

From Pedagogy to Practice Building Relationships In The Community

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TEXT ON SCREEN: Building Relationships In The Community

BETTY GUNNER: I am a retired teacher so I had to run three different surveys for the school board in order to gain information from the community 'cause I think that's where we have to start when we are going to build our curriculum. We need to begin with community in the sense that they should drive the curriculum. I mean obviously we need to have the provincial standards in there but I think as much as possible that the children should be learning within their culture. And in order to do that we need to draw from the community 'cause that's where the knowledge keepers are and they first and foremost live the life that we want to inculcate into our children in order to make them strong citizens for the future.

STUDENT: 'Cause I think you're the wrong person to carry the iPad across this.

STUDENT: Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness, easy, easy, easy.

DARREN LENTZ: Anybody remember the name for spruce roots?

STUDENT: Spruce root.

DARREN LENTZ: It is spruce root. What's the Anishinabe word for spruce root? Wah?

STUDENT: Sprucey rootey.

DARREN LENTZ: Watap. Watap is what we're picking today.

BOB BAXTER: Bonjour.

STUDENTS: Hi.

STUDENTS: Bonjour.

BOB BAXTER: Bon jour is right. Okay, my name is Bob Baxter and I was born on this land up north. I'm gonna be 68 years old here very shortly so I've been around for a while.

NARRATOR: There are many different ways for educators to support the learning of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit culture and ways of knowing.

BOB BAXTER: You know, you're grounded to nature if you don't know it, and in order to survive on it you got to look after it.

NARRATOR: In every area of the province communities are willing to share new knowledge with classrooms and help educators move the learning forward.

BOB BAXTER: And that's why they call us elders you know? We get wiser.

DARREN LENTZ: I think the more perspectives we have the better we're educated, and the more stories we listen to the better we're educated. So it's an opportunity for the kids to hear the real story and build relationships. It's all about relationship building. With our kids, with our teachers learning together, and with our community members coming in and seeing what school life is like, what we're doing. So we love to create those partnerships with elders, with community members and with community resource people.

DARREN LENTZ: And then freestyle, behind your back okay?

NARRATOR: There is a lot to draw from, and to get the most out of the experience it's integral that educators reach out locally.

KEVIN REED: Aboriginal education doesn't happen without community. It has been I think the case in the past that Aboriginal communities have been ignored. But everyone recognizes that these communities hold traditional teachings that we want to have shared and so it's important to value those teachings.

BOB BAXTER: The elders had dreams too of how to do things and those teachings they gave to their people.

JACK NIGRO: Building relationships with First Nations communities as well as the urban Indigenous community organizations have been really important to build trust but also access different services that might be beneficial to our Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike.

NARRATOR: Some of those organizations include First Nation, Metis, and Inuit educational advisory committees or councils that support educators in numerous ways.

MARY JANE FARRISH: It's through that council that we always try to consult, engage, partner with in the events that we're doing in our schools and also as a way of trying to make sure that we create opportunities for the council to engage into school events and to board events as well. We will have elders come in, or knowledge keepers come in to individuals classrooms and work with students and teachers. We will have elders and knowledge keeper come in and work with entire staff for larger staff events. We have elders go out to sit as stakeholder members on committee meetings so our Parent Involvement Committee, big conference and symposium. We had two of our members from the council go just to bring the voice of indigenous peoples to make sure that, that voice was heard and represented.

BARBARA-ANN FELSCHOW: So the Aboriginal Education Centre has a roster of artists, traditional teachers, also has elders that are accessible for anyone in a

school within TDSB they would connect with the instructional leaders or community liaison team, or with the student support team and then gain assistance that way and they would have resources that are vetted, viable, and authentic in terms of their use in classrooms.

NARRATOR: As part of a policy framework every schoolboard in Ontario now has or is in the process of setting up an Indigenous Education Advisory committee that includes representation from First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities, service organizations, elders, knowledge keeper, senators, senior school board representatives, students, and parents. No committee will look the same but all boards will have one which will help to guide curriculum development, support culturally appropriate teaching strategies, plan classroom visits from members of the local of community, and organize community social events.

CHRISTY RADBOURNE: Reach out to your friendship centre here, or reach out to other local Aboriginal or First Nations organization and they have access to all kinds of cultural resources and folks are really generous. I'll tell you that though the community will really respond to just you reaching out and making those first steps.

EDUCATION LEAD: What I'm gonna do is I'm gonna light this smudge and I'll go around finding--

NARRATOR: With the support of administration, colleagues, and a dedicated First Nation, Metis, and Inuit education lead schools and educators are able to make connections with local First Nations, Metis, and Inuit community members and organizations. Through this relationship community leaders are able to share their knowledge and facilitate a variety of learning opportunities which will then aid in building and strengthening these relationships including the understanding of protocols.

JACK NIGRO: We also build relationships with community organizations that can bring that authentic voice to our classrooms and to our school spaces.

NICOLE RICHMOND: One of the most interesting parts is bringing the community in so that we're more moving to a community school model so that our communities are reflected within our schools and that our schools are reflecting our communities.

DARREN LENTZ: It models to the children that we're all learning throughout our life and we model that on a daily basis when we bring in resource people to our schools. We show them that we're not just the holders of all this knowledge, that there are wider people out there that have a great deal of knowledge.

NICOLE RICHMOND: What we try and promote is that teachers be a part of communities, that they give back, and that they contribute so that they are sitting side by side with the parents, they're sitting side by side with the band councils, or that we're good neighbours. So it's a good neighbour principle so that we're all in this together. So we encourage teachers to invite local elders into classrooms, local

knowledge keepers into classrooms to share the perspective of the local Indigenous communities.

DOROTHY WYNNE: I am a survivor of the residential school. I was uprooted from my family because that's what--

NARRATOR: Opening the school's doors goes a long way when it comes to finding genuine resources. First Nations, Metis, and Inuit community members from all walks of life share their knowledge in guiding educators to provide rich and deeply meaningful learning opportunities for students.

DOROTHY WYNNE: What's so different from being at residential school and moving to a public school, treated differently too by the teachers. There was one teacher there that taught from 1 to grade 8 when I was in there and because I didn't really fully understand the English language she took it upon herself to take me. Come and sit with me at my desk and teach me how to read those words.

JACK NIGRO: Authentic voice is really important. The involvement of elders in our classrooms is crucial to doing this work justice.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: The most important learning that I've ever had is just listening to elders because they are the ones that hold the knowledge and lots of insight about how to approach it in my classroom, and they ultimately are the people that were empowering me.

SHARLA FALODI: As a non-Indigenous woman teaching in a school that's focused on Indigenous ways of knowing and being it gives me strength to know that they trust me with taking knowledge that they've shared with me and using it in a way that is respectable and honoured.

DARREN LENTZ: It's the reciprocity, the giving back so the kids here even then learn that we gain knowledge from outside community people and that they get to share that knowledge with their parents, with the younger kids in the schools, they become role models and mentors to the younger kids to teach them.

ZOE: I always talk about it with my family, especially I bring my new learning from school back to home and my family finds it interesting as well and we talk about perspective and even outside of school with my friends and even things we can connect outside so we can make connections.

ARDEN: I know that I take the discussion home and then I talk about it with my parents, and my little brother is now starting to learn about it too so it's getting out there and people are learning about it and I think if that happens then the stories will come back and then they can be put back in.

KEVIN REED: My goal is that all students will have met an Aboriginal elder at some point in their school career, will have gotten to some event at some time and every year it's growing. So I get more and more excited.

KEVIN REED: So we're gonna start with the two groups from this area, the Anishinabe if you could say that?

STUDENTS: Anishinabe. Anishinabe. Anishinabe.

KEVIN REED: Do you feel confident? Excellent, Haudenosaunee.

KEVIN REED: Haudenosaunee.

NARRATOR: For those just starting out there's comfort in numbers. Taking direction from colleagues who are familiar with the content may alleviate the hesitancy with how to begin.

KEVIN REED: Yes you may feel some apprehension but there are lots of supports in your community and in your school board to help you with this. If you feel challenged putting Aboriginal perspectives in your own mouth, don't do it. Get somebody else to do it for you. Find something that's been written, share that with the students. Bring in an elder or a community member to talk about it. Lots of people are willing to participate in this.

DARREN LENTZ: We've asked elders to come in and share their residential school experience with the children so that they get firsthand knowledge from an actual survivor and that impacted them hugely. And it also educated the teachers as well of that story so it's different than watching it on a video, or reading a story in a book. It's firsthand knowledge from an elder themselves.

ALVIN FIDDLER: It's important that the schools establish these relationships with these survivors and to include them in the work that lies ahead.

VICTOR CHAPAIS: Being a residential school survivor and giving my perspective growing up, giving that experience to the ones that are doing the curriculum development, being respectful doing it together. Me being a residential school survivor doesn't mean that my grandkids don't feel the effects of that when I went there. Those effects that happened manifested in my grandkids not being able to finish school and not understanding that. And that's the understanding that I hope we have with each other that I would bring into the discussion during curriculum development.

TEACHER: Thank you so much for coming and sharing that with us. I know it's a very difficult topic.

NARRATOR: Listening to those familiar with the content can go a long way in developing strong, lasting relationships that help to develop student perspective.

KAI: It was cool that we could experience people that actually went through it instead of just reading a book and asking them questions.

ANNA: It's easier to understand when somebody with firsthand experience tells me about it.

KEANNA: Coming into grade 8 I didn't really know that much about these topics so having some people other than just my teacher teach me about this really just opened my eyes on what's happening.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: I think it's really important for children, for students to see someone. We have books, we have resources, we have what I say, we have what other people say but to actually meet a survivor, a living person here with us who talks about what happened to him is so impactful.

CARMAN TOZER: They're like our connection to the past, but they're also like our guides to how we move forward. We hear a lot about the truth and reconciliation so we sort of are beginning to find out what the truth is and for a lot of our families they already knew what the truth is. Now we got to work forward and say okay, how do we reconcile this? And we take our guidance and our leadership from our community and from our community elders that have been through some of these experiences and can help us and our students to move forward.

DOROTHY WYNNE: You press on the thing here.

COOK: Yeah?

DOROTHY WYNNE: And it springs out I love you. I'm part of the First Nations people. They enjoy me coming in. They can talk to me and we have fun. It's not really a teacher, student relationship. It's more like a granny coming in, okay?

BOB BAXTER: I'd like to just go into schools and teach the young kids. Teach them when they're young 'cause when you're a child at a young age you learn. When you're taught something at a young age you carry that with you as you grow up, you know? If you teach a child to hate he's gonna hate. If you teach him to love he's gonna love. If you teach him the surroundings he's gonna cherish that, something that they'll carry at a young age.

NARRATOR: Community members have wisdom and insight to offer students through interaction. These relationships can help to build empathy.

BOB BAXTER: It's trial and error.

DON: I've never met Paul before today but he seemed really nice and knew what he was talking about, and there's a couple other elders that came in and did pow-wows in the school and taught us some other kind of stuff. Some ladies from Fort William First Nation came in and they taught us about what they called Mother Earth and tobacco. I think it's really good for our community to be closer and I think it's very important for us to be learning about their culture because that surrounds us in Canada.

KATHY MCCONNACHIE: We live in a very diverse Canada and I think that we have to make sure that students understand empathy and understanding and when we understand that we're in a diverse community then I think it's easier for kids to have that empathy. When we have empathy and openness then we're willing to learn.

JIMMY DICK: Spiritual.

STUDENT: Spiritual and emotional?

NARRATOR: Once connections are established relationships can flourish. Bonds are made which leads to an open, welcoming environment for all.

JIMMY DICK: I get to do a lot of stuff with the student besides teaching them stuff, but I also do drumming. I teach drumming with the boys and they love it, and then when we have it in our class I teach them drumming there and they just love it.

CARMAN TOZER: Our students are very respectful of our elders and listen, and heed what they say and I think that's a good thing. Where else do you get that kind of guidance from?

TEACHER: But we're very lucky today to have both Grand Chief Fiddler and Chief Collins with us.

JESSA: I liked how the chief kind of showed on the chalkboard the map and where everything originated and where everything is.

CHIEF: The treaty was signed in 1850, September 7th. This'll be our 166 year--

JESSA: I liked how he showed that because it's kind of history and I like history, and I think when people are given facts it's more known like this is real, it happens. It's happening. And I liked that they really talked to us not as teachers like raise your hand stuff like that. We talked in a group and it was kind of welcoming and everyone could talk if they wanted to. It was easy, and they opened up to us kind of and they told us some of their history, and their stories and that was cool to get to know them more.

SOPHIE: When she brought in our guest speakers, when Geronimo came and earlier in the year I think it was the second week of school Nicole Robinson came from the board too. So that was really interesting to connect with them because it's really easy to think about these people and yeah they're just in Northern Ontario but they're in Southern Ontario, too. They're in Kitchener, they're in Waterloo region. So I think that was really fun to see them and to hear them tell their stories.

ELDER: Whenever, wherever you go you acknowledge the local resident spirits that are there--

NARRATOR: This unique student learning that happens is rich, powerful, and rewarding. And the new knowledge educators gain as a result can do a lot to bridge gaps in community.

TEACHER: [INAUDIBLE] slowly, slowly.

KEVIN REED: It's also important to talk to the parents because I think a lot of Aboriginal parents have felt isolated or not connected to their own children's education because of institutional indifference perhaps.

CHRISTY RADBOURNE: The school comes unfortunately with an institutional identity, and that institutional identity is one of judgment and it's one of authority. And for a lot of our families from either northern communities or our Aboriginal families that creates a lot of tension. So we have a job. We talk about equity in relationships. We have a job really to overcome some of that institutional identity. It's not enough for us to say we're not judgmental or we're not the authority. It means that we really need to reach out and expand sort of that boundary on how we develop relationships with families.

HEATHER GARDNER: There are some parents that actually need that extra little push, that ability to show them a way and to reintroduce love back into their families.

CRYSTAL GIONETTE: I know that when I am in my daughter's school and she sees me there as a worker and a parent I know that it puts a smile on her face and it makes her feel confident so I think that if we get that message out there and get more parents into our school the children could feel more comfortable, and have a sense of belonging and knowing that mum and dad are welcome there too and mum and dad are attending these functions they never have before. So we're really trying to reach out to parents.

HEATHER GARDNER: My focus is relationship building and approaching the families with care and respect I'm able to gain their trust and to help liaise and build a relationship between the school and the families.

CHRISTY RADBOURNE: Getting to know folks on a first name basis is really critical. For me being outside in the school all the time, being seen out in the community, being sure that I can greet family members by their name and say hello, and have a conversation with them, and be interested in what they're doing outside of school, and bringing them into the school, and it takes a long time but once those relationships develop and folks start to open up the school becomes much more a community hub and we start talking about partnering with things like community services as well as not only community services but helping folks to find things that they need.

HEATHER GARDNER: So I provide access to services in our community. My background is actually in the social services field and so I'm able to help families with assistance to access to food, housing, Ontario Works directives, ODSP directives. I

also help to inspire the children while they're at school so my job is mainly to insure that they're successful while they're here.

CRYSTAL GIONETTE: Having those relationships is key, right? So that allows for a lot of parental engagement to happen and we're just--we're really focusing on having more of that happen.

ANDY MACFARLANE: There is a lot of bridging that's being done and it's at the ground roots. It's that piece that you don't recognize until you see that when we're giving people voices we're giving them that ownership piece that I think becomes not just the students but the families and the communities, it gives them a part of what their students are being involved in.

BOB BAXTER: You do things in a good way you will receive good things.

NARRATOR: When schools are inclusive of their communities it is instrumental in the successful implementation of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit education.

DOROTHY WYNNE: You can tell when the bottom is cooked as this top part--

COOK: It'll start floating?

DOROTHY WYNNE: Yeah, floating it.

NARRATOR: And those relationships support each other.

NICOLE RICHMOND: I'm on the road a lot trying to engage people and bring people up to speed but also bring people's voices in who sometimes have been at the margins and have not really necessarily been engaged with the school board in a big way. So it's really exciting work for sure.

ANIKA GUTHRIE: I have seen significant changes in many of the schools that I work in. One example is one of the schools that we've been involved in the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit collaborative inquiry and they started to really dig into self-regulation is kind of where it started. They also started to really look at what their relationships with their parents and families were in the school and a teacher very openly said she's very frustrated or she doesn't feel that they're as involved as she would expect or that she would hope definitely for the parents of her students to be. And so they really started to look at restructuring how they communicate with parents. They actually asked parents how they thought it would be best to communicate with them. Like is letters home good? Do you like phone calls? And the parents said that they preferred electronic communication. So that school this year has really started using SeeSaw and other apps to send the learning out to the homes instead of expecting those parents to come to parent teacher interviews and even something that you call a math and literacy night. That doesn't sound fun for parents who didn't have a positive experience with school and don't feel good in schools. And so restructuring it so that they called it a family gathering. Just making it a little bit friendlier and I've

seen that really transform the relationships between the teachers and the parents in that school.

TAMMY HARDWICK: Some of the proudest successes are coming from those collaborative pieces. I just have secondary schools that are working together on a collaborative inquiry and so they've been working over the course of a few months and then now they're coming together to have an Indigenous Celebration Day so this is an opportunity where the two schools are coming together and they're hosting this with over 100 students so that they're able to bring in those elders, those knowledge keepers and have authentic opportunities for the students to learn and engage in workshops and do different crafts and just have all of those experiences that they otherwise wouldn't be able to.

CARMAN TOZER: We run an outdoor ed program every year in second semester and it's primarily designed for our grade 12 students. Part of this program is actually taking our students out on the land in the winter. We do a canoe trip in the fall. We go camping. We bring along elders so there's that connection between our students.

ALEXANDER: Once I learned that they had a elders program I was like hey, maybe that's something I could connect to because it's in the bush and canoeing. We all went out there. It was like we're all one group. Everyone was basically family out there working as one. Helping set up the tent, chopping wood and making the fire, making food. We're all basically one team out there.

CARMAN TOZER: We also bring elders into the classroom. They participate in various activities with our youth. Earlier this week they were in making bannock with the foods group. Sometimes they come in and they do beading and moccasin making, and sometimes they come in to talk about difficult issues like residential schools.

ALEXANDER: When a student's struggling, an Aboriginal student is struggling he may not go to a teacher for help because he knows the teacher hasn't gone through the same situation he has, but if there would be a elder Aboriginal adult around in the school he may actually go seek that help.

CARMAN TOZER: And so a lot of times people still deal with some of those issues of a loss of a way of culture and that's why we do so many of these things in our school is to bring some of that stuff back so that our students have an opportunity to walk in that path.

BOB BAXTER: Just take a little pinch of tobacco, put it in your left hand and put it here to your heart. That is that. That is the place where you talk from when you talk to the creator from here. Not from here.

NARRATOR How these perspectives are learned and why these perspectives are learned is as valuable as the historic and culturally relevant information that students and educators have access to regarding First Nations, Metis, and Inuit perspectives. There is great advantage to these differentiated learning approaches.

BOB BAXTER: [speaking Indigenous language]

CHIEF: We all need to work together if we're gonna make things better for our communities. We can only do that by working together.

NARRATOR: In building partnerships with local First Nations, Metis, and Inuit organizations educators are supported in developing curriculum that has the potential to reach a broader student base.

CHIEF: We don't expect school boards to start from scratch now that the province has announced that this will be mandatory there's been work done already even with us at Anishinabek Nation that over the last few years we've developed our own curriculum that we want to be able to deliver in our schools in our own communities but we're willing to share that information.

DARREN LENTZ: When you get this kind of colour in the roots that means the bark's gonna come off really nice and easily. So you can see the bark's already starting to--

STUDENT: I coil. I'm coiling.

RYAN ROY: It's been a journey to watch the kids get to where we saw them today where they were harvesting roots and they were invested in what they were doing right? You give them the opportunity to learn like that in a different way, hands on learning which is a lot of what that teaching is. It's a lot of hands on things and that's what kids really love to do.

RYAN ROY: They're bombarded with so much information in a class all the time. It's nice when they get to go and learn in a situation like we learned in today and my colleague and I were reflecting after. We were saying how much did they learn here today just by having that elder there explaining some things, being out in that situation. That's something they're gonna remember always.

RYAN ROY: We're moving in the right direction. Is it perfect? Are we there? No, but we're getting there.

DARREN LENTZ: That came from the students themselves. They wanted to learn how to do that. They thought it would be a neat project. So they took it upon themselves to make those relationships and build that community piece into it to start a canoe.

RYAN ROY: So taking that back into the classroom more than likely we will have it in our literacy situation where we'll talk about some of the traditional learnings and teaching that we can reflect on based on what we've learned so far and just kind of go from there. It'll be connected more to the kids I think because they actually did too.

GREG ROGERS: Learning isn't all about textbooks and being in the classroom. It's really about education for life, and if we can give students life experiences that are real then the learning is gonna be that much more powerful.

RAY LAKE: There's a deep and abiding kind of wisdom in Aboriginal culture that teaches you how to live with the Earth. And I think that's valuable.

PETER JOLIFFE: It's powerful to connect with others and talk as opposed to reading about it. So in the abstract is great, that's part of it. It's also extended into this experiential place and that includes travel, it includes these trips. It includes having other community members into the school. It includes the hallways. It includes lunch hour, or intramurals, or sports. It includes it all.

ANDY MACFARLANE: If I own it, it becomes more real to me and if any student has a part in the process and a voice in the process then it becomes more of a piece of them and they take more pride in it.

CARMAN TOZER: I've been working as an educator here in Moose Knee, Moose Factory since 1990. In elementary school, high school I've spent some time at the college. I'll give you an example of why we're moving forward. Just go take a look in the guidance office. Our last year's graduates, where are they? They are moving on. They're gone to university. We have kids in nursing, we have students in life sciences, we have students in instrumentation.

CARMAN TOZER: Our students are graduating and they're going off to college, they're going off to university. A lot of them plan on coming back here to work within the community and for those students whose pathway wasn't college, university they're out there and they're working. They're contributing to our community so that's a good thing. That's how you move forward. And I happen to believe education is an important part of that but I think it's also the help and support that we get from our community that makes that goal more attainable.

EILIDH CHILDS: Well as much as I think these experiences and projects are helpful to my students in the main kind of core subjects of math, science, and language I think the most important things that they learn from these experiences and projects are the relationships and it's such a powerful thing to see them building relationships with the land, relationships with each other, relationships with their community. It's just a really powerful thing.

DARREN LENTZ: I noticed a change in all the students, and their openness and understanding of a variety of different cultures, or differences just in students themselves and their acceptance and their willingness to learn about others and not judging is really important.

KEVIN REED: My life has been greatly enriched as a result of the learning that I've done as part of my job, and I know that all of the teachers that I work with leave energized by the learning that they get and they want to go forward, and they want to do it.

[MUSIC]

TEXT ON SCREEN: From Pedagogy To Practice

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