

# TOOL BOX

FIRST NATIONS PARENTAL AND  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

# TOOL BOX



*As part of its I'M INVOLVED! awareness campaign, the FNEC has developed the Toolbox for school principals in its member communities to promote parental and community involvement in its schools.*

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# PREAMBLE

The *Toolbox* is rooted in testimonials and numerous recommendations published in expert reports and key commissions such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) that have examined living conditions among the First Nations of Canada. These commissions, which gave members of First Nations official tribunes where they could share their stories, experiences and realities, also shed light on these difficult years and revealed the devastating effects that are still felt today. The situation must change. To establish an egalitarian relationship, it must be built on recognition, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

*Among the calls to action for education, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada recommends “Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.”*  
(Education, art. 10, par. vi).

Historically, family and community have always played a leading role in teaching and educating First Nations children. This responsibility was torn away from them during the era of residential schools. The desire to completely assimilate First Nations legitimized the use of immoral methods. The time when school contributed to decimating Aboriginals, the time when they were taught the greatness of Canada to the detriment of their cultural identity is over. The time has come to repair the damage: we have to solve the world’s problems one day at a time, one child at a time, and one parent at a time through instruction

that values tradition, history and pride and a partnership based on respect and equality. We are back to square one: education.

Parents need to be re-established in their rightful place in the education process and the necessary conditions must be put in place to enable this responsibility to be echoed in our schools.

For several years, and more recently through the standards guide for First Nations education collectively produced by the First Nations Education Council and its member communities, the FNEC has called attention to the importance of doing everything we can to adequately include parents as primary caregivers in our education system.

This *Toolbox* created by the FNEC for parental and community involvement will help you put your action plan in motion on a daily basis. It includes information, training workshops and ways to raise awareness that will add to your initiatives to create a welcoming and caring school climate that meets the needs of parents and their children and that respects their culture.

Through its actions and dedication, your school team will contribute to creating this environment conducive to reconciliation and giving parents the opportunity to become key partners for student success.

# TOOLBOX CONTENT



# INTRODUCTION

As part of its I'm Involved! awareness campaign, the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) is proud to present the *Toolbox* for school principals to promote parental and community involvement in our schools.

At the 19<sup>th</sup> First Nations Education Conference in 2009, parents expressed an interest in finding ways to improve parental involvement and support their children in school.

Even though the FNEC has always assisted parents through initiatives conducted with schools, the communities present at the June 2013 general assembly agreed that parental and community involvement was a priority and that it should be an area developed as part of the First Nations education governance project.

A working committee, made up of education experts from the FNEC and its member communities, was created with the mandate to study the subject and develop parental and community involvement standards which were approved by the Assembly in September 2014 (see the [standards guide Supporting Strong First Nation Education Governance](#)).

As part of the effort to help the communities meet the parental and community involvement standards established through the First Nations education governance project, the FNEC launched the I'm Involved! campaign in June 2015, to raise awareness to parental and community involvement.

The main objective of this campaign was to make parental and community involvement a priority in our communities by placing value on children, the role of parents, volunteering, school and the people who work there, as well as the different ways children learn.

The *Toolbox* has been created by the FNEC to fulfill this objective. We hope that you will be able to become familiar with the contents and find all the information your school team needs.



### Parental and community involvement

Parents play a key role in their child's education. By placing value on school, showing an interest and participating in their child's daily activities at school, parents show their child how important education is. All these elements have a significant influence on a student's motivation and success.

It is **proven**\* that parental and community involvement has a positive impact on children:

- Better grades
- More success
- Better attendance
- Improved behaviour
- Increased motivation
- More self-esteem

The community can be involved by establishing partnerships with the school. Anyone can get projects off the ground and contribute their assets and experience to the school including community members in general, businesses, cultural organizations, social, employment, recreational, or health services.

It is up to the school to put initiatives in place for the community to encourage members to play a more active role. What is the status of parental and community involvement in your school? That is the question school principals should be investigating.

To encourage parental and community involvement, the school must show parents and members of the community that their participation is welcome and very important. The *Toolbox* has been developed within this context to give you tips and suggestions on the different aspects of parental and community involvement in your school.

*What is the status of parental and community involvement in your school?*

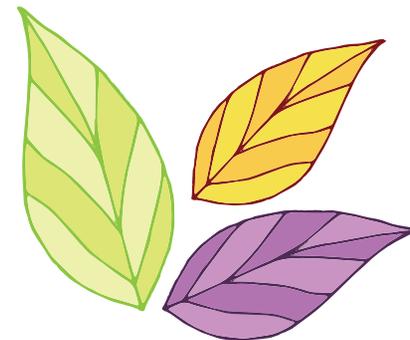
### **Roles and responsibilities of school principals**

Considering that school is a catalyst for parental and community involvement, school principals play an essential role. They are required to:

- exercise good leadership over teachers to establish appropriate conditions and a climate conducive to teaching, learning and commitment;
- establish initiatives that give students the best conditions possible during the course of their schooling;
- emphasize the importance of welcoming parents and offer them their rightful place in the school and the community;
- raise awareness among parents and the community to the importance of their participation so that it can be developed further;
- hold awareness sessions for teachers, and new teachers on occasion;
- establish a two-way communication system (school-home, home-school);
- encourage partnerships with community organizations.

### **Objectives of the Toolbox**

- Support the leadership of school principals in promoting and developing parental and community involvement.
- Gain a better understanding of parents and students in the community.
- Improve communication between the school and parents.
- Provide tools developed by the FNEC to help schools and communities meet parental and community involvement standards.
- Strengthen parenting skills and build the capacity of communities through training.
- Encourage the development of involvement structures.
- Support schools, parents and communities in implementing a parental and community involvement policy.



### Using the Toolbox

The *Toolbox* can be used in a variety of ways in relation to parental and community involvement.

To take full advantage of its tools and improve parental and community involvement in your school, **we strongly recommend that the principal be the person responsible for parental and community involvement. If not, the principal is responsible for appointing someone else in the school.**

- Communicate with a parental and community involvement counsellor at the FNEC to schedule a meeting on the contents of the *Toolbox*.
- With the counsellor's support, establish an action plan that includes the involvement objectives you want to work on.
- Invite the school team to a presentation on the action plan.
- Plan monthly follow-up meetings with the counsellor so that you can have support in reaching your involvement objectives.

- Go to the Toolbox for ideas or to find something you can use; for example, awareness tools developed by the FNEC (found under [publications](#) tab), and order the ones that you want to distribute in your school. You can also adapt and personalize the contents of the *Toolbox* depending on your school's needs.
- Give the school team easy access to the *Toolbox*.

The FNEC is always available to help. You can contact us at:

Telephone: 418-842-7672

Toll-free: 1-855-842-7672

Fax: 418-842-9988

E-mail: [info@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:info@cepn-fnec.com)

For more on the FNEC, visit our website:

[www.cepn-fnec.com](http://www.cepn-fnec.com)





# SUPPORT

## Welcoming and Supporting Parents, Elders and Community Members

### Impartial welcome respecting values and culture

According to Merriam-Webster

*Welcome means «to greet hospitably and with courtesy or cordiality; to accept with pleasure the occurrence or presence of.»*

*Support means «to promote the interests or cause of; to keep something going.»*

The above definitions share several notions including welcome, support, empathy, availability, positive attitude, assistance, and accessibility. In this perspective:

**Welcoming** corresponds to the measures put in place to establish a positive relationship with a parent right from the start.

**Supporting** focusses more on the relationship aspect where the parties make themselves available to help each other. The characteristics of supporting include openness and respect for the individual and his or her capabilities.

In a school or a community, staff members must be open to parents; for example, greeting them with a smile, showing empathy and care, and inviting them to join in the education of their child. In addition, to be able to welcome parents with respect for their cultural diversity, the school team must have an accurate understanding of the reality in the community.



### School principal's leadership

The duties of a principal in a First Nations school represent a particular challenge and reality. Since school is an essential part of the community with many cultural particularities, the education representative must inform the principal of educational goals and must incorporate culture in the school.

In this context, the principal plays a pivotal role and has a significant influence on the school team in terms of education administration and the implementation of parental and community involvement. As a result, the principal is in charge of welcoming and supporting teachers, and raising their awareness to the reality in the community so that they can easily integrate this rich cultural and traditional environment. Studies show that a principal's leadership is closely linked to the level of parental and community involvement in the school:



### School leadership

*At this point I believe it is important to discuss school leadership and its link to parent involvement. From my own experience of 15 years as a school principal in the public system, I have found the amount of parent involvement in a school is directly related to the leadership provided by the principal. When a principal views parents as interfering in «our» profession, the parents are more likely to become hostile, fight the system or just stay away. Principals, who believe parents should be involved in their children's education, develop policies and programs that encourage meaningful participation. This results in a sense of community with the staff and parents and builds trusting relationships. [Joanne Pearson, Christina \(2007\)](#)*

Aiming for a common approach between the school and the community, a consultative and ongoing process is suggested to establish a community profile and conscientiously choose the appropriate direction to take in this context.

The information gathered through this process will be used as leverage for the implementation of measures at the school, and will facilitate collaboration and communication between the school team and parents.

### Community Profile

Everything I need to know about the community to ensure parental and community involvement is respectful of the school's culture and values.



### **School team awareness session**

Staff members must be aware of the reality in the community to which they are committed, and the school principal is responsible for explaining the proposed approach to teachers.

Here are some measures the principal can put in place to raise awareness among members of the school team:

- Ask a resource person in the community to talk to teachers about the community's history.
- Get in touch with the language and cultural centre to give the school team the opportunity to take part in a traditional cultural activity in the community's native language.
- Organize a guided tour of the community for teachers with volunteer parents as guides.
- Encourage teachers to create a welcoming activity for parents at the beginning of the school year by giving them a budget for this purpose.
- Create a mentoring program with the language and culture teacher to inform teachers of the reality in the community.
- Set aside time to discuss the success the school has had with parents, the community, and cultural initiatives.



### **Protocols in force in the community**

Each community has its own protocols that must be taken into consideration. The school must be aware of those that relate to parental and community involvement. The following protocol concerning Elders is provided as an example and to show you how important it is to be familiar with the protocols and respect them.

#### *Elders*

*Elders are men and women regarded as the keepers and teachers of an Aboriginal nation's oral tradition and knowledge. Different Elders hold different gifts. Their contributions to schools and classrooms can be significant when they are involved in meaningful ways such as bringing traditional ceremonies and teachings into the school or classroom; providing advice to parents, students, teachers and school administrators; providing accurate information about Aboriginal heritage and Aboriginal communities; and acting as a bridge between the school and the community.*

*Elders are considered vital to the survival of Aboriginal cultures and the transmission of cultural knowledge is an essential part of the preservation and promotion of cultural traditions and their protocols. Elders are always to be treated with great respect and honour*  
(Our Words, Our Ways, Alberta Education, pg. 71)

Before approaching an Elder, you should be familiar with the protocol which can vary from one community to another. To do so, you should get in touch with a resource person in the community.

#### *Approaching an elder*

Approaching an Elder should be considered a special opportunity. You must be patient and willing to take your time to be with this person who has the knowledge, and be open to the Elder's teachings.

Protocol usually requires the offering of tobacco to the Elder. At this meeting, the Elder will indicate whether he or she is willing to accept your request. To do so, your request must be stated clearly, and in a respectful, open and honest way.

If the Elder accepts the tobacco from you, he or she is accepting your request.

### *Welcoming elders in the classroom*

Since Elders are respected community members, they should be looked after and their needs met by:

- ensuring that the Elder's transportation is taken care of;
- offering the Elder a meal;
- covering the Elder's costs.

### *In the classroom*

- Review good listening practices with the students
- Have breaks so the Elder can relax
- Provide a light lunch and serve the Elder first
- Let the Elder speak without interruption

### *Thanking the elder*

At the end of the visit, thank the Elder formally. At the same time the students can express their appreciation for the visit. In keeping with tradition, a thank you gift should be presented to the Elder; for example, a blanket, slippers, food basket.





### **Parent-teacher meetings:**

Important meetings (beginning of the school year, follow-up and report cards, individualized education plans)

### **Meeting the needs of parents, welcoming them, and supporting them in finding solutions**

#### *Beginning of the school year*

To further meet the needs of parents and encourage their presence in school, the school principal has to put measures in place to facilitate discussion.

#### *For example:*

The principal can give each teacher a budget to organize three activities involving parents during the course of the school year.

Parents should be invited to the school at the beginning of the school year so that a positive home-school relationship can be established.

#### *For example:*

The teacher can invite parents to the classroom for lunch and spend time getting to know them.

This is a good time to fill out the questionnaire [Getting to Know the Parents](#) with the parents to initiate communication and identify their strengths.

### *Follow-up and report cards*

We suggest teachers take time prior to the meeting to think about what he or she is going to say so that he or she is well prepared to discuss the situation with the parents. ([Parents meeting](#))

When follow-up needs to be done with a student's parents, the following recommendations should be considered:

- Speak plainly
- Acknowledge the role of parents
- Remain objective
- Thank the parents for coming and tell them how much it is appreciated
- Ask the parents questions to make sure the situation is clearly understood
- Ask the parents for their support by taking their situation into account
- Set specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic and time-based (SMART) goals
- Focus on problem solving
- Include the parents in finding solutions
- Show respect and empathy towards the parents
- Individualized education plans

### *What is sometimes heard from parents of special needs students:*

- They feel helpless as to how they can contribute to their child's education.
- They often had a difficult time at school marked by bad experiences.
- They feel inferior to teachers or other parents.
- They easily feel isolated and judged.
- They sometimes have the impression that it's their fault.
- They are unaware of their parental rights within the context of school.
- They think that their point of view is not given enough consideration.



### *Prior to the individualized education plan meeting:*

- Invite the parents when they are available.
- Suggest the parents attend the meeting accompanied by someone they trust.
- Reassure the parents by telling them you will find ways to help their child together.
- If the parents do not want to come to the school, suggest somewhere they feel more comfortable.

### *During the meeting:*

- Have someone from the community who is fluent in the native language present to translate if needed.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting.
- Encourage the parents to take part in developing measures to put in place.
- Describe the positive impact the accommodations will have.
- Bring up the subject of assessment and mention how it could help the child.
- Give the parents the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns they may have.
- Clearly outline what the parents can do to help their child.

- Give the parents some tools to help them support their child.
- Do a modeling activity with the parents.
- Provide a list of educational material; for example, links to audio books, websites featuring learning exercises.
- Mention that you are always available to answer their questions.

### *After the meeting:*

- Follow up with parents
- Encourage efforts made
- Highlight the positive



### Working with absentee parents

If parents do not attend the first day of school or meetings they are asked to participate in, we suggest you take concrete action to ensure the child's success is not put in jeopardy, and that in time, these parents become more involved.

Since the parents are absent, the school team has to be mobilized to support the child and help him or her achieve success. However, the school team has to be patient and persistent in its attempts to encourage the presence of parents through a variety of communication methods.

#### For example:

A staff member can go to the parent's or guardian's home.

When you run into the parents in the community, say hello and take the opportunity to speak highly of their child. Invite them to come to the school and tell them they are welcome in the school anytime.



These tips can also help you encourage more families to participate in parent-teacher meetings:

- Schedule meetings before mealtimes and serve a light snack.
- Alternate the time of day for meetings - some during the day and others in the evening.
- Provide a daycare service.
- Provide transportation to parents who could not participate otherwise.
- Ensure short and straightforward meetings.
- Communicate frequently with parents via the children's school planner, email, personal invitation and phone. Encourage two-way communication.
- Share invitations with grandparents and other family members.
- Create a "buddy system" to encourage participation and knowledge sharing.

Henderson, A. T., et Berla, N. (1994). *A New Generation of Evidence : The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, Washington, DC, Center for Law and Education.

Epstein, Joyce L. et coll. (2002-2005). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships : Your Handbook for Action*, 2e éd, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press.

Deslandes, R. (2004). «Les conditions nécessaires à la mise en place pour assurer une collaboration entre la famille, l'école et la communauté» *Vie pédagogique*, 133, 41-45.

# COMMUNICATION

## Tips and tricks

### **Getting to know students and parents in the community better: the importance of communication**

When we talk about communication with parents, we often think of daily messages written in the school planner and correspondence in general. However, communication is much more than that. For First Nations schools, it is an opportunity to reach out to parents and get to know them better, to build bridges and forge relationships.

Today's schools cannot ignore the painful aftermath of residential schools and the trauma that this chapter has caused for generations of First Nations. For this reason, the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) is inviting school principals and teachers think about how they can improve communication with parents to have a better understanding of certain behaviours or reactions from students or parents.

In addition to problems related to residential schools, First Nations have their own ways of learning, doing things, and reacting to their world around them. Therefore, it is important for anyone running a school or teaching students to fully understand these differences and take them into account on a daily basis.

In this context, this section provides you with some ideas and tools to get to know families in the community better and improve communication between the home and school.

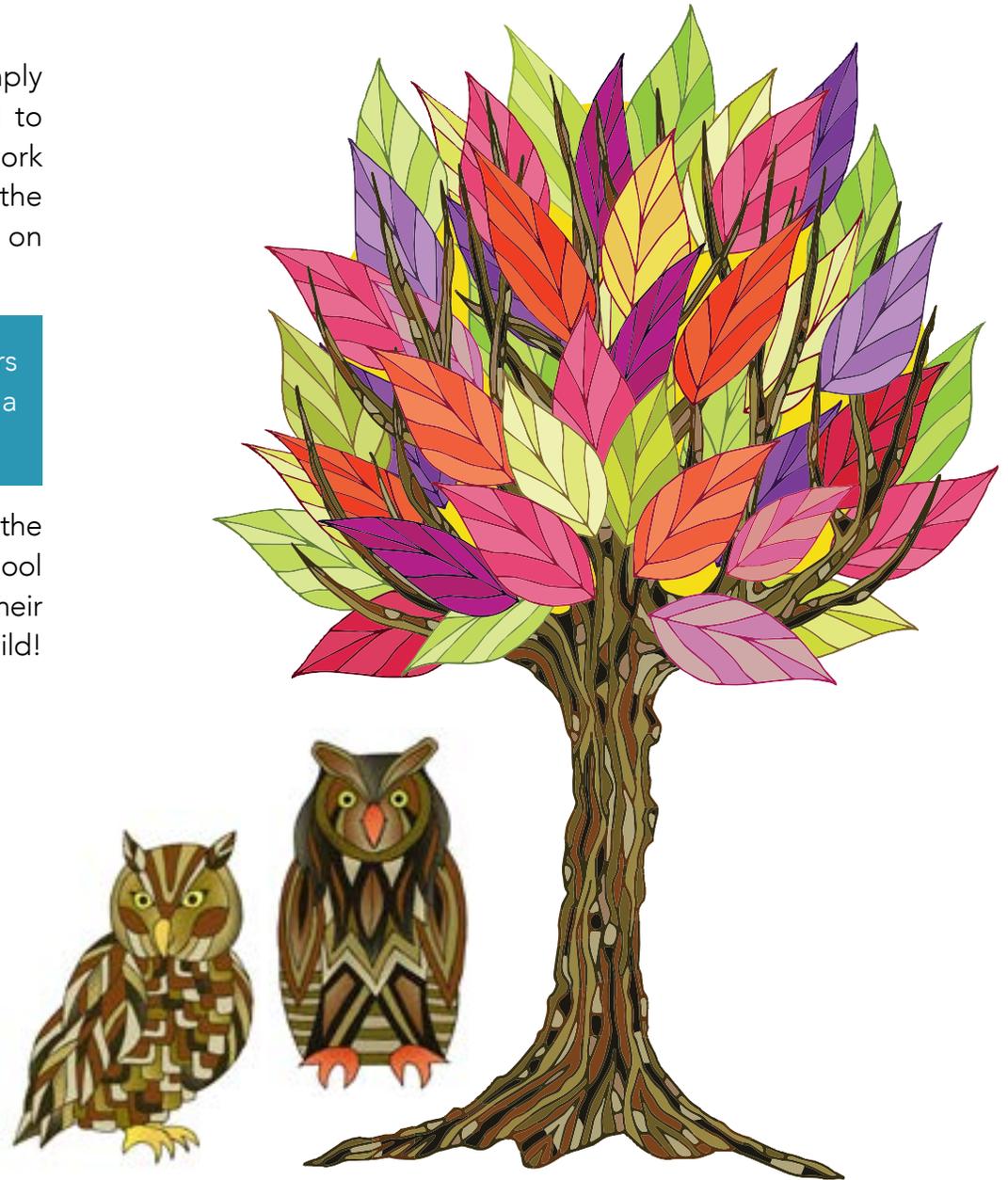


### **Establishing partnerships with parents**

The home-school relationship must go beyond simply communicating information on what is going on at school to achieve a real partnership in which parents and school staff work together on reaching shared objectives for the well-being of the child. This kind of home-school partnership must be based on trust, mutual respect, acceptance, and equality.

The determination and commitment of school staff members contribute to creating harmonious relationships and a welcoming, positive and safe climate for parents.

Home-school partnerships are more likely to be forged when the school implements strategies to encourage them. The school must therefore reach out to families and show parents that their involvement is essential, as much for the school as it is for their child!



Here are a few ways these partnerships can be developed:

- Appoint a lead resource person in the school who could be the point of contact between the school and parents (for example, a liaison officer serving as a facilitator).
- Conduct surveys to get a better understanding of parents. [Examples are available in the appendix.](#)
- Have teachers call parents at the start of the school year to introduce themselves to facilitate future communication and work with students.
- Make a list of the activities planned by the school for the year and ask parents to check off the ones they want to volunteer for or attend.
- Encourage family-oriented activities to be held at school—during which school matters will not be addressed—to build relationships.
- To make the school more open and welcoming, organize a community meal at the start of the school year for parents and let them know they are welcome at the school.
- Do not give students homework if there is an activity or meeting being held that evening at school.
- Provide a babysitting service or games during activities with parents.
- Publish student activities and achievements in the community newspaper.
- Introduce students to a variety of professions and know-how by inviting a parent or a community member to give a presentation to the class (cultural transmission).
- Organize a board game tournament for students and parents.
- Organize a walk with students and parents on a unifying theme (peace, Global Day of Parents, Earth Day, National Child Day, etc.).



### **Establishing partnerships with the community**

The school can work with the community in a variety of ways by establishing partnerships with local businesses, cultural organizations, social, employment, recreational and health services.

Here are a few of the advantages of establishing partnerships with the community:

- More services for students (recreation, health, nutrition).
- Access to skills (resource persons for conferences).
- Sponsorship.
- Communication.
- Passing down knowledge (Elders to students).
- Strengthening ties with community members.
- Making young people aware of the assistance, services and job opportunities available in the community.



Partnership opportunities can be created in many ways, for example by:

- setting up a basic cooking workshop with health services to introduce young people to their nation's traditional dishes;
- creating an "employee of the day" in various organizations in the community to introduce young people to a variety of career options or industries;
- giving community businesses the opportunity to sponsor some of the activities organized by the school; for example, a business could donate juice for a sporting event and attend or volunteer for the event;
- inviting community members to take part in an evening of storytelling with Elders;
- making facilities in the school like the gymnasium or the library available to community members.

Schools and the community can also target certain problems and work on them together by getting some initiatives off the ground, for example:

- Anti-bullying campaigns
- Tackling drug addiction and alcoholism
- Dealing with vandalism and theft
- Violence prevention

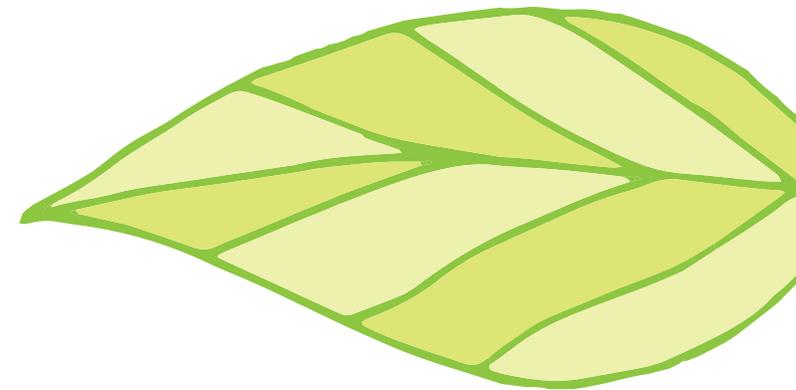
### Tips on parent-teacher interviews

The following tips can make parent-teacher interviews more effective!

- Call parents instead of sending them an e-mail or a letter to invite them to the meeting. It may be more effective in getting them to attend.
- Choose a meeting style that is not intimidating for parents. Roundtables for example encourage participation and teamwork.
- Make sure that school staff members do not outnumber parents.
- Be cooperative and use language parents can understand.
- Make sure that parents are aware of the subjects that will be discussed.
- Begin and end the meeting with positive points.
- Tell parents that their support is essential to their child's education.
- Avoid making derogatory comments and criticizing.
- Use "we" when solutions are jointly developed.
- Make parents feel that what they are saying is important by reiterating what they said and acknowledging that you understand.

Despite the school's best efforts to communicate with parents, some may not attend the interview. The school must continue its attempts to convince them to participate. Here are a few suggestions:

- Try and find a lead resource person in the school who could be the point of contact between parents and the school.
- If parents feel uncomfortable, tell them the interview could be held off school grounds.
- Use surveys to find out how parents would like the interviews to be conducted.
- Remind parents that sometimes they are the ones best able to find solutions and that their participation is needed to work as a team.
- Above all, continue implementing programs the child needs.



Sometimes, the school principal has to get involved in the situation. Here are a few ways difficult situations can be handled:

- Shake hands with the parents when you join the interview and introduce yourself.
- Make sure everyone has a seat.
- Listen carefully. Do not interrupt the parents.
- Let them know that you are confident the situation can be improved.
- Apologize if you or a staff member has made a mistake.
- Take cultural differences into consideration when you communicate with the parents.
- Find a way to work together. Have some suggestions ready for the parents.
- Find solutions together. Put them in writing and give everyone a copy.
- End the interview on a positive note.

### Volunteering

What is volunteering?

«A volunteer is someone who freely offers his or her time and skills to perform a function or task for a cause, organization or individual.

A volunteer is also someone who wants to be helpful and gain a sense of accomplishment while having fun with others.»

Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

### How to encourage parents to volunteer

To create a pool of volunteers, you can describe the kind of volunteer the school is looking for, make a list of the activities planned for the year, and ask parents to check off the ones that interest them. Calling people may be a more effective way to recruit volunteers than sending e-mails or letters.

Why do volunteers get involved?

- for the cause
- to feel useful
- for their personal development
- to feel part of a team

In addition to these elements, the volunteer recruitment letter should:

- clearly explain the project and its goals in detail;
- provide detailed information on what needs to be done (description of the duties, time, place and duration of the activity).

A sample [recruitment letter is in the appendix](#). You can modify it to suit your needs. You should respond quickly to interested parents to avoid letting an opportunity for them to get involved go by.



### *Types of volunteering*

To encourage parents to volunteer, you may need to make some suggestions.

Here is a list that you can adapt to suit your needs:

- Help out in the classroom (hang up or take down students' work, read to children, assist with scientific experiments, help keep the classroom website up-to-date, etc.).
- Lead cultural activities or crafting workshops.
- Help out in the library (shelve or repair books).
- Help conduct activities (make costumes, props and sets, prepare documents, prepare snacks, etc.).
- Provide homework help.
- Supervise at lunch time.
- Lead activities before or after school.
- Prepare a nature class.
- Organize school parties (back-to-school, Halloween, Christmas, Easter, etc.).
- Organize sporting events.
- Prepare Christmas hampers.
- Assist the Breakfast Club.
- Comfort students at vaccination time.
- Help out during the school photo shoot.
- Organize donation drives.
- Participate in coordinating the work of other volunteers.
- Make minor repairs (toys, sewing, etc.).
- Help students organize their work or put on their winter coats and boots.
- Organize activities for the children on professional development days or take part in them.



### *Recognizing volunteers*

Acknowledging the work volunteers do is a good way to show them they are a valued part of the school team. Gratitude can be shown towards volunteers at a specific time of year (for example, during National Volunteer Week in April), or throughout the year. Here are a few ways to let your volunteers know that their work is appreciated:

- Invite them to lunch or dinner.
- Present them with a certificate of appreciation at the graduation ceremony.
- Give them a gift certificate.
- Write a thank you message and publish it in the community newspaper or broadcast it on community radio.
- Give them a thank you card signed by the students.
- Send all the parents a message showcasing how much work was done by volunteers during the course of the year.
- Organize a tribute to the school's volunteers during a community event.
- Give them a letter of recommendation.

Here is an example of a word of thanks for volunteers:

With your energy, support, and interest, you are helping the community and the school come together to create a welcoming and dynamic environment for our students. Whether you sit on committee, lend a hand at the library, contribute to a school project, assist teachers in class, chaperone students on field trips, or have taken any other kind of initiative, your commitment makes the everyday life of students and teachers much easier. You assist in creating a place where students have the opportunity to grow and develop. We are very lucky to be able to count on you, and we want to show you our appreciation for the time you give to us and your dedication. On behalf of all the students and school staff, please accept our humble thanks.





# TRAINING

## **FNEC Training Courses**

Parents and First Nations community members play a central role in school life and contribute to defining and achieving the academic success of young people.

*Parental and community involvement is therefore crucial for student success.*

To better equip parents and the community to play an active role in the student success process, the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) has developed training courses that can be given in your community or via videoconference by its parental and community involvement counsellors.



The FNEC is currently offering the following courses:

### Parental Involvement

**SUMMARY:** This training course, primarily for parents, aims to shed light on the roles and responsibilities of parents in their children's schooling by suggesting different ways parents can participate in their children's education at home or volunteer at school. Numerous approaches to learning are suggested to encourage children. Through this course, parents will come to know their strengths and added value to community development. They will also gain an understanding of the positive impact they have on their children when they show an interest in their education and communicate how important education is. Whether they take part at home or at school as a volunteer, parents are essential.

### Topics covered:

- A) The different types of parental involvement
- B) The role of parents in supporting their child
- C) Volunteering
- D) Parents committee

### Expected results:

- A) Increased awareness of the role invested parents play
- B) Better understanding of school life
- C) Increased parental interest in getting involved at school

This half-day training course is available on request.



### Parents Committee

**SUMMARY:** First Nations schools can choose the kind of parental involvement structure that meets the needs and aspirations of their community members. Participants will have the opportunity to study the possibilities for parental involvement and develop the aspects they want to prioritize. The FNEC's parental and community involvement counsellors use examples and discussion to guide participants in identifying which approach best meets their aspirations.

#### Topics covered:

- A) Why create a parents committee?
- B) Parental involvement structures
- C) Areas of parental involvement

#### Expected results:

- A) Better understanding of the purpose of a parents committee
- B) Readiness to create a parental involvement structure
- C) Increased parental involvement at school

This half-day training course is available on request.



### Parental and Community Involvement Policy Development

**SUMMARY:** This training course, given by one of the FNEC's parental and community involvement counsellors, is for community members who have progressed to the stage where they want to develop an official parental and community involvement policy for their school. The stages, objectives, consultations, work plan development, delegation of responsibilities, mandates, values, partnerships, as well as the drafting and approval processes will be addressed and discussed. The FNEC has developed all the required reference documents to facilitate the drafting process, and its parental and community involvement counsellors are available throughout this process to support the various stakeholders.

#### Topics covered:

- A) Community needs analysis of parental involvement (consultation)
- B) Values
- C) Work plan development
- D) Responsibilities
- E) Mandates
- F) Drafting process

#### Expected results:

- A) Community drive
- B) Taking responsibility for drafting
- C) Implementation of an official parental and community involvement policy

The initial one-day training course is given by one of the FNEC's parental and community involvement counsellors.

The FNEC has developed other training courses on how to initiate discussion, gain a better understanding of certain stages of child development, using proactive measures of discipline, etc. These courses are also given by one of the FNEC's parental and community involvement counsellors.



### Training courses offered

- **Basic Principles:** The birth of my child. Who is he/she?
- **Early Childhood:** Taking part in preschool child development.
- **Childhood:** Key principles to understand and apply.
- **Principles of Discipline:** What is discipline?
- **Parenting Styles:** What kind of parent am I?
- **Feelings:** Identifying, understanding and expressing them.
- **Conflicts:** Myths and realities.
- **Conflict Management Styles:** Learning from conflicts to improve communication.
- **Adolescence:** How to help my child get through this time.
- **Parental Affirmation:** Asserting myself without feeling guilty.

For more information, contact Eve Lapointe,  
[elapointe@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:elapointe@cepn-fnec.com), at 418-842-7672.



# PARENTS COMMITTEE

## Parents Committee

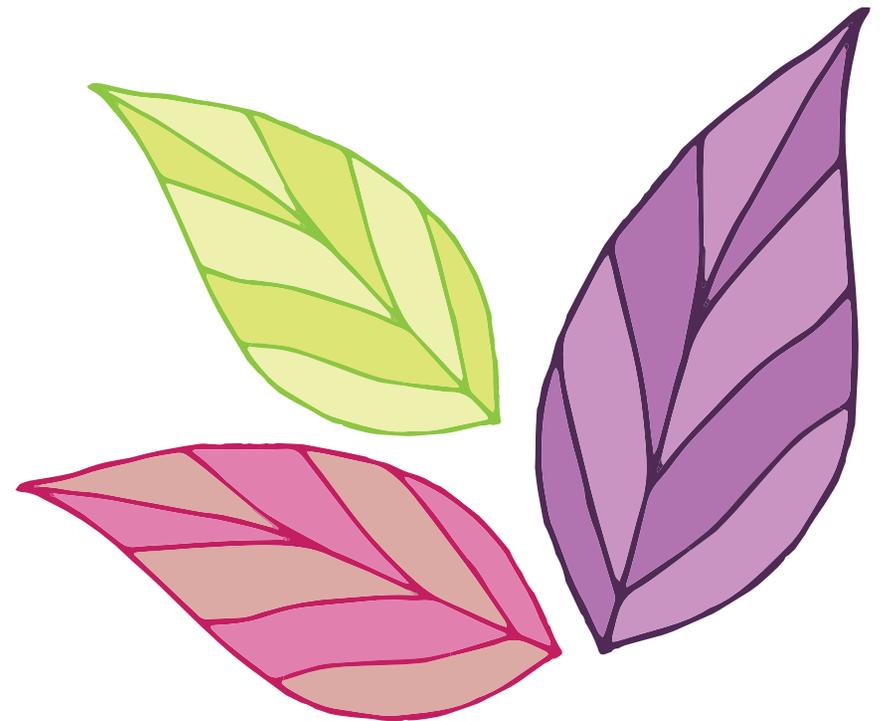
Setting up a parents committee to support the school's efforts and form partnerships between parents and the community is an important undertaking for any school whether it is in a remote community or an urban area.

The small population, greater parental responsibilities, family break-ups, and the lack of understanding of the value of participating in a parents committee among our communities are factors that make setting up a parents committee a difficult task.

That is why it is essential to begin by thoroughly understanding the needs of parents and to offer awareness workshops and training courses that acknowledge their concerns.

Once these stages have been passed, parents are ready to form a committee they can identify with. After that, they can decide what they want the committee to accomplish and then make it all official.

To do so, the FNEC is giving parents access to a wide range of documents and workshops that will guide them through the drafting stage of their committee's terms of reference.



### **Training courses offered:**

#### *Parents Committee Terms of Reference*

**Summary:** All the stages in the process to reach the final objective are shown and explained to participants.

#### **Expected results:**

- Notions of the terms of reference will be clarified
- Approval and development of the terms of reference

#### *Action plan*

**Summary:** This training course reveals instructions on how to implement actions targeted by the parents committee. Each stage in the process is identified including designating project leaders, the time frame, objectives, target outcomes, etc.

**Expected results:** By establishing their own action plan, participants will be able to reach the primary goal of giving children in their community every possible opportunity to succeed in school.

**Expected results:** Les participants sont en mesure de dresser leur propre plan d'action et ainsi d'atteindre l'objectif premier, qui est d'offrir aux enfants de leur communauté toutes les chances possibles d'atteindre la réussite scolaire qu'ils souhaitent.

Considering that the drafting stage is crucial, sample terms of reference have been developed to guide parents in writing their own terms of reference based on concrete examples. All the stages in the process are documented. They can simply modify some aspects of the terms of reference so that they genuinely reflect their aspirations.

The parental and community involvement counsellor can answer your questions. You can get in touch with Eve Lapointe, [elapointe@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:elapointe@cepn-fnec.com), at 418-842-7672.





# POLICY

## Parental and Community Involvement Policy

### Context

To promote the implementation of involvement policies in the communities, the First Nations Education Council has developed reference documents that enable the communities to write their own policy without having to start from scratch.

### The following documents are available:

#### *Standards guide*

As part of asserting their self-determination, member communities assigned the FNEC the mandate to develop a concrete process to fulfill their desire for healthy governance.

The [Supporting Strong First Nation Education Governance Standards](#), Guide, the document on which this process is based, enables its users to become aware of the direction aimed for and the specific areas that will be covered in the course of this process. For example, you can find out how to effectively manage parental and community involvement in Chapter 6 of the Standards Guide.

### *Sample terms of reference*

This [detailed sample](#) will help you produce your own parental involvement policy. Each stage in the drafting process is included. A sample is suggested to cut down on drafting time, not to mention that a complete training course is given by the parental and community involvement counsellors to help communities take over the policy development process. During this process you can call on them for additional information. The sample included in this document is what is the most extensive. You can organize your policy to suit your needs. It must represent your legitimate aspirations.

### *Service offer*

The FNEC's parental and community involvement counsellors are available to work with you at each step in the policy development process. Whether you need advice or training, or any time you need us there, we will be proud to join your team.

For further information, contact the FNEC at [info@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:info@cepn-fnec.com) or 418-842-7672.



# PUBLICATIONS

## **I'm involved!\* brochure**

The FNEC produced this document as part of the parental and community involvement project. It contains short positive statements encouraging parents to actively participate in their child's education.



## **Did you know?\*** leaflets

These reference documents, published in English and French, deal with specific subjects like reading, homework, parental involvement, and suggest little things that can contribute to improving the family environment and add a dose of fun and pride to student learning. These leaflets were a prelude to the newsletter.

- To download the flyer « Did you know? » Homework, [click here](#).
- To download the flyer « Did you know? » Summer reading, [click here](#).
- To download the flyer « Did you know? » Six types of parental involvement, [click here](#).



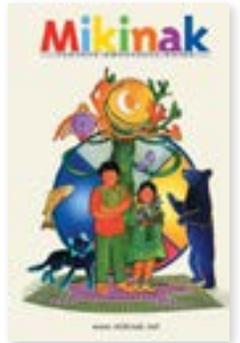
## **Newsletter**

This monthly publication created specifically for parents by the FNEC's parental and community involvement team is distributed through different channels (mail, e-mail, Facebook, website). Each newsletter addresses a different subject related to parental and community involvement. Subjects are presented in short articles with web links readers can explore to find out more information.



## **MIKINAK\*Teacher Awareness Guide**

This tool was produced by the FNEC in partnership with INAC and Quebec's Ministry of Education. Considering that the transition from elementary to secondary school is often difficult for First Nations students, this document was designed to help teachers and school staff welcome, support and supervise these students as they progress through school.



★ Order form: Our [form](#) can be used to order all of the documents presented here.

## Suggested reading and subject-based references

We have compiled a list of the subjects addressed in each monthly newsletter and added some web links where you can find supplementary information on each subject. This introductory list will enable you to further investigate the subjects that interest you.

Enjoy!

### Parental involvement

- English [For me as a Parent](#)
- French [Moi comme parent](#)
- Fédération des comités de parents du Québec
  - English [Getting the Facts About Parent Participation in the School](#)
  - French [Pour se faire une bonne idée de la participation des parents à l'école](#)
- People for Education
  - English [Parent involvement in education](#)
  - French [La participation des parents](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Education
  - English [How do I get involved?](#)
  - French [Comment les parents peuvent-ils s'impliquer?](#)
- Ontario Directors
  - English [Parent Engagement is Important to Student Success](#)
  - French [L'engagement parental est important pour le succès des élèves](#)
- First Nations Parents Club
  - English [First Nations Parents Club](#)

### Volunteering

- Fédération des comités de parents du Québec.
  - French [Le comité de parents, pivot de la participation parentale](#)
- Kids Health
  - English only [What Are the Benefits of Getting Involved?](#)
- Today's Parents
  - English only [25 doable ways to volunteer at your kid's school](#)
- wikiHow
  - English only [Expert Reviewed How to Be a Good Parent Volunteer at Your Child's School](#)
- Réseau de l'action bénévole du Québec
  - French only [Pourquoi faire du bénévolat?](#)

### Childhood

- Naître et grandir
  - English [Naître et grandir](#)
  - French [Naître et grandir](#)
- Government of Canada
  - English [Childhood and Adolescence](#)
  - French [Division de l'enfance et de l'adolescence](#)

- 👉 Tshakapesh  
[French only](#)
- 👉 Educatout  
[French only](#)
- 👉 CSSSPNQL  
[English and French](#)
- 👉 Let's play together  
[English only](#)

### Adolescence

- 👉 [French only](#) [Parent Estrie](#)
- 👉 [French only](#) [Toutsurmonado](#)
- 👉 University of Delaware  
[English only](#)
- 👉 Healthy Children  
[English only](#)

### Student success

- 👉 Toulouse, Pamela Rose.  
[English](#) [Beyond Shadows: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Student Success. Canadian Teacher's Federation.](#)  
[French](#) [Au-delà des ombres : Réussite des élèves des Premières Nations, des Métis et des Inuits. Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants.](#)
- 👉 Ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario et Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens. [À l'écoute de chaque élève grâce à la différenciation pédagogique.](#)
- 👉 Naître et grandir  
[English](#)  
[French](#)
- 👉 Alloprof Parents  
[French only](#)
- 👉 Learn Quebec  
[English only](#)
- 👉 Carrefour Education  
[French only](#)
- 👉 Soyons complices  
[French only](#)
- 👉 Choix Avenir  
[French only](#)
- 👉 Fédération des comités de parents  
[English](#)  
[French](#)

- Persévérance scolaire des jeunes autochtones

**English**

**French**

- Building student success

**English only**

- CTREQ

**French only**

### Parent-school relationship

- **French only** Ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario. [Partenariat avec les parents : Politique de participation des parents pour les écoles de l'Ontario.](#)
- **French only** Menand, Véronique. [Collaborer : un jeu d'enfant ? : regards des parents de familles vulnérables sur les relations famille-école](#)(Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Montréal).
- **French only** Ministère de la Famille. *Favoriser le développement global des jeunes enfants au Québec : une vision partagée pour des interventions concertées*, p. 17-20.
- Ministère de l'Éducation du Manitoba. **English** [Working Together, Familise, Schools, Communities](#)  
**French** [Travailler ensemble : familles, écoles, communautés.](#)
- Alberta Education.  
**English** [Our Words, Our Ways Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners.](#)  
**French** [Nos mots, nos façons : enseigner aux apprenants des Premières nations, des Métis et des Inuits.](#)

- **French only** Conseil en Éducation des Premières Nations. [Guide de sensibilisation MIKINAK.](#)
- **English only** Henderson, A. T., et Berla, N. (1994). *A New Generation of Evidence : The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, Washington, DC, Center for Law and Education.
- **English only** Epstein, Joyce L. et coll. (2002-2005). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships : Your Handbook for Action*, 2e éd, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press.
- **French only** Deslandes, R. (2004). « Les conditions nécessaires à la mise en place pour assurer une collaboration entre la famille, l'école et la communauté » *Vie pédagogique*, 133, 41-45.
- **English only** Joanne Pearson, Christina (2007) The University of British Columbia, page 73 [First Nations Parent Involvement in the Public School.](#)

### Parenting

- **French only** [Parent Estrie.](#)
- **French only** [Moi, comme parent « Compétences parentales ».](#)
- **French only** [Vos questions de parents. « En famille ».](#)
- **French only** Ministère de la Famille. [Favoriser le développement global des jeunes enfants au Québec : une vision partagée pour des interventions concertées](#), p. 13-14.

- 👉 **French only** Psychologies. [« Livres Parents »](#).
- 👉 American Psychological Association  
**English only** [Parenting](#)
- 👉 The Center for Parenting Education  
**English only**
- 👉 Parents as First Teachers  
**English**  
**French**
- 👉 Speaking up!  
**English only**

### Bullying

- 👉 **French only** [Espace : Pour une enfance en sécurité et sans violence](#)
- 👉 **French only** [Espace : Pour une enfance en sécurité et sans violence. « Publications utiles »](#).
- 👉 Educaloi  
**English** [Bullying and Violence in Quebec Schools](#)  
**French** [L'intimidation et la violence à l'école](#)
- 👉 PREVNet  
**English** [Bullying What We Know & What We Can Do](#)  
**French** [Intimidation, ce que nous en savons et ce que nous pouvons faire](#)

- 👉 Fondation Jasmin Roy  
**English** [Information Guide for Parents on School Violence and Bullying](#)  
**French** [Guide d'information aux parents sur la violence et l'intimidation à l'école](#)
  - 👉 Bullying stops here  
**English only** [A guide for parents to help their children](#)
- Specifically for principals, teachers and support staff
- 👉 Université Laval, Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Bibliothèque. [Sentiers littéraires pour enfants.](#)

# CONTACT US

**Eve Lapointe**

[elapointe@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:elapointe@cepn-fnec.com)

1-855-842-7672

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The background features a large, light-colored illustration. At the top, a falcon is shown in profile, looking to the right. Below it, two women's profiles are depicted, facing each other as if in conversation. The illustration is composed of fine, overlapping lines, giving it a textured, artistic appearance.

# APPENDICES

## ANNEXE 1

### Community profile

When was the community established?

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What are the traditional territories and seasonal movement in relation to the way of life in the community? For example, hunting season.

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What characterizes the community? For example, habits, significant events, traditional celebrations, official openings, residential school, family conflicts, land claims, suicide.

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Is it a healthy community?

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What kinds of services are available in the community? For example, crisis centre, family support centre, foster families, youth centre.

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## ANNEXE 2

### Parental resources in the community

What kinds of resources are available to parents in the community? For example, community organizations, groups, committees.

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What kinds of cultural, parental, community and recreational activities are held in the community?

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What methods of communication are used to encourage teachers to participate in these activities?

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## ANNEXE 3

### Parental attitudes toward education

What does school represent for parents?

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What does getting involved at school mean for them?

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Do parents feel their involvement at school is welcome?

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Would parents like to be more involved? If so, in what way?

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Do parents believe in education?

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What does success mean for parents?

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Does traditional Aboriginal education involve only the immediate family?

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What ideas do parents have on creating a welcoming atmosphere at school?

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## ANNEXE 4

### Language and culture

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

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What are the calls to action for education?

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Is there a language and culture program in my school?

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Do staff members know about cultural resources in the community?

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How can we further reinforce the community's native language in our school?

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Is my school committed to developing language and culture curriculum?

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Do we have Elders come to the school on occasion?

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Are there any cultural communicators in the community?

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What kinds of cultural and traditional protocols have to be followed?

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## ANNEXE 5

### **Encouraging parental commitment and trust**

Have I taken time to think about parental commitment?

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Am I ready to welcome parents at the school?

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Am I aware of the expectations parents have towards the school?

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How is parental involvement promoted?

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Do I encourage teachers to communicate with parents?

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Is there a resource in the school or the community who can be a guide in communication with parents?

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Is there someone who can assist with communication in the parents' native language?

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**GETTING TO KNOW THE PARENTS**

Your child's first and last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' first and last names: **Mother:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Father:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

What are your child's strengths? \_\_\_\_\_

What makes your child feel better? \_\_\_\_\_

What calms your child down? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your hopes for your child? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your expectations towards the school? \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNICATION**

What is the best way to contact you?

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

School planner

Would you like to be involved in the classroom?

- Yes       No

Do you have traditional knowledge you would like to share with children?

- Language
- Beading and crafts
- Traditional cooking
- Singing and drumming
- Stories and legends
- Hunting and wildlife
- Building canoes
- Basket weaving
- Plants and nature
- Tanning hides

Parents Meeting

Getting ready to meet the parents

1. **Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Primary strengths:

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3. Challenges:

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4. Favourite activities:

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5. What makes the student happy:

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6. Sources of motivation:

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7. Dealings with teachers:

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8. Relationships with classmates and schoolmates:

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9. Strategies already used:

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10. Improvements observed:

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11. The purpose of the meeting:

(Clearly define a specific objective that will have a positive impact.)

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12. Current situation:

(Clearly and objectively describe the observed aspects that require changes.)

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13. Targeted outcome of proposed support measures:

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## Parents Survey

THIS SURVEY IS ANONYMOUS. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY. YOU ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY EITHER IN WHOLE OR IN PART.

### General Information

1. Check off all applicable boxes.

Mother       Father

Married/common law       Single-parent family

2. Community: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Number of:

preschool age children

primary school age children

high school age children

### Section 1: Communication with parents

*The FNEC wants to know your opinion on communication between the school and parents, and more specifically on the following points:*

- *The welcome given by the school team and the contact with its members.*
- *The communication received from the school (clarity, frequency, etc.).*
- *The school's processing of the communication received from parents (acknowledgement of receipt, follow-up, etc.).*
- *The frequency and type of information wanted.*
- *Parent-teacher meetings.*
- *The language used by school staff members.*

Circle the number that corresponds to your opinion for each of the following statements.

1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly disagree	5 Non applicable
---------------------	------------	---------------	------------------------	---------------------

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. In general, the teachers are welcoming and friendly.                             | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 2. I regularly communicate with the teachers.                                       | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 3. The school principal is accessible.  | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 4. I receive a warm welcome when I go to the school.                                | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 5. The school staff is available to meet with me.                                   | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 6. Communication with the school staff is positive and helpful.                     | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 7. I know who can give me the information I need.                                   | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 8. I am well informed of my child's progress.                                       | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 9. I am well informed of the activities at the school.                              | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 10. Correspondence from the school is easy to understand.                           | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 11. I know when I can contact staff members.  | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 12. The school's office hours are suitable for me.                                  | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 13. The methods used by the school to contact me are adequate.                      | 1    2    3    4    5 |
| 14. The best way(s) to reach me: <i>(check off more than one box if applicable)</i> |                       |

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cell phone                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Home phone                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E-mail                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My child's school planner | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Facebook                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |





## Section 2: Services offered in the community

The FNEC wants to know your opinion of the services available in the school and the community in general, and the access to these services.

1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly disagree	5 Non applicable
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22. I am aware of the services available in the school and the community. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

23. My child already receives some of these services. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

24. I attend meetings concerning these services with my child. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

25. I hesitate to talk to the teachers or other staff members about my child's difficulties. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

26. I would like to: *(check off all applicable boxes)*

- receive more information on the available services.
- receive more information on the activities offered at the school.
- receive more information on the activities offered in the community.
- know who my child can go to if he is involved in a violent situation (e.g. bullying, taxing, threats).
- receive information on other subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

### Comments and explanations


### Section 3: Everyday issues

The FNEC wants to know your opinion on the everyday challenges you face, and more specifically on the following points:

- When your child has homework.
- Your parenting skills.
- Your level of involvement with your child and the school.

1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly disagree	5 Non applicable
---------------------	------------	---------------	------------------------	---------------------

27. Homework time goes well. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

28. My child knows what to do and does it. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

29. I have no difficulty understanding the instructions  
The school gives my child. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

30. I always supervise or take part in my child's homework. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

31. I want to be part of a parents committee. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

32. A parents committee could help me gain a better understanding of my  
parental responsibilities. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

33. I volunteer for activities. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

34. I have attended training sessions, conferences or activities  
organized by the FNEC before. 

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

35. The FNEC gives parents the opportunity to improve their parenting skills through a training course. What topics might interest you? *(check off all applicable boxes)*

- A typical day at school for my child
- My child's homework
- Communicating with my child and encouraging him to keep going
- How to intervene when my child has problematic or violent behaviour
- Relationships between boys and girls
- Health (personal health practices, sleep, stress, addiction)
- Changes during adolescence

Other subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

### Comments and explanations



## Volunteer Recruitment Form Letter

**(DATE)**

Dear parents:

**(Title of the activity)**

Would you like to be involved in planning (title of the activity) so that students in our school can take advantage of an outing on our territory?

(Title of the activity) will be held on (date) from (time – time).

We need some parent volunteers so that this activity can take place.

The following tasks need to be accomplished:

- **(Describe the tasks)**
- 
- 
- 

**(Explain the purpose of the activity)** Outings on our territory promote cultural revitalization by giving children and parents the opportunity to benefit from the know-how and soft skills of Elders in the community.

If you are interested in helping us with this activity, please get in touch with \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

On behalf of our students, thank you!

(Signature)



Order form for *I'm involved!* Material

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number - Street

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Province Postal code

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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