Following Their Voices

Meta-Synthesis

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Dr. Scott Tunison, Researcher
Dr. Dawn Wallin, Researcher

Department of Educational Administration
College of Education, University of Saskatchewan

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of Education
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Reflecting upon and telling the story of this year's *Following Their Voices* research is a bit like describing the process of building an airplane while it was in the air – we wanted to arrive safely at our destination but had to accept the ambiguity of not being entirely sure what the vehicle would look like or the precise coordinates of the destination itself. This year's research cohort included 11 schools serving diverse rural and urban communities both on- and off-reserve. The research design was a semi- permeable framework that, while starting and ending in a similar place for all participating schools, afforded the research teams the flexibility to account for the distinctive character of each school community in the research process.

The research contract was developed in consultation with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division. The Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU), a research unit in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, managed the overall project under the leadership of Dr. David Burgess. Research teams from the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, and First Nations University of Canada supported individual school communities to tell their *Following Their Voices* story. Members of the research teams are listed below:

University of Saskatchewan Research Team
Dr. Scott Tunison (Co-Investigator)
Dr. Dawn Wallin (Co-Investigator)
Dr. Jackie Ottmann
Jordan Adilman (research support)
Alisa Favel (research support)

University of Regina
Dr. Jenn de Lugt

First Nations University of Canada
Dr. Angelina Weenie

The FTV Research Advisory Committee was also created to guide the research. The following individuals served on the FTV Research Advisory Committee:

- Elder Isabelle Impey
- Elder Darlene Speidel

- Elder Don Speidel

- Robert Bratvold, Director of Education, Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division

- Pat Bugler, Director of Education, Treaty Six Education Council, FTV Priority Owner

- Tim Caleval, Executive Director, Priority Action Team, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education

- Dr. Alec Couros, Director, Saskatchewan Instructional Development Research Unit (SIDRU), Faculty of Education, University of Regina

- Dr. Jenn de Lugt, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Regina, FTV Researcher

- Leanne Kadyschuk, FTV Provincial Facilitator, Priority Action Team, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education

- Dr. Jackie Ottmann, Professor, Vice-provost of Indigenous Engagement, FTV Researcher

- Sheila Pocha, Program Head, Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), University of Saskatchewan, Representative of the Gabriel Dumont Institute

- Dr. Scott Tunison, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, FTV Researcher

- Dr. Dawn Wallin, Professor, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Programs, Partnerships, and Research, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, FTV Researcher

- Dr. Angelina Weenie, Associate Professor, Indigenous Education, Department of Indigenous Education, Health and Social Work, Representative of the First Nations University of Canada, FTV Researcher

- Dr. David Burgess, Associate Professor, Associate Dean, Research, Graduate Support, and International Initiatives, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, and Director of the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU), Chair of the FTV Research Advisory Committee

- Patricia Prowse, Associate Director, Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU directorate support)

The researchers and the SELU team would like to thank the members of the FTV Research Advisory Committee for the wise advice, guidance, and encouragement that they provided. Special thanks are extended to the 11 learning communities that welcomed the research teams into their communities and made time in their very busy schedules to describe their FTV journeys through the voices of their students, staff, Elders, parents and caregivers, and community members.

Finally, acknowledgement is given to Cecile Laprairie, SELU's administrative assistant, for providing support to the FTV Research Advisory Committee and for formatting the individual school reports as well as this meta-synthesis document.

Dr. Scott Tunison   Patricia Prowse

Co-Investigator   Associate Director

FTV Research Team   SELU

Decades of provincial data – including credit attainment; final marks; school completion; attendance; and over-representation in alternative and remedial classes – show that Indigenous students have been poorly served by the system. Despite good intentions, multiple programs, curriculum renewals, provincial strategies, and other initiatives, outcomes for students in general and for Indigenous students in particular have remained perniciously stagnant (Tunison, 2018, p. 2).

In October 2012, Premier Brad Wall announced the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond*. The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth is a strategy designed to secure a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people. To achieve this vision, the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth has two overriding goals: to ensure Saskatchewan continues to grow and to ensure the province is meeting the challenges of growth. As a result, the Ministry of Education launched *Student First*.

Student First was an invitation to the entire education sector to work collaboratively to effect improvement. In other words, *Student First* was an approach to unify and reorient the provincial education system on what matters most – the student. Furthermore, *Student First* helped the education system identify the factors that both support students' learning as well as minimize the barriers to improvement inherent in the system. Ultimately, the broad-based community engagement strategy employed by the *Student First* team yielded deep insights into the ways in which the sector could address the goals identified in the *Plan for Growth* and accommodate local priorities while bringing them together into one plan for action.

Deputy Premier and Minister of Education Don Morgan announced the *Education Sector Strategic Plan* (ESSP) in April 2014. The ESSP was the first ever province-wide plan developed collaboratively with education sector partners. Feedback from over 1,000 people from public and Catholic school divisions, Conseil des écoles Fransaskoises, First Nations education directors and principals, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Métis-Nation Saskatchewan, Ministry of Education, school boards, and students formed the basis of the ESSP. The plan was ultimately approved by all 28 school boards in the province and was accepted by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Evolving from the original *Student First* discussions, the ESSP is the action plan that prioritizes and deploys the work the sector needs to do in order to achieve the common goal of supporting every student to reach their full potential, as well as fulfilling the targets in the *Plan for Growth*. Moving forward, the Ministry and each division use the ESSP to develop improvement plans and determine how to deploy resources.

FOLLOWING THEIR VOICES EMERGES

Based on the salient themes emerging from the *Seeking Their Voices* (Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit, 2014) research and the knowledge acquired through the Te Kotahitanga visitation, the Ministry of Education collaborated with a group of individuals from across the sector to develop a Saskatchewan-based pedagogical response to the identified needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students. The response was titled *Following Their Voices* (FTV).

Inclusion in the ESSP also enabled FTV to formalize its relationships with a broad range of stakeholders. A formal FTV Leadership Team was established with representation from First Nations and Métis education authorities, Elders, provincial school divisions and the Ministry of Education. Throughout the development of FTV, there has been a strong commitment to authentically involve Métis and First Nations Elders to provide guidance and oversight to ensure any pedagogical approach was grounded in Indigenous practices and ways of knowing.

In the fall of 2014, an initial Elders' Gathering was held at the Wanuskewin Heritage Park, to gather advice and direction from a group of Elders representing all language groups and regions of the province. At the Gathering, the Elders confirmed the FTV *Guiding Vision* and provided advice and direction on the development of the *Understandings and Indicators* forming the underpinnings of the FTV initiative.

Following Their Voices was endorsed in the first ESSP (2015-17) as an urgent priority and has been upheld as both a promising practice and a provincial priority ever since. The ESSP states that, "*By June 30, 2020, collaboration between First Nations and Métis and non-First Nations and Métis partners will result in significant improvement in First Nations and Métis student engagement and will increase three- year graduation rates from 35% in June 2012 to at least 65%.*"

FOLLOWING THEIR VOICES GUIDING VISION

As part of the *Seeking Their Voices* research process, three distinct effective practice themes emerged that support school success for Inuit, First Nations and Métis students. The themes were:

- Enhancing relationships between students and teachers;
- Developing structures and supports for teachers and school administrators to work together to improve teaching and learning interactions with students; and
- Creating safe, well-managed learning environments.

This work identified the *Understandings* and *Indicators* that guide all work of the FTV initiative. The *Understandings* represent the perspectives or positions required of schools to foster the relationships, environments, and interactions necessary to meet the needs of Métis, Inuit, and First Nations students. The

Indicators explicate the actions that must be implemented by teachers and administrators to ensure the learning is joyful, culture is affirmed and students are given real choices in their futures. Together, the *Understandings* and *Indicators* form a powerful framework for all FTV processes and tools.

Twenty-four Elders and Knowledge Keepers (Cree, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, Dene, Métis, and Nakawe) are engaged in ongoing Elders' Gatherings, provincial professional learning and development sessions (PLD), and FTV Leadership Team meetings. Their wisdom, experience, and worldviews have been and continue to be invaluable to the FTV initiative.

THE RESEARCH

While similar documents present findings for each individual school, this document provides a summary and synthesis of the entire research study. The study was led by Drs. Scott Tunison, Dawn Wallin, Jackie Ottmann, Jenn de Lugt, and Angelina Weenie with directorate support from the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU) and guided by the FTV Research Advisory Committee. Broadly, this research is an examination of the extent to which the 11 schools in their second year of FTV implementation have successfully incorporated the *Understandings* and *Indicators* as well as the underlying actions and strategies into their structures and practices. The indicators include:

- Caring for and believing in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and their cultures.
- Having high expectations that Métis, Inuit, and First Nations students are self-determining, can participate, and can achieve.
- Creating a secure, well-managed learning environment.
- Engaging in teaching and learning interactions that are responsive to student interests and needs.
- Using a range of strategies to promote accelerated growth.
- Using evidence from Inuit, First Nations, and Métis student outcomes for critical reflection and for identifying strategic actions that promote accelerated growth.

While each *Indicator* has several components, we sought to use the *Indicators* as broad lenses through which to view existing school-based perceptual data (from students, parents, caregivers, and teachers) and extend those data to draw deeper understandings about school climate, classroom instruction, and student learning.

The school-based research was conducted using a mixed method design in three phases. FTV survey data and student outcome data were reviewed and reframed during *Phase 1*, and served as the foundation for engaging students, teachers, parents, caregivers, Elders, and school leadership in an appreciative inquiry of progress to date. In *Phase 2*, representatives from the groups identified above participated in group

conversations in each school. During these conversations, members of the research team took field notes. The notes were analyzed using qualitative coding and thematic analysis. Finally, results from all 11 schools were cross-referenced to develop a meta-synthesis of the results across the whole project. A detailed description of design and method is provided below.

Phase 1: Drs. Tunison and Wallin, along with representatives from the FTV Leadership Team, identified provincial- and school-based measures as critical indicators of schools' successful implementation of FTV instructional and learning community strategies. These findings, once identified, formed the foundation of Phase 2 data collection instruments and strategies.

Phase 2: During Phase 2, group and/or individual semi-structured group interviews were held with students, staff, parents and caregivers, and, where available, Elders and/or Traditional Knowledge Keepers in each school. The discussion guides were similar in construction from one school to the next but were adapted to schools' results on the common *Indicators* identified in Phase 1. Discussion guides focused on helping participants to identify their learning community's strengths and opportunities for improvement with respect to their efficacy with the common indicators. At each school site, qualitative data collected through Phase 2 were combined with secondary data from that school (the basis for data collection conversations) to develop a multi-faceted narrative of findings from that site. Schools were also invited to contribute one chapter of the narrative to incorporate their own stories into the overall FTV-specific school effectiveness document. Nine of the 11 schools provided site-specific narratives. Schools will disseminate the findings in the manner that best fits with their contexts.

Phase 3: Drs. Tunison and Wallin reviewed all of the available FTV school reports and the provincial measures and developed this meta-synthesis of the FTV initiative by analyzing secondary qualitative and quantitative data. This document provides meta-synthetic findings to the FTV Leadership Team and other groups as appropriate.

CHAPTER 2 – STRENGTHS AND POSITIVE INFLUENCES OF FTV

While FTV looks a bit different in each school community context, participants' perspectives about the positive influences of FTV implementation were remarkably similar across the 11 schools in this year's study. In the sections that follow, we draw themes from the insights shared by Elders, parents, caregivers; teachers; Strategic Change Leadership Teams (SCLTs); and students that were common to all schools. We also highlight a few salient examples of unique facets of FTV enacted by individual communities.

ELDERS, PARENTS, AND CAREGIVERS

In total, research teams engaged in conversation with 62 Elders, parents, and caregivers in eight of the 11 schools in this year's research cohort (3 schools were unable to provide conversation participants). Furthermore, about two-thirds of participants in the Elder, parent, and caregiver conversations were employed as staff members at their schools. This is not necessarily a concern but it does colour the perspectives considering that, in many cases, they were commenting about the efforts of individuals at the schools within which they worked.

Interviewees spoke passionately about their commitment to support their children's schooling in a variety of ways. They identified areas for growth and improvement (reported later in this document) and pointed to examples of schools' efforts at improvement.

We cannot say definitively that all examples were FTV-inspired but, given that they emerged through conversations about FTV and that many conversation participants were also working in the schools visited by the research teams, we suggest that they are at least somewhat connected to FTV efforts. We identified two broad themes from Elder, parent, and caregiver comments across the eight relevant school reports.

The first, *enhancing relationships*, is directly connected to the *Understandings* and *Indicators* and provides evidence of the extent to which they have become embedded in the work of the schools. The second, *expanding efficacy with and valuing language and culture*, is not explicitly a focus of FTV but does speak to the context in which FTV takes place; we include it as a way to honour participants' perspectives about the complementary effects that FTV can and does have in schools and communities; rather than as evidence of efficacy for FTV *per se*.

RELATIONSHIPS

FTV's Indicators Innovation Configuration Map (IICM) points to the centrality of healthy and supportive relationships between students and teachers as well as engaging with parents, caregivers, and Elders, in fostering exceptional student learning opportunities. IICM Indicator 1, for example, states, "Effective

teachers … demonstrate they care for and believe in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and their cultures" by developing an appreciation for and understanding of the cultural knowledge and worldviews of students and their families and cultivating supportive and respectful personal connections.

Elders, parents, and caregivers participating in this study consistently underscored the importance of relationships. However, they tended to focus more on the relationship between them and the school rather than on the teacher-student learning relationship that is at the core of FTV's IICM. Nevertheless, they generally suggested that, while there was room for improvement, schools were making progress in this regard.

The most common observations about improving relationships focused on schools' efforts to draw on communities' strengths with respect to traditional knowledge, ceremony, and language. From the points of view of conversation participants, schools were more open to Elders' and Traditional Knowledge Keepers' (TKKs) expertise and teachings. Several also noted that their schools were acknowledging more frequently the importance of enhancing student and staff understanding about culture and encouraging open-mindedness across the entire school community to traditional teachings, language, and activities. At the core of these efforts, according to participants, is establishing a respectful environment, which, in several cases, they felt was improving. Evidence cited to support this view is outlined below.

- Some schools adjusted their daily timetables to accommodate Elders' schedules.
- Some schools established Elder/community rooms so that they could be present in the school and have a place to meet with each other as well as with students, staff, and others who may wish to visit with them or seek their guidance.
- In many schools, teachers were reaching out more frequently to Elders to invite them to classrooms and share their teachings with the students.

Elders consistently observed that students needed their schools to go beyond academics and adopt a holistic view of support for learning. Schools were beginning to accept the importance of this teaching. Participants noted that schools were actively taking up this mantle by recognizing and meeting the needs of individual students by providing transportation to and from school, in-school day care and parenting classes, clothing depots, meals and snacks, and other supports as necessary.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Picking up on the previous section, Elders, parents, and caregivers were emphatic about the essential role language and culture plays in individual and community growth. Yet, there was a tension in their perspectives. On one hand, participants universally stated that it was important for the present generation

of students to be thoroughly engaged in traditional practices and conversant with the language of their particular communities, both for their own learning journeys as well as for the health of their communities. On the other hand, several participants admitted that they and many of their fellow community members either were not conversant with those languages and traditions themselves or chose not to speak their language with their children. Some of this issue, according to several participants, lay in the intergenerational trauma from the legacy of residential schools; while others felt that speaking too much of their own language might put their children at a disadvantage in their schooling given that instruction was primarily in English. Furthermore, they pointed out that most schools do not have the personnel to meet the need (i.e., teach the language and incorporate it into instruction). Nevertheless, most schools, according to Elders, parents, caregivers, provided access to language programs – in some schools, those programs were mandatory for students at particular grade(s). In other schools, traditional language instruction was optional.

Conversation participants in most study locations noted recent improvements. For example, ceremonies such as smudges, prayers, and Elder teachings were in the midst of becoming both normalized and appreciated. Students also had access to a plethora of cultural activities on the land such as hunting, trapping, fishing, and all of the associated activities (skinning, cooking, smoking, sharing, etc.). Multiple other cultural activities – depending upon the protocols at individual communities – such as preparing traditional foods, beading, sewing, drumming, dancing, and singing were also making their way more consistently into school schedules and processes.

REFLECTIONS

While not explicitly within the FTV IICM, these findings are important. Many of the success factors identified by Elders, parents, and caregivers reflect the critical community context within which FTV exists. From the point of view of key school stakeholders, when schools and, by extension, teachers and administrators, draw on community strengths more frequently to support collective learning through culture, traditional teachings, language and activities, they telegraph to the students, their families, and the community at large a recognition that they are culturally located and that location is celebrated and valued. In many of the schools we visited, we saw that this was an important first step in creating the teaching-learning relationship at the core of FTV. This is certainly a parameter for success and may be a byproduct of relationship building and concern for Métis, First Nations, and Inuit students. It provides evidence that schools are working hard at trying to build relationships and create safe, caring learning environments. At the same time, it also provides evidence that there is a disconnection between Elders/parents/caregivers' assumptions about the intent of FTV and FTV's stated aims and objectives.

In total, research teams engaged in conversation with 143 teachers. In five schools, all teachers on staff were part of conversations. In one very large school, approximately one-third of the 70 teachers on staff chose to participate in individual or group conversations. In the remaining schools, smaller subsets of the teaching staff were engaged in conversation (ranging from three participants in two schools to 11 participants in one school).

Based on the two broad themes that emerged from teachers' perspectives, we noted evidence of several IICM components. Teachers in all schools spoke to the ways in which FTV was (i) influencing their own practice as well as that of their colleagues, and (ii) helping them to create more engaging and inclusive student learning environments.

INFLUENCING TEACHER PEDAGOGY

There were teachers at all 11 schools who observed that they welcomed FTV as a personal and professional challenge to improve and grow as professionals. We noted two main themes from their comments.

First, many noted that, as part of their participation in FTV, they and their colleagues were learning about and implementing new teaching strategies and resources that, from their perspective, appeared to have positive effects on student learning. Given the IICM, professional learning and development activities led by School-based Facilitators in service of developing teachers' relational and culturally responsive pedagogical toolboxes, and their personal critical reflections about their practice, we expected to see evidence of changing pedagogy.

Certainly, a common perspective was that teachers valued the opportunity to collaborate more often. Several also noted that, through FTV, they were learning more about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and trying to incorporate those perspectives into instruction and course content. Many also asserted that some of the instructional strategies advocated through FTV-specific learning were already in their repertoire. They tended to see this as an affirmation of their expertise and felt encouraged to experiment with new strategies because they did not have to stop utilizing practices that have worked for them in the past.

Co-construction Meetings and Huddles were also generally valued (although variable in terms of preferred approach) because they afforded teachers with the opportunity to work directly with each other on important topics. At least some teachers in every school valued Observations. Those who did so noted that Observations (i) enhanced their personal reflective processes, (ii) provided mutual support for collective and

individual wellness, (iii) strengthened personal and professional relationships among teachers and staff, and (iv) created accountability to each other to contribute both to their own learning and to that of the group.

ENGAGING AND INCLUSIVE STUDENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Teachers also noted that FTV was helping them to create engaging and inclusive student learning environments. Specifically, through FTV, they were developing more positive and supportive relationships with students through (i) deliberate and consistent references to culture and language, (ii) incorporation of relational and culturally responsive pedagogy that affirmed student identity, and (iii) accommodation for students' personal circumstances.

For many teachers, another strength of FTV lay in the professional learning and development led by their School-based Facilitator colleagues giving them greater access to a wider range of culturally relevant and affirming resources that appeared to enhance student engagement and success. Some teachers mentioned "discursive strategies" (a major FTV pedagogical focus) specifically as a significant positive outcome from their FTV-related professional learning and development. Others referred more generally to the instructional strategies they were learning and trying in the classroom. Teachers felt that they were successfully affirming students' cultural identity through greater incorporation of culturally responsive instructional materials and pedagogies. From their perspective, these practices appeared to be helping students become more resilient and engaged in their learning. One of the core components of the first IICM indicator speaks to the importance of making personal connections with students by *thoughtfully and intentionally supporting students' physical, social, emotional, spiritual needs* and *intentionally and purposefully advocating for all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students*. All schools referenced efforts to make accommodations for students' personal circumstances – although they were doing so to varying degrees. Nevertheless, teachers often held the belief that better awareness of students' personal circumstances influenced positively their ability to facilitate student learning and many insisted that they and their schools were making concerted efforts in this regard. As evidence of this commitment, many teachers said that schools provided a range of personal supports for students such as clothing depots, food/snacks, day care, and transportation.

When asked what it would take for FTV to be sustainable in their schools, most teachers expressed sincere appreciation for the work of School-based Facilitators and stated that they were essential for FTV sustainability. Furthermore, according to many, continued collaborative preparation afforded them through Co-construction Meetings and/or team Huddles was valued and essential. Some teachers noted that, as they and their colleagues experience success and change, FTV would also become more sustainable.

REFLECTIONS

Considering that we were not able to observe teacher instructional practice first-hand, we cannot definitively ascertain the extent to which reported pedagogical changes was widespread. Certainly, change was taking place but there was also a strong desire to reframe existing practice as being FTV- supports provides some evidence that lasting change may not have been widespread. Furthermore, a key feature of FTV's design as an initiative sees schools taking responsibility and ownership for sustaining the momentum of change over time. While it is a positive sign that teachers see FTV-inspired collaborative learning and many of the components of the IICM as being valuable and positive, their comments also reveal a lack of personal and/or collective ownership for change.

STRATEGIC CHANGE LEADERSHIP TEAMS

The Strategic Change Leadership Teams (SCLTs) in all 11 schools participated in conversations in various configurations. Generally, the SCLT consists of the school's principal, FTV School-based Facilitator (sometimes the principal or vice-principal acted as School-based Facilitator), FTV Lead Teacher, a division- or education authority-level leader, and the FTV Provincial Facilitator assigned to the school.

The research teams were able to meet with a school's entire SCLT as a group in only a few schools. It was rare to have the division-level leader and/or FTV Provincial Facilitator present in the group conversations. In a few schools, the in-school administrator also did not participate in the SCLT interview.

SCLT members consistently observed that active involvement and public commitment from administration (in- and out-of-school) enhanced school-wide commitment and engagement with processes. We found, though, that administrator commitment to FTV was variable – at least in the way they engaged in supporting the other SCLT members to accomplish their respective roles. This perspective tended to emerge when in-school administrators did not attend the research teams' conversations with the SCLT. SCLTs also observed that teacher commitment to the FTV process was uneven; but, teachers who engage authentically were seeing improvements in student learning and in instructional practice. SCLTs and teachers were finding ways to adhere to the FTV process despite some scheduling challenges (e.g., meeting before- or after-school, lunchtime, etc.), while a testament to local ingenuity, a puzzling finding considering that the SCLT actually defines the schedule and is provided funding to make meetings possible.

REFLECTIONS

SCLTs tended to observe that the FTV process had helped them build a more collaborative and reflective environment in which staff took collective responsibility for student learning and led to a more consistent focus on finding out the learning needs of each student and responding effectively to those needs. They also

observed a greater commitment among teachers to incorporate Indigenous teachings and perspectives and to take instructional risks.

STUDENTS

Research teams were fortunate to interact with 324 students across the 11 schools in the research cohort. The number of students in any one school ranged from 119 to two. Students' perspectives are reported below according to three broad categories: teacher-student interactions, safe and healthy spaces, and relational and culturally responsive pedagogy.

TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

At the core of FTV is the nature of student-teacher interactions and nearly all IICM components speak to this importance. For example, the components of Indicator 1 (*caring for and believing in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and their cultures*) includes: (i) developing and demonstrating an in-depth understanding and appreciation of students' cultural knowledge, histories, and worldviews; (ii) supporting students' physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs while creating relevant and engaging learning opportunities and honouring diverse perspectives; (iii) establishing strong relationships with students and their families and support networks; and (iv) consulting regularly with students, Elders, and/or Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and community members to ensure meaningful incorporation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives and culture.

Students in each school were able to identify at least some teachers they perceived to be effective and supportive in this regard. Students in several schools also noted recent improvements in the ways some teachers demonstrated interest and support of student well-being. Students consistently stated that the ways in which teachers interacted with them demonstrated their level of commitment to teaching and, ultimately, to facilitating student learning. The most common perspective was that teachers are most effective and supportive when they authentically listen to students and demonstrate they care through their responses and supports. Of particular importance to students was that their teachers ought to know about and make allowances for the complexities in their personal lives.

Students in each school noted that at least some teachers were making more effort to differentiate instruction. In the last year or two, according to students, teachers made more effort to prepare interesting lessons and activities and "mix it up" with a range of instructional strategies. Students noted that teachers in their schools tended to make themselves available to provide extra help outside of class time. Many also noted that their teachers seemed to be providing hands-on and land-based activities more often. Students generally valued the opportunity to have some choice in the other students with whom they work with in

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groups and the means by which they are permitted to demonstrate their learning. Students in each school said that, while not all teachers do these things, at least a few teachers were drawing on a wider range of strategies to support their learning than had been typical in the past.

When asked about the nature of the feedback provided by their teachers, students described mostly feedback about assignment submissions rather than about academic learning. For example, teachers remind students to submit missing assignments using various means such as wall charts, personal communications, and other reminders. Teachers also circulate around the class and ask students if they need help or if they are "getting it". There was evidence in most schools of feed-forward academic support (e.g., allowing students to submit drafts of assignments for feedback before the final version was due) but, from students' points of view, this was not pervasive in any of the schools. Finally, parent- teacher interviews tend to be the primary reporting mechanism.

CREATION OF SECURE, WELL MANAGED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

In a way, the safest and healthiest spaces appeared to be out on the land. Students in all schools were enthusiastic about the opportunities afforded them to experience traditional practices like hunting and fishing. Students attending schools with culture and/or language rooms also tended to highlight these spaces as safe and healthy.

Within the school, students tended to point to teachers' efforts to be "present" for students both with schoolwork and issues in their personal lives. They pointed to teachers who help them with whatever they need as evidence that teachers were working together to create safe and healthy spaces.

Student discipline seemed reasonably fair from the point of view of most students – but, in some cases, they felt that rules and consequences for breaking them were applied inconsistently.

AFFIRMING RELATIONAL AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

As mentioned earlier, students at all schools referred to various cultural events and opportunities such as land-based learning and ceremonies such as smudging as evidence of culturally responsive programming. Students universally valued access to Elders especially when they visited classrooms and when they are available outside class time. Many schools facilitated the creation of culturally affirming art work, and students were proud of the opportunities to engage in Arts programming or clubs (e.g., murals, drama, drumming, beading, dance, singing, etc.). In some communities, students noticed and appreciated teachers who were attempting to learn language and community-specific traditions.

CHAPTER 3 – CHALLENGES FOR FTV

The following section details the challenges faced by many of the 11 schools that were involved with the implementation of *Following Their Voices*. The section has been organized into school- based challenges, challenges or weaknesses perceived to be inherent within the initiative, and challenges with research processes, including the provincial data collection process as well as the research conducted by SELU.

SCHOOL-BASED CHALLENGES

TEACHER RESISTANCE

Although most of the schools involved in the project could boast of having energetic and innovative teachers who were committed to FTV, there remained a significant proportion of teachers in each school who were apathetic or resistant to the initiative. The reasons for commitment, compliance, or resistance were different based on the individuals from each school, but there remains work to be done to create school cultures where *Following Their Voices* is simply "the way we do things around here."

LACK OF PARENTAL/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

This issue emerged in a variety of ways. A minority of schools did not ensure parents and Elders would be available to provide input. Despite multiple IICM components that speak to the importance of consistent, authentic, and meaningful consultation with parents/communities, few interviewees had knowledge of FTV unless they worked in the school or were regularly involved in other school initiatives. Furthermore, while many parents and caregivers were aware of the FTV perceptual survey, most did not connect the survey to FTV because their schools were not communicating the purpose of the initiative, or connecting the survey, general school events, or practices to FTV.

Many FTV IICM components speak to the importance of families, Elders, and the broader community in creating a positive and supportive learning environment for Métis, Inuit, and First Nations children and youth. For example, Indicator 1 focuses on "demonstrating in-depth appreciation of the cultural knowledge of students and families and purposefully seeking and establishing strong relationships with student's family and support network … [and] regularly consulting with … Elders, and/or Traditional Knowledge Keepers, parents, and community members." Based on our conversations and observations in the 11 schools involved in this study, we conclude that most schools expect parents, caregivers, and the wider community to take the initiative to engage with the school rather than take the responsibility to "own" the engagement process themselves. While it is true that most of the schools host events to which parents, caregivers, and the broader community are invited, there was very little outreach into the

community about the sorts of engagement families and the community might appreciate or where they would like that engagement to take place. We also noted that there appeared to be little outreach to homes regarding student learning, except for cases in which there was a "problem" with students.

We acknowledge that this particular finding is based on limited interaction with families and Elders and the issue may not be as pervasive as it appears; however, it was also apparent that little effort was expended by some schools for eliciting parent, caregiver, and Elder participants for this project in particular.

RELATIONAL AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Although the research teams noted evidence of changes in pedagogy, comments from students, teachers, and parents – along with our own observations – revealed that lectures, worksheets, and other traditional instructional methods were still prevalent in many classrooms.

Another common contention, among high school teachers and students in particular, was that there was "no time" to incorporate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews and knowledge as well as Elder teachings into the learning agenda of the classroom because curricula have too much content to cover. There also tended to be a substantial disconnect between most "traditional" cultural activities (e.g., on-the-land trips, fishing, hunting, beading, etc.) and the classroom. It was rare that a student could cite a specific instance in which traditional knowledge was the vehicle for curricular instruction (e.g., the physical dimensions and construction elements of teepees to study geometry, mathematics, thermodynamics, etc.). Similarly, few teachers highlighted efforts they or their colleagues were making to honour traditional knowledge in this manner. Students frequently expressed frustration that teachers "pushed through" the curriculum making it difficult for them to "keep up" in their learning. Teachers tended to cite departmental examination requirements as the rationale for not incorporating cultural teachings.

Students were generally appreciative of teachers, and qualified their comments when they spoke of the few teachers they felt were not supporting their learning. They characterized these teachers as those who did not put in effort into their teaching practice, who clearly did not enjoy teaching, and who did not attempt to build relationships with students. Students typically did not want to generalize negative learning experiences across all teachers, and they often took responsibility for their own lack of engagement in learning or poor behaviour. Some acknowledged that they faced racism in school from students, teachers, principals, and community members. Most students suggested that they would like to have more opportunities for co-construction of the content and pace of learning as well as the way in which they demonstrate their learning.

Considering these observations, we conclude that, while there was some evidence of pedagogical and relational practices at the core of the FTV framework were being implemented, they were not yet common among the teachers with whom we spoke or those mentioned by students. While most of the responsibility for addressing these issues lies at the school- and division/education authority-level, FTV leadership may be able to help ameliorate some of them – especially with additional guidance about more effective communication to teachers, students, and families about the intent and processes associate with FTV. Additionally, several of the issues frequently mentioned (e.g., staff turnover, provincial curricula, graduation requirements, teacher accreditation, etc.) lie outside the purview of the FTV initiative at all levels – provincial and local. However, since the ultimate objective for FTV is to foster greater success for Inuit, Métis, and First Nations students in the context of the provincial K-12 system (e.g., accumulating more of the "right" high school credits for senior matriculation) through more frequent employment of relational and culturally responsive pedagogy, initiative and division leaders may be able to play (or continue to play) key roles in advocating for thoughtful reflection about curriculum content, graduation requirements, and teacher certification.

SCHOOL-BASED FACILITATORS AND LEAD TEACHERS

Selection of School-based Facilitators and Lead Teachers is a local decision; however, they have a tremendous collective impact on local FTV implementation and, by extension, at the provincial level as well. We noted that School-based Facilitators and Lead Teachers were consistently valued for their hard work in supporting teacher learning. However, we also noted that there were at least two school- and/or division-level challenges that, if addressed would enhance the success of FTV across the board.

First, School-based Facilitators and Lead Teachers were often not Indigenous. This is not necessarily a problem in itself. Whether Indigenous or not, it is unrealistic for one or two persons to have all the cultural knowledge that might be relevant to the communities in which they work. But, in many of the schools, Elders were peripheral to the initiative. Their involvement in teaching and learning is sporadic and dependent on the openness and confidence of staff members rather than on a deliberate or systematic process to involve them. In some schools, Elders were integral to FTV activities, but in others, Elders were not involved unless they had personal connections to individual teachers or to members of the administrative team. It is important to note, here, that Elders are actively involved at the provincial level. They provide teachings and other guidance to school teams at all provincial professional learning and development days (PLDs) and have been integral in the design and evolution of the FTV initiative.

However, since the disconnect in Elder involvement exists at the local level, it may be that School-based Facilitators, Lead Teachers, and administrators are not sure how to engage Elders in the learning agenda through FTV.

While most School-based Facilitators were able to support teachers' work on developing pedagogy, it is questionable how many of them had the traditional knowledge necessary to support teacher growth in areas of culture. This keeps the pedagogical expertise privileged over the cultural expertise necessary to make the instructional, pedagogical, and attitudinal changes that are fundamental to the purposes of FTV.

Numerous components of the IICM underscore schools' and teachers' responsibility to consult with parents, Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and community members for support and guidance about local protocols, knowledge, and worldviews. School-based Facilitators need to be in regular contact with Elders and/or Traditional Knowledge Keepers to work together and to receive advice on how to engage community and students in culturally affirming ways. What is distinctly necessary about FTV is its intent to support teachers' abilities to become relational and culturally responsive; it is difficult to do that if those engaged in leading the work at the local level are unconnected with community Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers.

It is also the case that School-based Facilitators' abilities to single-handedly change resistant or racist attitudes of teachers, students, and community is limited at best. The fact that they are not administrators may help reduce fears of judgement and evaluation, but it also means that they can only encourage and hope that teacher colleagues take up the spirit and intent of FTV. In some places, School-based Facilitators, though keen to make a difference, have lost some hope, particularly when administrative teams are not as supportive as they could be.

PROGRAMMING AND COMMUNCATION

First, we acknowledge that FTV is not a language and culture program *per se*. All FTV documentation speaks to the importance of changing the fundamental teacher-student interaction to reflect the relational and culturally responsive pedagogy identified in research to be effective for Indigenous learners. However, we noted elements that appear to confound FTV implementation at the local level.

In particular, many people in school communities hold the misconception that FTV is a language and culture program. When asked about their FTV-related experiences, students tended to note an increase in land-based and experiential learning opportunities. They also highlighted language programming – although, language programming tended to drop off after elementary grades or did not maintain rigour in

the upper years. In addition, it seemed as if many schools felt that, if they were "doing some cultural activities" such as these, they were successfully implementing FTV.

FTV's IICM certainly recognizes the importance of these factors in fostering more efficacious student learning. However, the core of the FTV initiative is a deliberate focus on transforming teacher pedagogy and, in doing so, enhancing students' learning.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Overall, students generally perceived that relationships with teachers, in particular, had improved since the introduction of FTV. Although it was not the direct focus of the study, in many sites, students identified student behaviour/discipline management issues, noting in particular that they did not appreciate teachers who yelled at students. Students tended to be frustrated when they perceived that students received differential or preferential treatment for discipline issues, or when bullying issues were avoided or unresolved.

Students, in particular, commented on facility issues, including spaces they appreciated (or avoided), and supervision issues (washrooms and outside areas where certain students congregated). They talked of smoking areas, and areas of the school where negative behaviours occurred, such as drugs, gangs, and bullying. However, they also spoke of areas in the school that were highly regarded, such as rooms that were designated for FTV, culturally-focused programs, or student support programs like Peer Mentoring, etc.

Furthermore, though each school community was very different, a number of factors were commonly reported that were perceived to influence the time, attention, and impact of FTV. The top two factors reported were issues related to student attendance and teacher attrition. Many schools were impacted by student attendance concerns, and this naturally left teachers struggling between their desire to have some semblance of consistency in attendance policy versus their recognition that just making it to school was a huge success for some students who lived lives that were in continual upheaval. Though most teachers took ownership of the fact that they had to do what they could while students were with them, it was also acknowledged that it would be difficult for students to gain credits and graduate when they were seldom in school. In this case, the definitions of what constitutes "success" for each student was clearly in question.

The second most commonly noted concern was that many of the schools in the project had high rates of teacher attrition. This included the loss of teachers, Lead Teachers, School-based Facilitators, and administrators. Local school personnel became frustrated with the annual progression of FTV expectations

when in reality, many of the schools would start over again each year with up to half or more of their staff replaced (or going unreplaced while they struggled to find teachers).

The constant need to train, reset expectations, and begin the FTV processes with new people while maintaining momentum with those already on the FTV journey repeatedly emerged as a major concern in many schools.

Members of some school communities, particularly teachers new to the system or facilitators who were trying their best to maintain fidelity to the FTV initiative felt that there was a lack of clarity regarding the purposes of the FTV processes (cycles, goal-setting, Shadow Coaching) that hindered their ability to meet expectations and outcomes. This could be related to teacher turnover or the need to continually revisit the purpose so that it does not get lost in the activity and task orientation of the work. It could also be that the primary focus on individual teacher classroom instruction, and the lack of communication more broadly to the student and parent body, starts to conflate the purpose, and there is not enough broad messaging going on provincially, internally or to the community to create a cohesive and clear sense of purpose.

INITIATIVE CHALLENGES

CYCLES

High schools, in particular, found the number of required cycles to be accomplished during the first year to be overwhelming. In fact, this time commitment was one of the key reasons why teachers disengaged from the project during their first year. The timing of the cycles tended to clash with the rhythms of semester systems and/or reporting periods. The number of cycles was, perhaps, the most frustrating of all challenges for schools. It was often the reason provided as to why some schools did not submit all their data, why some facilitators felt completely overwhelmed with expectations, or why some teachers began choosing similar goals over multiple cycles because they never felt they could complete the task in a meaningful way. They often reminded the research teams that FTV was not the only initiative on which they had to focus their efforts, and the volume of time commitment over five cycles, when they felt some of their time also had to be focused elsewhere, was enough to demotivate many individuals in the first year.

FACILITATION

Despite FTV's focus on cross-school teacher collaboration, School-based Facilitators and Lead Teachers in K-12 schools were more apt to gain credibility from teachers if they worked at similar grade levels (e.g., high school teachers were less likely to accept support from facilitators whose main teaching area was at

the early/middle years level than they were from high school teachers). Those schools that had divided time for facilitators to work with teachers with similar grade level backgrounds tended to have better teacher commitment. Those facilitators often appreciated having a second colleague with whom to converse about the nature, challenges, and successes of their efforts.

INITIATIVE RESEARCH CHALLENGES

School teams noted signs of survey fatigue among students and parents and caregivers in particular. Part of the problem was that the *OurSCHOOL* survey and the FTV surveys both measure similar aspects of student, parent, and teacher perceptions yet they were required to complete both. Not only do these surveys take up time during the year, but also, according to some school teams, the future validity of data may be compromised because respondents no longer invest in being honest with their answers. They were also frustrated with some of the data collection timing that did not match up with local school schedules and were incompatible with implementation expectations.

During the time that the research team presented data to groups of teachers, and in discussion with SCLTs, it was apparent that the critique of the validity of survey results is common among schools. In fact, one School-based Facilitator acknowledged, "teachers can't seem to move beyond the critique of the data." This may partly be critical thinking and legitimate concerns about data quality and survey design, and/or it may partly be a means of deflecting critique on their performance or school. It was apparent in discussions with teachers and SCLTs that schools were less concerned with provincial statistical comparisons and were much more likely to pay attention to local qualitative data provided by their students and parents. Interestingly, however, not many schools were asking additional questions in the survey that would provide them with some of that qualitative or quantitative data.

Generally speaking, response rates were inconsistent, and tend to decrease as the school year progressed. Some schools have put processes in place to encourage completion (e.g., walking students to a computer lab to do the survey as a group; having educational assistants read surveys to students with reading difficulties; encouraging parental responses with draws or eliciting survey completion at school events, etc.). In each case, there are ethical issues with teachers or educational assistants potentially being able to influence responses with students or parents. Parent response rates were highly variable, and most parents were not connecting the survey to FTV. Given growing concerns about survey fatigue, return rates must be monitored in the future.

Finally, teachers acknowledged that they tend to prefer having longer periods of time to work together as a staff to make sense of the data (e.g., half day PD days) rather than short bursts of time where they feel only a superficial level of assessment is conducted. In their view, more time built in to engage with the

data and make thoughtful decisions around curricula, pedagogy, assessment, and cultural responsivity as a school collective is necessary.

Based upon the strengths and challenges noted in the previous sections, the following recommendations are offered with the intent to encourage the realization of the spirit of FTV as it was originally conceived.

Recommendation #1: We found that administrators who authentically supported the FTV initiative were more likely to have teachers who committed to the FTV process. Strong and demonstrative school- based administrator commitment and, in provincial schools, central office support is a necessary aspect of the initiative for it to be effective and sustainable. FTV's foundational GPILSEO framework, along with multiple indicators and components in the IICM underscore the critical role of strong and courageous leadership to challenge existing barriers to improvement as well as to foster continued relational and culturally responsive pedagogy. Having said this, though, FTV does not have sole responsibility to leverage this commitment. Presently, there is a confluence of initiatives and documents ongoing in the province including a revised *Inspiring Success First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework*, renewal of the *Education Sector Strategic Plan*, and the development and launch of *Leading to Learn* that, in concert with the FTV initiative, may be able to coalesce synergies for improvement. We recommend that the senior leaders of FTV and the other complementary initiatives explore possibilities for deliberate cross-pollination.

Recommendation #2: As is often the case with major initiatives such as FTV, many of the "problems" in the field exist because, or are exacerbated by, ineffective communication. Undoubtedly, it is important to communicate the value and intent of FTV and most of the responsibility for effective communication lies at the local level. However, we recommend that the FTV initiative explores with divisions, schools, and First Nations education authorities strategies for effective and consistent communication.

It is important that schools consult, ask for advice and support, and celebrate the good work of FTV with community members, staff, and students. As one participant noted, "there is a need to show love, and to create a sense of belonging." This messaging should flow to all constituents involved in the initiative. The value and intent of FTV should be communicated in multiple ways, and information sharing should be reciprocal in nature. School newsletters and regular communication strategies should (i) promote FTV, (ii) provide information, and (iii) invite parents, caregivers, and communities to learn more about what is going on in the school. A very valuable resource for supporting this promotion is the inclusion of educational assistants or local staff members, as they tend to be employed parents and community members. More could be done to support their learning and understanding of the initiative, as they are intimately connected to the classroom. Social and local media should be used to invite, advertise, and celebrate FTV events and cultural opportunities within the schools and the communities. It is time to begin

the conversations that can become community-changing and celebrate the changes that are occurring for teachers and students because of this important work.

Recommendation #3: We recommend that schools be encouraged to include an Elder on their SCLT teams. Elders should become integral to the leadership and enactment of FTV at the local level. More thoughtful and intentional planning should occur regarding how and when to invite Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers into classrooms, as well as to school and community events. It is imperative that schools make space (time and physical space) for student/Elder interactions that include curricular teaching opportunities, but that also allows for cultural teachings, protocol learning, and relationship building to help students live in a good way.

Recommendation #4: Despite the centrality of data to inform the FTV initiative, (e.g., *Indicator* 6 explicitly reinforces the importance of *using evidence from Métis, Inuit, and First Nation student outcomes for critical reflection and for identifying strategic actions that promote accelerated growth*), we found that, when school teams did discuss data, they often struggled to make sense of and draw meaning from the data. We recommend that FTV redouble efforts to help SCLTs build their data literacy, enhance their skillsets for facilitating collaborative data conversations, and extend those conversations to inform practice.

While there were some teachers/schools that questioned the relevance of student outcome metrics such as "on-time" (3-year) graduation rate, course completion, and final grades for an initiative such as FTV, we further recommend that FTV continue to focus on these metrics – at least as part of the FTV measurement framework. The process measures (e.g., perception surveys, peer observation trends, etc.) are also very important and ought to continue to be a focus. We noted, however, that while peer observation data are presently a significant focus at the PLD level, we did not encounter a single instance of a school focusing on these important data beyond a superficial way. Considering that FTV is about transforming the nature of the student-teacher instructional interaction through relational and culturally responsive pedagogy, peer-observation and critical reflection data ought to play a bigger role in the discussions about progress.

Recommendation #5: We recommend that FTV at both the initiative- and school-levels enhance communication strategies presently used to tell the FTV story. At the initiative-level, there are regular reports to the directors of education (through the Provincial Leadership Team), trustees (through the Saskatchewan School Boards Association), and other groups in a variety of ways; however, we propose that the FTV story – both successes and challenges – deserves to be told more widely. Considering our finding that there was a wide-spread lack of knowledge about FTV in the FTV schools, we suspect that schools and/or divisions/First Nations education authorities not presently involved with FTV may well

know little or nothing at all about the initiative. Find venues to share the data and research findings broadly. Open up opportunities for informed people to work together to improve the initiative. Hold an annual forum, or ensure that proposals are submitted for local or other conferences in order to broadly inform others of the purpose, benefit, and changes being enacted with this work.

CONCLUSION

The research team members have done their very best to honour these conversations with research participants, to document each schools' FTV story, and to outline a co-constructed positive path forward. It is the researchers' wish that (i) the individual school reports were useful for local teams and (ii) this meta-synthesis will be useful for the FTV Leadership Team.

Our recommendations are wide-ranging and we acknowledge that some are outside both the scope of the FTV initiative and the exclusive purview of FTV leaders. However, the data that informed stem from local school environments, and their implications do affect the teaching and learning environment in schools - particularly those with significant populations of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit students. They are grounded in our observations in the schools and findings in prevailing literature that may address the issues. All recommendations are made in the spirit of creating a positive path forward. We know that addressing generational barriers to positive learning outcomes in schools is challenging work. We hope that these recommendations will help all those involved with FTV improve their work, leadership of the initiative and, ultimately, lead to improved student outcomes.

We wish to make the following recommendations that, while beyond the scope of the FTV initiative itself, merit consideration at the sector level.

Recommendation #1: School divisions and education authorities should strategically plan to hire more First Nations and Métis teachers and staff. Hiring more individuals who have ties to cultural knowledge and language will not only better represent the demographic of children and youth in Saskatchewan schools and First Nations and Métis communities, but also it will better serve the educational and social purposes of provincial and First Nations education as the identities of First Nations and Métis peoples are affirmed, Canada's colonial history is deconstructed, and curricula are made richer by the cultural knowledge that can be shared between diverse peoples. These individuals should be intentionally selected to become leaders of FTV, and of school divisions and education authorities, so that Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing become part of the fabric and culture of the education system more authentically.

Recommendation #2: It cannot be up to local schools alone to offset the many negative issues that affect communities due to the impacts of Canada's colonial history. Professional learning and development in the areas of residential schools, intergenerational trauma, lateral violence, and the effects of poverty may lead to greater understanding, but it does not heal the trauma nor take away the effects with which people in the community are living daily. Schools, school divisions, and First Nations education authorities need to continue their efforts on interagency and inter-sectoral approaches to support healing processes, to acquire additional resources, and to ensure that school staffs are not working in isolation on this work that can be overwhelming and can affect the mental wellness of all of those involved.

Recommendation #3: There is a great need for additional counselling and support services, not only for students, but also for teachers and staff. Many have advocated for male and female counsellors, mentors and Elders so that a holistic approach to wellness is available for teachers, staff, and students. Trauma-informed strengths-based practice should become an integral pillar upon which FTV is based. Professional learning for facilitators and teachers should focus on trauma-informed practice as diligently as it currently does on differentiating teaching strategies so that the initiative can truly focus on the root causes of some of the factors affecting students' (teachers', staff members') lives and their learning.

Recommendation #4: The education sector should consider incorporating trauma-informed practice deliberately and fully into all processes. Student, teacher, and staff wellness, drawn from a western and Indigenous holistic sense, should become a priority. As noted earlier, mental health and wellness is a growing concern that impacts learning. The materials, activities, and professional learning opportunities supported by FTV appeared to be most effective when they stemmed from a holistic approach of healing. We suggest that schools/divisions not involved with FTV may benefit from a grounding in this important work.

Recommendation #5: Given the different ways in which religion and traditional spirituality are evident in these communities and schools, we recommend that FTV leaders open discussions related to the role of spirituality in the work of FTV. Spirituality is an inherent aspect of Indigenous ways of being, but it is contested with Christian influences, and no single community has the same view on the role of spirituality in educational spaces. There also exists a growing number of diverse religious backgrounds reflected in the populations of school communities that must be factored into discussions. These conversations will be contentious, but will lead to very important discussions about the purposes of education, and the effects of Canada's colonial history.

Recommendation #6: Given the passion, clarity, honesty, and foresight with which students spoke to the research team, it would be beneficial to have student voice on the provincial leadership team. "Nothing about us, without us" includes students as certainly as it includes Indigenous voices. Many good insights, possibilities, and new directions could come about with an acknowledgement that the voices of our youth should help direct their own futures. It would be a very good idea if local SCLTs and the Provincial Facilitator group regularly consulted with students over the nature and implementation of the FTV work.

Recommendation #7: There is definitely a role for teacher education to impact the work of FTV, as well as to impact the teacher attrition evident in many of these schools. It would be beneficial for local school divisions and/or education authorities to consider advocating for local programming that supports community members in becoming educational assistants or teachers. There are a number of community-based programs that are based either at the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, and First Nations University. Many of these program routes are designed to support Métis and First Nations teaching and learning (SUNTEP and ITEP in particular). In addition, the focus on differentiated instruction and developing effective relational and culturally responsive pedagogy are constructs that are legitimately of value and supported in teacher preparation programs in Saskatchewan. The processes inherent in the cycles of FTV could be similarly introduced in field experience requirements. A more coordinated effort to embed the spirit, intent, and processes of FTV into teacher education would help to alleviate teacher resistance and build a culture of commitment that could support sustainability.

Recommendation #8: We found that when schools have a designated room for FTV, and/or for cultural programming, the space (i) provides a safe haven for teachers, staff, parents, caregivers, and students, and (ii) creates a space where ideas, goals, and strategies can be housed in one location. Designating such a space also casts a spotlight on the initiative that generates excitement as people have a space where they can see the evidence of the good work that is being done by all those participating in the initiative. This shared space becomes a place for professional learning, and a space where students know they will be welcome and safe. We commend those schools that have designated such space(s) and encourage them to continue to do so. We recommend that the remainder of FTV schools find ways to create similar dedicated FTV spaces where possible.

Recommendation #9: Funding schemes and training regimes should take into consideration teacher, facilitator, and administrator turnover rates and/or local funding cuts that reduce staff time. There must be recognition in expectations, and in the funding model, that, regardless of what year of implementation the school is ostensibly a part, the School-based Facilitator, the Lead Teacher, the administrator, and/or many of the teachers may be new to both the school and the initiative. There may need to be a reset of the clock, training for the School-based Facilitator in particular, a refocusing of the leadership of the initiative, and a need to re-educate the school community. It may be that schools with large turnover rates may benefit from less money over five years, or a means of redistributing the money that provides for more training opportunities. Attrition rates must become something that is factored into the funding model for communities with high attrition. It is unlikely that these rates will shift significantly in the immediate future, so the response to that attrition should come in terms of how the support monies are distributed, over an extended timeline, or proportionately to (re)training in order to meet expectations. It also may mean that those individuals (facilitators) who might be in schools that are designated in one particular year, must attend a different year of training in the initiative or some other means of having them "catch up" without overwhelming them. Supporting local people to feel that they can be successful at the local level, and at the provincial level, is key to sustainability. Currently, moving along as if the people within the initiative are not changing is not supporting FTV in any local school. Rather, this creates frustration and a sense of being overwhelmed when people are held to expectations they may not understand or have been trained to deliver.

Recommendation #10: The final recommendation is to continue this lifelong learning emphasis on cultural revitalization and learning into adult education settings such that adult learners and/or community members can also reclaim language and identity. Many of the adults with whom we spoke lamented the loss of language and culture in their generations as a consequence of their parents' and grandparents' experiences with residential schools. As parents, they are unable to pass on the language and many of the

teachings. Creating a lifelong learning approach that includes adult education in community settings would be much appreciated by this group of individuals.