

Cross Lake Education Annual Report

With its large population, the Cross Lake (Pimicikamak) community has the requisite size to manage, operate and control its own education system. Because of its large population, Cross-Lake has embarked on local control of education for approximately 27 years. There are two separate schools in the community and with its current and projected student population; the community has been able to operate independently within its boundaries. The student population in Cross Lake is approximately 1,776 students from Nursery to Grade 12 and this student population is either larger or comparable in size to ten provincial school divisions in Manitoba and greater than the five smallest school divisions in Manitoba. Cross Lake First Nation Education Authority (CLEA) manages the Mikisew HS and Otter Nelson River schools in Cross Lake.

Funding

The education funding for the CLEA flows from AANDC to the Cross Lake First Nation under a Contribution First Nation Funding Agreement (CFNFA). The CFNFA is a five-year funding agreement and within the funding agreement, there is a fixed student number used to calculate the annual education funding for the each of the years of the five-year period. This methodology leads to problems in that there is no increase in funding for increased enrolment for the First Nation during the agreement period even if it is proven that student numbers have increased.

Service Delivery

The 1st level school services are the services delivered at the individual First Nation community level and includes the school, school administration, and school staff. The 1st level services are those services offered for school staff and school administration at the school level to serve the students and parents. In other words the day-to-day operations of the schools.

1st level services for the schools include the following list:

- Teachers
- Education Assistants
- Special Education - increased support
- Library
- Age/Grade/Attendance
- Cree Language Instructional Programming
- Other Programming and Student Activities
- Professional Development
- Principal(s)

- Vice Principal (s)
- Secretary
- IT support
- Data Management
- All other school expenses

Currently there is no funding for 2nd and 3rd level services for CLEA. For the purpose of this report 2nd level and 3rd level services are explained below.

The 2nd level services are the school support services that may be offered by the Cross Lake Education Authority Office level. The services are similar to support services provided by a provincial school division. The function of the 2nd level support services is to enhance and strengthen the educational programming for students, staff and school administrators at the schools. The 2nd level services are intended to support the schools directly in meeting the needs of the students and supporting the teachers and school staff.

3rd level services can be described as services that would enhance and support the 1st and 2nd level education services offered at the community level. For other school systems such as Manitoba, the Department of Education and the Minister of Education provides the 3rd level services to the schools in Manitoba.

Today, at the First Nation community level there is the absence of 2nd and 3rd level services to support the First Nations education system. Without the support systems there are many challenges for the Education Authority and schools to operate an effective education system for the students. The schools are doing the best they can with the limited education support and resources available to them from INAC

Current Projects

1. Feasibility Study Cross Lake Education Authority (CLEA) has been seeking to build a new high school and vocational training center in Cross Lake for at least 10 years. CLEA carried out a new high school feasibility study in 2006 and submitted it to INAC , but no funding was made available to CLEA in 2006 or in subsequent years to build such a school. The need for a new high school has been more than evident for over 10 years. Cross-Lake elementary, middle and high schools were overcrowded in 2006. In the period 2006 to 2016, school enrollment in all grades have continued to increase significantly and on a continuous basis. CLEA recent mandate to carry out school eligibility study. In the school year 2015/16, the Pimicikamak Executive Council gave the mandate to CLEA to carry out a feasibility study to: Build a new high school and vocational training facility; Renovate and build additions on to the two existing schools as required; Build new teacherages and renovate existing teacherages as required. CLEA

was able in school years 2015/16 and 2016/17 identify funds to carry out this school feasibility study.

2. **Strategic Plan:** CLEA's main purpose of existence is Student Success. To do so, we need to put in place a plan of action that will allow the organization to grow and perform to the best of its abilities. From time to time, we may need to refocus, but always giving in mind student success as our ultimate goal. A strategic plan is the roadmap that is needed for that to happen. In the development of this plan we focused on four things; our strengths, our weaknesses, our opportunities and our threats. Everything we do as an organizations must be based on our values as a community.
3. **Early Learning Project:** There is a growing that the first few years of a child life are critical in the process of development. Experiences in the early years lay the foundation for health, learning and behavior throughout the lifespan. Its important for the support to happen in the most critical times of a child's development, it is with this in mind that this initiative has been development in partnership with Red River College and MFNERC. It is based on three core concepts: strengthening understanding of early child development; techniques for supporting language and literacy in the early years; and classroom environments and practices that highlight active learning through play and positive guidance,
4. **Staff Development Initiative:** CLEA has embarked on this teacher training initiative on the premise that mathematics has shown to be lagging in our schools. CLEA seeks to develop a new strategy to address and improve the situation. This training initiative will be based on three pillars: 1) Development of teacher understanding and mastery of mathematical content, 2) Development of pedagogical skills, and 3) monitoring and evaluation.
5. **The learning Bird Project:** Many Indigenous schools have a desire to add digital resources to their classrooms, especially resources that help support and convey the perspectives of First Peoples. However, many lack the equipment, resources, and teacher support to achieve this. Learning Bird makes it easy for teachers to enhance instruction with engaging digital content using the tools they have today in the classroom. Students learn best when the content they are engaging with is interesting and relevant to them. This is why we offer content from different perspectives, including content from Indigenous perspectives. The content is delivered through a variety of models (video, podcasts, worksheets and presentations), and includes different voices and examples.

It is common knowledge among First Nations that the funding levels of all programs is far below the actual needs of the First Nations. The federal government has capped education funding at 2% for education programming on a national level since 1996. This results in an

increasing gap in funding between First Nations and the public school system. It is necessary to move forward in building our education system that is comparable to the provincial school divisions with an education system focused on meeting the needs of the our students that is culturally relevant. For that to happen it must be properly funded and properly resourced.