

# LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 9

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 6



## First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education in the *Just in Time* Newsletter

In January of this year, the twice-yearly newsletter of the ATA's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee, *Just in Time*, devoted its entire issue to First Nations, Métis and Inuit education. This issue of *Leadership Update* contains some material from *Just in Time* that we think administrators would find particularly useful and interesting. To read all published issues of the award-winning *Just in Time* go to the ATA website ([www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)) and click on For Members>Professional Development>Diversity, Equity and Human Rights>*Just in Time* newsletter.

### The ATA's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy and Action Plan

In June of 2011 the ATA's Provincial Executive Council established the Committee on First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Policy and Action Plan and tasked it with

- seeking input from Association members who work with FNMI students on how the Association could better serve the professional needs of these members,
- examining what other provincial organizations have done to support teachers working with FNMI students,
- inviting input from education partners on initiatives to support FNMI education in Alberta,
- proposing Association policy on education needs of FNMI students and teachers and
- proposing an action plan to support members working with FNMI students that honours the unique cultural and linguistic needs of the students.

Members of this committee were Denis Espetveidt, who chaired the committee, Glenda Bristow, Marieka Cardinal, Lori Pritchard, Jacqueline Skytt and Patrick Loyer; Shelley Svidal was the administrative secretary of the committee.

### Providing Advice and Support

Knowing the importance of respected elders in FNMI communities, the committee arranged meetings with elders to ask for their advice and support. Three First Nations elders attended the Calgary meeting; elders who attended the Edmonton meeting were First Nations and Métis.

The following people from other Alberta educational partners shared information with the committee:

- Terry Lakey, FNMI Professional Development Facilitator/Consultant, Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia
- Lorianne Tenove, FNMI Professional Development Facilitator/Consultant, Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia
- Jane Martin, Director, Aboriginal Policy Branch, Alberta Education
- Executive Committee, FNMI Education Council

### Summary of Focus Group Meetings

The following themes emerged from the focus groups:

- The history of residential schools has left a lasting impact on parents and communities. Public schools are organized and operated in a Eurocentric structure that does not fit

To believe in  
the things you  
can see and  
touch is no  
belief at all, but  
to believe in  
the unseen is a  
triumph and a  
blessing.

—Abraham  
Lincoln



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with the home/community culture. FNMI parents/community must have a voice in the school, and there must be an acknowledgement of the past domination of European cultures.

- The FNMI student population is growing, but there has been limited support to enhance the success of FNMI students in public schools. Provincial achievement test results and high school completion data provide evidence that FNMI students are struggling.
- Many teachers have had little or no preparation to teach in FNMI communities, and there is limited access to appropriate professional development. Teachers need to help FNMI students walk in two worlds.

## What Was Learned About Building Relationships to Support First Nations, Métis and Inuit Student Learning

- Teaching FNMI students is all about relationships and attending to human needs. Relationships with students and families are essential to

address issues and support success. In FNMI cultures, the extended family is much more important than it is in mainstream society.

- Students off reserve are often subject to stereotyping/racism in public schools. To connect with parents and communities, teachers need to understand the histories and cultural heritage of Alberta, including residential schools, treaties, traditional knowledge and protocols.
- Schools need access to Aboriginal personnel/staff to help the school communicate with parents, families and communities; provide advice to teachers; and bridge the cultural divide.

## What Was Learned About Holistic Pedagogy for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students

- Teachers need to incorporate culturally appropriate practices, knowledge and perspectives, such as inviting community members to share expertise and provide traditional guidance to both students and teachers.

- Teachers need to be aware of how important oral traditions are in Aboriginal cultures.
- Teachers need to use authentic and appropriate instruction and assessment pedagogy.
- Teachers need to take into account FNMI students' learning preferences, such as skill in nonverbal communication, skill in processing visual and spatial information, skill in holistic processing (more able to see the whole versus the parts), observation followed by practice, and an informal setting that allows for freedom of movement.
- There is no distinction between what is effective for FNMI students and for other students. Work on relationships, focus on effective pedagogy and develop an inclusive school, and motivation and engagement will follow.

## What Was Learned About the Importance of Inclusive Schools

- Schools need to be inclusive and develop an atmosphere of equality, belonging and respect. Inclusive values should be part of the school's mission, vision and action plan.
- School administrators require professional development specific to FNMI context, cultural awareness, cultural protocols and communication, and problem-solving strategies. School administrators need to be aware that some FNMI teachers have complex lives not unlike those of their students. As well, administrators should consider strategies to enhance FNMI student voice and parental involvement (eg, student leadership, parent councils).



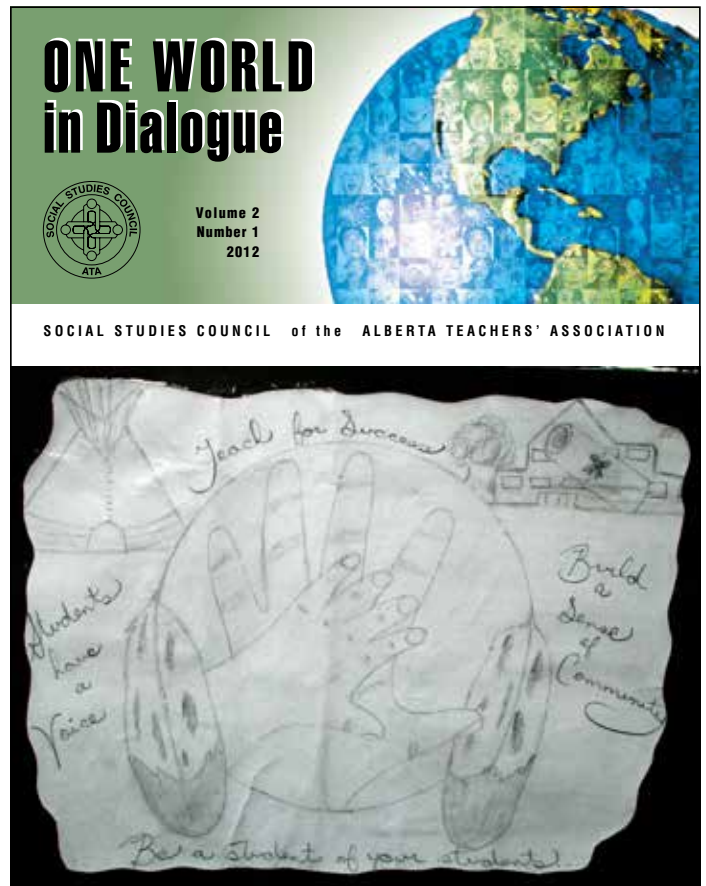
# One World in Dialogue

*One World in Dialogue* is the journal of the ATA's Social Studies Council. The latest issue contains the following articles about Aboriginal education:

- “Invoking Accountability and Documentation Through ‘All My Relations,’” by Métis writer and educator Vicki Bouvier;
- “An Invitation to Explore the Roots of Current Aboriginal/ Non-Aboriginal Relations in Canada,” by University of Calgary professor Gail Jardine, who is the editor of *One World in Dialogue*;
- “Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites,” by Cynthia Chambers, a professor of education at the University of Lethbridge and a collaborator with Indigenous communities on literacies of place, human relations and the material world, and Narcisse Blood, a leader and elder in the Blood Nation, an award-winning filmmaker and an instructor at Red Crow College; and
- a review of the book *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into the School Curriculum*.

The cover illustration is by Natasha Calf Robe Ayoungman, an elementary teacher at Chief Old Sun School, Siksika Nation.

For information on obtaining a copy of *One World in Dialogue*, contact Ian Campbell, in ATA Distribution, at [ian.campbell@ata.ab.ca](mailto:ian.campbell@ata.ab.ca).



## Q & A

**GORDON THOMAS**  
Executive Secretary

**Q:** What ATA workshops and resources can I access to help my staff understand and work with our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students?

**A:** The ATA offers a comprehensive workshop series to provide teachers with a better understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and world views to help Aboriginal students succeed in school and meet the prescribed learning outcomes. The workshop series, which is entitled First Nations, Métis and

Inuit (FNMI) Success Series, features the following workshops: Addressing Prejudice and Discrimination Relating to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students; Communicating with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students, Parents and Caregivers; Effective Assessment Practices for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students; Increasing Resiliency in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students; and Understanding Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples.

The Association also has an excellent resource entitled *Education Is Our Buffalo: A Teachers' Resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education in Alberta*. Written by a team of Aboriginal writers, this guide is intended to make teachers more aware of the history, culture, world views and present-day concerns of Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

The ATA library also has a wealth of materials on FNMI education. For more information, contact the library at [library@teachers.ab.ca](mailto:library@teachers.ab.ca).



# Soaring with Knowledge— Conference 2013

March 14–16, 2013

The fifth annual First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council conference, Soaring with Knowledge, takes place on March 14 (evening) and March 15, at the Ramada Conference Centre, in Edmonton. It promises to be an interesting and inspiring event. For more information, go to the ATA website ([www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)) and click on For Members>Professional Development>Specialist Councils>Council Directory>First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council.



On May 23, 1996, the government of Canada declared that June 21, the first day of summer, would be henceforth National Aboriginal Day.

“Indians, Inuit, and Métis have made unparalleled contributions to the development of this country. To recognize these contributions, the Canadian government has designated June 21st as National Aboriginal Day so that all Canadians may share and experience the cultures of Indians, Inuit, and Métis in Canada. The designation of National Aboriginal Day also supports global initiatives to commemorate the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples.”

## Teachers are encouraged to complete online budget tool and survey on inclusive education

### Online Budget Tool

The Alberta government has implemented an online tool, at [www.budgetchoice.ca](http://www.budgetchoice.ca), where Albertans can build their own provincial budget and make decisions on provincial spending and revenue priorities. On one page of the tool users can choose between making no cuts to education and selecting up to six cuts to save up to half a billion dollars.

The ideas presented for making cuts to education include cutting grants to school boards, eliminating the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement program, eliminating class-size funding, reducing administrative targeted costs, changing department administration and changing the funding model for high schools. Most of the proposed cuts would result in teacher layoffs.

The tool provides similar options for cutbacks in all 17 ministries. It also offers the option of increasing revenue through changes to health care premiums or through corporate, fuel, income and sales taxes.

There are no options for expanding current programs or services, or reducing revenue streams. However, users can submit ideas for other changes.

The government has not made it clear what data it will collect or how it will use the data to develop future budgets.

The Association is encouraging teachers to take time (between 10 and 30 minutes) to complete the tool as a way to advocate for appropriate funding of public education.

### Survey on inclusive education

The Every Teacher Project is a national study designed to identify and make widely available the collective expertise of Canadian teachers on inclusive education practices for sexual and gender minority students. The Association supports the project and encourages all members to complete a 15 to 20 minute survey on the subject before it closes in mid-February. A link to the survey is available on the Association website at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)



# CAP13 Banff

**DATE:**  
April 21 -24, 2013

**PLACE:**  
Banff Springs Hotel

A unique opportunity awaits to join educational leaders from around the world in the beautiful world heritage location of Banff, Alberta at Canada's premier conference for educational leaders.

Join us in April for a rare and historic dialogue with the world's leaders in education in a setting that has been called "the jewel of the Rockies". A wide array of world class keynote speakers will animate the dialogue of those attending and there will be myriad opportunities for spouses and family members to explore one of the most pristine wilderness areas in the world during the conference.

[www.cap2013.ca](http://www.cap2013.ca)

Register today at [www.cap2013.ca](http://www.cap2013.ca)

# Council for School Leadership

JOIN THE CSL TODAY AT  
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You Must Be A  
CSL Member  
Before Mid-May,  
2013 to be  
Eligible for  
the Draw

ICP – CAIRNS, Australia – July, 2013  
CAP 2014 – Halifax – Spring, 2014

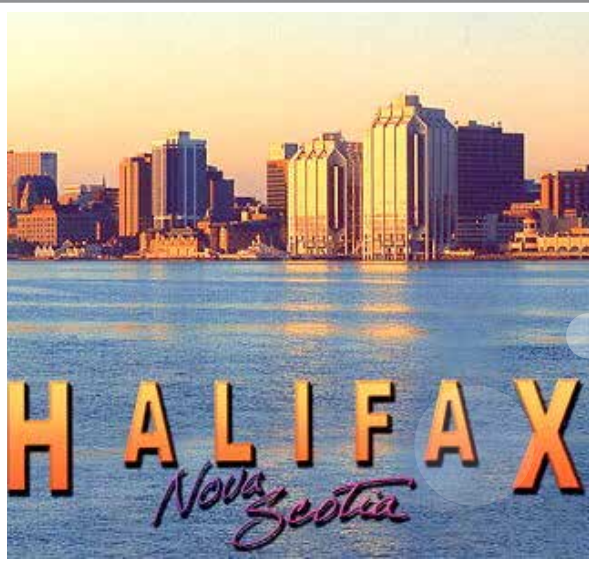
This May, the Council for School Leadership will select one member to attend the International Congress of Principals Conference, in Cairns, Australia, and one member to attend the CAP 2014 conference in Halifax, NS.

If you are a school principal, assistant principal, or district leader, join the CSL today to be eligible for our spring PD draw. Find out more at

[bit.ly/joincsl](http://bit.ly/joincsl)



# ICP CAIRNS - JULY, 2013



## CAP2014

HALIFAX, NS - SPRING 2014  
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
PRINCIPALS CONFERENCE



1-4 July

# ICP2013

Cairns Australia

Join the Council for School Leadership prior to mid-May, 2013, to be eligible for a draw to attend ICP2013 in Cairns, Australia or CAP 2014 in Halifax.

To enter the draw, refer a colleague at a teachers' convention booth or submit a request for CSL membership or join the CSL online at

[bit.ly/joincsl](http://bit.ly/joincsl)

