is used.

² Downloaded March 9, 2015 from <http://www.snhs.ca/ECD.htm>

³ *Ogwehowehnéha* simply means people with Ogwehoweh ways.

1.1 Project Vision

Thus, the Pen Pal Project began in 2006 as a means to provide a venue for relationship building between Ogwehoweh communities and their neighbours⁴. Today, the vision for the project remains consistent: to encourage Indigenous communities and their neighbours to meet, build relationship, understanding, and share in cultural exchange as a means to a respectful, thriving future.

1.2 Project Goals

In nurturing these relationships, the Pen Pal Project set goals for students to engage neighbours in relations of peace through a pen pal letter and cultural exchange. Then, as now, youth write about their hobbies, families and traditions and meet year-end to celebrate their connection, have fun together, and continue their learning.

The project, quickly labelled “the peace project”, grew annually as the number of classrooms, students and volunteers increased. With peace as a starting point, the goals for the Pen Pal Project are to:

- Build positive stories and perceptions of youth in neighbouring communities;
- Foster an appreciation of cultures in each community through education and exchange;
- Encourage themes of friendship, respect, and diversity to build relationships of peace;
- Connect cultural, literacy and relationship building skills to the Ontario curriculum;
- Share messages of peace and friendship with communities in Ontario, Canada and abroad.

Teachers dedicate time and effort to engage students in literacy skills activities, cultural exchange and experiential learning that affords students the opportunity to build enduring friendships. To offer quality programming for youth, the project relies on volunteers to fulfill a number of roles related to coordinating and hosting events and activities. Parents and family members contribute to the year-end gathering which assists student transition to off-territory secondary school or sports.

Project guidelines are listed below.

- The Pen Pal Project is open to JK to Grade 8 classrooms from Six Nations, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and neighbouring communities.
- The Project involves a commitment from September to June.
- A minimum of three letter exchanges is recommended.
- The year-end gathering is important for face-to-face meeting between pen pals.
- Classrooms are encouraged to meet, even prior to the year-end gathering.

⁴ The study gathers information concerning Six Nations students, only, since Indspire secures funding to deliver programs that provide tools for Indigenous peoples, especially youth, to achieve their potential.

1.3 Pen Pal Participants

“We have received positive feedback through stories, and to see the children meeting their pen pal at the year-end gathering is a sight like no other. There is an excitement in the air as the children arrive and anticipate putting a face to the person they have been writing to all year.”

Year	No. of Schools	No. of Classes	No. of Students*	No. of Volunteers♦
2007	2	2	40*	2
2008	2	4	80*	10
2009	4	10	250	35
2010	10	36	600	160
2011	13	50	1200	200
2012	15	80	1800	210
2013	20	100	2000	310
2014	15	74	1600	260

*20 students per class depicts nos. where data unavailable

♦ Volunteers include teachers, parents, community members and agency representatives

2.0 Indigenous Language Group

Hodinohso:ni: languages spoken fluently at Six Nations are Onondaga, Cayuga and Mohawk while functional use of Oneida and Seneca languages is evident in the community, as well.

3.0 Development Focus

The Pen Pal Project focuses delivery on the elementary level (K-8). However the Pen Pal Committee aims to evaluate the project's impact on secondary school success since the first class of Pen Pal recipients, meaning past participants, will graduate in 2015 and potentially move into post-secondary studies.

4.0 History

4.1 Community Mobilization

The representative team of helpers from Six Nations and Caledonia organized around the Neighbouring Communities Project, a relationship initiative, to assist communities to cope with circumstances of unrest during the summer of 2006. The team utilized a narrative community approach shown to be relevant to working with, and responding to, communities and groups experiencing divide, hardship, and emotional distress.

Central to the narrative approach, the story of conflict is the “First Story.” It involves the tension, hurt, violence, fear, mistrust, misunderstanding, and prejudice that results from conflict. However, within this story there is also an alternate “Second Story” about how people respond to difficulties and predicaments.

Using narrative community practice, the team held a series of approximately 36 consultations with members of both Six Nations and Caledonia communities over a three-day period. Two team members,

one of each community culture, met with a community member to learn and document their second stories.

Though its aim was not to resolve concerns and problems, the team produced the *2007 Community Document* that set a foundation to make resolution of such concerns and problems more possible. The report, vetted by participants and owned by both communities, identified common themes generated by discussion and recommendations to promote respectful relations. Because engagements with communities are time limited as the structures for narrative practice, the representative team gave way to a relative committee focused on the Pen Pal Project using report themes as a virtual blueprint for the project. (See <http://www.neighbouringcommunities.net/communitydocument.htm>)

Common themes identified as relevant to both communities included:

- The safety and security of our children
- Extending our efforts
- Healing knowledges
- Restoring friendships and relationships
- Developing understanding

5.0 Activities Accomplished

5.1 Pen Pal Committee

The Pen Pal Committee consists of 25 volunteer members, educators and representatives of community, federal and provincial social agencies, including Ganohkwasra Family Support Services, Six Nations Public Library, GEDSB, AANDC, Haldimand-Norfolk REACH, Haldimand County, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and several other similar agencies. Lead by the Pen Pal Coordinator, the committee guides the Pen Pal Project, a solely-based community initiative, by providing the best advice on the content of program, its delivery process and the approach used to gauge success⁵.

The committee members:

- Attend brief meetings two or three times per year to review project goals and projected outcomes;
- Advise on pairing schools, plan for year-end gathering and potential guests and budget;
- Act as a sounding board for the project team when faced with unforeseen challenges;
- Advise on the best way to invite community participation and disseminate information; and
- Assist the Coordinator to secure year-to-year funding from a list of combined funding sources⁶:
 - Cornerstone Agencies include the Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Tim Horton Children's Foundation; Tim Horton's Onondaga Farms; Iroquois Lacrosse Arena.
 - Foundations include The Dreamcatcher Fund; Ontario Power Generation; GEDSB, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board; Grand Erie Elementary Teacher's Federation Project; United Way – Brant; Stoney Creek Battlefield House Museum & Park.

⁵ Adapted from Grand River Employment & Training (GREAT) (2013). *Steering Committee for Special Projects Funding*. GREAT, Ohsweken, Ontario.

⁶ This list is not comprehensive but illustrates examples of agencies consistent over a number of years.

- Project Supports include AANDC; Hald-Nor Credit Union; Haldimand-Norfolk REACH; Niagara Peninsula Management Board; Hodinohso:ni: Resource Centre; Crafty Sew and Sew, and many generous contributions from community agencies too numerous to list here⁷.

5.2 Cultural Exchange: “Ways To Go Forward”

The *2007 Community Document* stands as a resource and testament to the skills, knowledges and community values that sustained Six Nations and Caledonia communities through a difficult period. Branching off from initial research, the Pen Pal Project incorporated the hopes and ideas of community members expressed in the report about how to proceed and move forward.

Below are the communities’ ideas expressed in questions “as like rain drops in a puddle...will have positive reverberations throughout the communities” (p. 21). The Pen Pal Project directed their goals, evident in the questions, toward cultural exchange that is community-led, a grassroots initiative aimed to grow and accommodate growth.

The safety and security of our children

- How can we expand and formalize the Pen Pal initiative currently underway?
- Can youth render their stories into art for an art show at community centres?
- Can we host “Unity Tournaments” with sports and culture exchange for youth and parents?
- How do we talk with our children about what is happening and answer their questions?
- Can there be reclamation site visits to dissolve the fears?

Extending our efforts

- Can we say hello to each other when we see each other in town?
- Can we get together for a potluck?
- How can we invite people to, or can we shop in Caledonia again?

Healing knowledges

- Is it possible to have another round of consultations and another gathering?
- How do we secure funding for additional healing initiatives?
- How can ceremonies help to support each other and heal?

Restoring friendships and relationships

- Can we call our friends and/or meet our friends?
- Can we share a warm memory or story of friendship?
- Can we meet at a potluck for dinner?

Developing Understanding

- Can there be greater information-sharing using the local media, such as weekly heritage and cultural information pieces, and articles about the effects of media information?
- Can we invite guest speakers to the schools?
- Can the residents and people on the reclamation site pen pal?

⁷ For example in 2013, the project listed a total of 29 contributing agencies, along with in-kind donations from 20 individuals and six schools, their staff and student who acted as guest speakers.

Other ideas

- Transcribe stories and ideas into song, art and theatre by local schools, musical artists.
Have documented ideas translated and put on CD, video.

5.3 Curriculum Philosophy

“We try to be significant to all of the cultures involved. Everything that we do is symbolic, everything that we do is meaningful, and it’s always quality.” Suzie Miller, *Tree of Peace* video by Daniel Dancer.

5.3.1 The Great Law of Peace and the Three Principles

From among pivotal teachings, ceremonies and stories in Hodinohso:ni: literature, the Great Law is most often associated with the concept of peace, building relationships, and transformative change. The Pen Pal Project, too, is concerned with peace. Fostering relations of friendship, respect and positive stories of youth in neighbouring communities, the project’s goals and activities reflect the Great Law and its principles, variously described, yet central to Hodinohso:ni: philosophy, values and traditions.

Inspired by the research of John Mohawk (1978)⁸, a renowned Seneca scholar, the three principles⁹ are:

Skennen (Peace) is more than just the absence of conflict or war, and is based on spiritual, social and political foundations. Peace has been defined as the active strivings of humans for the purpose of establishing universal justice... It is the product of a spiritually conscious society using its abilities of reason (pp. 33-34).

Kariwiio (Good Mind) refers to the principles righteousness; that all thoughts of prejudice, privilege or superiority be swept away and that recognition be given to the reality that the creation is intended for the benefit of all equally (p. 33).

Kasastensera (Strength) flows from the power of the good mind to use rational thinking and persuasion to channel the inherent good will of humans to work towards peace, justice and unity to prevent the abuse of human beings and mother earth.

In the *2007 Community Document*, the team of community helpers explain they focused on their “sameness rather than differences” (p. 1) bringing forward their own beliefs, values and teachings, “leaving room for that of others as well”. The Pen Pal Committee continues that tradition, best represented by the State of Good Relationships, an aspect of the Haudenosaunee¹⁰ Environmental Protection Process (HEPP) commissioned by the Confederacy Grand Council at Syracuse, N. Y.

⁸ Mohawk, J. C. (1978). Thoughts of peace: The great law. In Akwesasne Notes (Ed.), *Basic call to consciousness* (pp. 31-40). Summertown, TN: Native Voices.

⁹ From Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment: Research Advisory Committee. (1996). *Protocol for review of environmental and scientific research proposals*. Hogansburg, NY: ATFE.

¹⁰ Spelling of Hodinohso:ni: used by the Six Nations Confederacy.



Figure 1: State of Good Relationships

Wateroseriio – the Good Relationships within each part of Creation

Costello, J. E., & LaFrance, B. E. (2002) from

http://www.epa.gov/osp/tribes/NatForum06/5_17.pdf

5.3.2 Indigenous Pedagogy

The Pen Pal Project seeks to develop ways of teaching and learning that bring the voices of Indigenous peoples to the foreground. Language from Indigenous systems constructs worldview, a balance of natural order, interconnected in symbiotic relationships among component parts. Similarly, Indigenous pedagogy seeks to unite culture, curriculum and instructional methods, not separate from a way of living, but experienced as participatory. Teaching and learning in this context models an Indigenous process of instruction: animate, experiential activities that bring knowledge and skills to life, grounded in active listening, observing, and inquiry, sharing in community with elders, appropriate to place and life-ways sustained there.

5.4. Range of Student Activities

Type	Time Frame♦	Description
Letter Writing	September-June	<u>Three exchanges</u> : strengthen comprehension and literacy skills; build relationship; celebrate diverse cultures; practice social skills. Students share personal and family stories, photos, cultural and community events, drawings, paintings, gifts.
Class Meetings	Intermittent	Students connect and meet prior to the year-end gathering
Year-End Gathering	June 7 Gatherings 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014	Students exchange letters throughout the year and come together at year-end for celebrations of peace and friendship. Consistent annually, types of activities over 7 years, include: 1. <u>Cultural Awareness</u> : Elders, speakers and demonstrations (peace, friendship, community, history, peace gardens, treaties, wampum, tin work, lacrosse, healthy living, food) 2. <u>Literacy Skills</u> : Story-telling, spoken word, photography, stenciling, speaking and communicating, reflection 3. <u>The Arts</u> : visual arts, including turtle art, selfies, sky art*, postage stamps, painting, tile mosaic, collective banners, wall murals, book marks, friendship bracelets, yoyos; dance, including Hodinohso:ni: social, friendship and smoke dancing, English country dancing, Pow-Wow; Music, e.g. Hodinohso:ni: social songs, Susan Aglukark, Murray Porter, Reztore Pride; Tribal Vision Group, Eric Walters, J. C. Hill Group, Breaking Wind and many more musicians, artists and dancers 4. <u>Experiential Learning</u> : interactive games, Old School Games, human Friendship Wampum belt, sky art (Tree of Peace, Living Wampum Belt), planting a Friendship Forest, woodworking a Friendship Forest plaque in Cayuga and English
♦ Indicates annual planning * Described in detail below		

5.5 Sky Art: Animate Learning Activities

Also known as experiential or performative learning, animate pedagogy brings learning to life such that students do the action of the curriculum content they study. Activities are learner-centered, subjective and rely on relational methods and organizing. The Pen Pal Project planned two major performative activities, The Tree of Peace and The Living Wampum Belt. Foundational strategies guided both activities. As part of the program, students are encouraged to do the following:

- Join interactive demonstrations with guest speakers to appreciate the history and significance of the Tree of Peace and The Two Row Wampum Belt.
- Exchange personal and community stories to appreciate how knowledge passes through generations and shapes value systems.
- Participate in learning pairs, cooperative art activities and games that illustrate relationship-building is part of everyone's life.
- Demonstrate learning by doing the action of skills and concept acquired through activities, e.g. create human depictions of the Tree of Peace and the Two Row Wampum Belt.

See *The Tree of Peace Hugging the Earth* <https://vimeo.com/24670790>

See *The Living Wampum Belt* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hITJ7I-y5k>

5.6 School and Community Partnerships

Alberta, Canada

In 2013, the Pen Pal Project welcomed Susa Creek and Summitview schools from neighbouring communities at Grand Cache in Alberta, Canada. The project shared knowledge, skills and resources to establish connections that resulted in cultural exchange at three gatherings in the 2014 school year.

Kilburn Adelaide, South Australia

The news of the Pen Pal Project and related art projects extended locally and internationally sharing the message of connection, friendship and peace. The youth of St Brigid's School in Kilburn Adelaide, South Australia crafted a response for Pen Pal schools and communities and now look forward to future exchanges.

6.0 Materials and Tools Development

The materials and tools developed* include:

- website design
 - Pen Pal Project
 - Neighbouring Communities
- travelling art exhibit
- postage stamp collection
- collective banners
- tile art mosaic
- wall murals and turtle art
- two video productions
- summer camp for pen pals

*View materials at <http://www.penpalproject.ca/>

7.0 Logic Model

See Appendix 1

Inputs: Resources and Financial

- Partnerships
- Funding Agencies
- Community Members
- 2007 Community Document
- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Elders
- Schools
- Volunteers
- Community Agencies
- Resource People

Strategies/Major Activities

- Community mobilization
- Establish Pen Pal Committee
- Plan/implement cultural exchange
- Program evaluation

Outputs and Performance Indicators

- Blueprint for change
- Number of schools, teachers and volunteers
- Number of classes and students
- Range of student activities
- Curriculum content
- Evidence based outcomes: academic and social

Short Term Outcomes

- Increased exchange of knowledge and skills
- Increased use of program
- Improved student interaction
- Increased literacy

Intermediate Outcomes

- Change in student perspectives
- Increased credit accumulation by year
- Increased graduation rates

Ultimate Goal/Impact

- Improved learning outcomes for Six Nations students
- Improved relationship building skills for Six Nations students

8.0 Evidence Based Outcomes

Purpose of Research

To articulate the Pen Pal Project as a community action research project and review its success for purpose to share positive outcomes with the wider Indigenous education community.

Objective 1: Describe the dynamics of the project in operation and complete a process evaluation.

Objective 2: Assess project impacts and academic performance indicators to affirm student success.

Objective 3: Determine which project characteristics are associated with its success.

The project evaluation follows a logic model of outcomes/impacts to determine how the Pen Pal Project accomplished its intended results (See logic model and research framework included as Appendix 1 and 2). The logic of data analysis in evaluation answers specific questions¹¹; however, the product of this study is a “snapshot” of the Pen Pal Project’s success intended for educational networking, thus questions are modified for that purpose.

In the study framework, the three research objectives comprise the questions clustered to guide review of the project.

Objective 1 describes actors, activities and other program data to illustrate the project in operation as represented in the logic model.

Objective 2 is the crux of the evaluation which aims to determine how the Pen Pal Project accomplished its long-term outcomes to improve a) relationship building skills and b) learning outcomes for Six Nations students. Stakeholder interviews explore project impacts, while analysis of public data illustrates improved academic success.

Objective 3 considers short-term and medium-term outcomes to determine characteristics associated with project success.

Unable to access class lists in elementary schools, the committee focused attention on those students attending secondary schools off-territory who participated in Pen Pals during early their early years. Previous Pen Pal project recipients from Grades 9-12 at McKinnon Park Secondary School, attended by approximately 50 % of Six Nations students, became the focus of the study. Sensitivity of attaching outcomes (grades) to success discouraged review of individual student data. Thus statistical analysis of academic success relied on secondary source data, gleaned from reports of the GEDSB Native Advisory Committee, to show broad achievement trends supported by stakeholder interviews specific to MPSS.

Interview Participants

A total of 33 participants took part in focus groups and personal interviews (many by email and in small group settings). Participants included 11 students, 14 parents, seven Pen Pal Committee members and one service provider engaged in policing within the Six Nations community. All but three in the parent

¹¹ See Weiss, C.H. (1997). Analyzing and interpreting the data. In *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies* (2nd ed., pp. 271-293). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

group and two in the student group contributed input directly related to experiences at McKinnon Park Secondary, although the two student participants were in Gr. 8 at a Six Nations feeder school to MPSS.

Participants answered four interview questions. The researcher coded, categorized and tallied responses across all four questions to generate statistics on the content of the data. For example words such as *self-esteem* or *confidence* generated a category labeled *personal development* and the number of times participants referred to these or related words was used to argue the significance of personal development as an element or benefit of the Pen Pal Project. In analysis of outcomes, below, the numbers represent number of responses. These numbers exceed the number of participants because most respondents repeated answers, tallied each time mentioned, throughout the interview.

8.1 Project Outcomes

The following analysis describes short- and medium-term goals met by the Pen Pal Project to achieve long-term improvement of relationship building skills and learning outcomes for Six Nations students.

8.1.1 Objective 1: Project Process Evaluation

Question: Did the project do what it was supposed to do?

8.1.2 Objective 2: Assess project impacts and academic performance indicators to affirm student success.

Question: Did recipients of the Pen Pal Project prosper?

Note: Objectives 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 overlap in the presentation of evidence that shows how the Pen Pal Project accomplished its planned outcomes. This format distinguishes and labels short- and medium-term outcomes relative to both objectives while allowing collective display of statistical evidence.

Short-Term Outcomes:

Evidence indicates the project reached short-term goals to improve student interaction and to increase exchange of knowledge and skills, program usage, and proficiency in skills leading to graduation.

- All 33 or 100 % of stakeholder respondents confirmed increased exchange of knowledge and skills related to student interests, cultural diversity and developing friendships.
 - From total responses to all interview questions, the highest number spoke to the Pen Pal Project's success in building cross cultural awareness (50); fostering personal development skills (47); and improving student and community interaction (46).
 - Participants affirmed student interaction contributed most to building friendships (18).
 - Responses indicated increased knowledge and skills in literacy aptitude (34); cultural identity (24); and breaking down stereotypes (23) resulted from cultural exchange.
- From 2007-2014, increased program usage is evident in the increases in participation: from two to 20 schools; two to 100 classes; 40 to 2,000 students; and two to 310 volunteers.
- Stakeholders specified the growth of the Pen Pal Project impacted social and academic success.

- In elementary grades students developed personal and interpersonal skills such confidence and self-esteem, leadership skills and critical thinking skills (28); improved literacy skills (27); and increased enduring friendships with their pen pals (10).
 - Through transition to secondary school, students gained confidence and comfort in collaborating through sports and class work (15); cultivated awareness of global cultures (14); and honoured cultural diversity as a way to erase stereotypes (9).
 - Identified as the greatest benefits of the Pen Pal Project for students and communities are awareness of a shared cultural diversity (17); strength in character building skills (17); and respect for and sustaining cultural identity (14).
- Statistical evidence of improved student learning overlaps short and medium outcomes and appears in continuous order for easier access and analysis by the reader.

The evidence to determine success in meeting a **short-term outcome** to increase proficiency in foundational skills leading to graduation is OSSLT results.

The evidence to determine success in meeting **medium-term outcomes** related to increased completion of requirements for secondary school certification includes credit accumulation; graduation rates (the first Pen Pal cohort graduates in 2015); and post-secondary entrants.

The objective for creating data charts is to show improved achievement levels of Six Nations students during the years Pen Pal project recipients first entered GEDSB schools, i.e. to examine statistics from 2011-2014 along with 2010 statistics, if available, for comparison purposes.

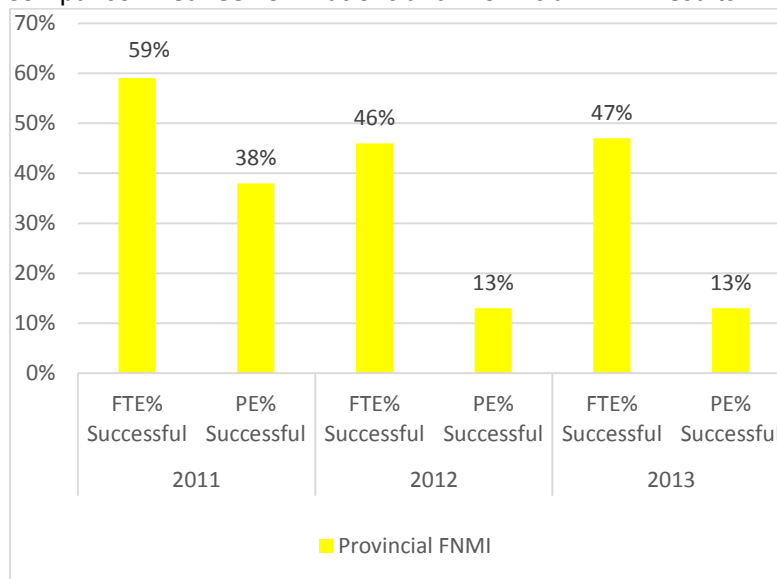
The charts identify previous Pen Pal Project participants as “project recipients”, and those students, though small in number (40 students) entered Grade 9 in GEDSB secondary schools in 2011-2012. Their numbers increase proportionally with annual project growth at feeder schools such that by 2013-2014 an estimated 200 out of an average of 540 students attending GEDSB schools have participated in the Pen Pal Project for one to three years.

Note: charts reflect 2013-2014 statistics as most current available.

Although GEDSB statistics do not distinguish Pen Pal project recipients in stated achievement levels, the study implies that reported success of Six Nations students is associated with success prosperity of those students who have participated in the Pen Pal Project.

Chart 1: Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

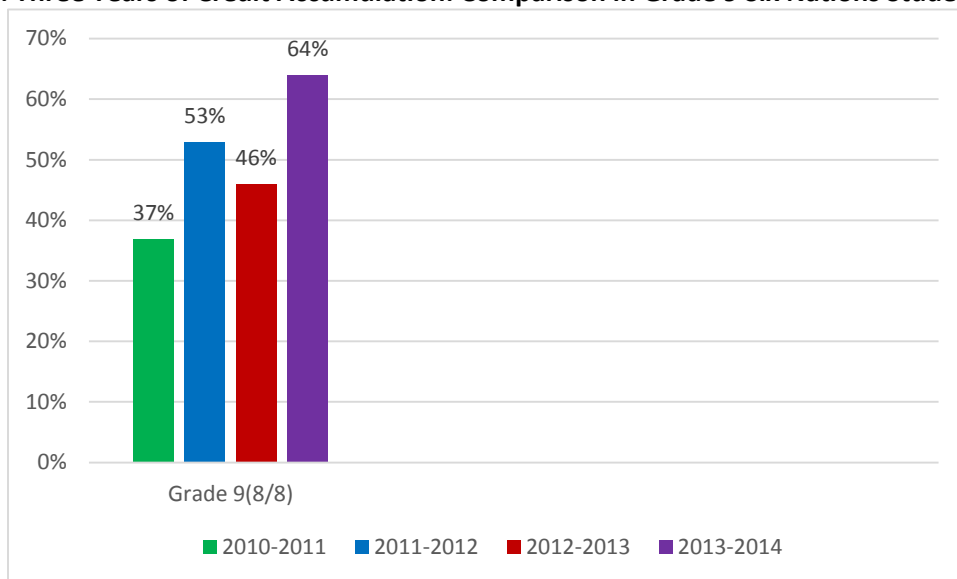
Three Years OSSLT Comparison Between Six Nations and Provincial FNMI Results



All students working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). Successful completion of OSSLT is the primary way to meet the literacy requirement for the OSSD. Students may write the OSSLT more than once. Students who are unsuccessful on the OSSLT may be eligible to take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLSC) in order to satisfy this graduation requirement.

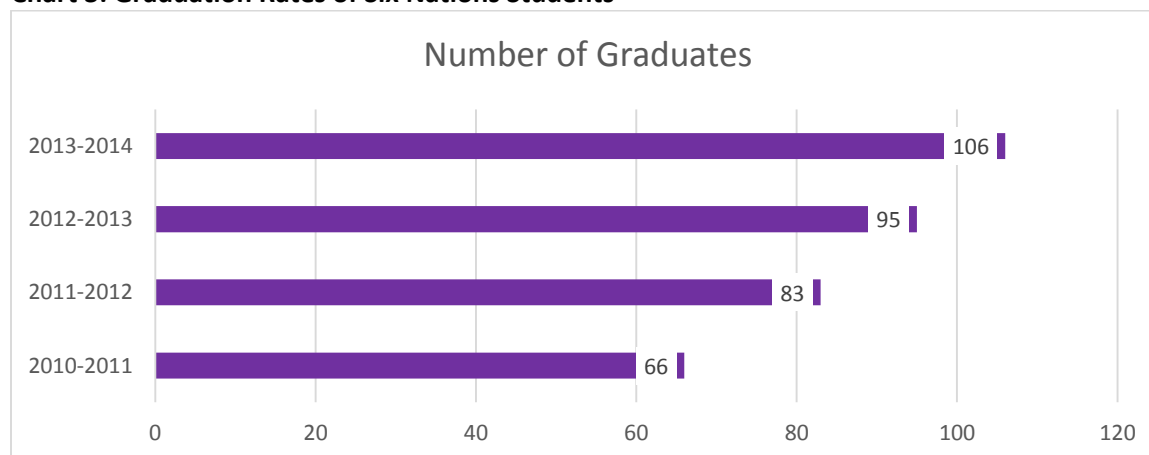
- In the chart above: **FTE** (first-time eligible) students are those who take test in year they are first eligible, i.e. Gr. 10. **PE** (previously eligible) students are those who were absent or deferred for, or were unsuccessful on, one or more previous administrations.
- The first Pen Pal project recipients complete the literacy test in Grade 10 in 2012*, indicating First Time Eligible (FTE) Six Nations students are 4% more successful than provincial FNMI students and 3% more successful than their provincial counterparts who were Previously Eligible (PE).
- In 2013, PE Six Nations students are 14% more successful than provincial FNMI students while FTE provincial students are 10% more successful. Statistics show 22% fewer Six Nations students enroll in OSSLSC to gain credentials apart from the literacy test.
- The most recent data from 2012 and 2013, which account for results of Pen Pal project recipients, indicate improved literacy rates from the two previous pre-Pen Pal Project years.

Chart 2: Three Years of Credit Accumulation: Comparison in Grade 9 Six Nations Students



- This chart shows student percentages that completed the standard eight out of eight compulsory credits in each grade toward a total of 30 credits, the graduation requirement.
- In 2011-2012, 53% of Six Nations Grade 9 students, including first-time Pen Pal project recipients, completed 8/8 credits, an increase from 37% in 2010-2011 without Pen Pal project recipient data.
- That improvement parallels influx of Pen Pal project recipients is most evident in Grade 9 where credit accumulation raised from 27% in 2010-2011 to 46% in 2012-2013, an increase of 9%; and 37% in 2010-2011 to 64% in 2013-2014, an increase of 27%.

Chart 3: Graduation Rates of Six Nations Students



Research shows that successful completion of eight credits in Grade 9, and 16 by Grade 10 keeps students on track to graduate with their peers. Over three years, the graduation rate of Six Nations students climbed as credit accumulation percentages reflective of incoming Pen Pal project recipients increased.

- The Pen Pal Coordinator estimates that in 2013-2014 at least 80% of Six Nations elementary students participated in the Pen Pal Project while projection for 2014-2015 is 100%.
- Mean calculation of 108 Grade 9 entrants annually indicates that within five years all Six Nations learners in GEDSB schools will have participated in the Pen Pal Project throughout their elementary years.
- Increased numbers of Six Nations graduates consistently reflect success of Pen Pal project recipients.

Medium-Term Outcomes:

Evidence indicates the project reached the medium-term goal to change student perspectives.

- Previously identified, stakeholders rated building cross-cultural awareness (50); fostering personal development skills (47); and improving student interaction (46) as Pen Pal Project's greatest successes, which are consistent with changing perspectives.
- From their total responses, students affirmed their greatest learning via participation in the Pen Pal Project included skills to connect and reach out to others (16); acknowledge and embrace personal growth that contributes to building relationships (14); and better understand cultural diversity (11). All benefits contribute to changing perspectives.
- The service provider indicated the land reclamation initiated a change in community perspective because 1) solutions emanated from focus on children; 2) the *2007 Community Document* set in place a foundation for peace-building; and 3) the longevity of the Pen Pal Project speaks to its value for change that impacts all service delivery.

Long-Term Outcomes

8.1.3 Objective 3: Determine which project characteristics are associated with its success.

Question: Are project characteristics associated with project outcomes?

Student confidentiality and sensitivity of attaching outcomes (grades) to success discouraged collection and analysis of quantitative data through correlation methods to determine if there is a relationship between characteristics of the Pen Pal Project and student outcomes. Section 10.0 lists a qualitative summary of results related to project success discussed throughout this report.

9.0 Assessment Tools

Attached as Appendices 3 to 6 are Focus Group and Personal Interview tools used to assess the success of the project.

10.0 Significant Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

10.1 Accomplishments

- Increased numbers of schools, classes, students and volunteers
- Increased exchange of knowledge and skills

- Increased use of program
- Improved student interaction
- Increased literacy
- Changes in student perspectives
- Increased credit accumulation and graduation rates
- Improved relationship building skills
- Improved learning outcomes

10.2 Lessons Learned

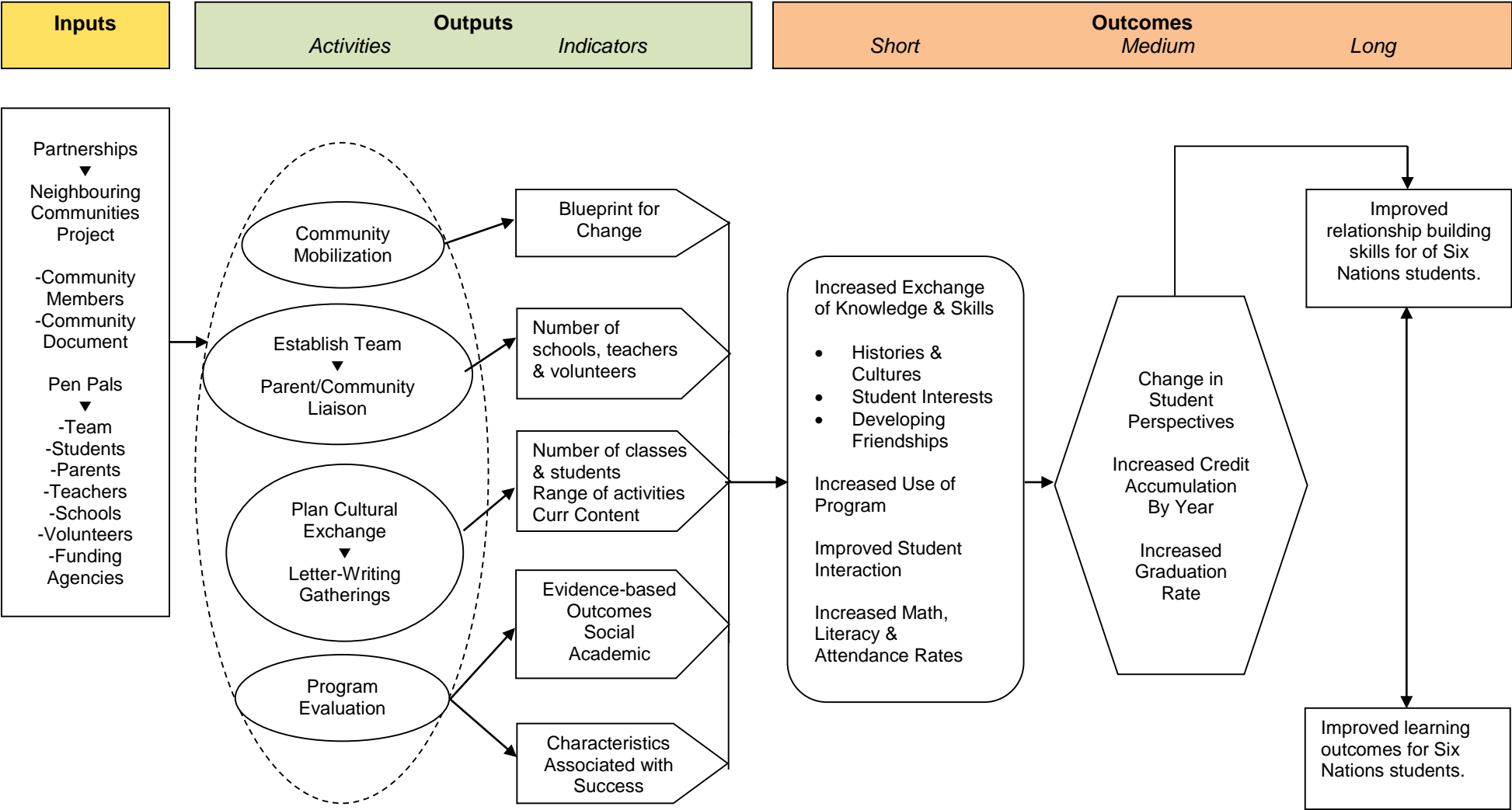
- “A child’s positive social development is as crucial to success as academic results” – Pen Pal Committee Member
- “I want my child to know about global cultures. That’s why I named my daughter Ireland” – Six Nations parent
- “It’s harder from Grade 8 to high school, we lose touch with culture and Cayuga language we’re used to being around” – Pen Pal Project student
- “Seeing kids without prejudice made me feel hopeful for their future” – Six Nations Parent
- “This group (Neighbouring Communities) and program (Pen Pal Project) created a bridge between communities we can bring forward, again” – Service provider at Six Nations

11.0 Next Steps

- Secure permanent funding from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to deliver the Pen Pal Project, including full time staff, to elementary schools at Six Nations.
- Secure permanent funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education to provide a vehicle for training teachers to implement Native Studies and Native Languages in the Ontario Curriculum.
- Secure permanent funding from the Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs to support transition from elementary to secondary grades for Ogwehoweh students at Six Nations.
- Conduct an annual evaluation to assess project impacts on social and academic success.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to follow impacts of letter writing and gatherings on student friendships

Appendix 1: Pen Pal Logic Model

Goal: To promote respect, unity and connectedness with students from Six Nations and Neighbouring Communities



Appendix 2: Nurturing Capacity: The Pen Pals Project

Research Plan and Framework (DRAFT 5: January 26, 2015ⁱ)

Goal: To articulate the Pen Pals Project as a community action research project and measure its success to share positive outcomes with the wider Indigenous education community.

Objective 1: By February 13, 2015 describe the dynamics of the project in operation and complete a process evaluation.				
ISSUES/QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	SOURCES	METHODS	TIME FRAME
1.1 What went on in the program over time?	a. Actors b. Activities and services c. Conditions of operation	-Project documents & reports -Websites: Pen Pals & Neighbouring Communities -Video materials -Newspaper articles	-Describing -Document review -Logic Model	Feb 6, 2015
1.2 How closely did the program follow its original plan? -Did the program do what it was supposed to do? -Did it continue to operate as its designers intended, or did it shift over time?	a. Blueprint for Change b. Descriptive program data; • number of classes & students • number of teachers & volunteers • range of instructional activities • content of curriculum c. answers if program did what it was supposed to do	a. Community Document 2007 b. Program data in 1.1.b above -Photographs, Children's art & Sky art images c. Pen Pals Coordinator -GEDSB Nat Advisr & Counslr* -Six Nations Parents -Six Nations Services (police) -Community Team Members* -Teacher/Student feedback -Project files	-Comparing -Informal interviews (*questionnaire if distance/schedule a factor) -Document review -Lit/Doc review	Feb 13, 2015
Objective 2: By March 13, 2015 assess project impacts and academic performance indicators to affirm student success, incl of Pen Pal recipients, over time.				
ISSUES/QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	SOURCES	METHODS	TIME FRAME
2.1 What is the nature of the measures and data collected?	a. Recipient data from grades 9-12 b. <u>Impacts of Pen Pals Project:</u> -changes in aware, knowledge, skills -increased academic success -improved self-identity/confidence -changes in community capacity -improved quality of life -evidence of support in transition to secondary school	a. McKinnon Native Counsellor b. 20 students	-GEDSB approval -Parent consent -Focus group -Six Nations Ethics (approved)	Feb. 1, 2015 Feb 6, 2015 Feb. 16, 2015 Nov. 14, 2014

	c. <u>Academic Performance Indicators</u> ; Recipient data over 4 academic years (non-identified, gender specific) 1) EQAO scores-Literacy & Math; 2) attendance rates; 3) credit accumulation, and; 4) graduation rates 5) college entrance rates	c. GEDSB public data 2009-13 in Tuition Agreement Reports -McKinnon Native Counsellor	-Percentile of standing -data collection pre/post recipients -informal interview -request statistics	Feb. 20, 2015 Feb. 20, 2015
2.2 Did project recipients prosper?	a. Impacts of Pen Pals Project b. Academic performance indicators	See sources in 2.1 above	-Content analysis -Presentation of data	Mar. 13, 2015
2.3 How did recipients compare to non-recipients?			-Comparing data pre/post recipients	Mar. 13, 2015
Objective 3: By March 20, 2015 determine which project characteristics are associated with its success to accomplish all proposed outcomes.				
ISSUES/QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	SOURCES	METHODS	TIME FRAME
3.1 Are participant characteristics (a program input) associated with project outcomes?	a. Improved relationship building skills for of Six Nations students. -Impacts of Pen Pals Project -Change in student perspectives -Increased exchange of knowledge and skills	-20 students -20 students -Pen Pals Coordinator -McKinnon Native Counsellor -Six Nations Parents	-Focus group -Focus group -Informal interviews	Mar. 20, 2015
3.2 Are characteristics of the project components (project process) associated with project outcomes?	a. Improved learning outcomes for Six Nations students -Increased academic success -Increased use of program	-See 2.2b. above -See 1.2 above	-See 2.2b. above -Lit/Doc review -See 1.2 above -Lit/Doc review	Mar. 20, 2015

ⁱ The logic of data analysis in evaluation used in the framework is influenced by the work of Carol Weiss, particularly Weiss, C.H. (1997). Analyzing and interpreting the data. In *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies* (2nd ed., pp. 271-293). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Appendix 3: Focus Group Parent Assessment Tools

Letter of Information

Parent Focus Group

Evaluation Review: Revised February 16, 2015

Background: In the course of collecting community based successful practices, the *Indspire Institute*¹, discovered there is limited data on existing projects in Indigenous communities. Through the *Nurturing Capacity* program, successful projects, many with a strong cultural basis that honours the local Indigenous knowledge system such as the Pen Pal Project, will be supported and recognized.

The goal of the Pen Pal Project is to bring students from Six Nations and neighbouring communities together in friendship to build respectful relationships through cultural exchange.

The aim of this research is to review how the Pen Pal Project influenced school and community experiences of Six Nations students. The project will share its success with Indigenous communities and educators across Canada through Indspire's Virtual Institute (see Logic Model attached as Appendix 1).

The purpose of this focus group is to gather opinions about how the Pen Pal Project did accomplish its goal as stated above. See also <http://www.neighbouringcommunities.net/communitydocument.htm> The 2007 Community Document for more information if you choose to do so.

There is just one main research question:

Did participation in the Pen Pal Project have an impact on school and community experiences of Six Nations students?

I invite you to share opinions about the above mentioned purpose and your experiences with the Pen Pal Project. The group setting is very informal with open-ended questions so as to gather a wide range of views and ideas. For my use, only, I will record verbatim notes.

Please Note: Participating in the study involves you in no more risk than your normal daily activities. The information I gather through the focus group will be compiled by me, only. I will not use any identifying information when analyzing or storing information, nor will any identifying information appear in the final report or in materials distributed through the Indspire Institute.

If you have questions or need more information about the study, please call Gloria Thomas at 519-445-4488 or email gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca. If you have concerns or questions about the way the study is conducted, please contact the Six Nations Ethics Office at (519) 445-2205 ext. 3235 or email adea@sixnations.ca. The Six Nations Ethics Board reviewed and provided ethics clearance for this study. Please note that ethics application has also been submitted to the Grand Erie District School Board.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hITJ7I-y5k>

**Nya:weh tgyai: (Thanks, truly)
for taking part in this important education study.**

¹ The study gathers information concerning Six Nations students, only, since Indspire secures funding to deliver programs that provide tools for Indigenous peoples, especially youth, to achieve their potential.

Parent Focus Group Agenda & Process

Gan/h?ny/hk Opening

- a. Participants meet and greet each other.
- b. Review the letter of information;
 - Project goal & research objectives
- c. Review and sign Consent Form

The purpose of this focus group is to gather information about how students prospered by their participation in the Pen Pal Project during their elementary and transition years to secondary school.

We invite you to participate in a 1 ½ hour discussion to share opinions about the above mentioned purpose and your experiences in the Pen Pal Project. The group setting is very informal with open-ended questions so as to gather a wide range of views and ideas. For my use, only, I will record verbatim notes.

There is just one main research question:

Did participation in the Pen Pal Project have an impact on school and community experiences of Six Nations students?

Prompt Questions:

1. Did sharing culture and interests help Six Nations and neighbouring students grow friendships?
2. Did the project impact Six Nations students' social and academic success in elementary grades?
3. What skills/concepts learned in the project most benefited all students and communities?
4. Has the project contributed to Six Nations students' success in secondary school?

No personal names are requested and no individual responses will be released. Collected information will be analyzed by me, only. A summary of research results will be forwarded to you as you indicate on the Consent Form your wish to receive them.

Gan/h?ny/hk Closing

**Six Nations Parents Focus Group
Consent Form**

- I have read the information presented in the Information Letter about a study being conducted by Gloria Thomas on behalf of the Pen Pal Project.
I understand that;
- I have the opportunity to ask questions about the project and to receive additional details I may request.
- If I agree to participate in this study I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- I have signed this *Consent Form* and may request a signed copy for my records.

I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I would like to receive a summary of the study's results Yes ☐

Please email results to this address _____

Or to this mailing address: _____

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results ☐

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:
gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca or call 519-445-4488.

This study has been reviewed by the Grand Erie District School Board and Six Nations Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

Sally Landon, GEDSB System Research Leader
Telephone (519)732-1615 or 519-756-6301 ext: 281042
Email: sally.landon@granderie.ca

Or

Six Nations Ethics Office
Telephone: (519) 445-2205 ext. 3235
Email: adea@sixnations.ca

Appendix 4: Focus Group Student Assessment Tools Information Letter & Consent

Review of the Six Nations Pen Pal Project Building Capacity

Principal Researcher:
Gloria Thomas

519-445-4488
E-mail: gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca

What is the purpose of this study?

The Pen Pal Project brings students from Six Nations and neighbouring communities together in friendship to build respectful relationships through cultural exchange. I am conducting research to review how the project influenced school and community experiences of Six Nations students. The project will share its success with Indigenous communities and educators across Canada through Indspire's *Virtual Institute*.

What will happen during the study?

With the consent of your parents, you will meet with me once at McKinnon Park Secondary School during school hours to participate in a group interview (sometimes called a focus group). I expect the session will last between 1-1 ½ hours. In the interview, I will ask questions about how the project impacted your school and community experiences. With consent of the Grand Erie District School Board, I will examine public data from 2009-2013 in Tuition Agreement Reports to compare achievement levels pre/post Pen Pal recipients entering MPSS. Information from the group interview and achievement reports will help assess how the project met its goals to improve learning outcomes and relationship building skills for those that attended the program.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

Participating in the study involves you in no more risk than your normal daily activities. There are no known physical, psychological, economic or social risks associated with participation in this research. Agreement of yours and your parents to be a part of the study in no way obligates you to remain a part of the study. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you choose to withdraw you may request that all or part of your data be destroyed by submitting this request via email to Gloria Thomas at gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca or by articulating this request in person if you make this decision while participating in the group interview. Also, participation or non-participation will not affect any school mark you may receive.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

Your participation may benefit you by providing an opportunity to voice your opinions and experience on matters that influence you and your community. The knowledge acquired

through this study may shed light on the kind of programs that improves learning and educational outcomes for Hodinohso:ni: and all Indigenous youth. The Pen Pal Project intends to share their best practices with Indigenous educators across Canada in hope that other communities will hear your voice and design similar projects.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

At no time, including during recruitment and data collection via the group interview, will the actual identity of study participants be disclosed. The information I gather through the group interview and analysis of GEDSB Tuition Agreement Reports will be evaluated and compiled by me, only. I will not use any identifying information when analyzing or storing student information, nor will any identifying information appear in the final report or in materials distributed through the Indspire Institute. Student data will be anonymous and coded to industry-standard. All computer files will be password protected.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to complete this study by March 31, 2015. The Parent Consent Form asks parents if they wish to receive a summary of results. If parents answer yes, they may leave an email or mailing address at which to receive results. MPSS's Native Counsellor will receive copies for herself and for distribution to student participants.

Do you have questions about the study?

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at: gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca or call 519-445-4488.

This study has been reviewed by the Grand Erie District School Board and Six Nations Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

Sally Landon, GEDSB System Research Leader
Telephone (519)732-1615 or 519-756-6301 ext: 281042
Email: sally.landon@granderie.ca

Or

Six Nations Ethics Office
Telephone: (519) 445-2205 ext. 3235
Email: adea@sixnations.ca

Parent Consent Form

- I have read the information presented in the Information Letter about a study being conducted by Gloria Thomas on behalf of the Pen Pal Project.
I understand that;
- I have the opportunity to ask questions about the project and to receive additional details I may request.
- If I agree to participate in this study I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- I have signed this *Parent Consent Form* and may request a signed copy for my records.

I agree to participate in the study.

Parent's Signature: _____

Name of Student: _____

Date: _____

I would like to receive a summary of the study's results Yes ☐

Please send them to this email address _____

Or to this mailing address: _____

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results ☐

Any questions about the study may be directed to Gloria Thomas at 519-445-4488 or gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca. Any ethical concerns about this study may be directed to:

Sally Landon, GEDSB System Research Leader
Telephone (519)732-1615 or 519-756-6301 ext: 281042
Email: sally.landon@granderie.ca

Or

Six Nations Ethics Office
Telephone: (519) 445-2205 ext. 3235
E-mail: adea@sixnations.ca

Student Focus Group

Agenda & Process

McKinnon Park Secondary School

Gan/h?ny/hk

Opening

- a. Participants meet and greet each other.
- b. Review the letter of information;
 - Project goal & research objectives

The purpose of this focus group is to gather information about how students prospered by their participation in the Pen Pal Project during their elementary and transition years to secondary school.

We invite you to participate in a 1 ½ hour discussion to share opinions about the above mentioned purpose and your experiences in the Pen Pal Project. The group setting is very informal with open-ended questions so as to gather a wide range of views and ideas. For my use, only, I will record verbatim notes.

There is just one main research question:

Did your participation in the Pen Pal Project have an impact on your academic, school and community experiences?

Prompt Questions:

1. Did sharing your culture and interests help you to grow friendships with neighbouring students?
2. Did the project assist to improve your social and academic success in elementary school?
3. What skills/concepts learned in the project most benefited all students and communities?
4. Has the project contributed to your transition into secondary school?

No personal names are requested and no individual responses will be released. Collected information will be analyzed by me, only. A summary of research results will be forwarded to MPSS Native Counsellor for distribution to research participants and to your parents as they indicate their wish to receive them.

Gan/h?ny/hk

Closing

Call for Research Participants

**Attention all Six Nations Students!!
Participants Needed for Exciting Research!**

**Are you a past participant of the Pen Pal Project
offered during your elementary school years?**

Then consider taking part in groundbreaking research!

I am conducting research for the Pen Pal Project to review if your participation in the project influenced your school success and skills for building relationships with others. The research asks students to take part in a 1 ½ hr. group interview to give your opinions about how Pen Pals impacted your school and community experiences. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

If interested, please contact Counsellor, Shannon Korber to inquire about an upcoming meeting on March 2, 2015 in Guidance Office Boardroom

**Nyaweh Swagwegoh!! Thanks Everyone!!
From Gloria Thomas 519-445-4488**

**This project has been approved by the Grand Erie District School Board
and the Six Nations Ethics Board**

Appendix 5: Personal Interview Student Assessment Tools Information Letter & Consent

Informal Interview

(Please Note: If distance/schedule is a factor, I have attached the questions for electronic reply)

Background: In the course of collecting community based successful practices, the *Indspire Institute*¹, discovered there is limited data on existing projects in Indigenous communities. Through the *Nurturing Capacity* program, successful projects, many with a strong cultural basis that honours the local Indigenous knowledge system such as the Pen Pal Project, will be supported and recognized.

The goal of the Pen Pal Project is to bring students from Six Nations and neighbouring communities together in friendship to build respectful relationships through cultural exchange.

The aim of this research is to review how the Pen Pal Project influenced school and community experiences of Six Nations students. The project will share its success with Indigenous communities and educators across Canada through Indspire's Virtual Institute (see Logic Model attached as Appendix 1).

The purpose of this interview is to gather opinions about how the Pen Pal Project did accomplish its goal as stated above. See also <http://www.neighbouringcommunities.net/communitydocument.htm> The 2007 Community Document for more information about the Project's goals.

There is just one main research question:

Did participation in the Pen Pal Project have an impact on school and community experiences of Six Nations students?

Please see page 3 for Prompt Questions

I invite you to share opinions about the above mentioned purpose and your experiences with the Pen Pal Project. Individually or in groups, the setting is very informal with open-ended questions so as to gather a wide range of views and ideas. For my use, only, I will record verbatim notes.

Please Note: Participating in the study involves you in no more risk than your normal daily activities. The information I gather through the interview will be compiled by me, only. I will not use any identifying information when analyzing or storing information, nor will any identifying information appear in the final report or in materials distributed through the Indspire Institute. Please indicate your decision to participate in the study by signing the Consent Form on page 2 before sharing your ideas.

If you have questions or need more information about the study, please call Gloria Thomas at 519-445-4488 or email gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca. If you have concerns or questions about the way the study is conducted, please contact the Six Nations Ethics Office at (519) 445-2205 ext. 3235 or email adea@sixnations.ca. The Six Nations Ethics Board reviewed and provided ethics clearance for this study.

**Nya:weh tgyai: (Thanks, truly)
for taking part in this important education study.**

¹ The study gathers information concerning Six Nations students, only, since Indspire secures funding to deliver programs that provide tools for Indigenous peoples, especially youth, to achieve their potential.

Consent Form

- I have read the information presented in the Information Letter about a study being conducted by Gloria Thomas on behalf of the Pen Pal Project.
I understand that;
- I have the opportunity to ask questions about the project and to receive additional details I may request.
- If I agree to participate in this study I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- I have signed this *Consent Form* and may request a signed copy for my records.

I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I would like to receive a summary of the study's results Yes ☐

Please email results to this address _____

Or to this mailing address: _____

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results ☐

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at: gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca or call 519-445-4488.

This study has been reviewed by the Grand Erie District School Board and Six Nations Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

Sally Landon, GEDSB System Research Leader
Telephone (519)732-1615 or 519-756-6301 ext: 281042
Email: sally.landon@granderie.ca

Or

Six Nations Ethics Office
Telephone: (519) 445-2205 ext. 3235
Email: adea@sixnations.ca

Informal Interview

(Please Note: If distance/schedule is a factor, please record your ideas below and email to gloria-thomas@sympatico.ca Thank you!)

One main research question guides collection of data:

Did participation in the Pen Pal Project have an impact on academic, school and community experiences of Six Nations students?

PROMPT QUESTIONS

Drawing from your existing knowledge and experience with the Pen Pal Project, please comment to the best of your ability on the questions below:

1. Did sharing culture and interests help Six Nations and neighbouring students grow friendships?

Please explain:

2. Did the project impact Six Nations students' social and academic success in elementary grades?

Please comment:

3. What skills/concepts learned in the project most benefited all students and communities? Please explain:

4. Has the project contributed to Six Nations student success in secondary school? Please comment: