

Research Study

Kihtwam - *“Once Again”*

Student Retention and Re-Entry Program

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Beardy's and Okemasis Willow Cree First Nation
Mistawasis First Nation
Muskeg Lake Cree Nation
Prairie Spirit School Division

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Prologue

The Worst Mistake I Made

In my life I made many mistakes I regretted, but the worst mistake I made was quitting school. I stole candy from a store and got caught. I told one of my best friend's secrets to someone else. I lied to my parents, so I wouldn't get into trouble. But none of these mistakes I made compare to dropping out of school. I disappointed most of my family, I felt like giving up, and I had nothing to look forward to in the future.

The worst and foremost thing that I disliked when I quit school was how I disappointed my family. My mom didn't know what to say to me. I think she was scared to say the wrong thing. My poor grandpa was shocked and told me he wasn't impressed with my decision. My aunties told me to go back and finish while I was young. My uncles didn't even look at me. I felt like I had let down everyone that cared and loved me.

With all my family feeling disappointed in me, I felt like giving up. All my interests went out the window. I stayed home and felt sorry for myself. When I did go somewhere it was always something to do with drinking. Drinking didn't help me, it just made me feel more depressed because of my decisions.

What really made me regret my decision was that I had nothing to look forward to in the future. I thought about all the people I love who were graduating and going to college or university, that were leaving me behind with nothing. I even thought about my older family members who had good careers and were doing good for their family. I wanted to do something for myself and the future children. I realized that I was going nowhere fast and I had nothing to look forward to.

I started searching for a school that would accept me and a year later I found one. I realize now I don't want to disappoint my family or give up and I certainly want something to look forward to in the future.

- Returnee Student

Introduction

The Partnership Committee consists of members from Beardy's & Okemasis Willow Cree First Nation, Mistawasis First Nation, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, and the Prairie Spirit School Division.

Prairie Spirit School Division has outlined four Strategic Directions to guide the establishment of meaningful system goals throughout the division. Student Engagement and Satisfaction is one of the four Strategic Directions, which includes a focus on improved outcomes for First Nations and Métis students. The Partnership Committee has developed an initiative that formally addresses concerns within its school communities:

- the learning needs of potential early school leavers in the middle years and secondary school
- the learning needs of approximately 150 students who have dropped out of school within these communities
- the need to work collaboratively to develop approaches to provide support services and programming that will re-engage youth who have left the system and will support students who are at risk of not completing school

The administrators and personnel of the Partnership schools, including Leask and Duck Lake within Prairie Spirit, have begun to develop a student retention and re-entry model – **Kihtwam** – which means 'once again'.

Kihtwam Program Objectives

The objectives of the Kihtwam Program are:

- to address the issue of disengaged youth ages 14 – 21 years
- to encourage "leavers" to complete their education – grade 12, adult 10/12, and/or GED
- to 'once again' invite youth to engage in learning and retain them in the system through varied and adaptive learning opportunities
- to connect education to the world of work and trade training

Kihtwam Program Actions

An attempt is being made to address the serious concerns associated with early school leavers through identification and development of:

- current resources and programs, to assist with stabilization of student populations to avoid early school leaving
- additional new programs and resources – which would include personnel, facilities, and infrastructure – to establish effective services and supports
- student voice through a Youth Engagement Team (YET)
- labour force and employment opportunities, to expand education experience
- methods to overcome barriers to employment
- funding sources and external partners, to ensure sustainability of services and support

Kihtwam Research Study

Intent of the Study

The intention for this study was to:

- identify the critical factors necessary for student engagement and satisfaction
- determine the successes of, and future recommendations for, the Kihtwam Program

Timeline

October 2007 – February 2008

- developed the outline for the research component
- contacted Partnership members and communities
- facilitated/coordinated data collection in schools and communities participating in the research component
- facilitated/coordinated meetings for participating community members

March 2008 – mid-May 2008

- conducted individualized dialogue sessions and focus group sessions
- prepared and submitted a statement of expenditures and budget information by March 31, 2008

May 2008

- analyzed and presented data to Partnership members
- prepared a final report of data results and assessment of the Kihitwam Program with an outline of (1) critical factors necessary for Student Engagement and Satisfaction, and (2) the current successes of, and future recommendations for, the Kihitwam Program.

Deliverables

This action research project supports a deep learning process for the Kihitwam Program.

Through data collection, the research:

- demonstrates that the Kihitwam Program provides improved outcomes for students
- demonstrates to funding agencies that the Kihitwam Program is an effective system response to the needs of the students in our communities
- helps inform the effective practices for the Partnership communities, and it may help inform effective practices for other school divisions or educational organizations, regarding potential early school leavers at the middle year and secondary school levels

Two key areas directed the research:

1. Student Assessment
2. Family/Community Assessment and Business Sector Assessment

1. Student Assessment:

Student assessment through individualized dialogue sessions and focus group sessions explored the reasons students leave schools, current attitudes toward re-entry, and how the Kihitwam Program – and other school programs – addresses their perceived needs. Information was gathered from in-school students (continuers and returnees) and former students (leavers and graduates). A focus was placed on case studies of early leavers.

2. Family/Community Assessment and Business Sector Assessment:

Family/Community assessment through focus groups and **Business Sector assessment** through individualized dialogue sessions provided necessary information to build understandings related to the successes of, and future recommendations for, the Kihitwam Program – from the family, community and business perspectives. This process helped to determine community resources and needs and assisted in identifying the strengths and areas for consideration related to the Kihitwam Program.

Refer to **Appendix A** for *The Kihitwam Research Study Framework for Individualized Dialogue Sessions and Focus Groups*.

Overview of Student, Family/Community and Business Sector Assessments

An overview of the findings from the Student, Family/Community and Business sector assessments is provided. As a result of the extensive commonalities of the responses, they have been reported collectively. Refer to the Epilogue and Appendix B for two sample case studies of early leavers (pseudonyms and possibly gender masking have been used in the case study reports). Refer to Appendix C for a comprehensive summary of the findings from the individualized dialogue sessions and the focus groups. The research study framework was adapted for the business sector individualized dialogue sessions.

Student individualized dialogue sessions began with the profiling portion (Part I) of the study. Brief summaries have been provided for the various areas of inquiry which helped to frame the study.

Gender – There were a total of 47 people – 18 males and 29 females – involved in the student individualized dialogue sessions. Focus groups and business sector sessions included individuals of both genders.

Age – Participants in the student individualized dialogue sessions ranged in age from 16 to 48. Approximately 70% were 16 to 21 years old. Focus group and business sector participants were also varying in ages.

Educational Category – Individualized dialogue sessions encompassed participants from four educational “categories” – continuers, leavers, returnees and graduates. Focus group and business sector participants also came from varying educational categories but were not asked to identify which one.

Schools Attended – Student participants attended one to 11 schools in their educational experiences. The majority of respondents reported having attended four or more schools.

Being Prohibited from Attending School – The majority of respondents reported they had never been told they could no longer go to school. However, other responses were:

- No, but I was once told by school personnel that it might be in my best interest if I left school, got my GED, and entered the work force – this was when I was 15.
- No – well yes – when my dad was sick and I had to stay home to help my mom take care of him.
- No, just suspended.
- Yes, once because I missed too many days of school.
- Yes, I was told I couldn’t attend because I was too old – I think I was 20 at the time.
- Yes, I was told my education level was not acceptable.

- Yes, I got expelled twice for fighting and missing school.
- Yes, I was kicked out in grade 7; my whole family was kicked out of school and not allowed to ride the bus anymore because of fighting – kids were teasing us about our parents being alcoholics.
- Yes, for fighting. I was never invited back. I didn't know if I could ever come back, so I didn't.
- Yes, when I got kicked out for missing too many classes.

Educational Levels – Student participants came from varying levels of education. Ten sample responses are provided:

- Grade 9 (age 43) – preparing for Grade 10
- currently completing Grade 12
- graduated but did not finish 24 credits
- in Grade 12 but also taking Grade 11 and Grade 10 courses
- in grade 10 – also working on some Grade 11 credits
- completed Adult 12 and Educational Assistant course
- finishing Adult 12
- completed Grade 12, and first year of nursing classes
- Grade 2 – preparing for Grade 10
- completed Grade 9 – preparing for Grade 10

Educational Histories of Parents/Guardians – The student participants reported varying educational histories of their parents/guardians. Five sample responses are provided:

- My mother finished grade 12 and went to university; my father finished grade 10 and has taken a plumbing and heating course.
- My parents only went to elementary school – grade 6 and grade 3.
- Both of my parents dropped out (around middle years/high school). My mom tried to go back a few years ago but then lost her mother and quit again.
- My dad had 10 years at residential school and now has his GED.
- My dad has his master's degree and my mom has her B. Ed.

Note: Many individuals reported about the educational history of their mother but made no mention of their father. One respondent made mention of the fact that both parents finished high school but there wasn't enough money to continue.

Home Life – The home lives of student participants reflect immense diversity. Some would be viewed as quite “regular”, while others would not – for example, the high number of youth that have lived away from home; the wide range of extended family situations; the large number of people living in the same home – as many as sixteen in one house; and the number of youth who have extensive child (their own and/or someone else's) and/or elder care giving responsibilities.

The complexities of home living situations are extremely broad. Three sample responses are provided:

- I lived with my parents until around grade 11. There was a younger brother and sister living with us. Mom was rarely around. I dropped out of school while living at an aunt's home. I now live with my dad and sister. My mom was/is a drug user. I have lived with grandparents.
- I lived with my grandma, 3 sisters and 1 brother when mom was in jail. I also lived with an uncle. I left home when I was 14 but eventually returned to my grandma's. I basically lived all over. My best friend's parents have now adopted me.
- I live with both parents. There are 4 kids. I am the oldest and sometimes care for younger siblings. We have a close family.

Other Experiences Affecting Attitudes Towards Education – The student participants reported various experiences they feel have affected their attitudes towards education – both positively and negatively. Twelve sample responses are provided:

- drugs and alcohol
- teachers – both encouraging and discouraging
- lack of family support
- family break down
- feelings of neglect and worthlessness
- depression
- failure of other family members; fear of following those footsteps
- foster homes
- spending time volunteering
- death of a loved one
- moving around
- racism and bullying from people who were once friends

Student Strengths – The majority of student participants were able to identify at least one of their strengths or “gifts” and one or more things in life that bring them happiness. Some respondents were able to identify how education can help get them where they want to be in life, based on the things they want and/or like to do, but just in general terms. They did not share many specific ideas about how their current level of education could help them get a satisfactory job or what would help them get an even better job. Three sample responses are provided:

- I love basketball and hunting for my family. I want to work in trades – masonry. I'd probably have to go to Moose Jaw Campus for education and that's just a big step to take.
- My children make me happy. They are my strength and gift in life. Just doing family outings with them makes me happy. I am excited about having my grade 12 next year – a true graduate.

- I like to play sports. I think I'm good at helping people. I want to have my own business – not like a store necessarily, but I want it to be my own. I don't know what kind of education I need – business I guess. I need motivation.

Positive School Experiences – Almost all the student participants were able to share one or more of their positive school experiences. Common responses centered around: one or more favorite teachers, subjects they enjoyed, sports, friends, involvement in school activities, educational achievements, returning to school after quitting, class trips, and extended time to complete classes.

School Programs – Most respondents indicated that although they have heard of most of the varying school programs (i.e. Kihitwam Programs, Storefront Programs, Adult Education, Pre-10 Programs, Extended Programs, Open Credit Programs, Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program, and Regional Colleges) they know very little about the details. There are some misconceptions about certain programs – for example, the purpose and requirements, who they serve, and the financial incentives – sometimes resulting in negative connotations associated with the program. Five sample responses are provided:

- Kihitwam is for people who dropped out and want to come back and finish. Storefront pays you to go.
- All of them offer education that you need for the future to get jobs.
- Storefront is good. Students go because they get money every month; this is an incentive. Kihitwam is good because some kids don't like to be in the classroom; they don't want to be singled out as dumb. Pre-10 is good to remind people who want to go back to give them a start back at school.
- It is hard to know all the options. What is out there? Who do you turn to?
- I know about Pre-10 at the shed and Storefront. I like Kihitwam better than Storefront or Pre-10.

Educational Requirements – There are varying levels of understanding with regards to the requirements for completing school (i.e., Grade 10, 11, 12, Adult 10/12, GED). Many respondents indicated knowing something about credits. Some knew that 24 credits is the requirement for grade 12, while others were unsure and speculated that it may be 20 - 30 credits. Some had a good understanding and also knew about the difference between compulsory and elective classes. Very little was known about the requirements for Adult 10/12 or the GED. Six sample responses are provided:

- You need 24 credits for grade 12; I don't know about the Adult 12.
- I don't know – something like 20 - 25 credits. GED is a test you do that tells you what grade level it is that you're at.
- You got to get credits; that's all that matters. Adult is the basic credits you really need. GED is a set of books you study and then you write tests.
- I always hear about credits and how many are needed to graduate but I still don't really know. It would be better to know what needs to be done (number and types of classes needed).

- I don't really know; I just take what teachers say.
- When we get to grade ten we hear about credits; we need to hear about this in grade 7 to 9.

All participants were asked to identify reasons why students discontinue their education (drop out of school) and what barriers prevent students from completing school. They were asked to identify programs and/or other supports that encourage students to continue their education or to re-engage students who have left school. They also were asked to identify social and/or peer issues – both the challenges and supports – associated with students in schools and to provide any other comments they had. This information was a primary focus of the study and therefore – combined with knowledge gained from the other various portions of the study – was used to construct the list of critical factors necessary for student engagement and satisfaction and to identify the successes of, and future recommendations for, the Kihitwam Program.

Critical Factors Necessary for Student Engagement and Satisfaction

Based on the multitude of information gathered, there were ten salient concepts that emerged as **Critical Factors Necessary for Student Engagement and Satisfaction**. The order in which they are listed is not indicative of urgency or importance.

1. Family

Considering, but not limited to:

- lack of family support
- family breakdown
- not enough value placed on education by parents
- inadequate parenting skills
- homelessness
- foster homes
- transience
- dealing with the illness and/or death of a loved one
- pregnancy; becoming a parent; daycare
- out-of-school pressures and responsibilities – i.e., primary caregiver – for children (their own and/or someone else's) and/or elders, babysitting, responsibilities at home

2. Personal Wellness

Considering, but not limited to:

- addictions – drugs, alcohol, gambling and card playing (for students, their friends, and for members of their families)
- peer pressure
- bullying
- cliques, students without friends

- racism
- maintaining a positive attitude toward education
- mental health – depression, stress, feelings of neglect and worthlessness, anxiety, loneliness
- abuse
- building moral character
- implications of crime and incarceration

3. Transportation

Considering, but not limited to:

- lack of transportation to school when the bus is missed
- transportation for daycare services

4. Recreational Activities

Considering, but not limited to:

- extracurricular activities – i.e., sports, drama, dance, Act Now
- volunteering
- recreational and/or outreach programs for single parents and young couples

5. Value of School

Considering, but not limited to:

- applicability and practicality, relevance
- ramifications of quitting
- having a job picked out that does not require an education
- seeing someone else with minimal education and a good job

6. Role Models and Elders

Considering, but not limited to:

- elder support in the school and community (downtown)
- adult advocacy
- big brother/sister
- mentorship programs

7. Learning Environment

Considering, but not limited to:

- teachers and staff
- class, program, and school size
- multiple program options and an awareness of the options
- school work – i.e., comprehending, keeping up, completing homework, concentrating, focusing, getting good grades, finding it interesting or appealing, asking for help
- the Edge homework program
- placement in classes – i.e., segregated from other students

8. Cultural Components

Considering, but not limited to:

- schools with a traditional Aboriginal focus
- personal attitudes about heritage and culture
- speakers, sweats
- conversational Cree (Cree Club)

9. Career and Post-Secondary Transitions

Considering, but not limited to:

- local employment opportunities
- transition services to post secondary and/or urban living
- hands-on learning
- work programs, work experience, and work education
- career searching, career day, career fair, and career guidance
- apprenticeships, trades

10. Financial Considerations

Considering, but not limited to:

- poverty (i.e., no nice clothes, no lunch, etc.)
- the belief that school causes debt
- Provincial Training Allowance
- the need for financial planning skills and money management skills

Successes of, and Future Recommendations for, the Kihlwam Program

The successes of, and future recommendations for, the Kihlwam Program have been formulated based on the information gathered.

Successes

- Students are returning to school.
- Students see Kihlwam as a less threatening way to re-engage in school.
- Students appreciate the flexible time frame.
- Students enjoy the flexibility of the program location.
- Students value the one-on-one time and working in small groups.
- The Partners are working in concert, sharing successes and considerations for the future.

Future Recommendations

Students have indicated that there needs to be more:

- family support mechanisms
- time spent building an understanding about the Kihlwam Program, and the communication needs to be consistent
- counseling opportunities (i.e., support groups, help line)
- conscious efforts made to invite students back to the learning programs after they have left
- career education and pre-employment strategies
- recreational programs
- work experience and apprenticeship opportunities, including providing transportation
- transition services to post secondary experiences (work or education)
- provisions made for daycare
- heritage and cultural education
- time spent developing financial planning and money management skills

Conclusion

The efforts of the Partnership Committee through the development of the Kihlwam Program have been successful. The desired Outcomes and Indicators of Success – see Appendix D – are realistic, and will continue to be a driving force for the initiative. At this point, it will be valuable for the Partnership Committee to look at the **Critical Factors Necessary for Student Engagement and Satisfaction**; and the **Successes of, and Future Recommendations for, the Kihlwam Program** to determine what areas they wish to target. It may be beneficial to classify areas based on immediate, short term, and long term goals.

Efforts should be made to continue to collect and analyze student achievement data connected to the Kihlwam Program, which can then be used to guide and inform practices related to meeting the learning needs of students. Although the purpose of this research study focused on the Kihlwam Program, the data gathered is information-rich and able to guide other facets of the work of the Partnership Communities in their quest for improved outcomes for students.

Epilogue – Early Leaver

Case Study #1

Clinton is 17 years old. He has dropped out of school. He had changed schools four times prior to dropping out, but had never been told he could not go to school. Clinton has a complete grade 10 and had started grade 11. Both of Clinton's parents dropped out of school; he figured during middle years or maybe high school. His mom tried to go back a few years ago but when her mother died, she quit again.

Clinton lived with his parents until around the time he finished grade 10. There were a younger brother and sister living with them; however, his mom was rarely around. He left his home to live with his aunt and ended up dropping out of school during that time. He now lives with his dad and sister. His mom was, and still is, a drug user. She likes the night life and has cheated on his dad. There was also a time when Clinton lived with his grandparents.

Clinton described the main reason for dropping out as the breakdown of his family. There were job concerns, so his dad had to try to find work in the city. They ended up moving around and Clinton became really lonely during this time. He tried to take a week off from school. He kept thinking about his mom and what she had done to the family. He hadn't quit school per se but he had taken a break to get his head together.

Clinton just stayed at home in his room and watched TV. When he attempted to return to school and try to catch up, he found he had lost his concentration and focus. He froze up. He felt neglected and worthless when his dad got a new girlfriend. He has battled depression and was hospitalized for over a week as a result of that depression.

Clinton always liked to party, even when he was still in school. However, drugs and alcohol weren't a huge factor – he was careful when and where he chose those partying activities. However, after dropping out, the morning after the party became even more depressing. He was hurt most by the thought of being like his mom – someone who put all the negative things in life before family; it was never family first.

He thought he would be his mom's shadow – that it was inevitable to follow in her footsteps. She too, battled depression and has attempted suicide a number of times. Clinton is still very hateful towards his mom. He sees her as an enemy. She doesn't acknowledge him anymore, because he doesn't acknowledge her. She is at rock bottom. She has lots of boyfriends, is always into the bar scene, and has let her appearance go. He is really struggling with dealing with his mom. He can't stop focusing on her and her actions. He noted that even though the dad is usually the negative influence in a family, in his situation it is the mom.

Clinton describes himself as someone who is not afraid to show caring feelings. He doesn't judge people. It makes him feel good when he can make others feel good. He is musically "aware" – he has a musical connectedness and a wide range of musical interests. He does plan

on returning to school. He has developed an interest in travelling, and is thinking about volunteer work. He wants to give himself to others because the reward is helping them. He wants to see other cultures, but definitely wants to finish high school. He thinks he would eventually like to take some teaching classes or maybe pursue something in music.

One of the most positive school experiences Clinton remembers happened in grade 10. He felt like this was when he broke out in a unique way as an individual. He did some cool art and movie projects, and wasn't afraid to stay after school to get help in math. He described it as a "coming of age". The struggles of adolescence were going away; the barriers were being removed. He wasn't so worried about fitting in with "the coolest" kids. He discovered it was okay to be your own person.

Clinton thinks that when students drop out of school, there is never a simple explanation. People don't just give up or are lazy. There are always so many layers to the story, so many reasons. Perhaps there are home issues; school socializing considerations (he mentioned "The Breakfast Club" movie); parental issues with regards to neglect; troubles with reading and/or comprehending; or maybe school is just too hard. There could be some incident from a long time ago that has started a chain reaction (i.e., seeing your parents partying when you are little, birth/genetic issues resulting from alcohol or drugs, or foster care experiences).

In order for students to stay in school, or return to school, Clinton thinks there needs to be more consideration given to the creation of support groups and/or healing groups, and maybe more counselors. This could help people to work through their self doubt; it is so easy to drown in self doubt. There needs to be more time for students to talk together in groups; they don't want to feel alone. Talking with former teachers or other students may help the "leaver" try to ease back in; it's no easy task to return. He also thinks it is helpful if you have successful parents and/or older siblings, and a close family who helps one another.

Clinton knows a little bit about school programs currently in place and requirements for completing school. He has heard of some of the programs but doesn't really know many details. He thinks it is hard to know all the options out there, and sometimes isn't really sure who to turn to; he has browsed the internet a bit. He always hears about credits and how many are needed to graduate but doesn't really remember. He thinks it would be better if students knew what needed to be done; for example, the number and types of classes needed.

Clinton thinks there are some social and peer issues associated with students in schools. Cliques are a big one. Kids are trying so hard to fit in they forget about the other things they need to look after. When people seem radically different, it's really hard in school. Other people don't want to reach out to them. Girlfriends and boyfriends (and break-ups) also complicate things; it creates an awkwardness and they are worried about that instead of school. Clinton also thinks media and entertainment (video games, cars, jet skis, etc.) have added a dimension to the lives of kids. These things take priority over school. Also, kids are constantly distracted; they are thinking about parties, the weekend, friends, and booze.

APPENDIX A

Framework for Individualized Dialogue Sessions and Focus Groups Kihitwam Research Study

This framework has been designed with questions that will produce responses related to critical factors for student engagement, student satisfaction, student retention, student successes, program considerations, reasons for leaving, attitudes towards re-entry to school or work, and how Kihitwam may be/is able to meet needs.

1. Consent Materials

Precede each interview/focus group with consent materials – a separate form should be signed by each participant.

2. Part I

Part I is mainly intended for use in the individualized dialogue sessions. However, some facilitators may choose to use parts of this section for focus groups as well, depending on who the group is comprised of (i.e. family focus group).

3. Part II

Part II is intended for use in both the individualized dialogue sessions and the focus groups.

4. Part III

Part III is intended for use with focus groups.

Facilitators:

Please remember, this is only a framework. Use only the questions that are suitable for your participants.

Consent Form

Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions.

Background Information

You have been invited to participate in an exciting study entitled, “Kihitwam – Student Retention and Re-entry”.

This study is led by Corrine Hoffman and Ken McDonough, who are working in partnership with the Kihitwam Committee. The Kihitwam Committee is comprised of personnel from the educational communities of:

- Beardy’s and Okemasis Willow Cree First Nation
- Mistawasis First Nation
- Muskeg Lake Cree Nation
- Prairie Spirit School Division

Goal of the Study

The goal of the research is to collect a wide range of information regarding perceptions about education and work programs that meet the needs of youth and young adults. In particular, we hope the summarized findings can help our communities and province:

- to address the issue of disengaged youth ages 14 – 21 years,
- to encourage “leavers” to complete their education – Grade 12, Adult 10/12, and/or GED,
- to ‘once again’ invite youth to engage in learning and retain them in the system through varied and adaptive learning opportunities, and
- to connect education to the world of work and trade training.

Potential Benefits

Input about schools, education, and the work force will contribute to the continued development of student success programs in schools – in particular, the Kihitwam Student Retention and Re-entry Project. These efforts are necessary to ensure educational and workforce programs are flexible in meeting the needs of those served.

Research Participation

Participation in the study is voluntary. You will not be required to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The information you give is confidential. Individual responses will not be linked to particular participants. All conversations will be confidential and any results will be reported anonymously. The information collected during this research will be used for educational purposes, and will become part of a report. Verbatim (word-for-word) quotes will be assigned to pseudonyms and no information will be reported that would allow anyone to be identified individually. Although the data from this study will be published and presented, the data will be reported in summary form, so it will not be possible to identify individuals.

Results

A summary of research findings will be generated and, upon request, will be made available to participants upon completion of the study.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand the description provided. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described, with the understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time, without giving reasons and without any consequences.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Interviewer)

(Date)

Part I

What is your gender?

How old are you?

What educational “category” (continuers, leavers, returnees, graduates) applies to you?

How many schools have you attended?

Have you ever been told that you could no longer go to school? Explain.

What is your current level of education?

(What grade have you completed? What grade are you in?)

What is the educational history of your parents/guardians?

(Did your parents/guardians finish elementary school and/or high school? Have they attended and/or completed any post-secondary programs?)

Describe the home in which you live.

(Have you ever lived away from home? Who is/has been your primary caregiver? Who do you live with? How many people live in your home? How many siblings – brothers/sisters – do you have living with you? Are you often the primary caregiver for younger children?)

Describe any other experiences affecting your attitude towards education.

(addictions, abuse – sexual/physical/emotional, residential school experiences in the family, justice, homelessness, young offenders, racism, sexuality/sexual orientation, bullying)

What are your strengths/“gifts”? What things bring you happiness in your life? What do you want/like to do? How can education help get you there? How will your current level of education help you get a job? What would help you improve your chances of getting a job (an even better job)?

Share one or more of your positive school experiences.

Part II

Why do you think students discontinue their education (drop out of school)? What are barriers that prevent students from completing school?

What programs and/or other supports encourage students to continue their education?

What programs and/or other supports need to be put in place to re-engage students who have left school?

What do you know about school programs that are currently in place?
(i.e., Kihtwam Program, Storefront Programs, Adult Education, Pre-10 Programs, Extended Programs, Open Credit Programs, Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program, Regional Colleges)

What do you know about the requirements for completing school (i.e. Grade 10, 11, 12, Adult 10/12, GED)?

What social and/or peer issues do you think are associated with students in schools? Please consider both the challenges and supports.

Please provide any other comments you would like to add.

Part III

What resources, programs, etc. are available in local communities, and/or throughout the province, that could support the efforts to educate and employ youth/young adults?

What resources, programs, etc. are not available in local communities, and/or throughout the province, but are needed in order to support the efforts to educate and employ youth/young adults?

What traditional and/or non-traditional/alternate educational and employment opportunities are best meeting the needs of youth/young adults?

What traditional and/or non-traditional/alternate educational and employment opportunities are not meeting the needs of youth/young adults?

APPENDIX B

Early Leaver Case Study #2

Lori is a 20-year-old young woman who never finished school. She has attended seven – maybe even more – schools. Once she was told to leave school because she had missed too many days. She has completed grade 9 and is in Pre-10 right now. Lori's mother graduated from high school but she wasn't sure if she has any further education. Her dad is a carpenter, but she's not sure if he finished high school. Lori has spent time living away from home – with other relatives. Now she lives with her mom and three brothers. She doesn't look after little kids, but she used to; they moved away.

Lori says her gift is drawing. She knows getting an education would help her get a job. She says she could probably get a job at McDonalds or Tim Horton's. She thinks she would want to move away for more school later. She doesn't like being around lots of people. If she was alone she thinks she could do it. Lori indicated three influences she thinks have affected her attitude towards education: marijuana, a creepy teacher and being bullied when she was younger. She said one of her positive school experiences was physical education and art because it was fun and the stuff they did was cool.

Lori thinks people drop out of school because they are getting bullied, they don't know the work, or maybe they want to move to another school but have no one to live with. She thinks Kihlwam and Storefront are programs that help students continue their education. She also thinks it is good when adults push kids to go to school; that helps support them. Lori thinks that when students leave school, it helps re-engage them when they are not made to take a whole day of school and when they can just focus on one class at a time. She also thinks it's important to work independently, not in a big class.

Lori didn't know much about school programs currently in place. Her basic understanding was that Kihlwam is for people who dropped out and want to come back and finish and Storefront pays you to go. Lori didn't really know about the requirements for completing school. She thought high school was something like 20 - 25 credits and that the GED is a test you do that tells you what grade level it is that you're at.

The social and peer issues Lori identified for students in schools were: people fighting over girlfriends/boyfriends or fighting about where you're from (negative); smoking drugs and drinking alcohol together (negative); and participating together, making friends (positive). She thinks people who drop out don't mean to stay out; they just need a break. Then it ends up being longer because they feel out of place.

APPENDIX C

Comprehensive Summary of Findings from the Individualized Dialogue Sessions and Focus Groups

Part I

What is your gender?

There were a total of 47 people – 18 males and 29 females – involved in the individualized dialogue sessions. Focus groups and business sector sessions included individuals of both genders.

How old are you?

Participants in the individualized dialogue sessions were of various ages:

16 – 3

17 – 14

18 – 8

19 – 4

20 – 2

21 – 3

22 – 3

23 – 2

27 – 1

28 – 1

34 – 2

40 – 1

41 – 1

43 – 1

48 – 1

Focus group and business sector session participants were also varying in ages.

What educational “category” (continuers, leavers, returnees, graduates) applies to you?

Individualized dialogue sessions encompassed participants from four educational “categories” - continuers, leavers, returnees, graduates. There was some overlap in terms of identification of the applicable category. For example, some continuers identified themselves as graduates because they are graduating this year. Some students identified themselves as graduates (because they had gone through the ceremony), even though they did not have 24 credits – therefore, essentially being a leaver.

Some students are close to being leavers because they are hardly attending school. However, individuals identified themselves as: continuers – 10, leavers – 5, returnees – 18, and

graduates – 14. Focus group and business sector session participants also came from varying educational categories but were not asked to identify which one.

How many schools have you attended?

Participants' responses ranged from 1 to 11 schools attended. The majority of respondents reported having attended 4 or more schools.

Have you ever been told that you could no longer go to school? Explain.

The majority of respondents simply reported that "no" they had never been told they could no longer go to school.

Other responses are provided:

- No, but I was once told by school personnel that it might be in my best interest if I left school, got my GED, and entered the work force – I was 15.
- No – well yes – when my dad was sick and I had to stay home to help my mom take care of him.
- No, just suspended.
- Yes – once – because I missed too many days of school.
- Yes, I was told I couldn't attend because I was too old – I think I was 20 at the time.
- Yes, I was told my education level was not at an acceptable level.
- Yes, I got expelled twice for fighting and missing school.
- Yes, I was kicked out in grade 7. My whole family was kicked out of school and not allowed to ride the bus anymore because of fighting – kids were teasing us about our parents being alcoholics.
- Yes, for fighting. I was never invited back. I didn't know if I could ever come back – so I didn't.
- Yes, when I got kicked out for missing too many classes.

What is your current level of education?

(What grade have you completed? What grade are you in?)

Ten sample responses are provided:

- Grade 9 (age 43) – preparing for Grade 10
- currently completing Grade 12
- graduated but did not finish 24 credits
- in Grade 12 but also taking Grade 11 and Grade 10 courses
- in grade 10 – also working on some Grade 11 credits
- completed Adult 12 and Educational Assistant course
- finishing Adult 12
- completed Grade 12 and first year of nursing classes
- Grade 2 – preparing for Grade 10
- completed Grade 9 – preparing for Grade 10

What is the educational history of your parents/guardians?

(Did your parents/guardians finish elementary school and/or high school? Have they attended and/or completed any post-secondary programs?)

Fifteen sample responses are provided:

- My mother finished grade 12 and went to university. My father finished grade 10 and has taken a plumbing and heating course.
- My parents only have elementary school – grade 6 and grade 3.
- I am not sure about my mom. No comment about dad.
- My mother graduated grade 12, received her B.I.S.W. and went on to receive her master's degree in social work. My father received his GED and now works with youth.
- My parents both dropped out (around middle years/high school). My mom tried to go back a few years ago but then lost her mother and quit again.
- My mom only has grade 8. No response about dad.
- My dad finished high school and some post secondary. My mom finished high school and also has her Educational Assistant certificate.
- My mom completed 1 year at U of S.
- I am not sure but I think they have their GEDs.
- My dad spent 10 years at residential school. He now has his GED.
- My parents both finished high school. My mom went to technical school for home care.
- My mom has grade 12. My dad maybe has grade 8.
- My dad has done upgrading 10 and a welding course. My mom has grade 8 and a child rearing course.
- Both my parents dropped out.
- My dad has a master's degree and my mom has a B.Ed.

Note: Many individuals reported about the educational history of the mother but made no mention of the father. One respondent made mention of the fact that both parents finished high school but there wasn't enough money to continue.

Describe the home in which you live.

(Have you ever lived away from home? Who is/has been your primary caregiver? Who do you live with? How many people live in your home? How many siblings – brothers/sisters – do you have living with you? Are you often the primary caregiver for younger children?)

Ten sample responses are provided:

- I live in a nice big house with 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. The house was furnished by the band. I have five children (my own) living with me – ages 6 - 14. I have lived in the house for six years.
- I am a single parent living alone with two sons.

- I lived with my parents until around grade 11. There was a younger brother and sister living with us. Mom was rarely around. I dropped out of school while living at an aunt's home. I now live with my dad and sister. Mom was/is a drug user. I have lived with grandparents.
- I lived with my grandma, 3 sisters and 1 brother when mom was in jail. I also lived with an uncle. I left home when I was 14. I eventually returned to my grandma's. I basically lived all over. My best friend's parents have now adopted me.
- I live with both parents. There are 4 kids. I am the oldest and sometimes care for younger siblings. We have a close family.
- I live with my mom and take care of a younger sister and niece when mom works; I don't know my father.
- I live with both parents, 5 siblings, and a nephew (total 9).
- I live with my parents, 3 younger brothers, and 1 older sister who has a small child – I help care for him.
- I often had lots of babysitters. My mom and dad had jobs as well as gambling and alcohol issues. Our parents told us (the 3 children) to go to school but didn't provide a lot of encouragement. We were sent to the residence school for 4 - 5 years.
- I currently live by myself. I have lived with my parents. I have lived with a brother, and I have lived with aunts and other relatives. I have a daughter who I have helped raise and who has resided with me on some occasions.

Describe any other experiences affecting your attitude towards education.

(addictions, abuse – sexual/physical/emotional, residential school experiences in the family, justice, homelessness, young offenders, racism, sexuality/sexual orientation, bullying)

Thirty sample responses are provided:

- drugs and alcohol
- being bullied
- teachers – both encouraging and discouraging
- choosing to be drug free since the age of 17; now I'm 34 and I haven't been drinking for over 2 years
- legal challenges with my oldest child that are being worked through with mediation and restitution
- lack of family support
- maintaining a positive attitude toward education; I don't drink alcohol or do drugs; I try to encourage people to further their education and to adopt a more positive attitude towards life in general
- I don't want to be in school but I am sent to school every day
- family break down
- feelings of neglect and worthlessness, depression
- partying
- failure of other family members; fear of following those footsteps

- losing my son (stillborn); this was a real turning point for me when I was 17
- my best friend going to jail
- foster homes
- spending time volunteering
- in ACT Now
- death of a loved one
- my mom is good influence
- once in a while a person doesn't want to be in school when kids are mean
- residence school – negative experience for my brothers but positive for me; I feel I benefited from that experience, i.e., scheduling
- moving around; it was difficult to adjust to stable home life
- our parents were alcoholics; my older siblings went to residential schools; the rest of us hid so they couldn't take us; I raised the younger siblings; sometimes there was nothing to eat; the family was bullied in our home community which made us violent children; teachers physically abused us in school to keep control; siblings were in trouble with the law; it was a rough childhood, but we learned to survive
- trying hard and seeing others who aren't working get higher marks
- my mom was a cocaine addict for a while but we stuck by her; our love is what made her get clean
- racism and bullying from people who were once friends
- I don't like lots of people; small classes are ok, but there are too many people in the halls; I like presentations
- becoming a teen parent is helping to prevent me from becoming addicted to alcohol; I don't want my kids to grow up as I did
- different academic standards and funding levels for on-reserve and off-reserve schools
- residential school legacy; resentment of white authority

What are your strengths/"gifts"? What things bring you happiness in your life? What do you want/like to do? How can education help get you there? How will your current level of education help you get a job? What would help you improve your chances of getting a job (an even better job)?

Thirty sample responses are provided:

- I like dancing at pow-wows all the time. I play basketball every day. My aunty could get me a job in BC doing construction this summer but I don't know if I want to go. Probably just graduating would be good enough for me.
- I love drawing. Getting an education would help me get a job. I could probably get a job at McDonalds or Tim Horton's. I would want to move away for more school; I don't like being around lots of people. If I was alone I could do it, I think.
- I love basketball and hunting for my family. I want to work in trades – masonry. I'd probably have to go to Moose Jaw Campus for education and that's just a big step to take.

- I like to play sports. I think I'm good at helping people. I want to have my own business – not like a store necessarily, but I want it to be my own. I don't know what kind of education I need – business I guess. I need motivation.
- I currently work with high risk youth. My choices, relationships, and experiences in the past help me to give better advice in my work. It also raised my awareness in the issues that the youths I work with deal in.
- My children make me happy. They are my strength and gift in life. Just doing family outings with them makes me happy. I am excited about having my grade 12 next year – a true graduate.
- My strength is my patience. I like doing native beadwork with my mother/grandmother. My family brings me happiness and I am happy to have a roof over my head. I want to pursue a career as a professional chef. This is my motivation to go back to school – education is important.
- I enjoy working with people. My goal is to complete grade 12 and enrol in the chemical dependency program. Completing school will help accomplish this.
- I am not afraid to show caring feelings. I don't judge people. It makes me feel good when I can make others feel good. I am musically "aware"; I have a musical connectedness and a wide range of musical interests. I plan on returning to school. I have developed an interest in travelling; maybe I'd like volunteer work. I want to give of myself to others; the reward is helping them. I want to see other cultures. I definitely want to finish high school. Maybe I'd take some teaching classes or pursue something in music.
- I don't know. I guess I'm a good people person. I have a positive attitude. I like producing music and deejaying. I also like working with my hands, playing with kids, and bartending. I want to go to bartending school. I plan on upgrading in the fall but I am deejaying and bartending now.
- I would need more education.
- I am strong emotionally and physically. I can make people laugh. I like meeting new people. I like soccer. I like being with kids, watching movies, and drinking tea. I like to try new things.
- I want to be a social worker. I will need university. I want to have a steady (non-transient) home and have a family.
- I like to help people understand what they're going through. I am caring. I like sciences. I am a good speaker/presenter and a good writer. I am helpful and respectful.
- I want to go to post secondary - maybe in the medical field (nurse/lab tech). I want to have a family. I want to be a good provider for my family.
- I like sports and math.
- I am not sure what job I want.
- I want to finish grade 12. I hope to go on to post secondary.
- I love making people feel proud of themselves. I am funny. I am an artist. I enjoy fixing things, caring for my nieces and nephews and writing songs.

- I am interested in welding, mechanics, and plumbing. I would like to teach art. I would like to be a foster parent. I will need to finish my education to be able to do the jobs I want.
- University or college would improve my chances of getting a good job.
- I am a strong student (93% average). I like physical education and math. I am a responsible person. I like to play guitar and do yoga. I want to work in a bank or something related to finance. I will need to keep going with education. I might have to go to university.
- In the past – the better the education, the better the job. However, times are changing with regards to the money earned and education needed.
- I am a patient person. I am accepting, able to adapt, and a good listener. I have used bad experiences for good (to grow). I enjoy helping youth (i.e. coach) and family life. I am hoping to be a teacher and to write books.
- I want to be an LPN or TA.
- I am a Peace Keeper now.
- I would like to get into nursing but you need such a high average.
- I need to upgrade and then go into Psychiatry or Pharmacy.
- I like to cook and help with kids. I did work experience once; it was okay.
- I know I need to get my grade 12.

Share one or more of your positive school experiences.

Twenty-three sample responses are provided:

- I liked being with everyone else; I had a few good teachers
- I liked math because I had a good teacher who explained everything so I could understand; I like physical education
- sports
- good, hard-working teachers
- while in-between high schools, I had the opportunity to work/learn in a studio-type (animation) atmosphere; this experience helped to spark a renewed interest in education as a whole; I eventually went back to school and completed my grade twelve
- fun with friends
- the whole time I was at Storefront (2 years) was a positive experience
- teachers with peachy attitudes
- I like the environment of my current school situation; I like my fellow school students and teachers; adults of all ages make me feel welcome because I am not the oldest or the youngest; what makes me even happier is that there will be nine true graduates next year – just to graduate with a lot of students.
- in grade nine I was asked to be a master of ceremonies for the grade 10's; this was a real honor; it gave me self confidence and a positive attitude; it built my self esteem; I also liked when I got to chaperone younger children

- my educational achievements and working with the teachers and students; I enjoy school; it is a great learning experience
- going back to school after quitting
- I did a reading program with Pre-Kindergarten kids
- named a favorite teacher
- mostly just things involving sports
- I was a strong math student in grades 1 - 8
- I liked science in high school
- I liked carpentry 10/20; I like working with my hands; I liked welding
- guitar lessons; small class numbers
- when my husband encouraged me to come back to high school
- class trips
- extended time for me to complete classes
- I need quiet to work – for Kihitwam we go to the shed to work on our books; I like that

Part II

Why do you think students discontinue their education (drop out of school)? What are barriers that prevent students from completing school?

- drugs
- students don't want to be around other students
- having children
- bullying
- no friends
- don't like the teachers
- trouble at home
- too many responsibilities
- in class they talk to their friends instead of working
- they don't take work home so they get behind
- they don't understand the work
- always moving to different places
- school doesn't help you
- no support at home
- home life – being kicked out
- moving
- having a kid
- they are lazy and they do it to get attention
- students fall behind and can't catch up
- there are no barriers; they are just lazy; they stop school because they already have a job picked out that doesn't require an education or they get social assistance

- boredom, loss of interest
- home (abuse – physical, mental, etc.)
- poverty (no nice clothes, no lunch, etc.)
- lack of support
- bullying
- they can't understand the work
- stress
- don't like school
- sometimes it's just life; we don't live in the best world and it's hard to come to school; everyone would like to be educated but life gets in the way
- school is boring
- teachers are grouchy
- school causes debt
- schoolwork is too hard
- teen pregnancy
- bullying
- too lazy
- learning difficulties
- abuse at home and other problems at home
- racism
- not having a goal or vision for their life
- not enough value placed on education by parents
- family – some students take the role of parent, responsibilities at home, looking after younger siblings, becoming parents themselves
- learning difficulties
- lack of transportation to school
- too boring, not enough stuff
- inadequate parenting skills - legacy of residential school?
- peers that are negative
- poor relationships with staff
- addictions, mental health
- poverty
- they get into drugs or hang around with the wrong people; start school a little later in the day like at ten or something 'cause lots of people sleep in
- they get bullied; they don't know the work; maybe they want to move to another school, but have no one to live with
- no encouragement at home, no one to help them; drugs and alcohol, and the people they hang around with
- a lot of teachers push kids away because of the way they're treated; there are teachers who belittle students in front of classmates and they make them feel stupid; when you get behind a little bit, it feels like you can't catch up and you're put in the group whose behind; if your teacher doesn't care about you, you don't feel like being there

- teachers – there are a few who aren't as fair as they seem and don't give you a chance to catch up in a dropped mark, or if you're missing assignments and school continues, then you feel you should give up
- falling behind, pregnancies, lack of interest, can't take classes they have talent in, become primary caregivers
- rebellious, can't handle the work or discipline it takes to come to school and do the work
- parents let them stay home or too many kids don't live with someone who is in charge of them; they are in charge of themselves and not mature enough to make the decision to go to school
- drugs and alcohol are a big problem; gambling and card playing at the shed
- afraid to ask for help in front of people; it is nice to get the one-on-one so you don't feel stupid; there should be more help in the classroom
- no encouragement from home
- bullying
- cliques
- transportation – getting children to daycare
- home problems
- anxiety
- depression
- loneliness
- drug and alcohol abuse
- residential money – things got worse for people
- babysitting siblings
- home problems
- transportation
- bullying
- pregnancy
- lack of support and encouragement
- finances/ poverty, homelessness
- lack of skills – they don't understand the work
- do not understand how the subjects relate to the real world; not recognizing school is their job at this time in their life
- stay at home to babysit siblings
- do not see the value in grade 12
- no forward thinking about the ramifications of quitting school
- school can be boring; the classes don't mean anything
- it's never simple; people don't just give up or are lazy; there are so many layers to the story, so many reasons; home issues; parental issues of neglect; trouble reading/comprehending; school is too hard; some small thing that has started a chain reaction (i.e., seeing your parents partying when you are little; birth issues – alcohol, drugs, genetics; foster care)

- they have no push or too much, no self desire, no help, they struggle
- no rides to school
- bad home life
- homework builds up
- grades
- attendance
- life habits and life history; trouble at home; no parents; abuse; some think they don't need school to live
- pregnancy, medical reasons (their own or someone else), family moves, no desire because of a conflict (maybe with a teacher or student or in their home), addictions, get a job and think it's more important than school; no parental support; transportation (no busses)
- no help from parents
- maybe picked on when small
- bullying
- something wrong at home
- drugs and alcohol; no goals for themselves; learning doesn't come easily
- hate it; don't want to be here; lack of home support; teenage pregnancy; maybe a few quit to go work
- lack of confidence, family problems, circumstances out of their control – i.e. sickness, pregnancy
- kids want freedom; all they care about is fun; they are too immature to understand the importance of education; they see a family living on welfare and don't know any different; they think doing nothing but sleeping all day is normal
- attendance – they fall behind and start to fail
- late and get into trouble
- could be alcohol or drugs
- not enough support at home
- struggle at school; find it easier to give up and drop out rather than try to get help
- transportation
- daycare
- bullying – leads to anger, leads to retaliation, or going into hiding
- racism – within our own culture – what family you come from, poverty
- being placed in a special class
- segregated from other students
- used as “slaves” for cleaning, serving, cooking, etc.
- not addressing learning challenges or behavioral problems, being placed in a special class
- being kicked out or suspended and never being invited back or told about new programs
- there should be more help in the classroom

- school is boring – need to teach in a different way; need to re-connect students with the natural world and mother earth; need hands-on learning in all subjects; the classroom needs to be thought of as being bigger
- students are influenced by others who have dropped out before and have a good job
- they feel discouraged when they can't get answers right
- they feel everyone is against them
- they have older siblings who have failed before them so they think they will too
- money
- drugs
- laziness
- too much pressure
- they find a good high-paying job that doesn't require grade 12
- pregnancy
- crime
- drug addictions
- family problems
- lack of discipline
- they have started a family
- some people just don't like school and they want to get away and work
- they don't understand the work and they don't like asking for help
- kids don't always have a positive attitude about their own heritage and culture; this results in a mindset of "I can't finish school"
- family issues
- being asked to leave home
- racism hurts our children; the whole family and community need to be educated (all races, including natives)
- many native students are afraid to ask questions; they don't want to be seen as stupid; need native teachers
- not enough time to finish classes – need more extended classes.

What programs and/or other supports encourage students to continue their education?

- friends
- the Edge homework program
- Storefront
- counselling
- work programs
- career searching
- career fair
- work education
- correspondence courses

- people coming in to do workshops about drugs and alcohol, sports, education, work, gangs, etc.
- the teachers and counsellors
- education fair
- wanting to have a good job in life
- the Edge – gives more time to do school work
- career day
- sports teams
- good teachers
- group support
- any extra-curricular which provides an opportunity to succeed, i.e., sports, drama, dance
- subjects that are interesting
- NorthWest Regional College
- good relationships
- elders in school
- provide more learning experiences out of the classroom
- older students need incentives like living allowance
- themselves; if they really wanted to continue and graduate, they would
- school activities like Act Now
- peer support at school
- sports
- positive relationships with students
- positive relationships between home and school
- good athletic program
- engage students in their interests
- guidance counselling
- provide daycare
- job fairs – develop career goal
- they want to graduate so they go
- Kihitwam
- Storefront
- adults pushing you to go to school
- Pre-10 program
- sports give you a reason to go to school 'cause they're fun
- family, spouses, federal and provincial government programs, work-specific training
- more sports or activities to make kids want to be there or feel a part of something
- winter and indigenous games are great but there are no games for our age group to compete in
- parent support
- encouragement to go somewhere in life
- recognition of potential by parents, teachers
- intramurals in the morning to get the metabolism going and excite kids to get to school

- make classes interesting – teachers just reading the information is terrible
- a caring staff – but not pushy, teachers hanging out as friends with students in halls, lunch etc. forming a relationship
- opportunity to choose activities and your own reading material
- a way to anonymously tell someone your problem – email or help phone line
- create something to make kids want to be in school
- trades classes
- more career guidance – a counselor who can follow through with helping with career plans; a teacher doesn't have time to teach and be a career counselor
- more gym time
- more hands-on learning
- more physical activity
- we need programs that are flexible if you are responsible to help at home – i.e., babysitting – or if you have a baby or a job
- friends – socializing
- look forward to contact with peers
- support at home
- sports
- the Edge
- bored at home
- finances
- good relationship between home and school
- personal attitude
- programs – building moral character needs to be addressed
- have gym in the morning to wake everybody up
- support group
- sports
- money
- successful parents/older sibling
- closeness of families, helping each other
- mind set of wanting a better life
- parents keeping you in check, they support you so you can have a better future; sometimes the teachers “pep talk” you
- extra-curricular – sports and different groups (not just academic, i.e., drama, book club)
- parents – they don't want you to be a drop out; they want you to get a good education
- maybe because they want a certain job
- mom pushes
- I enjoy learning; learning comes easy
- supportive teachers
- parents force you to stay
- activities (sports), volunteering at school,
- friends

- words of encouragement from teachers and staff
- strong confidence in yourself
- elder coming down town is good
- positive attitude from instructor/teacher
- adults who care and encourage kids to go back to school will encourage kids to come back; a teacher was always asking my friends about me and that is what made me decide to go back to school
- night school might be helpful
- PTA (Provincial Training Allowance) teaches responsibility – it is very strict for attendance and assignments
- incentives should have strict rules
- missing school, skipping and being late doesn't have a consequence
- teachers who make learning fun
- older siblings
- teachers
- breakfast class first period or a fun class first thing in the morning would get kids to class

What programs and/or other supports need to be put in place to re-engage students who have left school?

- give extra time for work
- take time to help students learn so they can understand
- a guarantee that by getting an education they'll become successful
- the enjoyment of learning kindness and respect
- free daycare for those who have kids and wish to go back
- transportation
- money to help pay bills
- steady pace
- opportunities for them to find something, learn it, and become good at it
- no homework on weekends
- an outreach program to single parents
- an outreach program for children age 15 - 20 to show them that education plays an important role
- eliminate bullying
- more physical education
- make classes more fun
- get a daycare
- one-on-one contact and educational support
- flexible time-tabling and alternate academic programming
- a location other the school
- none, it's a choice a person has to make
- make potential students aware of the various options for entering a learning program

- work and trade training
- school half-time and work training half-time
- the age 21 should be raised for attendance at high school
- Kihtwam program is good because it's out here and helps people go back
- not a whole day of school but just focus on one class at a time; working independently, not in a big class
- money helps; encouragement at home, and maybe a noon hour bus or something in case you sleep in
- older people encouraging, not educators but people in the community; role models – young adults – to encourage, people who are 22 - 30 who can explain why you don't want to be where they are; look at the role models right now – the 22-year-olds are all drinking; there needs to be a way to show students that there is something for them at the end; need programs that teach common sense values; people don't have that, no sense of respect; need to learn manners
- too many kids don't see the need to go to school; they live off their parents and don't see the need to finish school
- create something to make kids want to be in school
- trades classes
- more career guidance
- teachers who follow through
- more gym time
- more hands-on learning
- more physical activity
- car pools
- invite parents/guardians to come into classes to hear the "teaching" of a method of math for example so they understand what their children are learning
- invite parents to the Edge
- more relaxed environment – comfortable
- have separate places for kids who need quiet and others who enjoy noise
- programs like Kihtwam
- support group/healing group to work through self doubt; more counselors; time for students to talk together in groups; they don't want to feel alone; talking with former teachers/other students to try to ease back in
- money
- can't force someone; it has to be their choice; maybe an after school program; maybe provide day care for parents; provide transportation; friendly environment to return to; bigger school with somewhere to relax/access computers/get help (tutor)
- programs – i.e., cooking (chef), carpentry
- school as an incentive (hockey players)
- alternate program of some kind – i.e., trades program with grade 10 program; daycare
- counselors; getting resourceful (i.e. family wellness); encouragement from friends

- start teaching how to deal with bullying and racism right from Grade 1 and continue on each year until Grade 12
- be proactive so kids don't quit school

What do you know about school programs that are currently in place?

(i.e., Kihtwam Program, Storefront Programs, Adult Education, Pre-10 Programs, Extended Programs, Open Credit Programs, Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program, Regional Colleges)

Most respondents indicated that although they have heard of most of these school programs, they know very little about the details. There are some misconceptions about certain programs – for example, the purpose and requirements, who they serve, and the financial incentives, sometimes resulting in negative connotations associated with the program.

Eight sample responses are provided:

- Kihtwam is for people who dropped out and want to come back and finish. Storefront pays you to go.
- All of them offer education that you need for the future to get jobs.
- Storefront is good. Students go because they get money every month; this is an incentive. Kihtwam is good because some kids don't like to be in the classroom; they don't want to be singled out as dumb. Pre-10 is good to remind people who want to go back to give them a start back at school.
- As a child care and youth worker, I know that the youth I work with have a better chance of success with programs outside of the "normal" school program due to their lifestyles and living arrangements. Programs such as these offer the opportunity for youths/adults to continue their education. These are a must in today's society due to the knowledge that most people do not learn in the same way. People who have fallen to the wayside in their educational pursuits must be given the opportunity to better themselves and their lives.
- It is hard to know all the options. What is out there? Who do you turn to?
- We usually learn this from word of mouth or posters; I don't know much.
- I know about Pre-10 at the shed and Storefront. I like Kihtwam better than Storefront or Pre-10.
- I like small groups.

What do you know about the requirements for completing school (i.e., Grade 10, 11, 12, Adult 10/12, GED)?

Many respondents indicated knowing something about credits. Some knew that 24 credits is the requirement for grade 12, while others were unsure and speculated that it may be 20 - 30 credits. Some had a good understanding and also know about the difference between

compulsory and elective classes. Very little was known about the requirements for Adult 10/12 or the GED.

Nine sample responses are provided:

- You need 24 credits for grade 12; I don't know about the Adult 12.
- I don't know – something like 20 - 25 credits. GED is a test you do that tells you what grade level it is that you're at.
- You got to get credits; that's all that matters. Adult is the basic credits you really need. GED is a set of books you study and then you write tests.
- Grade 12 is something like 30 credits.
- I always hear about credits and how many are needed to graduate but I still don't really know. It would be better to know what needs to be done (number and types of classes needed).
- I know you have to apply for some programs; you need 24 credits to graduate.
- I know about high school requirements but not Adult 10/12 or the GED.
- I don't really know; I just take what teachers say.
- When we get to grade 10 we hear about credits; we need to hear about this in grade 7 to 9.

What social and/or peer issues do you think are associated with students in schools? Please consider both the challenges and supports.

- friends
- drug related/gang related enemies
- if there are fights in school that may discourage someone from returning
- clubs
- cigarettes and snuff
- cheating on tests
- being able to fit in
- working together on group projects
- spreading rumours
- leaving people out
- peer pressure
- there are kids involved in drugs/alcohol/fighting which affects their education
- the young students see the older ones skipping all the time, going uptown, etc.; they think when they get older they can get away with it too
- fashion/clothes/appearance
- being 'nerdy' or studious
- some older students are role models
- peer group that is positive is a great support
- bullying
- dating - relationships can be positive or negative

- people fighting over stuff; some good stuff is making friends and being in a group of people from where you're from
- fighting over girlfriends/boyfriends or where you're from; drugs and alcohol
- participating together, making friends
- helping each other with work and stuff; having friends and people to talk to; fighting over girls and over guys.
- Indian guys don't want to be the best in the class because they think if they're successful, everyone in their community will talk about them and start trying to bring them down, so they don't want to stand out; they just want to fit in and be average – especially the guys; they brag if they get a 52% because it's not above everyone else, but it's enough to pass
- drug and alcohol use, pregnancies
- friends always want us to go partying and drinking
- playing cards at the shed keeps kids up all night
- not enough sleep – staying up late
- being left out
- not understanding the work
- being smart and having to wait for others to catch up makes kids not want to go to class – I help other kids get caught up, but I'm tired of that
- school is boring
- bullying – kids need to know the difference between teasing and how other people take it and how it relates to bullying
- kids have more important things going on in their lives that interfere with them getting to school or getting their homework done; they are too scared to tell someone
- too much sitting
- poverty
- stress from teachers to finish assignments when you have a baby or a job that is important
- cliques; trying so hard to fit in you forget about the other things you need to look after; when people seem radically different, it's really hard in school; people don't want to reach out to them; girlfriend/boyfriend in same school and then break ups, awkwardness – worried about them instead of school
- making the wrong friends
- a girlfriend and good friends
- friends are a support
- conflicts with cliques are a challenge
- no perceived bullying issues but an awareness that it's a concern in other places
- good teachers are role models
- good environment; small school, small class sizes, can get lots of help
- friends in schools help students stay in school
- bullying and being picked on is a challenge
- role models in higher classes are a support

- bullying
- boring in school
- negative attitudes/positive attitudes
- bullying is challenge
- friends are a support
- sports teams are a support
- a good staff is a support
- friends helping friends
- big sister/big brother
- students are comfortable with teachers
- kids follow their peers; they aren't strong enough to say no or do the right thing
- no rules or role models
- friends push them to do drugs and drink, skip, etc.
- there should not be schools on reserve; kids should all go to school in one community so that they have relationships developed and same things have been taught
- it helped to have a few friends move to the new school with you so you don't feel alone
- ice breakers helped to have us get to know each other
- drugs
- when students are sent to work on a research project in groups, they sit and talk about their weekend; if the teacher made the groups, randomly or not, more work would be done in better quality; there would be no rushing to get things done
- people who do homework, work hard, and get good marks are often classified as "nerds" or "geeks"; who wants to be called that?

Please provide any other comments you would like to add.

- If you want to get anywhere in life, get your grade 12.
- You come to school to learn, but socializing can be a good thing as long as you don't forget why you're in school in the first place.
- Although students are getting extra help to pass, they are taking advantage. They know teachers don't want them to fail; they continue to not show up and just get the easy activities.
- If learning is made fun, we will remember it – one teacher threw a football to different students during biology, saying what stage the "cell" (football) was going through. It was fun, so I paid attention and remembered it easier.
- I think people who drop out don't mean to stay out, they just need a break. Then it ends up being longer because they feel out of place.
- Add training like WHMIS and First Aid, Safe Food Handling and stuff to help people complete requirements for trade training.
- A big problem is lack of parental involvement, and funding for young adults in school – finances and budgeting issues.

- Media and entertainment (video games, cars, jet skis, etc.) take priority over school; they are always distracting. Parties, the weekend, friends, and booze are also very distracting.
- They (schools) did good with me.
- It's important to have good cultural (Native) components in classes – speakers, sweats.
- It's important for conversational Cree to be available (Cree Club).
- If there would have been more communication between home and school, my mom would have found out I was skipping and she would have put pressure on me, but I was sneaky.
- Teachers and adults preaching to me about skipping just made me skip more until I quit.
- Storefront students should come in and talk to the kids about doing their education now, not at age 21+.
- We need to have more activities: movie nights, dances.
- Kids don't do homework because they are busy after school – hanging out or looking after kids.
- School - classes don't seem to relate to the real world.
- We need financial planning.
- We need money management skills.
- There is not enough information given on careers and how to plan our future.
- The reserve has a newspaper; the school could put information in it.
- The teachers at Storefront and from NWRC are really good at telling you what you need for the future.
- Where would kids like us be if there was no Storefront?
- Some classes (subjects) are not given enough time to get through the material and complete the class on time; for example, calculus and regular math move too fast, even for strong students.

Part III

Resources, programs, etc. available in local communities, and/or throughout the province, that could support the efforts to educate and employ youth/young adults; educational and employment opportunities that are best meeting the needs of youth/young adults:

- Storefront schools
- special schools with a traditional Aboriginal focus (urban) – Won'ska
- Sports for Fun programs
- work experience and life skills programs
- youth mentors
- babysitting courses and jobs
- community sports teams and classes like dance
- Family Literacy Program
- local businesses and jobs for students

- Kihitwam
- Family Wellness
- Primary Health Care Team
- daycare
- band training for people who get a job with them
- sports, bingo, mini chefs, and arts and crafts on-reserve
- Society for Safe and Caring School and Communities
- virtues programs
- trades skills
- hands-on math; for example, operating a till, making change
- pre-apprentice introduction
- drop-in centres
- the Industrial Arts shop
- Storefront schools
- Kihitwam
- people coming in and teaching birch bark or weaving
- presentations with humor

What resources, programs, etc. are not available in local communities, and/or throughout the province, but are needed in order to support the efforts to educate and employ youth/young adults?

- for kids at age 15 who hate school, they should be doing more work experience type activities rather than book work; this way they gain some work ethic and see the importance of an education for grade 10 – 12
- on-reserve Peacekeepers could be used to help with communication to home and to support anger management programs
- there isn't much on the reserve
- employment – there is a lack of places for work experience
- there is very little for young parents
- there is nothing in our small communities
- few to no jobs are available; all local uneducated adults have the local jobs that require no education – gas jockey, grocery store
- age appropriate activities for young parents
- things like carnivals for young families to go to as an outing with our kids
- activities for dads, moms and couples
- career preparation
- resume writing
- interview practice
- scholarship information
- awareness programs
- local work experience

- awareness of the importance of volunteerism
- transportation to the city for work – work COOP
- supports for grandparents who are raising grandchildren need some work; grandparents do not have the energy to raise kids anymore and so many of them are raising kids
- work experience, but real experience – not being the cleaning slave; teach us how to run a till, etc.
- babysitting
- single parents' support
- flexible school time
- more time for homework, computers
- school should be open everyday or at least every other day after school to access the gym, computer room, library, etc.; kids are told they have to go home after school if there isn't an organized/supervised activity
- more life skills, work preparation, and work experience programs – rural and on-reserve
- training on-reserve for skills in trade areas
- support for youth going into post-secondary (support group, one-on-one contacts)
- more cultural programming
- there is no advertising about our other programs that are available on-line or through correspondence
- kids who hate school could be trained in things like volunteer firefighter, CPR etc.; they should have more speakers coming in and teaching about careers and what it takes to have certain careers
- hopefully the Kihitwam programs will grow and keep kids busy so they don't get into trouble

Educational and employment opportunities that are not meeting the needs of youth/young adults:

- Stand-alone Storefront

Business Sector - Summary of Findings

The individualized dialogue sessions were conducted in a one-to-one setting with either human resource personnel or managers of eight different industry sector businesses.

Why do you think students discontinue their education?

- addictions, family circumstances, mental health
- do not fit into the 'mold' of the school system
- do not see it as beneficial
- not reality based – do not understand the connection between school and employment
- lack of support from significant adults
- too much sitting, not enough doing – boring
- meaningless

What programs encourage students to continue education?

- wide variety of options in subject areas – not just academic based
- hands-on, real life, experiences; work experience programs
- reality based programs that show the importance of education – work placements
- programs that reach the whole student; strong support from teachers, parents, and community
- apprenticeship programs; mentorship
- assign adult advocates to students who are at risk
- hands-on learning – let them learn by doing

How can the education system provide assistance to engage students in employment?

- have industry come in to the schools as speakers; be mentors; form partnerships
- understand that not all kids go to university; stop pushing university to all students when only a fraction actually goes
- show the significance of learning as it relates to real life; how does what I learn in school help me to make a living and support myself?
- start early – in grade 7 or 8, kids should be able to explore careers
- have teachers that are informed about all careers – trades and professional careers
- partner with businesses to expose kids to different careers
- have an open communication network and seek input from potential employers to learn about what skills are needed in the workforce
- invite businesses to schools
- use resources that are developed by the sector groups allowing students to be exposed to, and learn about, a wide variety of careers

How can industry partners help students to become more engaged in learning?

- mentorship programs
- provide work experience and apprenticeship placements
- go into the schools and talk to the kids about resumes, interviews, career options; be a role model
- offer resources – scholarships, training allowances, curriculum
- provide apprenticeship opportunities
- provide spotlights on careers in their business; field trips to on-site businesses
- anyway we can
- partner with schools

Additional comments:

- We need to build the bridge to start working together more.
- There are lots of incentives to get kids to stay in school; we need to show them the benefits – they need to understand that in order to have a fulfilling life, then you have to be motivated.
- Keep bringing us kids; and we will keep employing them.
- Start some training earlier – make work experience mandatory – allow them to get paid while they are earning credits.
- Anyone can get a job; we have to teach kids how to set themselves up for a career – it has to be a passion.

APPENDIX D

Kihtwam Program Outcomes

Employment

- sustainable Youth to Work program within a safe and nurturing environment
- concrete connection of education to the world of work and trades training
- increased employment opportunities for students and community members

Learning Component

- guide for establishing tuition and service agreements
- shared human resources, program expertise, curriculum materials and activities for students
- development of a culturally sensitive model to continue to strengthen the youth partnership
- collaborative professional development opportunities for staffs
- increased understanding and valuing of treaty
- formation of a joint school administrators' group
- Special Education teachers collaboratively plan for student success
- shared centres of excellence among First Nations and PSSD schools
- common goals among partners will create alignment and efficiency
- cross-cultural training for all employees of each partner
- evolution toward a common working community
- decrease in racism
- increased positive interaction among communities, teachers, students and parents

Community Engagement

- support local strategies for youth involvement
- increased level of trust, communication, inclusiveness and collaboration within the Partnership
- increased leadership and involvement of parents and community in learning activities

External Partnerships

- increased involvement with Saskatoon Tribal Council
- increased Interagency support
- bringing together concerned stakeholders (community, local governments, Tribal Council, Chiefs and council) to solve issues affecting learning success
- increased capacity to access resources
- creation of First Nations-School Division Partnerships across the province
- impact federal policy on education funding

Kihtwam Program Indicators of Success

- increased Aboriginal student numbers graduating from completed educational programs
- increased Aboriginal student numbers engaged and involved in education and their communities
- increased employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth and adults
- increased Aboriginal parent and community leadership and involvement in education
- increased levels of Aboriginal student satisfaction evidenced through interviews
- decreased student mobility and transience
- improved transition for Aboriginal students evidenced by enrollment:
 - Elementary to Secondary
 - Secondary to Post-Secondary
- increased numbers of students involved in the Youth Engagement Team