



GRFN Education Unit Final Report

Comprehensive Review of Programs and Services

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Request for Proposal

Garden River First Nations (GRFN) is one of seven members of the North Shore Tribal Council (NSTC), whose land stretches along the north shore of Lake Huron close to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. These communities work collaboratively on planning, while retaining their unique identity and direction. GRFN is Ojibway, part of the Anishinaabe Nation, with a celebrated history stretching far beyond contact. The Robinson-Huron Treaty (1850) defined the boundaries, and parameters of what is GRFN.

There are approximately 3,000 members of the GRFN, of which a slight majority of Band citizens live off-reserve. Nearly 30% of the on-reserve population is under 30 years, which is why the Education Review received the attention of the community. There are implications for this population cohort to migrate to post-secondary education and employment and leave their community, either temporarily or permanently. There will be a need to create employment opportunities on or in close proximity to the Reserve. Currently, fewer than 150 people are employed by the GRFN on-reserve delivering a variety of programs and services. The majority of the off-reserve community are forty years or older. There are more females than males. Fluency in the Ojibway language continues to be an issue as highlighted in the ‘Out and About Program’, designed to preserve the language through immersion weekends and Ojibway classes. This was an area that the Elders spoke passionately about to the review team.

One of the GRFN Action items stated, “As a community, Garden River will support the education of its people and maintain connections with Anishinaabe heritage and traditions” (Ketegaunseebee Garden River First Nation Community Plan: 77). The Garden River First Nation requested proposals to conduct a comprehensive review of programs and services regarding their Education Unit. “The Request for Proposals is aimed at increasing achievement results and transitional strategies for our elementary, secondary and post-secondary students including our exceptional students. An outside Consultant who will develop multiple methodologies for community engagement strategies including various survey instruments, focus group questions will lead this review, and other methods that are used to ensure a cross section of identified stakeholders are consulted. Stakeholders include but are not limited to: Education staff, Band staff, past and present students from high-school and post-secondary, teachers, leadership, parents, Elders and interested Garden River First Nation community citizens.” The request was to engage the community in reflection and discussion focussed on change.

Phase I – Education Unit

The first phase as outlined in the RFP was to focus on the Education Unit, its services, programs and organization. The objectives and benefits of this project are aimed at engaging the community in the review of programs and services including the review and revisions to existing Operating Guidelines in Post-Secondary, Secondary, Elementary and the need to develop Operating Guidelines for Special Education. This review may result in a re-structuring process, which will include a review of current job descriptions with the possible outcome of revising and

enhancing the roles and responsibilities of staff members. Any recommended changes will be made based upon the feedback received through community engagements sessions, questionnaires/surveys, research on best practices regarding transitions, identified gaps, strengths and weaknesses of each department of the Education Unit. In short, the people of Garden River will heavily drive whatever changes are made.

The intention of the Review was to engage as many community members who wish to contribute to the renewed commitment of the Education Unit to improve and enhance the programs and services provided.

Expected Results

It is anticipated that the outcome of Phase 1 will be the successful design and implementation of a community consultation process leading to recommendations to:

- Improve coordination and implementation of educational services
- Clearly define retention, transition, engagement, and graduation strategies to support academic and cultural success of Garden River First Nation students, and
- Recommendations for restructuring if necessary

Phase II - Adults in Motion & Post-Secondary

Phase Two's focus was on adult education. Adults In Motion (AIM) is a First Nation Private School providing students, 16 years of age or older, the opportunity to gain credits toward their high school diploma through independent learning courses, teacher-taught courses and cooperative education where students gain work experience. The staff provides guidance, support, instruction, and one-on-one assistance to students working towards their Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

The focus was to analyze the current operational structure of AIM; review the policies and procedures and to consult with the same stakeholders as described above in an effort to increase the attendance of students attending this school.

Expected Results

The outcome of the AIM review is aimed at creating recruitment and engagement strategies to increase the attendance and success of students; the development of a school plan with both short and long-term objectives with the development of a proper measurement and reporting tool that tracks success. In an effort to evaluate student success these measures could include benchmark achievements from year to year, or semester to semester. This school evaluation tool will allow GRFN to improve/develop programs and services that will meet the needs of all students.

Through enhanced engagement, student success, school services, setting a school direction, increased teacher skill-set, staff team building and cohesiveness, the review will enable the

identification of gaps and barriers and develop strategies to overcome them. Ultimately, GRFN wanted to set a strategic direction for the school to ensure we meet our goals and objectives.

Context and Background to the Evaluation

We know more about educational improvement planning and impactful education than we ever have before. Google provides educational improvement planning and targeted reviews, and there are over one million hits. Becoming strategic and effective, to positively affect student outcomes, are attainable goals. The analysis from OECD's PISA (Programme for International Student Achievement), 2015 is that balancing excellence and equity matter. Evidence-based practices offer possibilities for change.

There is an existing body of research into effective educational practices for First Nation Learners. These findings will assist the review. Strategic planning for improvement can drive intentionality and coherency. "Reviews become value-added when there are explicit links based on the analysis of results to improved student outcomes" (Freedman & Di Cecco, p.41).

The Garden River First Nation, on their website refers to, "The Creators Garden", honouring the traditions of the Ojibway Nation and the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Within the Garden River Education Unit is situated the 'Natahwegidjig Mahjeeshkahwan', Adults in Motion (AIM), operating as a private alternative school. AIM provides opportunities and supports to adult learners to gain skills, knowledge, and graduate high school to obtain their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The Education Unit provides a variety of opportunities within the Garden River community (for example, tutoring, special education supports, counselling, and youth forums). The Garden River Education Unit has responsibility for a range of learners, from elementary, secondary through the Adults in Motion Independent, and for post-secondary adult learners. The AIM program uses a variety of pathways, depending on when the student first entered high schools.

The Education Unit aim is to "enable the Garden River First Nation Community Members to achieve their educational goals." Their mission is to "enable the students(s) to acquire the skills, knowledge, values and commitment to become lifelong learners and responsible members of the Garden River First Nation Community".

The Garden River website notes that the review "will include all programs and services within Post-secondary, Secondary, Elementary, and Special Education, including a review of our policies and procedures in each area mentioned. We believe it is essential to learn from a variety of perspectives including our students, families, leadership and interested community members so we can all support our students in reaching their full potential." Therefore, we suggest hosting a series of community engagement sessions in the new year to further explore how we can promote student well-being with the goal of increasing our graduation rates at the high-school and post-secondary level.

The Review - Phase 1

The review as outlined in the RFP has two phases. The first was to engage the Garden River First Nation stakeholders in a review of the programs and services of the Education Unit including elementary, secondary and post-secondary. This phase required an analysis of the structural components and policy/protocol components of the Education Unit in order to increase participation and retention. The resulting suggestions gathered helped indicate direction for change. In particular, special education needs to be addressed in terms of developing guidelines and suggested support, and this was clear in the analysis of the community feedback and input sessions.

Student Numbers

From data provided, currently, age-appropriate students in kindergarten through grade 12 leave the reserve to attend off-reserve schools. From the website, there are two main tuition agreements for sponsored students: one with Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board, and the other with the Algoma District School Board. Tutoring services are provided through the GREU staff.

GRFN operates an on-site Child Care Centre. According the Education Unit's website as of February 2017, Garden River has 231 GRFN on-reserve students transported off reserve for education in 15 publicly funded elementary schools. Additionally, there are 13 other First Nation students and 23 non-status students attending elementary schools. The schools with the greatest number of GRFN students are East View, educating 120 students and Holy Cross educating 73 students. Of the 15 schools with GRFN students: most have five or fewer students. The review's emphasis was on East View and Holy Cross, which account for 193 GRFN students or 84% of the elementary GRFN students.

There are 77 tuition-sponsored students in the secondary schools;

- 35 at White Pines ADSB
- 25 at St. Mary's College HSCDSB
- 13 at Superior Heights ADSB
- 4 at Korah ADSB

Additional supports for post-secondary students are available.

For Post-Secondary

There are 100 students attending post-secondary institutions.

- 9 are in certificate courses
- 54 post-secondary students are registered at Colleges, the greatest number at Sault College
- 46 attend universities, with Algoma having the most students attending programs

- 5 in a three year program
- 10 in graduate education not including doctoral programs
- 2 in doctoral programs
- 15 of the 100 post-secondary students have a documented disability.

The Review - Phase 2

Phase Two's intent was to focus on the Adults in Motion (AIM) Independent School. Adults in Motion (AIM), operates as a private alternative school. AIM provides opportunities and supports to adult learners to graduate high school and obtain their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). AIM hosts a range of learners, from age 16 through students over 60. The program uses a variety of pathways, depending on when the student first entered high school and is structured according to their strengths and needs. Courses are offered through several venues including courses from the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) through TVO, cooperative education courses, and onsite offerings. The review will assess alignment to the new policy documents such as: Ontario Schools, Policy and Program Requirements 2016 and Program Policy Memorandum 159 on collaborative professionalism.

According to data gathered regarding adults on-reserve, 25 years and older, for the Community Plan in 2013:

- 39% hold neither a certificate nor a diploma/degree compared to 36% for the Non-FNMI population
- 24% hold a high school diploma compared to 23.2% for the Non-FNMI population
- 8% have certification in a Skilled Trade and/or Apprenticeship compared to 12.1% for the Non-FNMI population
- 29% have a post-secondary certificate or diploma or degree or a combination of these three (2013: 47)
 - 25.1% of non-FNMI have a university degree
 - 21.8% of non-FNMI have a college diploma

During the review process, it became clear that Post-Secondary Education was an area that the community wanted to engage and comment on through the various input gathering sessions and survey and focus groups and interviews.

The Review Process

The team spent six days on-site, interviewing, leading focus groups and community input sessions and reviewing relevant data sets (The contract provided for four days onsite but the additional days were need to complete a fulsome response and analysis). This review emphasized gathering input from a wide variety of stakeholders including students, Elders, parents and

community members, Band leadership, other GRFN departments, staff and partners including the school systems. Community sessions, interviews and focus groups were used to gather input from a broad group of stakeholders. We have included the written and spoken comments from each group to demonstrate the amount of congruence and coherency in identification of issues and suggestions for possible strategies/approaches for solution. Additionally, an online survey was developed with input from the Education Unit to gather opinions, and ideas from the broader GRFN community. The aim of the review was to explore ways to increase outcomes for students. When we queried this further, we heard comments such as:

- Ensure students are ready for high school, academically, socially and emotionally
- Increase high school graduation rates
- More students in and completing post-secondary programs
- More opportunities to complete post-secondary including for those who may require multiple tries
- Increase engagement and participation of parents and the community
- Include the Elders in the decision-making
- Increase opportunities to embed and celebrate Language and Culture

These qualitative data were analyzed from trends and common themes. The suggestions that arose from the consultations and focus groups and interviews are referenced in the discussions 9from the input gathered from the focus groups and interviews and the appendices. These are referenced from literature on effective practices. Additionally, the team examined a variety of other data sets including:

- Student achievement data
- On-line Survey data
- Previous reports and materials

Input from Focus Groups and Interviews

What We Heard From Members of the Education Unit

The review team held a focus group for the Education Unit, as well as smaller focus groups with the Special Education Drivers, AIM, Tutors, and ASWs. The team then interviewed some members of the Unit individually either in person or in a phone conversation. Michael Jordan once said that individuals win awards, but only teams win championships. The shared goal for change for the GREU is to have the members of GRFN, working together as a team to realize increased outcomes for GRFN learners – all of their learners.

The members of the Education Unit were able to clearly articulate their roles and responsibilities and took pride in their work. They recognize the range of needs and strengths in their respective learners and the challenges resulting in terms of increasing engagement and retention, “helping

students see the relevance and need of their education”. “Sometimes it’s difficult to keep their attention and motivation” was a recurring concern mentioned for AIM students. Several in discussions, mentioned the importance of “maintaining cultural relevance” and some participants raised the lack of awareness and sensitivity regarding students’ FN heritage demonstrated by the receiving teacher/schools, which can pose difficulties for students. Some teachers/administrators, “made the extra effort and approach” but that was not consistent. There was variation mentioned between the schools/districts in how they welcomed and accommodated GRFN students. There was discussion during the interviews of the ambiguity of having the school administrators as the line of control.

The focus groups discussed the need for offering, “more culture and land-based activities” to increase relevance and engagement; and “making opportunities for learning more concrete”. For AIM students, participants wanted more opportunities to embed the heritage into literacy and math, for relevancy. The Unit supported extra-curricular and recreational opportunities to engage students and the variety of activities that were available and reflected how the van bussing has helped make that happen.

Participants mentioned the success of the roll-out for the 2012 Strategic Plan, developed in response to community crisis and how “the community came together to make things better”. We heard in the focus groups, “when it goes well, there is a lot of passion” and commitment to their work. Some mentioned, “we try new things” when describing working for change and being adaptive and flexible. Collectively, the members of the Unit were proud of how they celebrated success of their graduates. The AIM staff talked about the upcoming March Indigenous Youth Gathering for youth up to 30 years old, as evidence of a new initiative. They were excited about possibilities and the focus on careers and cultural awareness. Many mentioned the annual banquet, and Christmas sketches as evidence of the Unit’s success. In the smaller groupings, there was discussion of considering specialized outreach through activities such as painting, photography, making mittens, which was occurring on the day of the onsite visit, with a land-base and FN cultural focus as a way of engaging potential learners. These could involve the Elders.

It was mentioned that additional funding for special education has “allowed for more supports and targeted resources”. The clubs and homework clubs, trade and technology days, and teams were viewed as contributing to the success of the Unit. They appreciated the engagement of existing resources within the community – the Elders, Band Leaders, Health Centre and the physical beauty and possibilities of the reserve - the lakes, hills and space.

The Unit noted that their success wasn’t always recognized. They felt it was important that the community see the positives as well as the challenges. This included the variety of study, support services including advocacy, referrals and the availability to tutoring supports, assisting with field trips and educational expenses and ongoing contacts.

The lack of perceived support, they felt, “limited community involvement and support”. We discussed some possible strategies to boost the marketing possibilities and reinforce the successes including monthly presentations to Council. “It’s hard to get people out for consultations” and we “want to engage and motivate parents about their children’s learning”. “We need the leadership to be involved including the Tribal Council and Elders”.

Participants felt they were stretched by the increasing demands in meeting individual learners’ diverse needs. There was a collective and individual request for relevant and timely professional learning to build capacity. “We would benefit from training in behaviour management techniques and strategies”, one participant mentioned. From another, “we need to know how to incorporate the latest technology and approaches being used by the schools. I haven’t had training in any of this”. There were challenges expressed in terms of interpretation of policies to meet changing demands. Sometimes they felt that exceptions needed to be made and the policies appeared inflexible. Rewriting protocols or clarifying existing ones was thought to be helpful

Some participants asked for greater clarity in terms of their interactions with schools as to chain of command. Several participants raised the issue of “structures standing in the way of flexibility” and the “blurring of personal and professional lines” and “information is seldom passed on”. Many articulated a need for more alignment and coordination across the departments to better meet students/family needs. This theme was expressed during focus groups with other GRFN departments. Some wanted clarity in communication between the Education Unit and the two school systems. There was an expressed need for an intentional and formalized process in addition to the existing organic and informal networks as a priority. “We need to sit at the table together”. We discussed strategies such as case management approaches and developing formats similar to in-school team meetings. We heard from the Unit, that they would like to see more programs run through the Wellness and Health Care Department especially regarding “wellness and mental health issues”.

The Unit acknowledged that student data isn’t being gathered and currently used to impact decision-making as effectively as it might. Several participants raised the possibility of developing for students and their families, “one stop shopping” so there would be one contact to find the services and programs they wanted and needed. Transitions were another area raised. Participants were pleased with the transition from Child Care to Kindergarten; however many had concerns about the transition from grade 9 to high school and then the transitions upon leaving high schools. Some considerations included:

- Intensive summer school program in August to target the transition from grade 8 to grade 9
- Specific targeted study skills course for AIM students
- Specific transitioning courses to assist AIM students and intensive summer school for credit courses

The Education Unit welcomed more targeted professional learning to increase their skills and knowledge. They liked the idea of “team-based learning” to increase collaboration. They were interested in expanding their networks especially for AIM and there was discussion of several possible approaches including with other First Nation adult education departments. Some wanted to access other models and resources outside GRFN, including ministry resources that could be used to support students. AIM asked for models for interdisciplinary courses to engage students and embed cultural relevance. We discussed possibilities of expanded co-op experiences, Sports and Health programs leading to trainer certification and courses using Specialist High Skills Major leading to Apprenticeship, peer mentoring and pairing with Elders as strategies for increasing support and engagement. We discussed offering tutoring workshops for parents/grandparents so they could be helpful with homework.

Assessment as a topic was mentioned as an area some would welcome for additional professional learning and approaches.

The members said they would know they were successful with change if they observed:

- More enrolment in courses offered by AIM, and an increased rate of completion of a high school diploma
- More graduates (certificates, diplomas, degrees) employed in their field of choice
- A stronger sense of FN identity as measured in attitudinal surveys and conversations
- Evidence of more consistent collaboration across the GREU and other departments
- Easier transitions from elementary to high school and high school and beyond

As one member wrote, “Change is very difficult, but how else do you make something better?” Another topic raised by a few members was transportation, which seems to be a function that involved several people without overall coordination.

Student Focus Groups

The team interviewed students in each of the four publicly-funded Ontario schools that received the majority of Garden River’s students: East View, Holy Cross, St. Mary’s College, and White Pines. The students were divided into two main cohorts; groups of students from grades seven through eight for the elementary schools, and for the high schools, grades nine through twelve.

East View PS has 301 students, with 120 students coming from the Garden River FN community. In fact, approximately 70% of East View’s students are self-identified. French and Ojibwe are offered from grade 1 through 8 and most students/parents select the Native as a second Language (NSL) option. There are issues of timetabling NSL and students can be withdrawn from traditional curriculum subjects such as science or social science or one of the other options, since NSL is not exclusively scheduled during core French.

Holy Cross has approximately 580 students, of which 196 are self-identified on and off surrounding reserves and 73 are from GRFN. French and Ojibwe too are offered and most students/parents select the NSL option. St. Mary's College has 25 students from GRFN, while White Pines has 35 students. The St. Mary's website had an interesting video clip on a specialized program on Aboriginal Entrepreneurship.

<http://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1019943&binId=1.1142313&playlistPageNum=1>

Permission was granted from parents/guardians prior to the interviews and the students were assured of confidentiality. The team listened to the focused discussions of approximately 69 students, of which 61 were from GRFN. We engaged in conversations with students, twice at St. Mary's College because the initial focus group included FN students, but not all of the students were from GRFN. This is what students shared:

Across the four schools, students told us they enjoyed the school because, "It is safe and caring". The students responded positively to the school's "welcoming environment", and "strong school spirit". The students across the four schools mentioned, "Caring teachers" and in particular, they referenced the cultural workers, the diverse student population and range of activities. In two elementary schools, the administrators and school counsellors were mentioned as people students sought out if they had concerns. "Faculty members or a student we trust" was another response and parents and grandparents were mentioned. A few students mentioned issues of bullying and that not all students were treated the same. Only a few students across the four schools reported seeing the respective staff liaison on a regular basis. Students enjoyed the range of sports, clubs and activities but would like to see more. At White Pines, the 'link through' program, linking grade 9 students with senior students was viewed as a positive.

We asked how Language and Culture was supported in their school. Students from both panels talked about the dedicated Culture Room as, "we have our own space", the Ojibwe language classes, the reinforcement of traditions and the occasional visits of Elders, the posters, drumming classes for females and males, messages in the hall and those morning announcements recognizing that the school originally stood on First Nation land. All of these students said "helped in understanding our path". A few students mentioned the spring, pow wow held at the school. A few students wanted the language classes to focus on more conversational Ojibwe to be more useful and to have clearer connections with Elders and the community. Across the schools, a few students asked for on-reserve schools. One message for the Chief was "we are trying hard and working well". Students were impressed that Chief Paul Syrette had come to speak with them and hoped he would do it again. Dianne reminded the high school students about the *Indigenous Youth Gathering* on March 30, 31. Unfortunately, March 30th conflicts with the writing of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), and passing the OSSLT is a requirement for the OSSD or high school diploma.

We were interested in the transitions from elementary to secondary school and from secondary to post-secondary. Both the elementary and secondary students shared their opinions of the first transition. Overall, students found the move from elementary to secondary challenging. This is what the students told us that would make the transitions easier and make them feel more confident:

From Elementary to Secondary

- Let them meet the Link Crew earlier and continue that relationship through high school so you have a friend “who can help guide you”
- Have them come for several visits to the school and tour, “so there are no surprises”, and you can “know the routines” because “it is a whole new level” and as one student reminded us “it can change your life completely”
- Visits to the Cultural Room and the staff that supported them in their Culture
- Phil Jones’s visit to Holy Cross was mentioned as useful
- Several requested tutoring at their school during the day because they come home to babysit and cannot access the tutors at GRFN after-school
- Have some GRFN high school students visit the grade 7 and 8’s to talk with them about what to expect in the high school they will select
- A week for orientation prior to September in GRFN with experiential on the land activities
- For the Catholic schools, the cost of uniforms was mentioned especially for St. Mary’s; consider a uniform exchange store where parents can bring in used uniforms and they can be shared

From Secondary to Post-Secondary

Students did not feel adequately prepared in terms of their upcoming transition from secondary to post-secondary institutions and programs. They shared their ideas they thought might make their transitions easier:

- They worried about issues like financial planning and “real budgeting” and “not being sure what to do”, and suggested holding “a special session on funding for us, so we understand this better”,
- They wanted mentors similar to the Link Crew that could support them as a peer,
- They suggested having recent high school graduates return and speak to them in GRFN, not at their respective school,
- Visits to the potential colleges/universities,

- They weren't sure if they had an e-portfolio and a few had heard about 'Career Cruising' but still felt uncertain in terms of what pathways/careers they should know about. They liked the Trade Tech opportunities,
- Wanted more information to know if they were selecting the right courses and wanted to speak face-to-face to have their questions answered in a timely manner. If we don't know we need to know more immediately",
- They suggested a job fair at GRFN,
- University and College Fairs on GRFN. Want more formalized opportunities,
- More on-reserve co-op opportunities,
- Only two students mentioned the information of the Education Unit's website,
- On-reserve high school courses or dual credits including summer and night school courses.

The following are comments from students regarding programs that would like to see in place in GRFN:

- "Utilize the rec centre more"
- A community garden "to reinforce our heritage" – From PBS on educational resources to support this strategy - https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/da823ff0-c229-4a3d-926e-278a4f366347/think-garden-sustainable-gardening/?utm_source=lmnews&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mktg_2016#.WNrXnU91qUk
- Robotics
- Coding
- More outdoor activities that are experiential so "we can learn by doing with our hands"
- A student council or ways to build student leadership

School Administrative Staff Input

Additionally, we spoke with the administrators of the four schools that educate the majority of Garden River's students. We heard the following themes expressed across the interviews with administration.

- They were pleased with the positive supports from the GRFN Community. "The services and supports that Garden River Education Unit provides to support students with special needs is working well."
 - Talked about ongoing support in terms of Special Education and the ASW
 - Involvement of community agencies during IPRC and case conferences held at the respective schools
 - Challenges of not having "on-call supply ASWs" for that additional support
 - Discussed the support during the transitioning to high school

- Both elementary schools were pleased with the planning and transitioning from GRFN Child Care to their school.
 - GRFN support in registering new kindergarten students
 - For students not registered there are 'Drop-in Family Centres, off reserve in public schools for parents/grandparents/guardians and children from birth to age six. Information is provided through the school boards; however transportation would have to be provided for on-reserve families or GRFN could develop its own centre.
- They celebrated students' success from GRFN.
- All schools wanted to welcome GRFN students and show respect for their culture and language and were not sure they always succeeded. For both administrations, building the capacity of their staffs to be culturally relevant and responsive was a work in progress.
- Schools had provided FN training through the respective school boards, to their staffs and they all had a dedicated culture room, which reflected through pictures, artifacts and smudging the GRFN's heritage.
- They appreciated the supports from and presence of the ASWs and elementary school liaison; although they were not sure of the scheduling and did not clearly understand the scheduling regarding frequency/focus of the visits.
- They wanted to create inviting environments for learning where well-being and respect and trust were evident.
- They had some data on the achievement of FNMI students but not specifically to GRFN.
- The administrators discussed the challenges of strategically managing resources and were appreciative of the additional supports offered by GRFN including the ASWs, the professional assessments from the Wellness Centre for students in the identification process, and the Special Education Support Services, the Special Education Van drivers to assist in providing services to improve the learning of the GRFN student outcomes, especially for those requiring additional supports. Mental health was raised as an issue, although GRFN students did not experience more issues than other students. The school administrators would like more aligned connections to the Health and Wellness Centre on GRFN.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Administrators were pleased with the current transition strategies from pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten including onsite visits to GRFN by elementary administrators and key teaching staff to register students for kindergarten. They suggested perhaps that process could occur for elementary students transitioning to high school too,
- Concern was raised regarding the education 'readiness to learn gaps' between GRFN students attending Child Care and those not attending and wanted some targeted educational readiness supports for those families. This issue was raised in department focus groups,

- Worried about vulnerable students and finding appropriate supports,
- More explicit collaboration between GRFN and the school/board including more effective use of data and building professional capacity on the gathering and use of data and effective practices,
- Being more familiar with evidence-based practices for FNMI students.

The school boards maintain an Aboriginal Lead Teacher, provincially-mandated Aboriginal Education Committee (EDU, 2007), and provide professional training for administrators, teachers and support staffs.

Adults in Motion (AIM)

There are approximately 65 students enrolled in AIM today, of which six are en route to graduating with their OSSD, according to GREU. Students can register any time during the year for courses and teacher-taught onsite courses are offered twice a year. During the onsite visit, we were able to interact with some of the AIM students during a workshop creating traditional gloves. They were pleased with the blending of traditional culture and learning and appreciated the involvement of Elders in the program. Natalie Barry and her team provided information on AIM and their aspirations for their students as learners. During the evening input session on K-12 education and AIM, we heard the following comments about AIM and suggestions for improving learning outcomes:

- Need to be more explicit about why a high school diploma is important and share that widely with the community,
- The AIM teachers were seen to be supportive,
- Shorter, chunked programs to make the transitions easier,
- Offer a variety of offerings: face-to-face, blended learning, on-line,
- Greater involvement of Elders and traditions in the curriculum,
- Build awareness of the programs and services through “flyers, postings, social media” and consider door-to-door recruitment,
- For Ontario Works enforce the conditions for those who need to continue their education using the AIM programs and services and encourage those employed on GRFN to move towards completing their OSSD/GED by offering incentives for completion,
- Increase co-op opportunities within GRFN and have more mentorships and coaching for AIM students,
- More career counselling,
- Offer more courses in NSL, Native Studies and partner with Elders,
- Partner with other GRFN departments to find funding dollars,
- Look at grants that can add to existing supports to students to assist them in completing their diplomas,
- Align with existing programs organized by Elders including TRUST, Dream Catchers and other existing programs within the community,

- Video the Elders to preserve the heritage as a project for AIM or Summer Work Program and involve our learners and their experiences,
- Offer programs that coincide with and celebrate traditional ceremonies and celebrations including rites of passage within Ojibwe traditions,
- Offer evening sessions and host open houses,
- Offer Free gym membership for AIM students.

Post-Secondary Education

Post-secondary is the current “hot topic” issue for most respondents in terms of education improvement for GRFN. The community wanted to discuss the strategies, programs, and services focused on transitions to post-secondary and the supports to students currently enrolled in post-secondary institutions. They expressed concerns regarding current policies and the implementation of those policies and the implications for students in probationary status and those who have dropped out of formal schooling.

There are many useful tools located on the Education Unit’s web site, including study tips, resume writing, avoiding subletting nightmares to name a few.

Band Leaders

We spoke with the Chief Paul Syrette, and the members of the Band Portfolio Holders twice. They were curious about the lack of useable data on student achievement for them to engage in effective and proactive planning for improvement. Collectively, they wanted a sense of where students were currently performing and what the data could indicate. What would be the indicators of improved student outcomes? We discussed the issues pertaining to transitions. Their focus was on strengthening Language, Culture and knowledge of Ceremonies and traditions. Engaging the community and honouring the Elders were all important. We have heard input into increasing opportunities for land-based experiential programming and connecting learners to mentors employed in various occupations on GRFN. The review team shared preliminary materials developed for the review specifically for the Education Unit for feedback. Finally, we discussed possible next steps. These are described later in the section dealing with Job Descriptions and Organizational issues.

Elders

The Elder focus group was set to coincide with their scheduled lunch. The Elders were gracious to host us and we collectively gained from their wisdom. The conversations were wide-ranging and fruitful. A suggestion that arose from the evident concern in the discussions was that oversight needed to happen to ensure change and the implementation of the recommendations to move forward. The conversations and comments suggested the creation of an “Elders’ Committee to Provide Support and Advice on Implementing Educational Changes”. To be eligible the Elder would have to be a registered member of GRFN and use their, “work, life

experience and education to offer advice”. The consolidation from the Wednesday and Thursday input meetings included for this committee:

The first three topics presented, reflect the comments on school transitions to which the other groups had given input. The last comments focus on the conversations and suggestions finding ways to promote the Language, Culture and Heritage of GRFN. There are common themes emerging across the various focus groups, input sessions and interviews.

For Child Care to Elementary

- Concern expressed about building the skills of those children not currently in Child Care and discussions on how best to serve their needs so they are better prepared for junior kindergarten
 - Mock primary classroom to acclimatize young learners and that could be used to do training for those not registered in Child Care
 - More awareness of the range and needs of learners
 - Concern that there are too many pressures in kindergarten; however the curriculum is mandated provincially (Note: The 2016 Kindergarten Curriculum was shared with the Education Unit to assist in their planning)
- Another suggestion was for creating on-reserve schools

Elementary to Secondary

- Need to be clear on the message – high school diplomas matter and are important for students of GRFN to continue their education
- Need more trained counsellors “to provide support and encouragement” and “access to guidance counsellors”. “Our students need better advice”
- “Make more students aware of their possibilities”
- Have members of the Boards of Education make reports to Band Council
- Include off-reserve students in training and programs
- Create on-reserve middle school to help with transitions
- Engage community and parents on committees to offer feedback and advice, like the School Councils and look at what are our strengths and challenges
- “We need more teaching of our local history and culture”

Secondary to Post-Secondary

- Many of the suggestions emphasized the need for better training and access to timely and relevant information through different modalities
 - Financial training in grades 11 and 12
 - More targeted career orientation in high school
 - More opportunities to explore the possibilities of pathways
 - Workshops on what scholarships are available and how to apply – sit down and go through mock application forms with feedback provided
 - Courses on budgeting in grades 11 and 12

- What are the common pitfalls that derail students and what are strategies to deal with those challenges?
- Providing “trained and helpful counsellors” for students “wanting to talk and to get advice”. Make it “more inviting so kids want to talk and share”
- Ensure cost of living increases match the increases in tuition and living expenses
- Use role models and peer mentors. “Grads who can mentor, track and support students who may become at-risk”
- We need databases. We need “more timely identification of who is on track and who is not and how do we intervene”
- There were discussions about “fairness’ of current policies and procedures. “Education is a Treaty right, how do our policies deny that right”
- More teaching “Local history and culture”. “What does status as a Treaty Indian really mean?”
- How can we enable a post-degree diploma from being recognized?
- Discussion about issues such as mental health impacting education and learning

Promoting Our Language, Culture and Heritage

- More information should be available in schools
- “Get Elders to teach survival skills, cooking/manners, tolerance, & Grandfather Teachings”. These should form part of the Education Circle
- “Our history and language MUST be taught in all levels of education”. Some learners may never be fluent but they will have some fluency. “Without our language and culture our people will die”.
- “Financial support for our culture and heritage is in the treaties - get leaders to assert our rights”
- “Invite Elders/people of knowledge to come to speak, visit and mentor in the schools”
- “Our Culture and language can be supported as we ourselves know it”. We need more published books on our culture so kids can understand their heritage”.
- “Mandatory classes every term at AIM. This could be free to all including Band staff. Consider conducting meetings and business dealings in the Language. How powerful is that? Inspiring, empowering, confident learners at all ages”.

Thoughts, Ideas & Suggestions from Parents & Community Input Sessions

There were three evening sessions in total. Two evening sessions were held dealing with Post-Secondary Education and one focused on Kindergarten through high school including Adults in Motion. These sessions began with traditional greetings and smudging and brief remarks from the Chief and the Manager of the Education Unit. The three sessions were live-streamed to the greater GRFN community. There were approximately 30 people attending each session. There

were topics on chart paper that invited comments/concerns/feedback and blank chart paper for participants to add additional items for consideration. For the Post-Secondary sessions, the Tuesday evening identified the issues and gathered comments and the Thursday session tried to identify solutions and strategies to the identified issues. The reviewers have combined the feedback from the two post-secondary sessions. The Thursday evening meeting occurred after the meeting with Elders. Both sessions expressed the need for community oversight of the implementation of the review's suggestions for improvement. Both meetings endorsed creating an Elder Advisory Committee to ensure implementation of the report's recommendations.

Elder Advisory Committee

These were some considerations expressed:

- Band Council and the Leaders can actively solicit Elders to apply
- Must be a GRFN registered member and 55 years or older
- Elders should have the moral authority to have the recommendations enforced
- Elders' "work, life experience and education should be considered in the selection process"
- Rotating terms of one to two years, with an option to re-apply
- The Elder Advisory Committee would require appropriate staff and administration support
- Elders must meet background check requirements and consider conflict of interest policies
- The committee should hold quarterly meetings with formal updates from members of the GREU and other departments involved in implementation
- "Forgiveness Factor" needed

Post-Secondary

How can we more effectively engage the Elders to Preserve GRFN Culture and Language?

The initial discussions and comments revolved around concerns that language and culture were not being preserved. There were concerns raised that students were "on their own for the first time", perhaps "experiencing identity issues", and not comfortable with seeking outreach and support. The following were the strategies and approaches suggested:

- "Honour and recognize the Elders". Gather and share the knowledge and wisdom of Elders so students understand and appreciate their History and Culture and Language
- Create a 'Research Historian'
- Have students interview and write down Elders' knowledge and then incorporate their wisdom into a book/resource that could be given to students

- Begin with asking questions like: ‘What was it like growing up in GRFN’, to break the ice
- Invite Elders “to share their life experiences” in post-secondary schools as well as the elementary and secondary schools. They could be given an honorarium
- Video-Tape the Elders to capture their “living stories” and use them with students in building pride and a sense of history and tradition
- Create a website for Elders and maintain it by someone proficient –could be a High School project and be used to enhance the curriculum
- More training and awareness for GRFN post-secondary school instructors
- Have cultural rooms in the institutions and programs that FN students can access and use
- Make programs of culture and language meaningful and relevant prior to them leaving and then have follow-up sessions
- Do outreach, extend “personal invitations” to make the students feel welcomed and “know who to go to with questions and concerns”
- Develop mentoring opportunities for Elders to engage youth: survival skills, trapping , traditional ways of life

How Do We Create More Timely, Direct Supports including Guidance, Counselling and Ongoing Mentorship for Post-Secondary Students?

Participants began with the assumption that the aim is to create more graduates and were asked to discuss the barriers and challenges that needed to be addressed. The consensus was that the current level of support is neither timely nor sufficient. The participants shared anecdotes and explored options to move towards wrap-around supports so that fewer students would struggle, be placed on probation, and drop-out:

- Mandatory and ongoing meetings of grade 12 students for guidance and direction regarding course selections/applying to Apprenticeship, College or University and other career paths
- “More liaison starting in grade 11 through grade 12”
- Share information of “what specific schools have to offer”
- “More exploration about interests & aptitude” – to avoid students dropping out
- Offer career pathways based on assessments & interest – “I need someone to help guide me”
- Help students choose their options –when should you look at a certificate course and when a diploma or degree?
- Meetings in person (not email) at GREU at mid-term post-secondary to make sure the student is moving towards success
- Some students felt overwhelmed by the emails and shared they had challenges in tracking them

- Before students graduate ask them to volunteer and act as peer mentors to other Post-secondary students and/or for elementary, secondary including AIM, students
- Have recent graduates and students enrolled in Post-Secondary come back and offer speeches, role modeling, presentations, as a way of “giving back to the community”
- Ask students enrolled in Post-Secondary courses for ways to improve, such as, “What would you do differently?” or “In this situation, what would you have done?”
- Could interview some unsuccessful post-secondary students to identify some common challenges and pitfalls they experienced, and develop strategies and supports to overcome them
- Require qualified, trained counsellor to work with students and offer ongoing supports and connect the students with services at their post-secondary institution
- May need direct contacts and someone to go with to the initial meetings
- Consider a new position for GREU; a career developer with cultural competency
- Take students to workplace of possible future post-secondary careers/employment
- Link students with other FN students, “even if different reservation than GRFN”
- “Fund “host” families to assist, support students when they are away”
- “Get to know who the students are, take more time and interest in the students, make them feel empowered”

Have a Community-Based Committee for Probation and Appeals. What should be the Guidelines?

The consensus was that these decisions were impactful and required a neutral committee that could reflect community input in a clear and transparent manner. Conversations shared concerns regarding the degree of tracking and monitoring in terms of keeping data bases and then contacting students when they looked like they might miss a deadline or requirement.

Participants felt that “18 year olds are not really adults” and still need supports. They asked, “What is the forgiveness factor? Some worried about issues of mental health and anxiety, trauma and physical health that could “derail students from graduating”.

Suggestions included:

- Establish a community-wide committee with a variety of stakeholders
- Keep a data base to track
- Set transparent criteria for appeals – post them
- Monitor the trends and decisions

How Do We Make Funding More Responsive within the Federal Purview? What can GRFN Change?

There was acknowledgement that funding is limited. “Living expenses have increased and the funding for cost of living remained static”. There are “no indexing for inflation” especially in expensive jurisdictions like Toronto. These were the approaches that participants suggested:

- Ask for a Financial Management System
- Consider bi-weekly payments not monthly
- Students need training and supports – bank crediting courses and credit card spending issues
- Pre-loaded credit cards for targeted payees –the educational institutions, food, communication
- Be more active in locating and securing bursaries & scholarships
- Offer workshops on how to apply
- Are there more funds available under the new government? Ontario to offer free tuition – is this real? Have we researched this?
- Research more Foundations that are possible. Walk students through the application process
- Encourage GRFN members to prioritize saving dollars for financial future, i.e. RESP
- Fund books, living allowance at a flat rate & tuition so you can fund more students
- Allow students to pay back if they owe money through venues such as community service or manageable smaller payments – people do not move on because they owe \$
- Is the post-secondary role to enforce the INAC funding or support students?
- Access Aboriginal Post-Secondary Information Program – APSIP

How to Provide More Meaningful Support and Guidance to Assist Students Selecting Course to Course & Program to Program?

There were concerns that students floundered or entered into probationary status because they didn’t understand their course selections and program considerations. Part of the discussions related to high school pathways, and in the reviewers’ consideration too many GRFN students are placed into ‘Applied’ courses, which limit their future post-secondary options and choices. The following were suggestions to consider:

- Make sure students are in the course pathways to get them to the destinations they require
- Sit down meeting to review progress based on an active and maintained data base tracking enrolment and progress of achievement. The aim is for “regular face-to-face” meetings
- More opportunities to visit a variety of post-secondary institutions
- More qualified counsellors with post-secondary qualifications who know the system and “are knowledgeable”

How to Create a Community-Wide Committee to Review and Revise Policies?

This chart raised many discussion points. One topic dealt with eligibility considerations for non-resident GRFN students. Another issue was clarity on which out-of-country programs were eligible for funding. Another issue raised was the challenge of a post-degree diploma being eligible for funding. Dr. Lloyd tried to clarify some of these issues based on the federal regulations. There were discussions on “forgiveness procedures” and allowing students to change their program courses and direction. The following advice was raised:

- Ensure the committee is diverse & knowledgeable in terms of finance and INAC policies and directions
- Recruit committee members with “known skills and knowledgeable”
- Pay members to serve on the committee and provide meals
- Survey people for knowledge of the current policies
- Invite members who are both on and off reserve people to give input to the committee
- Engage the opinions of high school and post-secondary students because, “they know what needs to be changed”
- Consult with GRFN members who faced difficulties to give their input
- Have/hire a professional policy developer

What can be done to Support Post-Secondary and AIM Students with Special Needs?

- Revise existing guidelines to recognize special circumstances and have policies that enable timely, needed and supportive access to special education services and programs
- Align the services more closely to the student. Ensure identified students have a current Individual Education Plan (IEP), in grade 12 so they can go forward to access needed services from Student Support at post-secondary.
- Partner with post-secondary institutions such as The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) for people over 18- <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/odsp/>
- Consider a trained Special Education Advocate for identified adult learners. That position could work with Post-Secondary and AIM and the community
- Ensure staff working with adults with special needs are properly trained and build their professional capacity

Kindergarten through High School and AIM

These sessions discussed the transitions from Child Care through supporting and promoting AIM; including discussions on how to enlist support from the Education Unit. Additionally,

there were conversations and comments about a series of other pertinent topics including: Parent Involvement, promoting the language and culture, extra-curricular activities, communication with the School Boards, Special Education and a broad category entitled “Other Issues”.

Transitions from Child Care to Elementary

- Offer trial bus rides with parents and students, in August closer to September and possible visits to the school’s kindergarten classes and offer more adult support on the buses
- Continue with the “elementary administration and teachers visiting to register students for JK/SK here at GRFN”
- Allow for “Bring your Parent to School to alleviate fears/anxieties”
- Staggered starts to school so students get know their teachers
- Offer the program half-days (Provincial curriculum/funding is all day every day kindergarten)
- Consider instituting the ‘Welcome to Kindergarten Programming’, which operates through the Learning Partnership
- Provide alternate transportation for identified students based on need/disability
- To preserve identity for GRFN, “enforce cultural awareness and visibility” “Use our use leverage from the tuition agreements to encourage the boards to hire more Indigenous staffs, be more visible and incorporate the Medicine Wheel, Grandfather Teachings and support using more Indigenous crafts

Transition Elementary Through High School

- Hold information sessions with public board staffs, in GRFN “to learn about their programs and opportunities for our students”
- Help us to understand the choices among/between the various schools – how do you make the right choice?
- “Most parents and students don’t understand the different high school pathways”. What are the implications in choosing for learning and the future?
- Create transition packages that contain the relevant information for grade 9 students and parents
- Offer more structured school visits with a peer mentor or assign Link Crew earlier to help with the transition
- Try (and) to ensure success prior to grade 8. Need more academic counselling
- Create 1:1 ratio in mentors using high school students who can act as mentors. There are high school leadership credits
- Use role models. Who can we access from GRFN? They can maintain ongoing contact and support with high school students
- Bring in community people to talk to students- actors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, doctors, and teachers

- Create more sports teams and hands-on, positive activities for students
- Should we look at transitions from grade 6 to grade 7? What can we do for these students?
- Create posters, and information and use more social media

Supporting and Promoting AIM among Adult Learners

- More flyers, postings, social media
- Explain why HS diplomas are so important
- Create a simple data base to track those GRFN adults who don't have a HS diploma and do targeted outreach to interest them in the system
- Offer incentives to students registered in AIM and gaining credits for their OSSD
- Include this as part of the Education Plan for Councils' staffs to have a high school diploma
- Free gym membership for AIM students
- Create videos as a course credit such as, "the making of..." featuring AIM students who achieved their Ontario Secondary School Diploma/GED
- Documentaries on education
- More use of social media –posters featuring AIM students
- Offer practical certificate leading courses such as Tourism, Culinary Arts, Physical Fitness Specialists similar to the Specialist High Skills Major program
- Consider more door-to-door recruitment
- Offer adults a variety of offerings: face-to-face, blended learning, on-line and make sure adults are aware of the possibilities
- "Offer Native as a Second Language or NSL, and more Native Studies courses"
- Partner with other GRFN departments to write grant applications and seek additional funding dollars
- "Align Aim with existing programs such as Elders, TRUST, Dream Catchers and other existing Elder programs or programs within the community"
- Offer courses, including face-to-face all year-around
- "Video the Elders to preserve the heritage as a project for AIM or Summer Work Program"
- Offer programs that coincide with traditional ceremonies and celebrations
- Teach rites of passage within Ojibwe traditions
- Offer Arts courses for credit grounded in FN traditions

How can the Education Unit Support Academic Success?

- What is achievement? How do we know where we are and what it will look like? Where are our statistics on how well we are doing?

- “We need more liaison/student interaction. More interaction that is proactive not reactive”
- Personalize the connections with students
- Hire “certified and trained counsellors”
- Recognize students’ achievements
- We discussed the possibilities of monthly presentations of positive education new/celebrations to Council
- Select a student of the month or most improved
- Tell the positive stories using social media- increase awareness for what is happening that is good news
- Have monthly celebrations
- Identify those at risk and intervene early and continue to monitor even if not already formally “at-risk”
- We had discussions on a possible Case Management approach across departments
- What about the non-trouble makers who are at-risk? They tend to fade away
- Don’t exclude and ignore the students at the non-preferred schools with lower GRFN populations
- Have ASW in each school

Support More Parental Involvement

- “Actually invite parents and care givers on a regular basis to gather their input”
- Offer updates on the work of the Education Unit’s work at the Community Centre and Band Council meetings
- Send personalized invitations to parents about their respective School Councils. On our website, give updates about meeting dates/times/issues
- “Create our own GRFN Parent Council”. It could combine elementary and secondary education. Have a section of the website dedicated to relevant information. More use of social media
- “Bring administrators and teachers here to GRFN for information sessions”
- Hold parent/child nights to boost parental understanding and support for their children’s education
- Could be game nights
- Literacy and numeracy nights
- Focus on traditional cooking and/or crafts
- Cooking nights/traditional foods
- Teach and offer families, opportunities to learn traditional skills such as fishing and other “on the land activities”
- Family language and culture
- Offer incentives to attend – food, gift cards

- Offer maple sugaring

Promoting the Language and Culture

- Write more grants and apply to funding agencies i.e. Dreamcatchers, GRFN Community Trust to support and align programs
- Make acquisition of the Language a priority
- Consider street signs in Ojibwe
- Posters in the buildings
- Teaching more Ojibwe in Child Care
- Offer evening sessions on culture and history, treaties
- Connect more with community members so they know what is happening and find out what can they offer
- More updates on GRFN Facebook & Twitter pages (social media)
- Have an Ojibwe Cultural Club
- Make it mandatory for all GRFN students “to learn their history”, so they can be “confident in who they are & where they came from”
- Some parents mentioned that Catholicism is mandatory in Catholic schools
- “Our children can benefit from their culture, language, history, Art & Art history”
- Offer “Language & Culture Camps for family, teens, kids”
- “Our young people should attend cultural activities in the community & get credit for it”
- “Language should be visible in the community”
- Create murals in playgrounds
- Celebrations of Rites of Passage
- Construct a Cultural Round House

Extra-Curricular Activities. What more is needed?

- “Offer these at school and at GRFN: chess, cribbage, monopoly, Crazy 8 & other board games that they can play with parents and grandparents”
- “Hold more Native craft fairs and cultural events”
- “Offer rec centre for kids” and “Create a safe space for students to own”
- “Offer weekend sports’ tournaments including basketball, volleyball, hockey, lacrosse, and field hockey”
- Organize Family night games and crafts and other activities
- “Provide and publicize game schedules and encourage community members to attend. Offer incentives as draws
- “Develop more experiential land-based activities” and “don’t be discouraged by low attendance”

Communication and Interaction with Schools and School Boards

- Given the tuition agreements, “Demand that more FN teachers and support staffs be hired” to reflect our diversity
- Ask for “monthly communication with the Board with monthly student updates”
- Ask for presentations to GRFN Band Council from representatives of the Ontario school boards on relevant issues to GRFN
- “The Catholic Boards need to be more culturally aware & have more cultural things happening”
- Include more social media interaction between teachers and students including academic and sports
- Invite school teachers to on-reserve professional development and encourage our GREU to attend more outside PD. “The can share resources, and bring back to students”
- “Create Native & Non Native teacher work partnerships to learn from one another”

Special Education

- “Have Special Education FN teacher/counsellor acting as an advocate in the schools to advocate more on behalf of our students” or create a new position a Special Education Advocate
- “Provide more professional learning on special education for GRFN staffs”
- Have trained special education staff work with AIM’s students.
- “AIM students should be able to access these special education services and programs. If necessary access existing funds i.e. Dream Catchers”
- “Given tuition agreements demand more services”
- “Don’t pay until changes occur \$ talks”
- ADVOCATE. “Are we doing anything?”
- the number of special education students continues to grow
- Attend the IEP/IPRC/Education planning meetings and report back
- After the meeting, several people shared their stories with the reviewers. Consider a position for GRFN on each board’s Special Education Advisory Council or SEAC, which is a provincially mandated committee
- Correlate the number of special education teachers in relation to tuition agreements
- There were questions around “Is there over-identification of our students but not providing extra services?”
- “Assist parents/students in identifying needs & implement policies/strategies for success”
- Improvements to transportation services and protocols for identified students, including: risks, behaviours, triggers, dangers, and emergency options
- Need more supply/back-up trained ASWs

Other Issues

The reviewers left several blank pages of chart paper for participants to add issues and comments. This is what was commented on:

- One area was issues servicing off-reserve GRFN students
- Use our buses but get off earlier
- Access services and programs
- Off-reserve GR Band members don't have the same opportunities for services programs, and supports i.e. field trips, school supplies, sports
- Off-reserve don't have the same access to liaison and support services provided by GRFN Education Unit
- Access Dream Catchers and the Community Trust to provide additional supports for off-reserve students
- Create more education/cultural after school programs- tutoring, self-esteem, games
- Offer more evening programs at AIM –computer, grade 9 credit courses
- Actions speak louder than words –“people need to feel listened to and valued”
- “Post –secondary access should not be so rigid/laddered”. Consider alternate career paths for learners. This involved reaching down after a degree, for a diploma; however there are federal restrictions
- More visible support from Chief & Council
- More school 1:1 visits with parents too

Other Departments for GRFN

The review team met with three other departments that serve GRFN, and this is a summary of those meetings. There were rich, frank and far-reaching discussions regarding the various transitions that learners experience in GRFN. Participants shared personal anecdotes that added context to the conversations. We began with discussions regarding the issues around Child Care and ended with discussions regarding Post-Secondary students with Special Needs.

Child Care

- the number of current spaces cannot not serve the entire community and that the result appears to be a discrepancy in skills and knowledge and readiness for kindergarten between children who attended the Child Care and those who did not
- Given the wait lists, there could be “integration with Wellness in a ‘Parents and Tots’ program” and perhaps the Library to help bridge the gaps
- Alternative programs could focus on ‘Readiness to Learn’ with “integration of language and culture and keep those initiatives running in the primary grades as hooks”
- Suggestion to begin ‘readiness to learn’ screening prior to registration for kindergarten and then have targeted summer programming
- The onsite Kindergarten registration arrangements at GRFN is working well

- Discussed issues of transportation to programming for families with financial restrictions
- Perhaps visits to the schools prior to September attendance and having the consideration of bus runs later in August to prepare students for the transitioning rather than the spring

Transition from Elementary to Secondary

- More of a focus on attendance, retention and issues involving mental health that require a more systemic response including access to more qualified counsellors and more coordination with other departments and community agencies such as the Algoma Family services – the concern was for vulnerable students whose social/emotional issues impact their education
- Offer incentives to parents for improved attendance
- Offer programs for orientation during the summer that can incorporate experiential and cultural learning and be “culturally responsive”
- Develop a youth drop-in centre and utilize the gym facilities for programming
- Create courses targeting study skills
- Build positive social supports, networks and mentors including accessing support from the Elders
- Create a new position, “GR Youth Counsellor” to serve vulnerable students
- Didn’t want GR students isolated at school, for instance announcements that say “All GR students come to the office”
- Build more engagement combining sports, bands and programs students want to participate in
- Build in experiential learning with AIM and the GED with indigenous programs –basket weaving, fishing, protecting the land – sustainability through the cultural lens
- Train peers to help support peers and give them incentives

Transition High School to Post-Secondary – “We want more graduates”

- This too was a ‘hot topic’, and many participants shared personal stories
- Have more College and University Awareness Nights on GRFN
- The counsellors need more training and need to do outreach, “talk to their students”, more text messaging and phone calls
- Barriers to funding and issues of literacy, job readiness and mental health – “multiple barriers to moving forward” – some students who don’t qualify may need some other type of financial supports, “what can we offer?”
- Start with summer employment from grade 9 through 12 to get to know the students with liaison work especially for students in grades 11 and 12
- Have aptitude tests
- Comments like “students need to learn to learn” and the array of possible courses that could be provided on site and electronically – financial management, time management, accessing supports, otherwise, “we are setting some up for failure”

- More summer employment and training job creation and look for sources for additional funding for these programs and partner with private industries and the community – we need more grant writers
- Providing more career coaching and co-op opportunities
- Matching possible options with labour market data – “aligning education with future job possibilities and course expectations”. Discussions with employment counsellors
- Discussed barriers with deadlines and policies and that outreach should be made to the student beyond emails “because students can be vulnerable and become paralyzed”
- Several participants suggested a consideration that participants in Ontario Works are fulfilling their education requirements/planning. The perception was that this may not be consistently reinforced. Perhaps there could be a joint committee with AIM?

Post-Secondary Students with Special Needs

- Concern about the services provided “need to accommodate to get the best service possible”
- Need more assistive technology and trainers to help
- How do we make transportation more accessible
- There are mental health issues “not addressed” = anxiety, depression – “how are we accommodating for these?”
- We need to monitor and assess and review the ongoing supports
- For all students with special needs we need to help parents with understanding and support http://tvo.org/video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/campus-crisis?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=cad
- What can we offer to over-achievers? “We need to remember there are a range of learners”
- More access to qualified practitioners for assessments

Numbers Interviewed/Focus Groups

GROUP	NUMBERS
GRFN	
GREU – Focus Group	16
GREU Interviews including Phone & Face to face	9
Band Leadership – both focus groups & individual conversations	5
Elders	27
Students – Holy Cross	8
Students – East View	18

GROUP	NUMBERS
Students – St. Mary’s College	16 (1st session, which included some students not from GRFN) 13 (2 nd session, there was some duplication)
Students – White Pines	14
Wellness Centre/ Health	5
Economic & Community Development	4
Finance	4
Community Evening Input Sessions #1	28
Community Evening Input Sessions #2	24
Community Evening Input Sessions #3	22
Public School Boards	
System Leaders	3
School Administrators	8
Total	220 contacts of which perhaps 40 involved the same people

- Note: the numbers do not include those that joined us via live-streaming of the evening sessions.

Synthesizing the Comments/Observations from the Focus Groups and Input Sessions

Pride in Students’ Achievement and Concerns in terms of Improving Outcomes (K-12)

- Participants celebrated students success and want all students to be successful so they can achieve their life goals
- Want programming developed and delivered for students not currently in Child Care to prepare them for the transition to Kindergarten
- All the transitions were considered as challenges with specific input/comments noted for change. Broader and more intense preparation for all transitions, that will be incorporated into the suggestions for improvement
- Want to better support students. Many are not clear on the possibilities of impactful strategies/approaches especially for students with special needs or potentially at-risk; however there is a consensus that Elders should be more involved

- A need and desire to increase cultural responsiveness and commitment to the Ojibwe language, heritage and the importance of the Elders including experiential, land-based programming
- More parental engagement
- Want more contact with the schools and school systems and a greater presence on GRFN, with school/system administrators presenting to Council and parents on GRFN
- Need quality and current data/information to provide a clearer picture on how students are really performing
- More career preparedness, career counseling and preparation for post-secondary options
- Special Education; supporting students academically at risk and mental health issues were a repeated concern noted across the input sessions

AIM

- Engage students- close the gap between those that register, those that attend and those that obtain their diploma (OSSD, GED)
- Strong interest in promoting/teaching/preserving the language, culture, ceremonies and heritage – healing circles, experiential cultural activities
- More emphasis across GRFN departments on the importance of proactively encouraging more adults to complete their OSSD/GED
- More embedded use of technology
- Special Education, supporting students academically at risk, and mental health issues were a repeated concern noted across the input sessions
- Use of peer mentors, coaches and Elders
- Offering co-op opportunities on GRFN and expanded career counseling
- Continue with the flexible times/offerings

Post-Secondary Education

- This was a ‘hot-button’ issue across input sessions
- Consensus that the current policies and protocols need to be identified and reviewed to remove barriers for moving forward
- Want more promotion of the program possibilities using social media and other modalities of communication including exploring possible external avenues for funding
- Need for focused programs for high school and adult students entering post-secondary institutions in terms of preparedness including financial planning, program/course selection, career counseling
- Commitment for more tracking to proactively assess when post-secondary students are potentially at-risk and making personal connections with the post-secondary institutions’ student support services and Indigenous services
- More ongoing personal contact with students so they feel connected including the use of technology and social media

- Use messaging for reminders and personal connections – train parents to use social media to keep connections –Skype /Face Time
- Online searchable and interactive handbook with flow charts of what to do depending on the specific issues and who to contact
- Recognize and celebrate graduates and award winners
- Special Education; supporting students academically at risk and mental health issues were a repeated concern noted across the input sessions

Proactive Leadership

- Want the Band Leadership to continue to champion education
- Create opportunities to celebrate educational success
- Suggestions for an Elders' Committee to oversee and assist with implementation and the report
- Suggestion for a community-based committee to review and revise the current education policies and protocols
- A community-based committee to serve as an Appeals Committee for post-secondary issues
- Re-organization of the Education Unit's organization structure and roles/responsibilities to better respond with services and programs for identified needs raised across the sessions
- Understanding that demands on staff are increasing and the issues are more complex, requiring more ongoing professional learning and collaboration and consideration of new positions within the GREU
- More collaboration across departments especially the Wellness/Health Centre and Ontario Works
- More opportunities for community input and engagement in education
- An understanding that resources are finite and that change requires strategically managing resources

Analysis of the 2012 GRFN Review

The report on the 2012 review of the Garden River first Nation Education Unit (GREU) summarized the strengths and challenges faced by the Education Unit and offered recommendations for moving forward. It was compiled, "to provide a diagnostic of the current programs and services in GRFN and identify strategies and actions that will promote student success" (2012:4). The review spanned pre-school through adult education, similar in scope to the 2017 review, with the exception of the Child Care Centre and pre-school early learning. In 2012 and 2017, the reviewers acknowledged the commitment to improving outcomes for GRFN learners, recognizing that "an educated population is the strongest foundation upon which to build the future for GRFN" (2012: 5). The 2012 review included a four-day strategic planning exercise.

The 2012 and 2017 methodology included a balanced mixed methods approach blending qualitative data from focus groups and interviews with quantitative data. In both, confidentiality was stressed with themes emerging from the data analysis. The 2012 report provided an historical contextual overview including the legacy of residential schools and the federal First Nations relationship.

The data used in the 2012 analysis included:

- Input gathered from four evening Focus Groups and one focus group with secondary school students
- 40 key informant interviews with relevant staff and community stakeholders
- Community Survey – posted on Facebook, and delivered to various GRFN departments
- Post-secondary Survey using Survey Monkey
- Both surveys were developed in collaboration with the GREU
- A review of relevant internal documents including educational data
- A literature search

In 2012, the data available from the district school boards with tuition agreements with GRFN were in their nascent stages. The limitations of available relevant data were noted in the 2012 report, “such data would assist the GREU in setting priorities or perhaps assist staff in determining which services are effective or require improvements” (2012: 19). Based on these 2012 findings, regarding a lack of useful data, recommendations concerning the gathering, analysis, and use of data for more effective decision-making emerged for:

- Elementary – the number of graduates with a few exceptional years remained consistent in the 21-29 range from 2001-2012
- Secondary – the numbers were consistent in the 13-15 student range for the same time period
- Fewer secondary school graduates than elementary indicating a disconnect
- Issues of attendance often accompanied students who selected to drop-out
- AIM – smaller averaging from 0 through 7 with several students as the more consistent pattern
- Post-Secondary – wide variance from 2001-2012 from 11 to 58 students
- Do high school registration, similar to kindergarten in GRFN
- “Let parents know what services are provided” so parents see possibilities

A summary of findings resulting from the 2012 key informant interviews and focus groups were shared and used to inform the recommendations. Respondents felt that the GREU offered a full-range of services for the pre-school through adult learner. Programs, services and staffing have grown over the years to meet increasing demands.

But despite some real progress, there were concerns expressed regarding:

- A lack of parent and community input to develop and champion a community-based vision for education
- A lack of shared continuity and coherency and coordination among and between the GREU and other GR departments resulting in a fragmented, balkanized approach and disconnects during transitions
- A lack of FN and cultural perspectives in education being received by GRFN students
- A lack of accountability and tracking of educational outcomes often due to a lack of data and/or a lack of using data for informed decision-making
- A lack of transparent policy development focused on change and improvement causing frustration and mistrust among stakeholders through a lack of understanding how policies are drafted, revised and adopted. Perception is that policy development is reactive not proactive
- A lack of Chief and Council active involvement and other political roles and responsibilities, especially in terms of the Education Portfolio of members of the Band Council
- A lack of student support and understanding, by students, of the liaison programs and the services and programs available
- A lack of teacher understanding in the publicly sponsored district school boards receiving GRFN students

A list of possible innovative actions from the respondents included the tentative findings from the 2012 review. The 2012 review's recommendations included:

- Create GRFN Education Committee/Council
- Design and implement a tracking system for educational outcomes
- Strengthen partnership relationships with the district school boards involved in tuition agreements with GRFN
- Undertake a Comprehensive Evaluation and Review of the Education Unit
- Create a transition Team to manage and respond to transitions
- Re-Orient Education Programs and Services
- Strengthen Community and Parental Engagement
- Establish a GRFN Student Educational Success Council
- Targeted Professional development for GREU
- Strengthen Relationships with other FN Organizations
- Build University Partnerships

The 2017 review analysis' findings will support many of these 2012 findings and recommendations. The emerging issue is not the veracity of the analysis and recommendations but the lack of implementation of its key findings. Pfeiffer and Sutton (2000) articulated that knowing what to do is not enough and that one has to turn knowledge into action for desired results.

Comments from the Research Literature and Effective Practices

In order to ensure alignment with effective and research informed practices, the reviewers undertook a scan of the literature. A draft research report was presented during the onsite visit. The focus was on culturally responsive Indigenous practices as well as the literature on effective practices for adult education.

Given the dual nature of the RFP, the reviewers looked at the literature dealing with effective school practices, from kindergarten through grade 12 focusing on those dealing with FNMI. Additionally, they reviewed the adult education literature through the same lens.

According to the 2012's Portrait of First Nations and Education, compiled by the Chief's Assembly of First Nations, there are 633 distinct FN communities, with 11 major language groupings and over 60 dialects spoken. Over 1.4 million Canadians, self-identify as Aboriginal and over 700,000 as FN, contributing as the fastest growing demographic group in Canada. In fact, 30 % (percent) of the population is under 30 years, which reinforces why education matters (Chief's Assembly on Education, 2012: 1). For GRFN, that statistic is 30% of on reserve population is under 20 years. Statistics Canada (2015) estimates that by 2026, 4.6 % of Canada's population and 12 % of its labour force will be Aboriginal. It is important to support increasing educational outcomes and ensuring a highly skilled and educated work force.

A synopsis of *Advice from the Research and Effective Practices* can be found in Appendix X. That paper expands on the context, challenges, and opportunities in more specific detail including for at-risk students in high school and AIM as well as discussion of possibilities for post-secondary students.

For Students in K-12; Practices Indicated for Consideration Are:

- Faculty create a culture of “can and care” – warm, accepting, supportive environment with expectations
- Making personal connections
- Focus on problem-solving not problem-blaming
- High quality language instruction using a Balanced approach (think aloud, read aloud, guided practice, shared and independent reading, writing and oracy)
- Teachers modeling and scaffolding instruction explicitly within a dedicated literacy block (one hour minimum)
- Explicit instruction in sound to print for early years
- Visible literacy learning – Posted academic vocabulary to support and build students' acquisition of language, posted learning goals and success criteria with descriptive feedback aligned to the learning goals and success criteria (Growing Success)
- Making connections to the students' lived experiences to be culturally responsive
- Recognition and use of Native Languages
- Pedagogy that stresses traditional cultural ways of knowing and doing
- Curriculum that embeds traditional culture and uses visual arts, legends, and oral histories

- Strong community participation and engagement
- Knowledge of situational realities including the social and cultural and political mores of the community
- Using culturally relevant and responsive leveled literacy texts and other supportive resources for story-telling, oral activities – Aboriginal War Veterans – www.ainc.inac.gc.ca
- More effective and fluent teachers using the maternal First Languages. In Ontario, Cayuga, Cree, Delaware, Mohawk, Ojibwe, Oji-Cree, and Oneida can be substituted for French in elementary (Native as a Second Language) and for credit in high school (O’Sullivan & Goosney, 2007)
- Gather and monitor relevant data sets for interventions and capacity building
- Need to identify at-risk and vulnerable learners, “Putting Faces on the Data” (Sharratt&Plante2016)
- Begin and monitor interventions
- Use circles and restorative justice practices
- Use case management approach accessing skilled, qualified professionals
- Remediation and practice – tutors, peer supports, assistive technology
- Consideration of bilingual programs similar to French Immersion with an aim to improve the first and second language literacy
- In New Zealand, schools with more than 50% of instruction in *Maori te reo* more likely to meet the national standards (Rolsad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005)
- Integrate the culture into programming and curriculum, it is not an add-on
- Use of the environment and integrate issues of sustainability in line with FN culture and heritage with authentic, land-based activities (Graveline, 2001)
- Project-based learning
- In schools where culture was honoured and the culture and language embedded, attendance issues improved (Demmert, 2001)
- Build and maintain mutual respect and trust
- Track changes in self-identification (CEA, 2016)
- Fidelity to evidence-based practices –the variance of quality and intent is large

AIM Students

AIM bridges secondary and post-secondary with characteristics and approaches spanning both. Adult learners range from 18 years through mature adults and seniors. Of the approximately 65 enrolled students, “six are working towards earning their OSSD, if they continue to attend”. Most are interested in courses that lead to OSSD credits or its equivalency (GED). Others are interested in programs/courses leading to post-secondary opportunities including apprenticeship or other occupational requirements. These are for academic accreditation. Some are focused on interest courses. Their needs are diverse. Need to determine:

- The percentage of early leavers – 18-21 years, over young adults, 22-30 and adults since their needs may differ

- What are the opportunities in these age groupings for AIM for community members not registered in programming?
- What percentage are involved in obtaining pre-requisite training prior to academic upgrading and what percentage are in the midst of academic upgrading?
- What is the rate of participation to completion? Why do students choose to disengage?

For those focused on academic credentialing, many require additional academic upgrading in literacy/language training, and mathematics and numeracy before they can be successful as learners. There may be other needs presenting including identified special needs and issues involving anxiety and frustration.

Serving AIM students requires balancing the academic and the wellness and well-being needs. The central coordinated intake, assessment, information and planning is currently available including prior learning assessment. AIM students need to understand, which skills and services require academic pre-requisite learning prior to academic upgrading. Learning plans need to be clearly delineated.

AIM students require wrap-around services and programs. They need authentic, experiential learning opportunities. They need welcoming, inviting and engaging programming.

- Completing a high school diploma should be a community-wide focus
- Need to determine the potential AIM students within GRFN including those currently linked to other programming
- Offer awareness of the programs and services through “flyers, postings, social media” and consider door-to-door recruitment
- More concrete linkages to career/world of work pathways
- Build Shorter, chunked programs to make the transitions easier
- Continue offering students a variety of modalities: face-to-face, blended learning, on-line
- Greater involvement of Elders and traditions in the curriculum and working in experiential programming to ground students in the culture and language and offer positive role models
- Consider using the physical training facilities to link students to leadership and engagement
- Consider more experiential, land-based programming and cross –curricular learning to meet unique needs
- Consider peer mentors to provide intrinsic supports so students don’t disengage and drop-out
- Consider variations of Specialist High Skills Major programming

For Post-Secondary Students; the following were suggested to create safe, welcoming, and inviting learning environments:

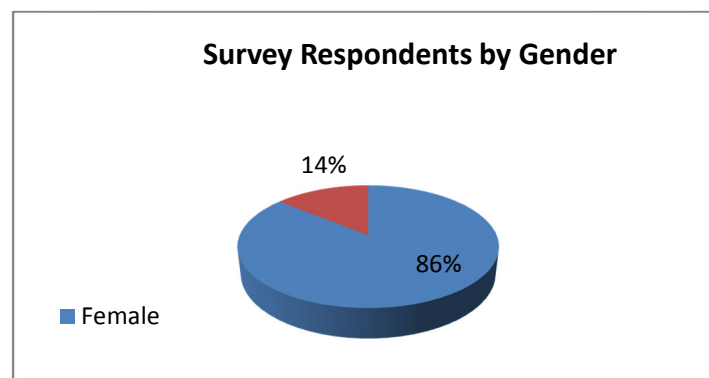
- Developing college-ready programming delivered by staff with specialized training providing developmental education targeting areas of weakness and providing consistent support services

- Making it available web-linked if sessions missed or information that can be reviewed 24/7
- Offering incentives to influence students' persistence and attendance
- Material should be relevant to the learners' lived experiences and connections made where possible
- Ensure there are designated contacts to maintain ongoing personal connections to check in and be proactive if issues arise
- Building relationships between teachers and students and have ongoing scheduled meetings
- Ongoing peer tutoring, counseling to build social capital and mentorship opportunities
- Utilizing technologies and social media: blogs, tweeting, wikis, social media for informal sharing and providing timely reminders and ongoing supports and developing e-mail buddies
- Anishinabek Information Technology Centre could be a resource
- Integrating high impact service learning to build reflection and civic engagement/responsibility
- Creating and sustaining learning communities to become supportive networks of peers

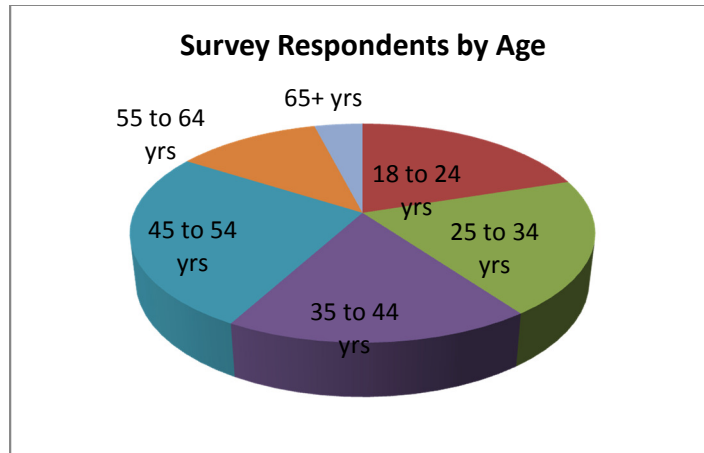
Results from Survey Data

The on-line survey was active for 20 days through the Garden River Education Unit's website. Possible participants were contacted through email links sent to current, former students, community members and stakeholders off and on reserve. Hard copies were available for those who preferred a paper version.

- 54 online surveys were completed and 3 entered manually
- The respondents were predominantly female: 49 females, 8 males



- 64% of respondents in ages groups 18 to 54 years of age. The background is as follows:



Question 3 asked the respondent to check their status at the time of completing the survey:

- 50% of respondents were employed full-time and 5% part-time
- Approximately, 70% of respondents had completed a college diploma (32%) or a university undergraduate degree (38%)

Question 4 asked respondents to rate the existing services provided by the Education Unit that are supportive of their child's learning. The question was subdivided so that responses could be made for students in Elementary, Secondary and Post-Secondary. These allowed parents/guardians/grandparents to respond across the appropriate levels(s). This message was reinforced during the input sessions.

Elementary

Respondents were asked to rate services and programs provided by the Education Unit that was supportive either of their own learning or their child's learning in elementary. On average, 26 respondents answered this section and 15 responded "Not Applicable". A scale consistent across three levels was offered.

Explanation of Programs and Services Offered

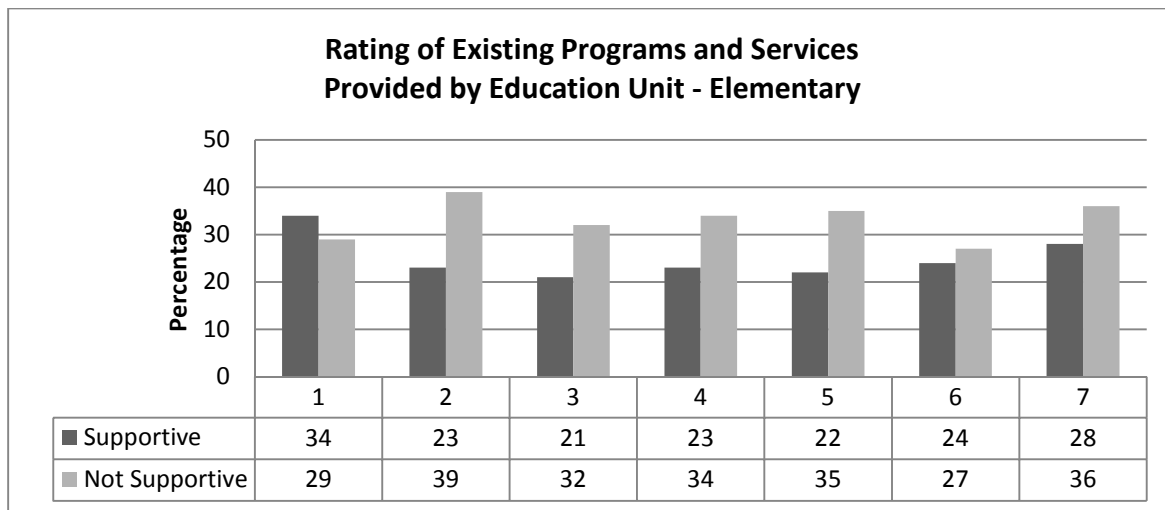
1. Helping the student become oriented to their program
2. Academic Counselling
3. Providing assistance with funding of programs (including finding scholarships)

4. Assistance with program selections
5. Assistance with understanding program requirements
6. Assistance with understanding program expectations
7. Providing liaison with other educational organization and personnel

Secondary

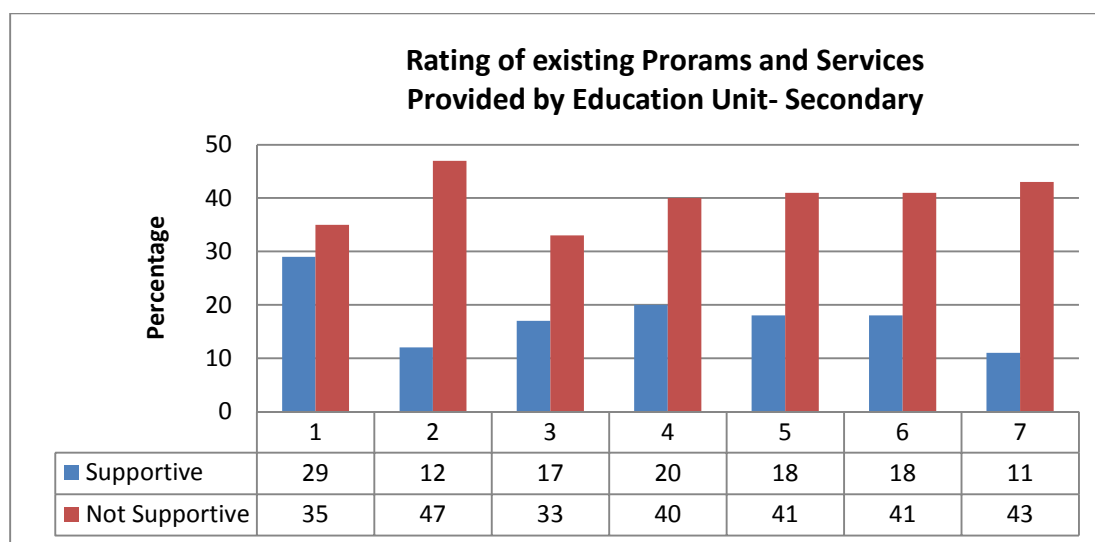
The first service - helping the student become oriented in their program - was viewed as "very Supportive or Supportive" by 34% of respondents. That was the only service where "Very Supportive or Supportive" came up more frequently as responses.

More respondents found the majority of services and program only "somewhat supportive" or "not supportive at all". The percent of students who found the service "somewhat supportive or not supportive at all" is as follows, across the programs and services as follows:



Respondents were asked to rate services and programs provided by the Education Unit that were supportive either of their own learning or their child's learning in secondary school. On average, 29 respondents answered this section and 16 responded "Not Applicable".

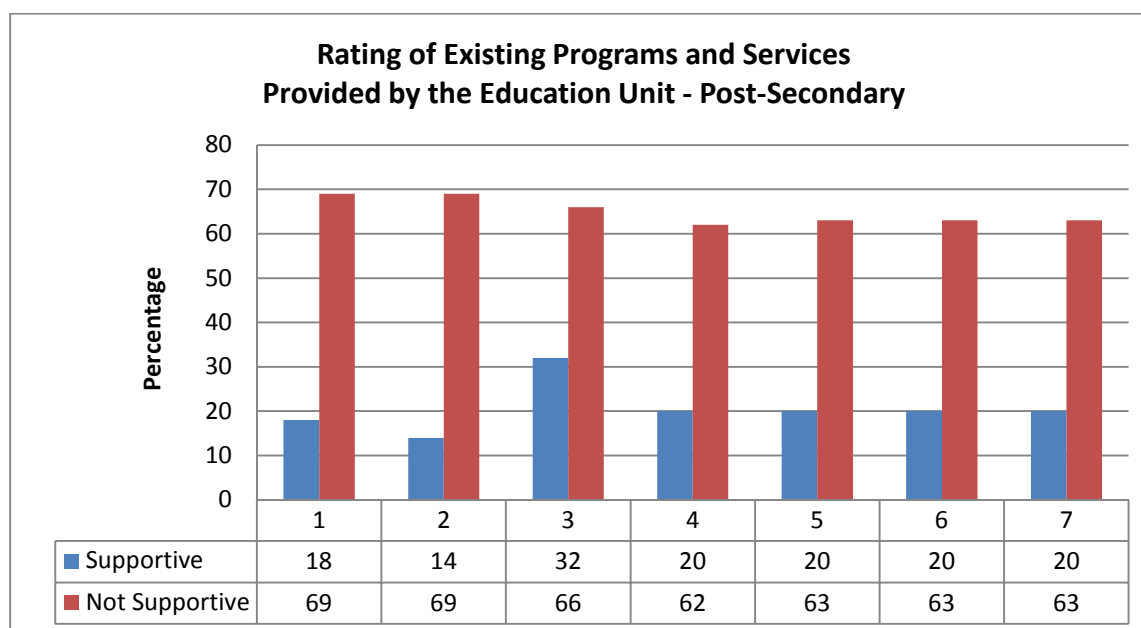
For all the programs and services listed, responses of "Somewhat Supportive or Not supportive at all" were predominant. The percent of students who found the service "somewhat supportive or not supportive at all" is as follows, across the programs and services as follows:



Post-Secondary

Respondents were asked to rate services and programs provided by the Education Unit that was supportive either of their own learning or their child's learning in post- secondary institutions. On average, 44 respondents answered this section and nine responded "Not Applicable".

For all the programs and services listed, responses of “Somewhat supportive or not supportive at all” were predominant. The percent of students who found the service "somewhat supportive or not supportive at all" is as follows, across the programs and services as follows:



Question 5 asked respondents how often they currently seek support from a variety of sources compared to how often they would like to see that support provided. The question was subdivided so that responses could be made for students in Elementary, Secondary and Post-Secondary.

The most frequent responses are as follows:

	Most commonly, I currently seek support		I would like support provided	
	Frequency From		Frequency	By
Elementary	As needed	Elementary Liaison Worker (38%)	As needed	Elementary Liaison Worker (38%)
Secondary	As needed	Elementary (36%) and Secondary Liaison Workers (38%)	As needed	Elementary Liaison Worker (57%) Secondary Liaison worker (55%) Post-Secondary Liaison worker (58%)
Post-secondary	As needed	Post-secondary Counsellor (54%)	Monthly	Post-secondary Counsellor (42%)

Question 6 asked respondents how often the Post-Secondary Counsellor, Secondary Liaison Worker or the Elementary Liaison Worker contacted them to offer or provide services:

- 49% said only if they requested assistance
- 23% said they had never been contacted
- 16% said they had been contacted monthly

Question 7 asked respondents to give examples of the types of Support Offered;

Thirty-five responses were received. The following is a sampling of responses. The complete list of responses was submitted to the Band Leadership.

No Support Offered

- There were several comments such as: None, never contacted me. None. Only if I ask for help, even then support is not great

- Support is only provided if it is sought out. If you don't speak up you will get left behind. I spoke about struggles I was having in college where I seen a counselor that would have lead me to seek further mental health professionals but never went that far, I completed the semester with a D average and did not return. The course load was heavy, I was interested in the content I just couldn't keep up academically, financially, and was working through living away from home subject to new experiences that interfered with schooling. I tried again some years later and the same outcome came about. I completed a university undergrad but couldn't get that college training I wanted and believed would lead me to secure employment.

Support Given Comments Included:

- Class requirements, policies, How to study, being safe, scholarships and grants available, events, job offerings, reminders through emails of deadlines and to check on progress
- I was told if my son needed assistance with homework, has a learning disability, or anything that he would need assistance with learning, they could help. It's nice know we have services for this
- Postsecondary counselor has been available to advise me that the masters programs I am interested in would not be covered in full by the sponsorship program.
- Logistical issues such as: enrollment and bus scheduling, yearly high school monetary incentives for school, gym, book and library fees, travel allowance and registration with part time courses
- Interact with students about options: needs to know more about requirements for possible careers, some reminders about when applications are due, picking courses and getting tutoring help, funding for school events, bursary issues/scholarships
- Registering child to elementary, high school, college, etc. - upcoming events i.e.: back to school blitz, education banquet, school cheques, tutor services, first day of school bussing practice, day camps, science camps, Skills Canada, and career and tech day. Email reminders i.e.: to register kids to JK, or update information. such as email, phone number, address, transportation info (such as where child is getting on bus and off bus) provided with bus routes, graduation prep, field trips; what Garden River provides (movies, end of year field trip, grad 8 grad), lots of info in the newsletter, meetings in the community that pertain to education

Question 8 asked respondents to indicate what types of support they would like to and/or would have liked to receive? The following is a sampling of responses.

General

- Positive Comments included: None, she's doing it all now. She has been very helpful with getting my son into a new school and organizing the bussing and daycare pickup/drop off
- Wish List Requests: Be included/invited in services; programming, financial, etc. More money because sometimes you have to choose between work and school (e.g. work at low paying jobs vs. going to school for better paying jobs). There were times when I needed to access help on filling out forms and it was hard to figure pieces out. Payment programs to help pay back monies owed. Lump sums are hard. Early identification. Counseling services.
- Issues of Dealing with Policy/Funding Issues: Real-life examples of Band members who may have completed the post-secondary programs, potential job/careers re: post-secondary grads. If I am cut off from educational assistance, I realize there's the group that reviews the circumstances; however, if there can be counseling, support groups and alternative funding arrangements would be great.
- Services available. The school itself has contacted me about extra services for my children but not followed up by our education system. More information. Knowing what resources one could access, in regards to, support with classes- tutors, extensions. Creating education plans for students so they know where they are going.

Knowing what is out there

Respondents asked for more pertinent and relevant information in a way that they can access, other than the guidelines, and use including for scholarships and funding:

- More info put out to those who don't live on the reserve. I didn't know about the funding for application while I was in high school so it was hard on my family for me to apply. Information on scholarships.
- It would be nice to know what is out there for students - rides, after school programs, tutoring outside of the Education Unit, extra help but not enough to warrant a tutor full time. Awareness of ASW's. Had no idea Garden River had ASWs until last year. Any support that isn't pertinent to the actual classroom learning would have been welcomed. I had no idea that the children were entitled to moving expenses, until it was too late.
- Bussing services and other services available if off reserve or not going to the main schools. For my child in elementary - having available transportation from his school (which isn't located in SSM - he attends Echo Bay Central) to tutoring at Recreation Centre and/or after school program at GR Child Care Centre.

Getting Updates and Reminders

Respondents wanted reminders other than emails, since for some juggling, the demands of their program and living arrangements can be overwhelming and critical dates may slip by. A data tracking system would be useful for coordination. Parents want to be kept in the loop (acknowledging issues of adult consent, but those forms can be signed prior to the commencement of programs)

- I would like to get an update when he sees my son at school and I will also let my son know that the SLW is there if he needs to speak with him. Would like the counselors to

Speak with students once a week to ensure needs are addressed and not when it's too late and the student has failed a credit.

- Regular communication. Actual academic support. Actual counseling. More than them just administering cheques. I think it is important to have check-ins by email at least monthly and a meeting in person at midterm and final to know what is going on - it's nice to have someone to talk with and ease stress.

Tutoring/Help with Academics

For some learners, additional support is required and there is an expressed need for tutoring help and writing academic papers in particular:

- Sometimes I need help with papers and it's hard to get a hold of anyone. I would have liked more tutoring that concentrated on stuff like writing papers. Access to a tutor would be helpful at midterms and when I have papers. High school guidance classroom help. At school tutoring.
- Support to help make sure I am choosing the right program, support of being regularly contacted; it would help if the Education website was up-to-date with the proper dates for the funding. The deadline online for the spring deadline says something totally different than what is sent out by email. Guidance on program selection for future schooling. Students being given options for future schooling based on interests. Options for funding and scholarships. Mentoring high school students to seek higher education.
- Mentorship and academic counseling, maybe a big brother/sister program. I feel like a lot of the gaps are just because we don't have funding to fill support positions. We know what we need we just aren't creating the jobs or we can't afford to fund the positions.

Question 9: Respondents were asked to indicate whom they would go to ask for help, assistance or clarification regarding education or their education future. Respondents could choose all that applied.

Who would you contact for help/assistance?	%
Faculty at the school	43%
Other GRFN Staff	37%
School Student Service	32%
Elementary Liaison Worker (GRFN)	24%
Post-Secondary Counselor (GRFN)	24%
Secondary Liaison Worker (GRFN)	19%

43 % of respondents would contact faculty at their institution/school, while 32% would contact Student Services at their school. 37% said they would contact GRFN staff other than the Elementary, Secondary and Post-Secondary liaison contacts.

Question 10 asked if there were cultural supports/teachings within their current educational institution and whether or not they had accessed them. Part C asked for examples of the types of cultural supports they would like to see, including participation and contact with Elders.

66% of respondents said their educational institution offered cultural supports all the time and a further 20% said they had access to cultural supports some of the time. 16% reported that their institution/school had no cultural supports at all. Included are examples from the submissions:

- In terms of accessing existing cultural supports, slightly under half of all respondents (48%) said they had accessed those and 21% said they sometimes accessed supports.

Participation/Contact with Elders

These garnered many responses in regards to traditional cultural practices:

- There were multiple comments regarding smudging such as: Smudging when I need to. Elder to talk to Elder in residence, to assist with sweat lodge, smudge, tobacco. Elders for healing lodges. Supports using the medicine wheel. Elders from the different nations, cultural teachings, an indigenous specific counselor (to deal with long wait times especially at university /college), workshops to help with transition and school issues, feasts! Traditional food is important, a welcoming environment to allies and those who aren't raised in their culture. (I'm speaking from a PSE perspective), several mentioned wanting to be in contact with Elders to talk.
- Multiple comments regarding building comfort and fluency with Ojibwe. Elders, Ojibwe language speakers/supports/resources/labs/tables, mental health support using medicine wheel teachings and holistic (physical, spiritual, mental, emotional) strategies

Cultural Practices and Representation in the Institutions/Schools

- There were multiple comments regarding increasing cultural sensitivity of faculty and institutions: Cultural sensitivity training to faculty. Make Anishinabek history mandatory in curriculum (education system). Cultural and spiritual teachings and circles - I have offered my services and was treated with disrespect by the worker. I recommend the seven grandfather teachings and how to practice this way of life every day. Morning prayers in Ojibway. Smudging in the morning, making sure NSL class isn't interfering with students' regular studies (this has been raised as an issue in the input sessions). Utilizing medicine wheel teachings and growing with them; rites, passages, and rituals.
- Several comments about increasing the number of FN in teaching and administrative positions and INAC: At the local high school level, I believe there is at least one Garden River/First Nation in support roles. However, we as a collective of Anishinabek people need to push for more representation at the teaching levels. We need Indigenous peoples at the Ministry level -- guiding, directing, impacting provincial / institutional level, to develop, create and implement cultural support and teachings to help ALL Ontarians develop and understanding and perhaps an appreciation for Indigenous history.

Cultural teaching (including History and Language)

- Again, multiple comments about systemically and visibly ensuring history, heritage and language are taught and preserved. Some examples include having a cultural support worker accessible for all the schools that Garden River students attend. Any education

regarding cultural teaching would be fantastic!! More outdoor ed things like orienteering and working in the bush. Drumming -singing -crafts -history -elder visits -visiting elder - daily cultural awareness. History - Should be mandatory for ALL students not just First Nations Culture - Native Art - Language - That way people can get a better understanding of who we are.

Question 11 asked respondents to indicate, the extent that they had been involved in making the decisions about their educational path:

83 % of respondents stated that they were involved:

- most of the time
- 8% said they had no involvement in making education decisions.

Question 12 asked respondents if they knew what they would do when they were finished with their education and if the options for future employment/careers were clear to them:

73% stated that they were clear, 10% said they were not clear and 18 % said they were uncertain.

Question 13 asked respondents to think about and give examples of programs, policies, and/or services that should be discontinued or modified, added or continued (Stop, Start, Continue):

STOP

How can we change or improve the programs and services currently offered?

- Some responses were positive to maintaining the status quo: I don't know of any I would change at this point. I don't think any services should stop, as the Garden River Education Unit has what is referred to as the "Cadillac of Services".
- Many referenced a need for more continuous, direct, positive, supportive contact: Need more responsive counselors. Too many students and not enough counselors. Consider maybe flex hours, having them available one evening a week. Several mentioned negative interactions and feeling under-empowered. More tutoring. Babysitting.
- There were multiple responses regarding the existing appeal process and ways missing credits are handled: Many students have legitimate reasons for having missed credit/credits which are dismissed by education staff. Each student is different, some have more responsibilities than others, and some have families, learning disabilities, mental health issues or lack of support from family. Eliminate the requirement for a probationary student having to have their attendance sheets signed by professors, it's demeaning/embarrassing for a student. Want greater transparency with policies being applied/revised. Want the options of International Institutions clarified from what it is now. Stop requiring applications for every year or every semester and commit to funding a student for the duration of their post-secondary program. Stop making last minute changes to deadlines/policies.
- Several want the existing policy amended to provide accommodation for reaching back to college after obtaining a degree: I feel, as long as attendance, good marks, and still

wanted to be educated, it should be covered. Students should not be discouraged from education. What policies do the education staffs follow? Is it clear?

- Some others want to stop services not being available to those who live off-reserve: Stop not servicing off-reserve. Want access to transportation.

START OR REVISE/MODIFY

- Several want more services or more flexible services including: babysitting, more in school tutoring/help for students struggling, transportation to accommodate working parents, equal access to our Ojibway language and culture, because my child attends a school where the numbers aren't high for First Nation students he is unable to access our culture and traditions as students can access at SSM schools.
- There were multiple comments regarding better training for staff: Clearer delineation roles for support services staff. Proper training for positions. Additional training for staff as environment and roles change. Mental health first aid training. Promote healthy dialogue between staff, and management Encourage ideas, empower staff and colleagues
- Multiple comments regarding the need for flexibility and 'forgiveness in applying policies', wanting a committee and input into the revision of policies. I believe deadlines should be set and adhered to. However, the process could be modified to reconsider students in specific circumstances. For example, a student fails a required class in the winter semester (January - April) and does not know until after the deadline for spring/summer funding. A process in which to assess their situation and perhaps reassign funding could help some students. The monthly tuition payback, find a better solution than the current, it is keeping people out of school and it isn't getting paid back to where it came from, so why are those people getting punished? Definitely policies and guidelines need to be updated. There should be a panel/board of different people including student(s) to agree on big decisions or things that fall out of the scope of the policies and procedures - decisions like probation.
- Mentorship and/or more professional support personnel. Comment submitted such as: more mentors, more trained counsellors. More constant communication with post-secondary students out of town. More updates of things that are happening back home, or even getting the monthly newsletter mailed to us. Counselors who are "formally trained," role models, who support students' educational experiences, provide course counseling and planning, have knowledge of specialized learning needs and disabilities, can assist in students' career goals, and supports students' physical and mental well-being. One in each area is not effective. Training on differences of how people learn, understanding that students have to learn a new way of life along with becoming independent learners, compassion that students do lead a stressful life. Hire someone when one of the counsellors is off on vacation. Have a special department in post-secondary for special needs students; they should be seen by someone who is highly trained and knows how to deal with their specific needs as these students need extra special attention and have unique needs. Have a plan in place for them and discuss the plan together with them and meet on a regular basis.
- Traditional Cultural/Spiritual Healing and Supports: many of these comments restated those from a previous question. Implement cultural and spiritual ways of life and traditional healing. Language/culture camps after school programs support/include off-reserve teachings/practices/language incorporated throughout Native language learning

mandatory for all staff more parental engagement/family engagement more transitioning programs bring the schools to the reserve. More outdoor ed. programs in the summer. Involve Elders in craft clubs, tracking and hunting.

- Programs to support transitions more effectively: University trips for students Career orientation with guests from outside the community Past students come in or act as a mentor who are working both on and off reserve, and near and far Incorporate more traditional and cultural aspects as options for members. Other workshops or how-to's. Career days for grade 8's and grade 12's. Have police officers, doctors, teachers, counselors, and elders, spiritual healers, to come in and speak with our students. Get them excited and motivated to do so, and to do it with our college students as well. Hire some teachers or older high school students to tutor in home after school. Skills training, Life skills and financial planning workshops. Workshops on how to apply for bursaries.

CONTINUE

What should be *continued in terms of supports and services to help on the education journey?*

- Continue allowing a flexible schedule for students to complete their studies (i.e. 5 years to complete a 4 year degree). Sometimes students need a 4 course workload instead of 5 courses to make the most of their information intake and be successful. Continue offering funding for fees and tests etc. Continue what you do. Maybe increase tutoring fees. Continue reminder emails: upcoming career day, post-secondary info sessions, newsletter submissions. Continue to post information about dates and programs offered.

Question 14

If you are a student attending alternative school off-reserve, what are some of your reasons as to why you chose not to attend Adults In Motion (AIM). Please describe below

Ten respondents¹ answered this question. Some reflected on personal/professional overlaps for GRFN. Some wanted more traditionally structured programming with daily scheduling or that AIM doesn't have the same credentialed credence as other schools:

- I'm not a student but I'm thinking maybe it's a personal issue, or maybe they don't want to work or study with family as a teacher. I've never attended alternative school, I would have had I known that was an option while I was attending school in town. At least take a few classes maybe not full-time because they would pay you for completing a course. Language programs and program diversity. Class schedule - people like the chalkboard class room feel - they do some of their class where you have to attend to learn and be taught and some are correspondence - do on your own - which can be hard - you don't get the same intimate learning. It has a reputation – it is not the same.

Question 15

¹ Responses consolidated where relevant

Is there anything we did not ask you on this survey that you would like us to know?

There was, as anticipated a variety of foci in the responses. Some were supportive of the current system. Some focused on specific change initiatives and others reminded us of the importance of consultations for improvement. The following is a sample of responses received:

- Thank you I wouldn't have been able to attend and finish university without you. I found my culture through university, became a leader. I owe the PSE program everything. Miigwetch. I think GRFN is doing wonderful things in their education departments, and believe that exercises such as this that are aimed at improving what we as a community do improves the quality of life in and around our community. "Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning" - Benjamin Franklin
- Be more supportive and offer life skills training on a continual basis, including Ojibwe immersion -- should BE mandatory courses regardless. Speak to students in an encouraging, positive, uplifting way. There is a huge need to offer teachings and healing methods for people to find their gifts to help themselves and others. Start with the workers who service others. AIM - because in my view, AIM deals with high needs students (because they didn't complete high school through the regular route) this should get additional funding so they can provide additional services for high needs. Also welfare Program (Niigaaniin) should follow the guidelines where recipients must work, train or attend school so that if recipients are able, they can work towards a better future. Also, consideration should be given to accelerated programs where the cost comparison is the same as regular programs or less than the regular route.
- We can be building capacity for the future for Garden River First Nation in all aspects of development. Could we have someone from INAC come and explain policies and rules of the game so we could understand? More evaluations. I hope that something is actually done with all these surveys and that it's not "just another survey" and be left to collect dust someplace. I would like to see action taken each area could use some work.

Data from Student Achievement: Where are they now?

One concern raised by the reviewers, from the initial submission in response to the RFP was the data on student achievement outcomes. *When you can measure, you can identify strengths and challenges and address them.*

There appeared to be a lack of relevant data regularly gathered and used by GREU to track students and that poses challenges in beginning proactive interventions. Of the 12 students in both HSCDSB and ADSB programs, all 12 are on track to graduate with their OSSD. Of the 65 AIM students, 6 are on track to graduate. Individual members of the GREU keep their own records; however, these may not be shared collectively. One cannot focus intentional interventions without knowing which students are succeeding, and which are potentially vulnerable and at-risk. Improvement is dependent on metrics, gathering input and applying systematically evidence-based strategies and approaches monitoring and revising in a cycle of improvement.

The reviewers with the Education Manager's assistance contacted and then met/held discussions with representatives from the two school boards relevant representatives. The ADSB gathers and holds the data, for the GRFN' students, in a secure relational database. HSCDSB database does not yet isolate the GRFN students so these were shared in a collection of secure files for analysis. These data were analyzed. In this initial analysis, the reviewers wanted to highlight students vulnerable and/or at risk academically, in terms of attendance or both.

The following data are presented. There are students currently with indicators of possible risk factors that could benefit from a case management approach and shared conversations and a collective response of services to support them towards success. Searching through the data bases provided, the following concerns were raised based on these criteria:

Academics:

Students with grades of C, C-, D+,D,D- or R in at least two strands or more of Math and/or English Language, Reading and/or English Language Writing.

Attendance

Students were flagged for having a total of nine or more lates and/or days absent. The importance of regular attendance has been noted previously in this report.

Both Academics and Attendance:

Students were flagged if their attendance was flagged AND their academic profile showed areas of need as defined above.

GRFN STUDENTS IN HURON SUPERIOR CDSB - ELEMENTARY

Grade	# of Garden River Students Enrolled	Academics a concern but attendance not involved	Attendance a concern but academics not involved	Both academics and attendance are of concern	# of students with concerns
1	11	1	1	1	3
2	8	3	0	1	4
3	7	2	0	0	2
4	8	3	0	2	5
5	5	1	0	0	1
6	8	3	0	1	4
7	3	2	0	0	2
8	6	2	0	1	3
TOTAL	56	17	1	6	24

GRFN STUDENTS IN ALGOMA DSB - ELEMENTARY

Grade	# of Garden River Students	Academics a concern but attendance not involved	Attendance a concern but academics not involved	Both academics and attendance are of concern	# of students with
1	18	2	0	0	2
2	12	1	4	1	6
3	17	3	3	1	7
4	16	5	4	2	11
5	19	2	1	7	10
6	11	2	0	1	3
7	17	3	1	5	9
8	19	4	4	2	10
TOTAL	129	22	17	19	58

Elementary:

- HSCDSB – There are 56 GR students enrolled in HSCDSB’ programs. Of the 56 students, 24 students (or 43%) had some indication of a degree of possible risk:
 - 17 students are academically at risk
 - 1 student has attendance concern issues
 - 6 with a combination of attendance and academics and one student who might be considered for gifted assessments
- Algoma DSB – There are 129 GR students enrolled in ADSB’s programs. Of the 129 students, 58 students (or 45%) had some indication of a degree of possible risk:
 - 22 are academically at risk
 - 17 have attendance concern issues
 - 19 have dual risk factors, comprising both academically and attendance

Analysis of Education Unit Job Descriptions and Organization Chart of the GR Education Unit

Job Descriptions

One of the tasks in the RFP was to review the current job descriptions in terms of roles and responsibilities. The job descriptions had last been updated in 2008. The reviewers analyzed the 20-pdf files submitted. The first component designated the unique characteristics or competencies of that specific job; however, the others were virtually the same across the remaining job descriptions. The competencies consisted, as indicated in the analysis, of lists of tasks rather than distinct roles and responsibilities.

.During the focus group and interview sessions with the GR Education Unit, participants mentioned the lack of clarity in their job description and reporting status. An example was the lack of a single designation for the coordination and responsibility for transportation and the need for rationalizing this and like services. This analysis and a draft revised job description and template were shared with representatives of the leadership during the onsite visit for their input. Additionally, a draft template for job appraisals was developed to bring clarity to this issue as well.

A draft template for revised job descriptions was drafted based on best current practice. The current job descriptions can be revised using the suggested model and reflecting the suggestions for improvement contained in this report. Once the suggestions for improvement are accepted for implementation, the process of revision can begin with external supports.

The inclusion of additional positions and revised job roles for GREU was determined through the analysis of input from the interviews, focus groups and surveys as well as the student achievement data analysis.

Categories suggested in the revisions to the Draft Job Description for the GR Education Unit

A completed model job description was provided to the Education Unit's Manager and Band Leadership for review. The proposed categories for the new job descriptions are:

1. An outline of the position's information include the title, the department, the supervisor's title, the scheduled hours of work, the number of incumbents in that position, and if the person in the job description outlined supervises others
2. The purpose of that specific position
3. An outline of the duties and responsibilities of that specific position
4. The knowledge required to fulfill that specific position: "knowledge of accepted administrative and office policies, procedures and processes to ensure a proper and smooth workflow"
5. Outline of the specific skills required for this position
6. Section entitled Freedom of Action that outlines the supervision and agency entailed by that position

These suggested category criteria meet the acceptable requirements for job descriptions.

Performance Appraisal Template

A draft template to guide performance appraisal was created for input, then shared. The underlying premise is that a component of the form would be completed by the individual having the performance appraisal review prior to the initial interview, and would be submitted within a defined period. There is a second component of the Performance Appraisal form to be completed during the appraisal by the appraiser.

The job descriptions and appraisal template for all employees/managerial staffs of the Education Unit could be completed internally and/or with outside assistance. The reviewers can suggest several possible consultancy names for consideration. These meet current criteria for acceptable HR requirements.

Organizational Structure

Associated with the job descriptions was the format of the existing Organization Chart. The reviewers analyzed the current Organization Chart in terms of components such as: span of control and reporting groupings. This analysis too was shared during the onsite visit in March, 2017. A draft chart was discussed and additional revisions made. The suggested revised organization chart included now more adequately reflects:

- Span of control
- Grouping of like roles
- Reporting responsibilities
- Additional positions to address stated needs
- Functionality/purpose of positions within the Education Unit are more clearly addressed by assignment and role

The initial draft organizational chart was shared with the leadership team during the onsite visit. Based on feedback and the input sessions, three draft organizational charts were crafted. The second draft was shared on April 4, 2017 during the third teleconference third on April 19th during the fourth teleconference. The response to the RFP promised two teleconferences. Setting out the logic of the organization as proposed is based on the consensus heard during the many public contact sessions and data analysis. This proposal is based on function to respond to stated needs of learners and the community. The oversight committees (Elders' Advisory Committee and the Community Committee focused on Post-Secondary) will serve as checks on lack of responsiveness and flexibility.

Organization Chart

The draft organizational chart is based on feedback and a needs analysis for consideration. It provides the dual supports of academic supports and wellness and health and special education supports, given the diverse needs of learners. Consultants would work with the GREU to align the job/role descriptions with the suggested organizational chart. Where possible, existing staffs would be placed into new positions, delineate in the organizational chart. Some positions will require additional skills training. Some positions would require new hires because the needed skill set is not evident in existing staff roles/responsibilities in order to meet needs expressed by the community.

Explanatory Notes to Accompany Organization Chart

The current functions of the GREU are as follows:

- Provide support for 224 sponsored students enrolled in elementary and secondary education (elementary and secondary liaison workers, tutors) via tuition Memorandum of Understanding agreements
- Organize and provide additional support for students with special education needs (Education Support Services Coordinator, Aboriginal Support workers, Special Education Van Drivers, Cultural Worker)
- Organize and provide counselling for postsecondary students (Post-Secondary Counsellor)
- Organize and deliver secondary education for adults through Adults in Motion (A.I.M.), a private alternative secondary school. A.I.M. provides opportunities and supports to adult learners to graduate high school and obtain their Ontario secondary school diploma (OSSD). A.I.M. hosts a range of learners, from age 16 through students over 60. The program uses a variety of pathways, depending on when the student first entered high school and structured according to their strengths and needs. Courses are offered through several venues including courses from the Independent Learning Centre (ILC), cooperative education courses, and onsite offerings (Teachers, Coordinator)

Educational Needs indicated by Analysis of Data and Feedback/Input

- Need for supports for increased and targeted academics *in school* for both elementary and secondary as well as experiential out of school on-reserve experiences
- Need to change delivery model for tutoring to make it more responsive to expressed needs for flexibility in terms of times and locations
- Need for additional special education supports throughout the system; from kindergarten through Post-Secondary programming. This includes use of case management approaches for students at-risk, and alignment and involvement with other GRFN Departments such as Health & Wellness
- Need to intentionally integrate more culturally responsive programming on-GRFN, accessing the support of Elders and the community
- Need for access and analysis concrete student achievement data using relational data bases (already in place for ADSB) to assess student success, students at risk to determine needs and interventions and monitor progress over time including attendance data. Reviewers shared an attendance template, which could be used by the GREU
- Need to improve programs and services that support transitioning and integrate career planning and possible pathways through closer alignment with the district school boards and other GRFN Departments

The proposed model integrates a functional analysis of GREU to organize three main “teams”

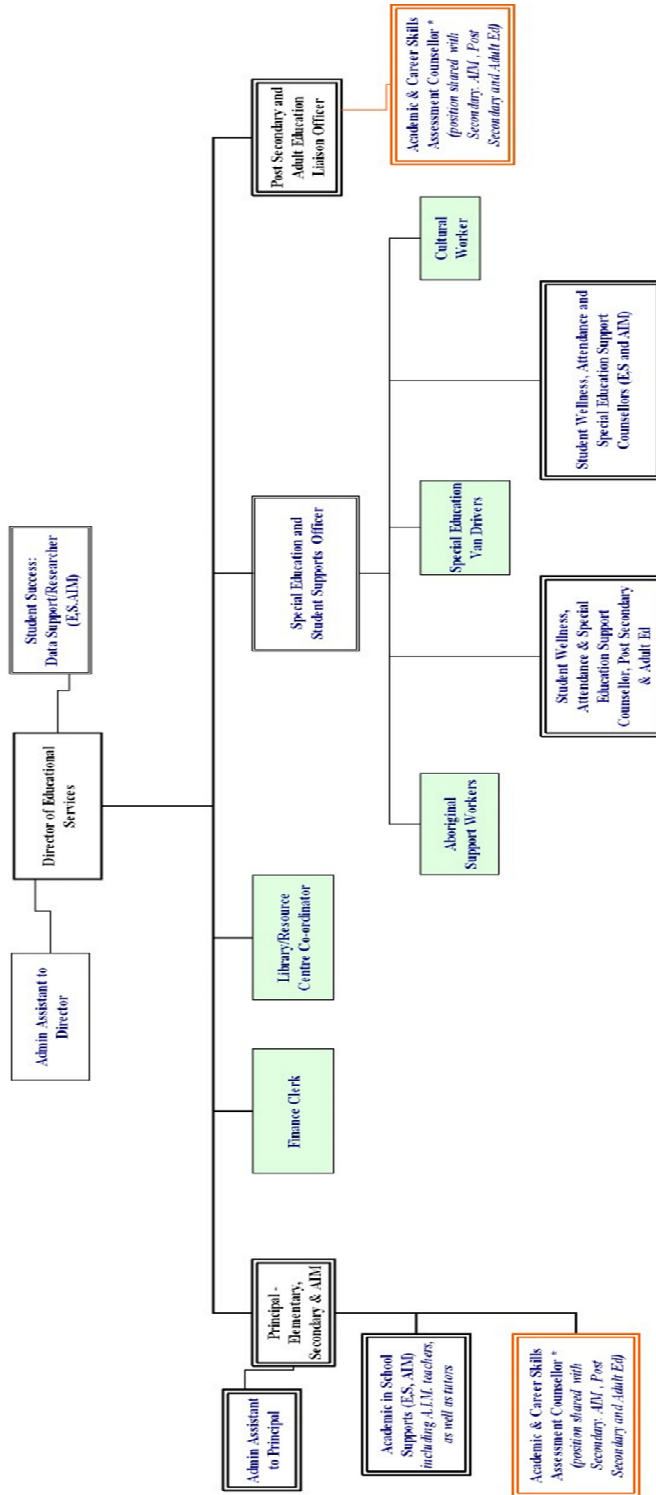
1. Elementary, secondary, and alternative secondary (A.I.M.)
2. Adult education and Post-Secondary education

3. Student Support Services including Special Education

- provides for coordination and alignment across the three teams
- encourages coordination across GRFN departments
- provides direct services, and supports to the range of learners

Positions within the "new" organization are intended to help support responsiveness and effective functioning of GREU, and the organization as a whole

An Alternative View with
Team for Special Education
and Student Supports
AL April 24



This view has three functional teams: two focus on academics (Elementary, Secondary and ADM, Adult Education and Post Secondary) while the third team (Special Education and Student Supports) supports students throughout the Unit (K to 12 + ADM, as well as Post-secondary/Adult Ed).

NOTE:

1. Positions with white fill and double lines show areas where existing personnel could be assigned.
2. Position with double Orange lines is shared between Secondary/ADM and Post Secondary.
3. Depending on how staff are re-aligned, some new staff may be required.

Realizing the Vision for Change: Suggestions for Improvement

System Level Oversights and Priorities

Improvement Priorities

Strategic Planning: From Vision to Action

The reviewers suggest four priorities for consideration for improvement. The four are grounded in the data analysis including student achievement and the survey data and feedback received during the many input sessions and interactions with community stakeholders. Special Education was an area that spans kindergarten through post-secondary and requires increased alignment and coordination in new guidelines.

1. Improve transitions for students to kindergarten, to high school and to post-secondary pathways to provide focused supports, programs and structures to encourage stronger student outcomes.
2. Target improving learner outcomes from kindergarten through grade 12 using data, analysis, and evidence-based practices including students with identified learning needs (Special Education) and students enrolled in AIM.
3. Review, revise and rationalize the policies, processes, procedures, programs and services for post-secondary learners, providing oversight to enable more responsive, flexible programs and services to meet students' and the community's needs and improve outcomes.
4. Reorganize the roles/functions of the GR Education Unit to increase effectiveness, responsiveness and alignment of services and programs to needs as indicated in the draft organization chart and indicated in the input gathering sessions and data analysis.

Implementation Recommendations

- Presentation to Band Council
- Elders' Advisory Committee to oversee implementation of the change process
- Post-Secondary Community Committee

Elder Advisory Committee

These were some criteria presented:

- Band Council and the Leaders can actively solicit Elders to apply
- Elder must be a GRFN registered member and 55 years or older
- Elders should have the moral authority to have the recommendations enforced
- Elders' "work, life experience and education should be considered in the selection process"
- Rotating fixed terms of one to two years, with an option to re-apply

- The Elder Advisory Committee would require appropriate staff and administration support
- Need to develop an outline of the roles/responsibilities of the Elder Advisory Committee
- Elders must meet background check requirements and consider conflict of interest policies
- The committee should hold quarterly meetings with formal updates from members of the GREU and other departments involved in implementation
- Report publically to Band Council 2 times/year
- Could rely on support from external consultants

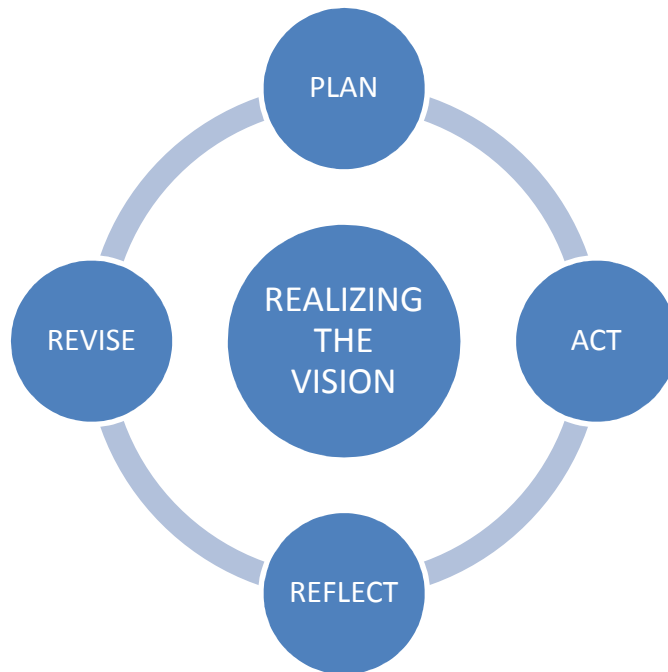
Post-Secondary Community Committee

- Drawn from the community including a range of stakeholders
- Fixed term of one to two years with an option to re-apply
- Need to develop outline of the roles/responsibilities of this committee
- Review, revise and rationalize the policies and procedures of Post-Secondary to be more responsive and flexible
- Act as an Appeal Committee to settle challenges to the policies and procedures
- Members must meet background check requirements and consider conflict of interest policies
- Act as an advisory body to new initiatives, programs and services for Post-Secondary education/training

Focused Action Plans to Realize the Priorities

The suggested priorities can form four linked and aligned action plans. The reviewers are suggesting a template for possible use. These contain the elements for a focused and accountable plan. The reviewers have suggested details to be included in two of the four plans: Transitions and Re-Organization of the GREU. Priorities and Elements of the Plan are suggested for the other two suggested strategic priorities. Effective system planning requires collaborative input, advice and discussions regarding priorities, elements of action, data, strategies and actions, timelines, monitoring and lead contact(s) and indicators of results. The processing of creating the action plan develops shared ownership and accountability.

This focus enables a strategic cyclical review of: planning based on evidence and effective practices, acting, reviewing including using data/evidence and refining the plan. Over-arching goal for the planning is improved learning outcomes for all learners through more responsive, timely and intentionally focused programs and services integrating and honouring language and culture of GRFN.



Template for the Action Plans

PRIORITIES	ELEMENTS OF THE ACTION PLAN	DATA	STRATEGIES & ACTIONS	TIMELINES MONITORING LEAD CONTACT	INDICATORS OF RESULTS

Summary

The proposed action plans form a supplement to this report. Our recommendation is that there be an update on progress on the action plans made to Band Council on a quarterly basis beginning in September 2017. This and the oversight by the two community committees will provide impetus for ongoing implementation and shared accountability to ensure that change happens.

This report aligns with INAC's agenda for improved learner outcomes, evidence-informed, and increased accountability. GRFN should be consulting with INAC over increased funding and support to enable implementation of this report.