

# Relational Home Visits and Reconciliation: Case Studies

CSSBA Trustees' Gathering on Indigenous Education

Thursday, July 7, 2022. 1:00- 2:15. Saskatoon.

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# Hopes and Dreams

For...


- Your children
- Nieces/nephews
- Grandchildren

What would your parents have dreamt or wanted for you growing up?





## Parent responses

- To be happy
  - To choose a job that they will enjoy
  - To be successful in whatever way makes them happy
  - To be healthy
  - To be kind
  - To learn how to struggle or fail and be able to overcome those challenges
  - To learn about his culture in school
  - To carry on passions for his culture throughout his school years
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## The Opportunity

- *Provincial Education Plan Framework 2020-2030*
- Fostering connections and relationships between educators, students, and their families,
- Creating inclusive, safe, and welcoming school environments.
- The pillars of connections and relationships drive the goals through which students learn what they need for their future, feel safe and supported, belong, are valued, and can be themselves.

# The Saskatchewan Context



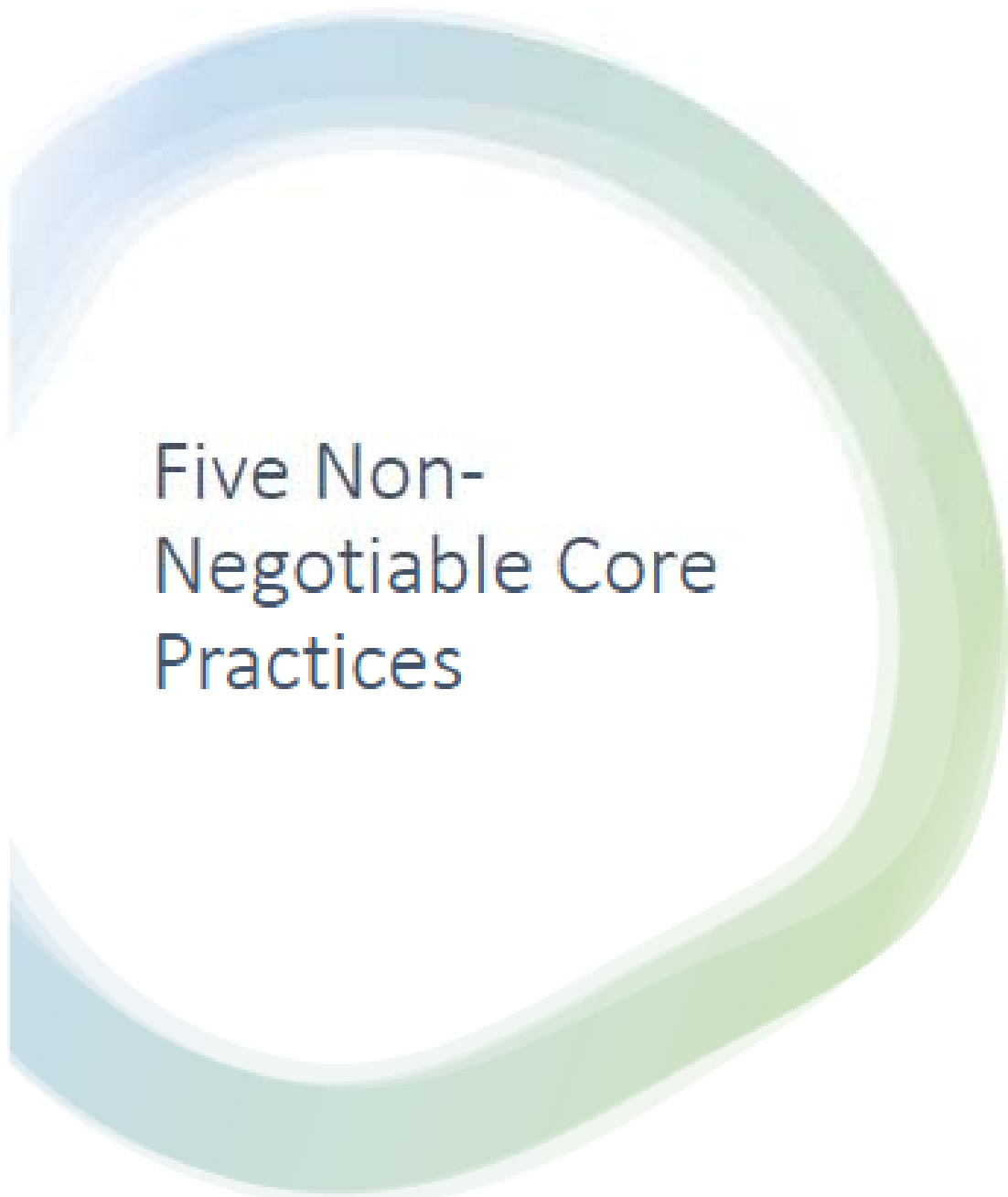
- Saskatchewan has a long, rich history in community education philosophy and practice, dating at least back to 1980.
- Recent interest in the work of Dr. Debbie Pushor (U of S), and Kevin Cameron (North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response) is re-focusing Saskatchewan's educator sector on the vital importance of connections and relationships.
- Building connections through home visits is an evidence-based high-impact practice that is relatively easy to implement to respond to this challenge.

# The Model

- The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project ([www.pthvp.org](http://www.pthvp.org)) has been in existence in the U.S.A. since 1998. It is a not for profit organization.
- One of the founders was a parent in San Diego concerned about the disconnect between home and school
- This initiative is in 700 schools across 28 States, and now in Saskatchewan.
- Two-visits model: The first visit is focused on relationships. The second visit is relational, and can also focus on academics.

# The Legacy of Parent-Engagement and Home-School Visits in Saskatchewan

1. Aboriginal Elders and Community Liaison Workers.
  - *taking control of the narrative*
2. Family Engagement in pre-K
  - *mediating between the personal/private and the public/social*




## Five Non-Negotiable Core Practices

- Visits are always voluntary for educators and families, and arranged in advance.
- Teachers are trained, and compensated for visits outside their school day.
- Focus of the first visit is relationship-building; key focus is a discussion of hopes and dreams.
- No targeting – visit all or a cross-section of students so there is no stigma.
- Educators conduct visits in pairs, and after the visit, reflect with their partner.



# Participation by division, schools, staff, families and number of visits

Five School Divisions	Number of Schools	Number of Participating Staff	Number of Participating Families	Number of Visits (1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> )
North. Lights	1	2	3	3 (3/0)
Ile-a-la Crosse	1	2	20	40 (20/20)
Holy Trinity	2	14	32	55 (32/23)
Sun West	2	19	46	67 (46/21)
Regina Public	2	15	42	84 (42/42)
	8	52	143	249 (143/106)



## Research Design and Methodology

- **Action Research and Indigenous methodologies:**
- **Learn by Doing and Reflecting**
- **Respectfully honor the voices of the participants**
  - ✓ engagement
  - ✓ inclusivity
  - ✓ dialogue
  - ✓ building relationships
  - ✓ learn by doing
  - ✓ provisional tries

## Purpose & First Meetings

- At the heart, HTCSD had many purposes- Mental Health & Wellbeing, reconnection, building relationships
- Belief: parents and teachers are partners and co-educators of children; parents being the first teachers
- First visits were awkward at first but with the focus on Hopes & Dreams, families quickly opened up



# Makafui's story

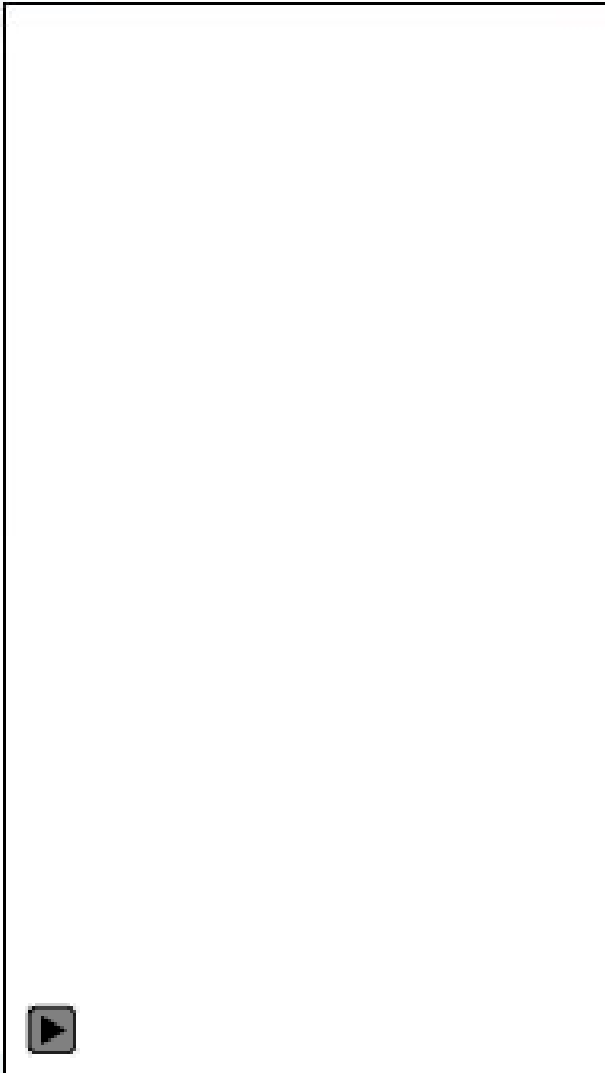


- Makafui is very proud of his heritage. He showed us this photo of his first picture at his school in Ghana. He loves to show this picture.
- This year, Makafui chose to wear similar type clothing for picture day. It was amazing.
- They are from Ghana and Togo. They speak both languages and Tri.
- Mom is very happy and proud
- that Makafui loves school and
- and that he is trying his best all the time.



## Alexa's Story

- New to school, limited contact
- Alexa's interactions- limited but yet strong, trilingual student
- Parents were excited to welcome staff who noticed a piano
- Mother burst with pride; Alexa played and sang. It was an honour for staff to be a witness to her abilities
- Debrief- need for Alexa to be connected to the school choir, play for them and "jam out" with the teacher
- Alexa was so proud to be part of her school community and to be *seen* by staff & students alike
- Alexa now seeks out the teachers, asks about their day, shares her continued growth in music and is a completely different child



# “Relational Congruency” in smaller communities in rural Saskatchewan



- The distance between home and school is narrow because of a shared sense of community.
- Parents and teachers are neighbours and friends.
- The children were excited and proud to play “show and tell” right in their own homes.
- Volunteers wanted to show that they know what it means to be a “good parent”. Everyone’s on the same page.

## Refugee families have experienced trauma



- Parents were anxious to “do the best they can” where they do not know the “system” and feel like outsiders.
- Home visits became an opportunity to share their own stories of hardship and perseverance.
- Teachers visiting their home was an “honour” and they became “hosts to their guests”



# Our Experiences

## Marissa

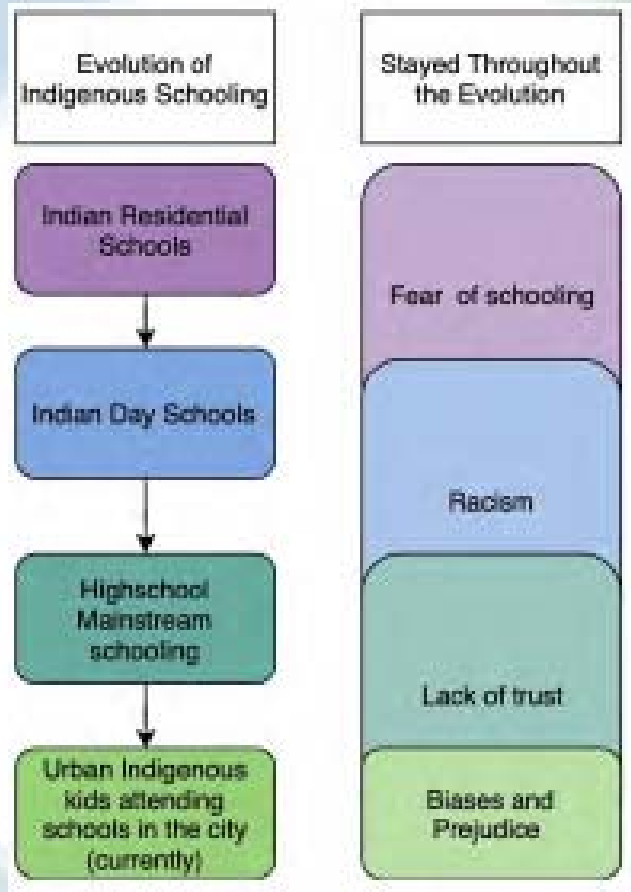
- I am currently teaching in the same division I attended from kindergarten to grade 12
- Lack of representation
- Didn't feel comfortable
- Anxiety about interactions with my parents and teachers that I would get in trouble

## Emily

- Lack of connections with teachers
- Lack of connections with peers
- Viewing relationships between teachers and other students
- Lack of representation
- Communication between teachers and my parents



# Indigenous Parents



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Meeting with parents on their own terms can break down the walls and barriers

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Feelings and fears towards schools are still there and affecting the students (children/grandchildren) they send to us

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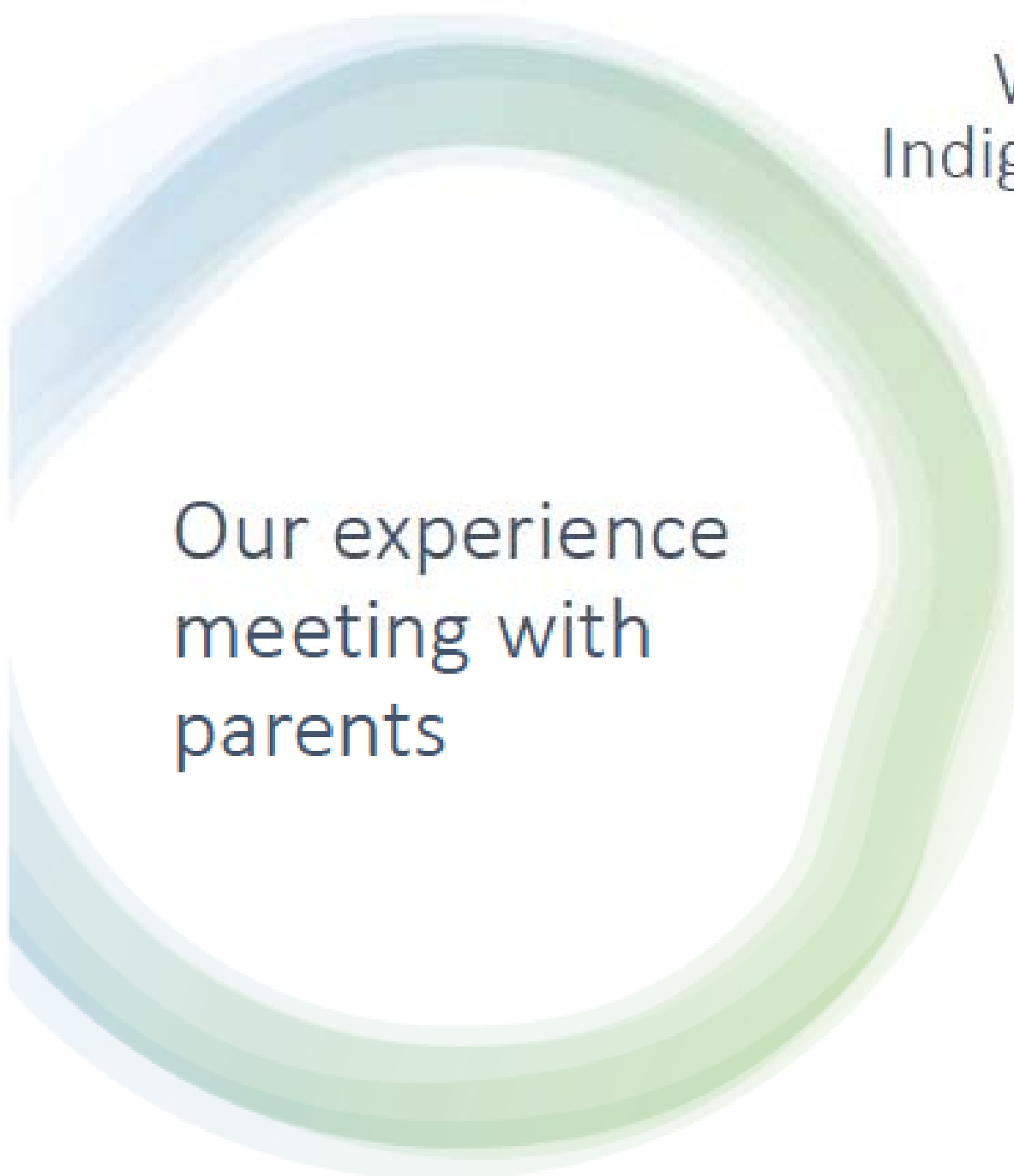
Parent meetings and personal conversations one way of easing those fears and hesitations towards the school system

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Often we are not meeting with just parents it's all sorts of caregivers

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Adjust expectations when meeting families, conversations will take a natural path and you can't force someone to open up more than they're willing to



## Our experience meeting with parents

### What we found with the Indigenous parents we did visit:

- Seeing an indigenous staff member come to meet with them eased some of their anxiety
- Open to sharing their child's vulnerabilities without judgement
- The pride the kids had when we would come back to school after our visit
- Parents school experience that they shared with us
- Truly listen to hear and give time for them to answer

## Representation Matters

- Recognize your Indigenous staff members and the work that they are doing with your students. Sometimes we become aunties, uncles, Kokum's and Mushum's that our students need.
- Recognize your Indigenous staff members as parents with their own children in your schools.
- Standing alongside your Indigenous staff provides opportunity to show caregivers that you are an ally to the Indigenous community. This helps bridge the gap between our school system and Indigenous families working through school related trauma.

## Moving Forward with this Program

- If this is a program you're interested in doing, we would highly suggest doing school/board wide PD on anti-racism, breaking biases and prejudice.
- Whether or not you want to move forward with this amazing program, these are steps that all our schools across Canada need to take.
- Breaking down the barriers that the western education system has built around us is a small part of true reconciliation.
- Take the time to truly listen to what the parents are saying and sharing. Sometimes we listen to add to the conversation and share our stories, but this program is about truly listening with intention to hear and to get to know the parents, families and their stories.
- With the PTHV Program schools can become what they are meant to be, a safe place where families can reach out if they have questions, concerns or need assistance.



## Reported Impact on Parents and Families

### **1. Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.**

*healing and unlearning*

### **2. Concerns of and for Newcomers.**

*proud parents anxious about schooling*

### **3. Hospitality and Reciprocity**

*the gift of meeting & sharing*

*having a cup of tea together*



Questions