



# CASS

College of  
Alberta School  
Superintendents

## Highlights

### 2021 CASS First Nations Métis and Inuit Education Gathering March 15-17 (virtual)

The 2021 Indigenous Gathering was unique in many ways being the first Gathering held virtually, with over 325 participants and a strong focus on listening to the voices of Indigenous youth. The purpose of all 5 Gatherings has been “listening, understanding and moving forward together to achieve reconciliation through education”. This year more school and system based leaders attended. Participants represented many roles in our provincial education system, teachers, school and system leaders, consortia, post-secondary, trustees and Indigenous community organizations.

Cultural ceremony, an important part of each Gathering was still provided with a modified Grand Entry to open our hearts and minds to learning, with an Elder prayer each day to start us off in a good way and the retiring of the flags to end our time together. Special thanks to Elder Wilson Bearhead and Sharon Morin for their guidance on cultural ceremony.

Our learning goals for the Gathering <https://cassalberta.ca/conferences-workshops/2021-first-nations-metis-inuit-education-gathering/> were successfully achieved based on feedback from participants. 100% of participants agreed that the Gathering deepen their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous education as described in their professional practice standard, 100% agreement that they would apply their learning, 100% agreement that they would share their learning with their colleagues, 100% agreement that they would put their learning into action and 97% agreement with a better understanding of how to lead and implement Indigenous knowledge into their practice. 60% of respondents indicated this was their first time attending a Gathering.

When asked “What aspect of this learning was most meaningful to you in order of meaningful?” respondents identified the **quality** of the 3 keynotes, ( Sean Lessard, student panel, and Tomas Jirousek) and the 16 presentations, listening to **youth voices**, listening to the **personal stories/practices** of presenters, hearing from **Indigenous Peoples**, and **land-based learning**. Many recommended always including the voices of youth.

“What aspect of this learning might be improved” **in person** attendance at the Gathering, opportunity to **attend more sessions** rather than having to pick only 4 validating the quality of presentations, access to **recordings** of each keynote and presentations for further reflection and sharing, opportunity to **interact and listen** to the Elders, more province wide sharing /**access to resources** and how to **decolonize** school systems. Many respondents indicated nothing.

“One thing I require to further support my learning”, a reoccurring theme of accessing resources, presentation PowerPoints and recordings emerged to continue their learning, reflection and sharing, followed by **time** to reflect and learn in their roles. Recordings will be made available in the near future on the CASS website.

Comments “on the administration of the Gathering” were **highly supportive** of the registration process, well organized, communication from CASS, ease of the virtual experience, liked sign on door option indicating do not disturb, difference in experience of whether Gathering should be half day (more time to reflect on half day’s learning) or full (opportunity to attend more sessions) with good argument on both sides but all in agreement that **in person is better** providing more opportunity to interact with others, participate in **cultural ceremony** although more time consuming and costly with travel , registration and lodging expenses.

Roots of Resilience Education Foundation were the **witness to our learning** at the Gathering and also supported the youth panel . This is the link to their witness statement which was well received with requests for access now posted on the Gathering website: <https://cassalberta.ca/conferences-workshops/2019-first-nations-metis-inuit-education-gathering/>

Another unique feature of this year’s gathering was the introduction of the **personal pledge to reconciliation** to support participants in acting their learning, also posted on the Gathering website.

**Thanks** to Claudine Cortes and David Keohane for all of their support and to all participants for their ongoing commitment and leadership to education for reconciliation.

Planning will begin for the 2022 Indigenous Gathering March 14-16 in the fall based on the feedback from participants.