



Board Trustees: Paula Scott, Andrea Zerr, Laurie Makichuk and Michelle Rusteika.

PREMIER'S AWARD



**Board of Education Award for
Innovation and Excellence in Education**
September 2023

Prepared By
LLOYDMINSTER CATHOLIC
SCHOOL DIVISION

FROM VISION TO RECONCILIATION

*Setting the foundation of
Kākīsimokamik, our
unique Indigenous
Centre for our schools
and community*



- 03 A Letter from our Director
- 05 Celebrations with Community
- 06 A Letter from our Board Chair
- 07 Dashboard and Directives
- 08 Youth Leads the Way
- 09 A Letter from our Indigenous Program Coordinator
- 11 More on Kakisimokamik
- 13 A Letter from a former student and current staff member
- 14 In Closing
- 15 Thank You and Contact

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

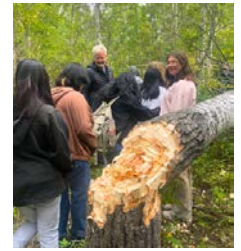
Mr. Nigel McCarthy

Dear Committee
for the Board of Education Award for
Innovation and Excellence,

The roadmap for Education and Truth and Reconciliation was provided in Calls to Action #62 to 65, almost a decade ago. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission said in its report that we must:

- Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- Build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect
- require denominational schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders.

The question for our Board of Trustees was where will this education, training of teachers, partnership and curriculum be developed and evolved.



Over the last 6 years our Board has walked this journey with Elders, parents and students. We have attended ceremonies at our local First Nations, visited the Elders Council, hosted feasts and planted the seeds of Trust. By attending Sweats and Pipe Ceremony with Elders, we discovered that a place for prayers, ceremony, and traditional teaching was the pathway to reconciliation in our region. The Board set in its CEO evaluation and process, a dashboard review for delivery on these Calls to Action. With reporting and evaluation, the Board table continues to review success and sets the goals for future action embedded in Annual CEO Evaluation and Board Retreats.

Out of this process in 2019, the concept for Kākīsimokamik was born. The name, granted to us in 2022 along with an Eagle Staff, means place of prayer in Cree. What Elders told us is that a Center for this learning was required. The Board of Trustees raised funds from Industry Partners in excess of \$170,000 dollars to build this space. They met with Elders and community to define a design, and when it came time to begin construction hosted a traditional Cree groundbreaking, the same ceremony held to build a roundhouse in Cree Communities.

CONTINUED WITH OUR DIRECTOR

Kākīsimokamik is a circular room, centered by a tree, Okimawatik, which was harvested by Cree people and our students in September 2022. The tree was chosen through a fasting ceremony, in the tradition of seeking the tree for Sundance. Not only are our Elders partners in this process, but they have taught us on the journey to discover how reconciliation can be made good for learning but also for our ancestors.

With Kākīsimokamik, Trustees gave back a piece of land, inside the school to learning and hope. This gift has been reciprocal, with our Cree and Métis community filling the space with the knowledge needed to bring curriculum to life. We share the same goals, hope for our children and the desire to ensure success for both parties to Treaty 6.

As we host learning with weekly smudge and ceremony and monthly learnings for our children, we have engaged Cree peoples and lead curriculum staff, to build a scope and sequence for traditional indigenous learnings at each grade level. This document, unique to LCSD, provides teachers with teachings for each grade which are completed with the partnership and guidance of Elders. Every child in the system will receive over 40 unique teachings in Kindergarten to Grade 10 with specific courses Grade 8 to 12. This document is a generational inheritance for our school system and a model for the Provincial Inspiring Education work underway today.

The data is clear. In 2022 we graduated 92% of our Indigenous students. This is more than double the Provincial Average. When our Indigenous students have a home, both physical and emotional, they have the roots to grow success. Our Grade 3 reading results for indigenous students have averaged 91.3% over the last 3 years. In 2 of the last 4 years, Indigenous students outperformed non indigenous students. Add to this the thousands of students who have received specific instruction in traditional teachings, each year for the last 5 years. The data shows progress as we walk together towards reconciliation.

Our Trustees set the bar for LCSD that there will be no distinction between the results for Indigenous and non-indigenous learners. They have rooted this journey in physical space, evaluation procedures and strategic planning. They have sought resources and built partnerships to provide the innovation to aspire to a better future. In doing so, they have built a space for Truth and Reconciliation in our schools.



Nigel McCarthy
Director of Education



COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS & MEDIA

We ask that you start reviewing our submission by watching a few short videos and highlights with our local media



Harvesting a Tree for new Indigenous Centre

September 2022

This video highlights the journey to designing and building our Indigenous Centre and also sharing what a Day of National Truth and Reconciliation means to our students and staff. *"For me it was almost bad to be Indigenous... to see us now where we are teaching and celebrating Indigenous culture, it means a lot to me because it means I can be proud of who I am."* -Vernon Royal

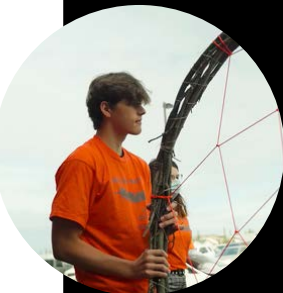
<https://vimeo.com/754773827>



New Indigenous Centre opens in LCSD

April 2023

Our Board of Trustees and the Lloydminster Catholic School Division welcomed dignitaries, stakeholders, partners, media and our school and broader community into the new Indigenous Centre and join us in a traditional feast. Every aspect of the space, including the name was all done honouring proper protocol and with Elder's, cultural advisors and local neighbouring First Nations. <https://vimeo.com/818975578>



Why We Wear Orange

September 2021

It was important for us to educate our staff and students about, *Why we wear orange?* This video was created with our Indigenous Coordinator and used with classes and our community to create meaningful conversations about why wearing orange is about a daily commitment to walk the path of Truth and Reconciliation with intent, purpose and unique meaning to us all. <http://vimeo.com/616184052>



Receiving the Honour of an Eagle Staff

September 2022

We are all treaty people. We were honoured by local First Nations with an Eagle Staff and welcomed people from our community, and both Provinces to join us in celebrating this honour and what it means. The Eagle Staff is one of the most sacred gifts our School Division has ever received and it remains with us to remind us to never forget and continue learning. <https://vimeo.com/756940243>



We have countless other local news stories and videos highlighting our work with Indigenous directives over the last decade. They can be viewed on our social media, website and Vimeo channel.

FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR, MRS. PAULA SCOTT

"On behalf of the Lloydminster Catholic School Board, I am thrilled to witness the official grand opening of Kakisimokamik, a testament to our community's dedication to walking the path of Truth and Reconciliation with our City, neighbouring First Nations and staff and students. I have been a School Board Trustee for over 16 years and this has been a focus for our team for nearly a decade. We knew we needed this for our Treaty people and we knew we needed to do it right, honouring culture and tradition in every step of the construction and design. Thankfully, we had staff, students, Elders, local First Nations and community leaders who participated in every facet of this new Centre. This space is about creating a well-rounded educational experience that supports our students in walking on a foundation of understanding, acceptance and appreciation so we may all walk together toward solutions for the future that are for the betterment of our country. This is a completely inclusive space and one of the most well used areas in our new expansion.

Our School Division has been filled with excitement and a deep sense of responsibility when it comes to establishing an Indigenous Student Centre at Holy Rosary High School. This initiative represents a crucial step towards acknowledging the rich cultural heritage and the unique needs of our Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students. It's not just about providing a physical space; it's about creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where all students can thrive academically, culturally, and socially.



Paula Scott

Students and staff within LCSD and many partners in Lloydminster wanted a place where they can connect with their roots, celebrate their traditions, and access the resources and support necessary to excel in their education. We now have that space. Kakisimokamik will be a beacon of hope and empowerment, fostering a sense of belonging and pride within our Indigenous student community.

Moreover, this endeavor is not just a desire but a necessity. We recognize the historical injustices and disparities that Indigenous communities have faced in education. Establishing this center is a step towards rectifying those past wrongs and working towards a more equitable future. By providing culturally sensitive resources, support, and mentorship, we aim to bridge the gap and ensure that every student within the Lloydminster Catholic School Division has the opportunity to reach their full potential. It has been a great honour to working with our dedicated team of staff and partners to make this possible. We have learned, we continue to learn and we are committed to the work that needs to be done on the path to Truth and Reconciliation.



KĀKĪSIMOKAMIK DASHBOARD

School Board Trustees have driven this undertaking for nearly 10 years and been a part of every decision, element of design and consultation with Elders, partners, cultural advisors, politicians, staff and students.

GOAL & Directive 1: Build a School Division where each of us shares the obligations of Treaty People.

GOAL & Directive 2: Ensure that every teacher strives for a future built on the strengths of our Indigenous children, and all children.

GOAL & Directive 3: Create a welcoming and supportive space that promotes Indigenous culture, knowledge, and community engagement within the educational environment.



Kākīsimokamīk



Nov 24, 2021
Cultural Advisor Mike Young preparing the land for construction with an offering of tobacco.

OSKINĪKISIS NĪKĀNIWIN

Permanently raising the Métis and Treaty 6 Flags in the spring of 2018 we asked, “Can a decade of work be encapsulated in the celebration of a day?” This momentous event was years in the making and marked the dedication and commitment to the work that will always lay before us on the path to Truth and Reconciliation. With the flags flying proudly outside our schools we continued to build relationships with local Indigenous Peoples and forge a path of meaningful, authentic partnerships.

Youth Leads the Way

Another 5 years were spent with City leaders in Hot 6 meetings, presentations and professional development. The Board of Trustees continued collaboration with students to find out their dreams for their future space. Our classrooms continued embracing outcomes rooted in ‘we are all treaty people’ and ultimately shortly after being honoured with an Eagle Staff from Onion Lake First Nation we were giving the land tobacco and putting a shovel in the ground on, **Kākīsimokamīk**, our unique one of a kind Indigenous Centre.

We officially opened our Centre in April of 2023.



SHARINGS FROM OUR STAFF

with Ms. Cynthia Young



Tansi, I am proud to hold the title of Indigenous Program Coordinator for the Lloydminster Catholic School Division.

Niya okichitaw iskwew

I am honoured to support staff and students in experiencing Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) culture in our schools!

Kakisimokamik was nothing but a wish and what seemed like an unrealistic dream, when I started my employment over 20 years ago. We had culture in the posters on the wall and in some of the books. **Today, that couldn't be further from the truth.**

We have sure come a long way since then and I am proud to look at our path we have journeyed. I remember when we started Cree Club and Cree students would come and hang out and learn the simplest phrases in their language soon they would bring their friends and I would have all the students learning not only language but also what it means to be Indigenous.

These basic language lessons evolved to how we would navigate finding our identity and path to walk in this world. Our little Cree Club soon grew to extend to groups at all our elementary schools and into Holy Rosary High School.

In my position I support students getting to school, work with families to bridge any language or cultural gaps to help families understand our education system, help students find jobs, liaise with staff and Indigenous families, support cultural learnings and create opportunities to get the culture off the walls and into the hearts of our people. One thing I can say completely is that our School Division Board has always made culture and respect a foundation for what we do within LCSD. When we wanted to take students to audition for the Twilight movies out in BC. We were able to. When we wanted to invest in Elders, Cultural Advisors, special guests, speakers and large scale events, we were met with, How can we help?

Our little Cree Club has now evolved into the **Dream Catchers**. This group of students being well known across our City and neighbouring community. This group being made up of students from all walks of life. We host events, speakers and participate in local projects year round while our High School has a for credit Cree language course that continues to grow each year. We take staff, students and leadership hunting, fishing, canoeing and to experience places like Victoria Metis Settlement, Batoche, Wanuskewin or for sweats, smudges, pow wows, blanket ceremonies, conferences, Indigenous Summits, tipi risings *and more...* **There are no limits to creating opportunities for our people to experience culture within LCSD.**

Cynthia Young



SHARINGS FROM OUR STAFF

...more with Ms. Cynthia Young



What is innovative about what we do at Lloyd Catholic is; *there is nothing we won't do, and be supported in doing to support kids and their learning.* Our Board, Senior Management Team and our Administrative teams at each school are open to embracing culture and integrating it into everything we do. From school assemblies, art around our buildings and the events we host; we have such a supportive team that is never afraid to ask tough questions or shy away from the unknown.

That depth of learning means we will do everything we can to help students from academics to athletics to fostering individuality identity, culture and goals for the future.

When we all try to understand one another we can work better together and great things are accomplished. We volunteer and assist everywhere we can in Lloydminster to break down barriers and old ways of thinking and foster new thoughts together with new friends. We have spent almost 2 decades working out of small office spaces and in corners of schools and the community. Now over the last 5 years of envisioning and following proper protocol with our Indigenous Centre we have a new home and hub to gather and continue our work. A place that staff and students, and community leaders, can come and feel at home.

Because so many students were a part of the construction, harvesting the tree and being a part of the ceremonies so many students feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the space and the work we are doing.

Students asked. We listened. Together we have built something so truly special that it can barely be explained with words. Kākīsimokamik is a feeling. A feeling to belong and a feeling to help others belong.



“Nothing we have done and accomplished could have been done without the support of our School Board, Senior Management and Administrative teams. They have always allowed us to work out side of the box, breathe culture into hearts and start by helping our Indigenous students when they once didn't seem to fit in. Now they do. Now we all have a place and now, we understand

‘We are all treaty people.’

. We are so lucky and appreciative of all the great experiences we have had to get our students and in meeting them where they need us. Join us in Kakisimokamik and join us in our schools and community to truly feel the touch that celebrating our culture can have on all people.”

-Cynthia Young

Indigenous Centre

Kāpīsimokamik



About Our Centre

We are honoured to share the GRAND OPENING of **Kāpīsimokamik** with you. We have been planning for this Centre from conceptualization of the new HRHS expansion. Every element of the design and construction of this space was done in direct consultation with cultural advisors and Indigenous experts.

We opened the doors in April, 2023 after nearly a decade of planning and preparation.



HOPE
BLESSINGS
TRUTH
TEACHINGS
RECONCILIATION
CULTURE



Okimāwatik

The tree is the center and foundation of our *being*. The roots and branches are all related to how we grow and develop as people.



The Artist

A special piece by Jason Carter was commissioned for the Centre. Carter is a famous Indigenous sculptor, painter, illustrator and public artist from the Little Red River Cree Nation. www.jasoncarter.com

Kākīsimokamik

Where we pray.



The Shapes

The circle is a sacred symbol and representative of all forms of life. The round room also represents historic lodging of the Indigenous people and is respective of the Medicine Wheel.



The poplar tree for the space was harvested with Cultural Advisors, staff, students and community partners in the fall of 2022. The tree comes from a local forest and all proper protocol was adhered to in moving it to our space.



Thank you to Synergy Credit Union and Jason Arden and Associates Ltd. for investing in our Centre and for being our partners in seeking Truth and Reconciliation in our community.



We are blessed that many staff and students have been participating in the design and construction of the Centre from the beginning and were given the teachings along the way. They are understanding and knowledgeable of the details that took shape with Elders and through ceremonies, sacred fires and fasting. Now they can share their new cultural knowledge.



Our Indigenous Centre is culturally accurate, built honouring proper protocol and ceremonies. We believe *Kākīsimokamik* is where feelings of spirituality and peace can be experienced by anyone who enters. It is truly a unique space and will provide all our LCSD staff and students a welcoming environment for learning about our local Indigenous Culture.

WE ARE ALL TREATY PEOPLE.



Cultural Advisor, Mike Young and Indigenous Programming Coordinator, Cynthia Young

MANY EVENTS, MEETINGS, CEREMONIES AND A FEAST WERE ATTENDED TO BE GIVEN THIS SPECIAL NAME.

SHARINGS FROM OUR STAFF



with Ms. Leah Boyer



Leah was the 2016 Sasktel Aboriginal Youth Leadership Award Winner when she was a student at Holy Rosary High School.

Taanishi! As a proud Métis woman, Holy Rosary High School alumna, and graduate of the University of Alberta's Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP), I feel so privileged to teach in the same building that inspired my desire to enter into the profession.

Having benefited immensely; mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically from the Dream Catcher Indigenous Mentorship Program as a student, it is an honour to share my experience on behalf of my peers, the Dream Catcher family, past and present.

It's hard to find the right words to convey just how instrumental the Dream Catcher program was in shaping my peers and I into the people we are today. For many of us, The Dream Catchers was our safe space, where we could learn and grow alongside one another in community. And, although academic success was a byproduct, the focus of the programming was investing in us culturally and relationally as more than just a number on paper.

By providing us time, space, and opportunities beyond the classroom, we were able to set goals for our futures– the more ambitious the better– do the groundwork, and achieve them. Whether it meant flying students out to Vancouver for acting auditions or driving them to consulate offices in Edmonton to secure their study-abroad visas, if you were a Dream Catcher with a goal, the Dream Catchers– with support from the Board of Trustees– made it happen.

It is important to recognize the people who paved the way for us to dream big and see it realized. I had many mentors in LCSD over the years, and many are now my colleagues. Over the past ten years– from being a student to now as a teacher– so much at Holy Rosary has changed, however, one thing that hasn't is LCSD's commitment to walking alongside their students and staff, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in good ways that promote whole-person development and authentic intercultural understanding.

Knowing that our LCSD Board of Trustees was supporting those mentors of mine when they were creating opportunities for my peers and I and they are now the same Board of Trustees supporting me in continuing this work, is truly remarkable. The gift of support is something I never take for granted as a professional in LCSD. I see how special this is and how crucial it is to us truly walking the path of Truth and Reconciliation together. We took risks together and we will continue to forge new pathways to all learn to walk in two worlds.

Every day, I walk past the *Kākīsimokamik* on the way to my classroom I am filled with pride because it symbolizes dreams realized and endless future potential.

Leah Boyer



IN CLOSING

The Board of Trustees set the priority to achieve tangible results for students with the recent expansion project at Holy Rosary High School, starting almost a decade ago. This reflects our Board of Trustees ongoing commitment to Truth and Reconciliation as a journey. With the opening of Kākīsimokamik, **Trustees believe there is now a home for the ideal that Treaty people have a place to come together.**

Kākīsimokamik developed out of a specific need, a need for culturally meaningful areas and safe place for all staff and students to ask questions, learn, challenge bias and grow together. This space now supports staff, students and community members in building greater cultural awareness gives us a place for us to advance the 94 Calls to Action.

a) Supporting Indigenous Students and Families:

Consultations with surrounding First Nations' Elders and Junior Elders have revealed that Indigenous students and families living off reserve experience significant disconnection. Elders are concerned for Urban Cree and Metis students, speaking often on how culture loss orphans youth from an understanding of themselves, their language, and their history. Elders understand language as a gateway to the strengths that students will derive from ceremony and spiritual acceptance. Kākīsimokamik will enable us to offer culturally relevant, wholistic and strength-based programs and services geared toward Indigenous students. Culturally relevant educational spaces and curricula are required to help them succeed in their education. *We now have that space.*

b) Building Awareness and Understanding:

Elders see the Centre as a way non-Indigenous students, families, and community members can recognize and appreciate the positive impact that Indigenous understandings of the world bring to Canadian Life. non-Indigenous students will be able to learn Indigenous teachings in an area that supports and strengthens the teachings.

Creating education spaces outside the standard Western format will increase awareness and appreciation of different methods of learning.

c) 94 Calls to Action:

A key element of Reconciliation is offering students a place in their provincial schools that will teach Indigenous culture, tradition, and ceremony. To do so properly requires having the appropriate physical space to deliver Indigenous teachings. Our Indigenous Program Coordinator works with local First Nation leaders to bring in teachers of culture and tradition and to host ceremonies for students and families: Without a culturally meaningful space, the ceremonies and traditions are not fully realized. For example, to make progress on call number 64, which calls for including a segment on Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders in comparative religious studies, we must have the spaces to support these beliefs to truly honour their teachings.

We are all treaty people and advancing treaty relationships are best served by working together. With this spirit, community collaboration is embedded in the heart of our project. The physical space was designed in collaboration with Elder Roger Fox, from Sweetgrass First Nation, Elder Brent Dillion, from Onion Lake First Nation, Elder-in-residence Mike Young, Junior Elder Cynthia Young, and the Onion Lake Elders Council. Collaboration with Sweetgrass Cree Nation and Onion Lake Cree Nations for ceremony teachings and their impact is already in place: They will continue to support our Junior Elders with knowledge and learnings. The Heart of Treaty 6 (HOT 6), a cross Governmental and action group of dozens of agencies and companies from the region, will continue to assist us in doing the work that needs to be done on the path to Truth and Reconciliation.

While the dream for Kākīsimokamik has been achieved, this is just the beginning of the work that needs to be done on the path to Truth and Reconciliation.

We are just getting started!

THANK YOU

It has been an honour sharing our journey into Kākīsimokamik with you.



Our Board Trustees and Senior Management Team

ēkosi (in closing)

We believe the words of one of our HRHS Alumnus, and recent McGill Graduate perfectly encapsulated our vision when he said *"I believe that cultural awareness is one of the most important aspects in education, as it allows for students to gain a better sense of self, and become more confident in their studies. In a nation where pluralism is one of the most illuminating aspects of our society, it's important that we celebrate our differences and promote diversity in our schools."*

-S.B.



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