

Culturally Responsive Schools-Placing Culture in the Center

It is the goal of Saskatoon Public Schools to improve student learning by adopting a model of education that is culturally responsive and affirming. The work of the Okiciyapi Partnership (partnership with Saskatoon Tribal Council-STC, Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. -CUMFI and Saskatoon Public Schools-SPS) has underscored the urgency of the work of becoming a more culturally responsive school division. Saskatoon Public Schools utilized action and appreciative research methodologies to guide the inquiry into the questions: What is cultural responsiveness? What are the processes that will help move Saskatoon Public Schools to become a more culturally responsive school division? A strategy used by the research team was to form an Advisory Committee to seek guidance in the understanding of cultural responsiveness and to respectfully engage Elders, cultural leaders, students, parents, staff and community members in conversations around the development of cultural standards and guidelines. The research is a result of capturing the wisdom of the Advisory Committee.

The description of culturally responsiveness includes these qualities: affirming, holistic, ceremonial, healing, value based, visual, purposeful, community based, honouring of Elders and traditional knowledge keepers, respectful of diversity and celebration of life. Saskatoon Public Schools has engaged in this research because it values and recognizes the vital role that culture plays in the development of strong learners, schools and systems. *This work is about becoming more cultural responsive to enhance and improve student engagement with an emphasis on First Nation, Inuit and Métis students.*