

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY CULTURE
AND CLIMATE REVIEW**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 27
(CARIBOO CHILCOTIN)**

2024/2025 School Year



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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education and Childcare asked Safer Schools Together (SST) to undertake a School Community Culture and Climate Review for School District 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin). The review focused on systems of student safety, racism, anti-Indigenous racism and other school safety measures. SST was pleased to have Mr. Kaleb Child Musgamdzi, the former Provincial Director of Indigenous Education, work with SST on this review.

PROCESS

The Review included:

- In-person/Zoom meetings with School and District Leadership on December 9, 2024.
- In-person meetings with Community Service Providers on January 17, 2025.
- In-person meetings with First Nations on February 3, 2025, with the:
 - First Nations Education Council (FNEC).
 - Esk'etemc leadership.
 - An evening dinner meeting with the rights holders. Five (5) of the twelve (12) band's rightsholders and council members attended this meeting.
 - The meetings were intended to ensure that the rights holders' voices within the Cariboo Chilcotin School District boundaries were part of the process.
 - An online survey was provided to First Nations rights holders and FNEC members to provide additional feedback.
- School Culture and Climate questionnaires were provided for students in grades six (6) through twelve (12), as well as school/district staff, and parents. Respondents were not required to provide their names, ensuring anonymity and comfort when responding.
- The district and schools proposed the timeframe for distributing and returning questionnaires from February 18 to February 27.
- Parents/caregivers were able to complete the questionnaire online or in print.
 - School principals provided parents with a print-based questionnaire at their request.
 - SST automatically received completed online questionnaires.
 - One hundred and eighty-eight (188) print-based questionnaires were sent home with the school's eldest child in sealed envelopes, including stamped return envelopes, to be mailed to SST. (SST received five (5) print-based responses. It appears that some schools may have delayed sending them home.

FINDINGS

A total of 1,844 students in grades 6 through 12, 375 educators, and 400 parents completed the online or print-based questionnaires and provided anonymous additional feedback to express their honest and candid opinions without fear of reprisal.

The quantitative and qualitative data from the school community culture and climate review process indicated a mixed narrative regarding systems of student safety, racism, and other school safety measures.

The quantitative data from the educator, student, and parent questionnaires support the school district's efforts to actively promote respect for Indigenous cultures within the school environment, foster equity and reconciliation, and partner with Indigenous communities and organizations. However, some comments in the additional feedback section of the questionnaires suggested a perceived imbalance in the focus on Indigenous culture and perspectives. Additionally, qualitative and quantitative feedback from Indigenous leaders and council members expressed a need to address the racist attitudes exhibited by some educators and students.

The extensive coverage and dialogue of school district issues within the broader community creates a narrative that may not accurately represent the experiences of all parents and Indigenous communities regarding racism and student safety.

Although there is certainly work to be done in terms of strengthening the communication systems between district and school leadership with school staff, parents/caregivers, and community partners, it should be noted that all groups articulated in the questionnaires and comments strong levels of satisfaction regarding teacher-student communication.

Considerable effort is required to ensure that staff possess the knowledge and understanding of policies, procedures, and training necessary to maintain safe, caring, and inclusive school environments.

The district will need to develop a comprehensive work plan, which may require external expertise, to successfully implement the recommendations outlined in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop a comprehensive communication strategy that ensures all members of the school community, as well as the broader community, are well-informed about school and district initiatives that positively affect student education, well-being, and safety.

- Consult with a communications specialist to help the district reshape the narrative impacted by negative publicity by offering training for board members and staff on how to facilitate effective, open, consistent, and transparent communication.
- Develop a user-friendly format for the district's Communications Protocol for Families and Community that provides pertinent information and is easily accessible by parents/caregivers and community members.

Ensure that the conditions for safe, caring, and inclusive school environments are grounded in best practice and informed by national and international expertise.

- Provide educators, Indigenous leadership and other community partners with knowledge and training on:
 - The foundations of safe, caring and inclusive school communities
 - Threat assessment
 - Critical incident response and management
 - Cultural equity and sensitivity to address bias and racism
 - Trauma-informed practices
- Provide parent sessions that focus on topics such as bullying, cultural sensitivity, online safety; code of conduct; resolving conflict and communicating with children based on their age and stage.
- Ensure that codes of conduct are aligned with the Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct, as outlined in Ministerial Order 89/2024.
 - Align student behaviour and progressive disciplinary actions with the school's Code of Conduct to more effectively address safety concerns such as bullying, violence, and substance use.
- Develop a leadership program that provides mentorship and builds capacity.
- Encourage staff participation in developing proactive prevention initiatives and to ensure awareness of the Erase Report It tool and resources.

Engage the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) to co-construct initiatives addressing identified issues and concerns specific to First Nations through a nation-informed approach.

Through the updated FNEC (Bill 40) relationship:

- Develop an anti-Indigenous racism strategy and systems improvement cycle through improved FNEC accountabilities (Terms of Reference)

Inform the annual First Nations programs survey and community engagement calendar to support further relationship-building through the broader district communications strategy.

Promote and improve service delivery and programs for Indigenous Education, budget and policy planning, and preferential hiring for Indigenous Education positions.

Conduct a review of the current attendance support program and alternative education programs to ensure their responsiveness/success in meeting the needs of vulnerable learners.

Explore ways to honour and celebrate the rich diversity of the student population.

CONCLUSION

A detailed work plan and a process for implementing the recommendations outlined in the report will be required to achieve sustained improvement through short- and long-term measures. Engaging external experts will help ensure that current best practices, along with necessary processes and procedures, are established to address the identified areas of concern and build capacity.

Safer Schools Together thanks the Cariboo Chilcotin School District, Indigenous leadership, and community members for their contributions to the review process. There is a shared commitment among all members of the school district community to promote a healthy culture and climate that ensures student success, promotes feelings of safety, and supports emotional well-being.



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