

First Nations Métis and Inuit Education Gathering 2019 Highlights

The fourth Gathering held in Edmonton April 10-12 was highly successful in meeting all of its goals with a high level of participant satisfaction. The event was also a sell out a few weeks in advance indicating strong interest and support for the Gathering as a way to foster participant learning and leading.

Delegates represented system (26%) and school (10%) based leaders, teachers (24%), trustees (8.5%), Consortia (6%), community and national organizations (4%), post secondaries (2%) and with many Elders, and Indigenous community leaders. We also welcomed approximately 25 participants from out of province.

Gathering resource materials, are posted here: <https://cassalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CASS-2019-First-Nations-M%C3%A9tis-Inuit-Education-Gathering-Presenter-Contacts-and-Resource-Materials.pdf>

Members Survey Data:

- 34% indicated that they were focusing their learning on the TQS, 31 % LQS and 9% SLQS
- 97 % strongly agree/agree that they would be applying their learning in their role
- 98 % indicated an intention to share their learning with colleagues/workplace
- 94% indicated learning how to lead by incorporating strategies into their workplace
- Participants identified the following, as making their learning experience meaningful ; outstanding and inspirational keynotes, learning with Elders, access to resources, strong sessions/presentations, Indigenous perspectives throughout the Gathering, opportunity to participate in ceremony, Inuit learning, and connections with other educators and community people,
- Participants suggested several ideas for improvement; more hands-on learning, timing of sessions, breaks to be consistent, establish and monitor cellphone usage in sessions (some were using them during sessions distracting others and while Elders were speaking etc.)

- Participants identified the following actions to further their professional learning; opportunities for land-based experience ,more time to listen and be with Elders, more learning about Inuit and Métis history and story, access to online support, and more learning of the how to beyond awareness and understanding.

Conference Keynotes/Witness to our Learning

The five keynotes speakers were inspirational in their address calling each one of us to further action by deepen our listening, understanding and by moving forward.

- *Jesse Wente* encouraged us to imagine the possible, learn the truth first to understand the past . Relationship with Indigenous people is key . Canadians need a better relationship than exists currently. What must we do? Not stop until we have a strong relationship!
- *Cindy Blackstock* challenged us by saying that the statement “we are making progress is not what we want to hear “it is not good enough when we still have significant underfunding , inequity for education, health care, housing, increasing numbers of children in care! What actions are we taking as educators to eliminate the inequity?
- *Jenna Broomfield* talked about taking up space, having a safe space for all children to speak out , be who they are , be able to tell their stories . Cautioned us about assuming that Indigenous people are the same saying that this view could be racist. This lack of knowledge and understanding about the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada is dangerous rhetoric.
- *Senator Sinclair* spoke to the importance of education and respect for each other as the keys to reconciliation. Education can help each of heal, teach our children that equality is the way to stop racism and to bring about reconciliation. The lack of teaching and learning about residential schools for all children past and present is a problem in Canada. Education has been used to harm all when the truth has not been told. He urged teachers, “You are the most important Reconciliation fighters in all Canada because you are going to change how your students will be.”

- *Aaron Paquette* shared his personal story of his ups and downs and how we all suffer at some times in our life and the need to have people like educators , parents, friends and family that we can lean on in these times of struggle .With our support we can help our students through these challenges .
- Richard Van Camp was this year’s witness to our learning. The witness spends time throughout the Gathering observing our learning, keynotes, ceremony and demonstrations and shares these and his calls to actions/next steps for us in our journey of reconciliation on the final day. Richard’s full address, “Light Them A Path” can be found here: <https://cassalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Light-Them-A-Path-by-Richard-Van-Camp.pdf>

More information on the keynotes/witness can be found at <https://cassalberta.ca/conferences-workshops/2019-first-nations-metis-inuit-education-gathering/?tab=1>