



# **Eliza Van Bibber School Review Report**

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Eliza Van Bibber

Date: May 2012

**School Principal:** Keith Clarke

**Date of Review:** April 3 and 4

**School Review Team:**

- Gayle Bedard, Director FNPP DOE
- Dennis Darling, Principal of Teslin
- Alice Hartley, School Council chair, Takhini
- Patricia Toovey, Principal of Hidden Valley
- Judy Arnold Director, DOE

**Meetings with the School included:**

- Administration
- School staff
- Students
- Community Elders

**School Context**

Eliza Van Bibber Community School serves students from kindergarten to grade 12 in the community of Pelly Crossing and most students belong to the Selkirk First Nation. There have been a significant number of staff and administrative changes over the last few years and the current administrator is in his first full year at the school. For the last several months the school has been working hard to re-establish stability, consistency, and trust within the school. The school is also committed to increasing the involvement of parents, School Council, community and Elders in the school.

## **Norms and Culture:**

### **Characteristics:**

Continuously improving schools are socially and culturally inclusive with high expectations for each learner. A focus on continuous improvement is evident.

### **Observations of the Team:**

- The entrance to the school is bright with an open circular area which is a great place to display First Nations art and cultural pieces as well as student work;
- Staff members are professional and there is an air of optimism at the school not evident previously. Staff commented that there have been significant positive change at the school in the last year,
  - The school is to be commended for the work done in changing culture, norms and tone in the school;
- Although admitting that there is more work to be done staff are raising the bar in relation to behavior and academic expectations;
- The Team noted that students appeared to feel comfortable at the school and were respectful, polite, engaged, and open for discussion. However the students suggested that:
  - Attendance and bullying are challenges that need to be addressed,
  - There is a perception by the community and the students that academic standards are not the same in Pelly as they are in Whitehorse and this needs to change. Students indicated that they get what they called “Pelly pity” marks that do not serve them well when they leave the school.

### **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- Engage the community in understanding the work done and the work yet to be done in relation to raising academic and behavioural standards for all students;
- Strengthen the culture and norms at the school by working with individual parents, community, students, and School Council to review and revise the mission statement to reflect community and have it translated into Northern Tutchone.
- Make the entrance to the school more reflective of First Nations culture through student art including murals and carvings completed by students, artists and community.
  - Consider having the names of the classrooms and greetings translated into Northern Tutchone;
- Use a focus on social responsibility and social justice to develop an approach to behaviour and social issues that is consistent across the school and restorative rather than punitive,
  - Use the social responsibility performance standards and the development of classroom and school-wide criteria with students and staff using student friendly language,
  - An essential component of the process will be modeling expectations for students and having the School Council and community understand processes and procedures.

## **Community**

**Characteristics:** Continuously improving schools build a shared commitment to success for each learner. The school collaborates with parents, students, school council, Yukon First Nations, and community to support student learning. Ongoing parent/community involvement is embedded in school culture and the school communicates about progress and challenges in multiple ways.

### **Observations of the Team:**

- The teaching staff at the school see themselves as increasingly functioning as a positive team. First Nations staff members feel somewhat disconnected and would like to be part of this team approach;
- Staff commented that collaboration and interactions with parents is an area that needs significant attention;
  - Although invitations are sent to parents, there are many who are uncomfortable coming into the school and staff reflected on ways to connect outside of the building;
- The staff would appreciate the School Council being more involved in the school so that the School Council understands the work the school is doing to move forward and raise expectations and can then share with the community,
  - Staff mentioned that sometimes community meetings are held about education and that when negative reports come back to them it makes them feel devalued and defeated,
- The Elders and community members that the Team spoke with were eager to help with the school particularly with on the land activities which they believe to be the best way to engage students in learning and meet high expectations;
- The school has made a connection for students with Yukon College and students regularly go to the College after school;
- Students commented that some students are not interested in school and they feel that it is not cool to do well in school;
- The Team was unable to connect with the School Council and it was noted that Eliza Van Bibber is the only Yukon school where no connection was made with School Council during the review process.

### **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- Explore ways to reach out to individual parents and the community,
  - Consider holding meetings or student led conferences in alternate settings,
  - Consider ways for staff to be involved community activities,
- Be persistent in trying to make connections and provide ways for parents to comfortably express their concerns;
- Make use of the Elders and community members as more on the land activities are developed;
- Connect with other area schools, Carmacks and Mayo, to share ideas and support secondary learners;
- Strengthen the use of experiential and on the land learning as a way to engage students, improve attendance,
  - Ensure that on the land learning is connected to grade level outcomes so that high expectations can be met;
- Provide students with leadership opportunities and opportunities to appreciate the value of education in their future success.

## **School Organization**

**Characteristics:** Continuously improving schools organize structures, actions, and interventions to ensure success for each learner. Work in the school is coherent and aligned to focus on improvement. Actions and interventions include effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The Department supports the school and makes connections across the Territory to build capacity.

### **Observations of the Team:**

- Staff consistently focus on addressing the academic and social emotional needs of students;
- The Team noted some excellent samples of student writing on the walls;
- The school based team is in place but staff acknowledge that further work is needed on the Individual Education Plans and interventions for specific students;
- The use of assessment for learning to guide classroom practice and as learning for student self-assessment using student friendly performance standards is in the early stages of development;
- The Team observed many strategies in place to address the needs of vulnerable students but that attention also needs to be paid to those capable students who need to be challenged;
- Team suggests that First Nations language instruction should not generate preparation time or cover the personal needs of staff. Additionally, First Nation language classes should not be too lengthy.

### **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- Work with the First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit to:
  - Revisit the organization of classes in relation to the delivery of First Nation Language,
  - Determine the use of cultural inclusion funds so budgets are transparent,
  - Explore with Selkirk First Nation the possibility of a counsellor for the school;
- Enlist the help of Department consultants to provide all staff, including support staff, with ongoing professional development opportunities in the school including:
  - Literacy development,
  - The use of assessment for and as learning,
  - Social emotional development,
  - Challenging capable learners;
- Use an experiential or on the land approach integrated with grade level prescribed learning outcomes to engage all students meet the needs of struggling as well stronger learners;
- Review schedules and organization for secondary students which could include but is not limited to:
  - Making use of the opportunities/facilities/skills that exist in the school and in community,
  - Connecting with Carmacks and/or Mayo to have students working with each other on line or in person,
  - Exploring more formal online opportunities for all students in all grades but particularly those who need to be challenged to excel;
- Ensure that all early learners have significant opportunities to develop oral language skills in an activity based environment.

## **Processes and Progress**

**Characteristics:** Continuously improving schools take responsibility for improving outcomes for students. They use evidence to guide decisions and actions and have processes in place to collectively monitor progress and make adjustments in key areas of their work. They demonstrate improvement over time – for individual students, groups of students, and the school.

### **Observations of the Team:**

- All staff and students commented that attendance, academic progress and social emotional development were significant issues at the school;
- Students, staff and community members want accuracy in the evaluation and reporting processes;
- The Team observed that the school is doing significant planning for individual students;
- Staff is increasingly using accurate evidence and data to make decision about required actions and plans;
- The 2011-2012 growth plan was developed to guide a genuine school growth process during the 2011-2012 year and the school appeared to be ready to develop a growth plan that would function as a road map to improvement.

### **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- Ensure that all grading and reporting to parents accurately reflects student progress in relation to grade level prescribed learning outcomes;
- Implement the 2012-2013 school growth process as an ongoing exercise to ensure a road map to the future is in place and continues to evolve;
- Share the current evidence of attendance and student progress with parents and the community in a variety of ways.

**Conclusions:**

The school is clearly in the midst of change and staff members are eager to move forward acknowledging the work needed to engage parents and the community with the school. The Team strongly encourages the school to work with Department staff to support the next steps in the learning journey for all students. Although optimistic about the current path the school has taken, the Team suggests that an update on progress should take place in 2013 in order to confirm the sustainability of current directions and engage the School Council in the process.