



CASS 2023 First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education
Gathering

Decolonizing Education: Truthing our way Forward
ReconciliACTION



Sharon Morin (niya michif iskwew), Project Coordinator, Les Femmes Michif
Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation

Good afternoon, (introduce myself in Michif) I want to start by thanking the Elders who have been here this week with us, sharing their educational resource, themselves, one of the greatest resources you can have in your tool kit. (thank the elders who have guided me)

We in turn send you our greatest resources, our children. You spend many hours with our littles, you teach, mentor, share and hopefully learn from our children. Something that Dr. Dwayne Donald said was “Let our Children lead” words that I heard spoken in many forms throughout the conference.

Wahkotowin = relationships with land, and when I say land, I mean all of its inhabitants not just the us a people but the animals, plants, waterways even the Rocks. I have been taught that rocks are the oldest beings, so old they have no eyes or no mouth, but they have ears, they are listening to us. (share the Ross story) If you pay attention, open your minds, hearts and classrooms you can actively participate in the act of Wahkotowin, that is part of what is being offered to you as educators and you are being asked that you put that into action.

Something else that I picked up on was from Mind to Heart and from Heart to Hand, that is another step in decolonizing your space, just learning to lead with your heart, which I think most teachers do instinctively, but what is being asked here is that you do it consciously. That when you are making your plans for the year with these teachings are at the forefront of your thinking. That you put that into action

I am going to echo what my good friend Charlene Bearhead said in last year’s CASS witness statement:

“Relationship, relationship, relationship... I think that is something that we all witnessed here... And we’ve heard over and over it’s the key to learning”.

I want to share that this past year I was part of a Metis delegation that went to Egypt to attend the UN COP on Climate, the first ever Metis delegation which I am very proud of.... It was the first time at COP that the Indigenous people had their own pavilion, and it was the first time that the youth were not in a separate space, I am going to say that 95% of the First Nations

Metis and Inuit delegation were folks under 30 and they are impatient with us. I attended a MMIWG event in Ottawa this past fall where a FN and Metis youth group came and sang, at the end their “Young Auntie” as they refer to her, who is a Metis woman from Fishing Lake spoke, her final words were “we have been coming for the last 5 years and nothing has changed?”

Now am not saying that things have not changed here, but what I am saying is that the kids are ready, our kids are willing and able to walk this journey with you and I hope that you are ready as educators, superintendents and community members are ready. No more can we hear, I am scared, I am uncomfortable, I wasn't taught it, we need to put it into actions.

I was able to attend a couple of sessions, I wish I could have sat in on all of them!!

So many opportunities to learn and resources for your tool kit, sessions on Truth and reconciliAction, Our Journey of Truth from Head to Heart, Treaties 6, 7,8 Education and Alliance, Honoring voices of Indigenous Teachers and school leaders to name a few – do you hear the themes in the titles, can you pick them out?

Great resources created by FN Metis and Inuit Educators, to again put into that “Tool KIT” of yours. A resource built to give our kids HEROS! Heroes from communities that they might know! Hero's that might look like them, hero's that have walked the walk as them or family members of theirs', so they understand the struggles to get there. Something that presenter Crystal Clark said that I loved was “these resources are seed” So what do you as an educator do with seeds??? Obviously water them, nurture them, support them and help them grow.

The Coming Together Session, where they presented on Honoring their students! I loved that, honouring, such a great word. They asked their kids what they wanted, they listened, they worked with the home ec teacher, they worked with community and created their own unique grad gifts. They let their children lead.

You have a new resource from RLI on Michi languages, interactive spaces that will entice learners of all ages to look further into Michif. A resource that is using distinction in our Michif language.

Land based learning with Bryon Johnson and Vance Quinn, they are a perfect example of working together to create outdoor space for their students, firstly they are very lucky to be in the area that they are in, but the space that has been created will last forever and leave memories that they will never forget, relationships that will last a lifetime and a true appreciation of the land and all of its gifts.

I am going to borrow something from Bryon Johnson the idea of know or knowing.

Know your students

Know your student's family

Know your resources

Know that mistakes are okay

Know that not knowing is also okay

Know that you can always ask questions

Know that we entrust you with our greatest resource – our children

Know that not all indigenous children are not raised in their culture

Know that we are aware of our past trauma's

Know that it's okay to lead with love in your profession

And know that we are all here to support you in your classrooms