

Following Their Voices: Supporting Indigenous Students' Learning by Fostering Culturally-Sustaining and Relational Pedagogies to Reshape the School and Classroom Environment

Tuesday 3 August 2021 - Parallel Session 2 - 12.45pm to 1.45pm (GMT+1)

GRANT - Developing Cultural Responsiveness

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In this presentation, we describe Following Their Voices (FTV), an initiative implemented in schools in Saskatchewan, Canada, to meet the educational needs of Indigenous students. Inspired by a program from Aotearoa (New Zealand) called Te Kotahitanga, but reframed for the local context with the guidance of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, FTV is designed to raise the educational achievement and engagement of Indigenous students by transforming student-teacher interactions through relational and culturally sustaining pedagogies while fostering spaces where culture and identity are affirmed and students' voices drive the teaching and learning environment. Most of the schools involved in this project are found in rural, remote and Northern contexts. Using a train-the-trainer model, teachers learn about and implement culturally sustaining pedagogies with observational support from colleagues; set goals to enhance instructional improvement; and participate in regular collaborative reflection meetings to build on successes and address areas that require change. Findings from our appreciative inquiry with 11 schools in their second year of FTV implementation revealed that the schools are most successful in transforming instruction and improving outcomes for Indigenous students when the principal actively participates in professional learning activities alongside teachers and publicly acknowledges both the vision of the FTV initiative and the efforts of teachers to change. The research builds upon existing school-based perceptual data (from students, parents, and teachers) and extends those data to draw deeper understandings about school climate, classroom instruction, and student learning. We will share additional findings and discuss implications for future research.