

# Survey Summary

*Pertaining to Parent and Community engagement in  
First Nation Schools*

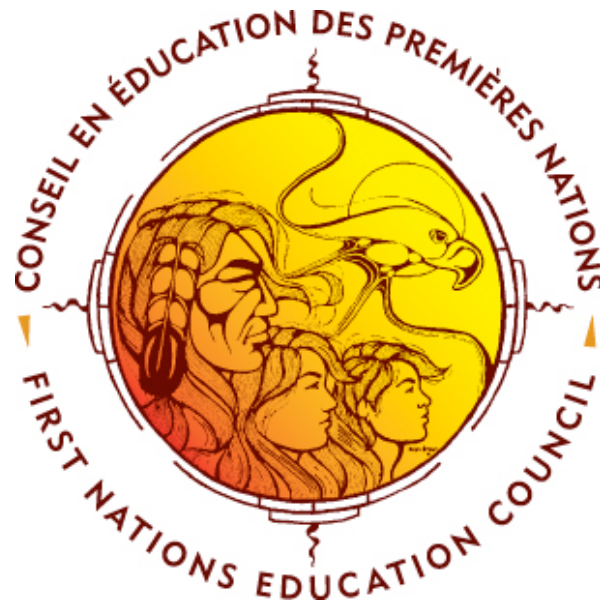
Prepared by:

*The First Nations Education Council*

*In collaboration with:*

*Katenies Research and Management Services*

*Dr. Rose Alma J. McDonald*



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## OVERVIEW

A literature review was conducted during March 2009 regarding parent-community involvement in First Nation schools. The literature indicated that parent community involvement in schools is generally thought to mean the ways that school, families and communities interact in order to support student learning and development.

The literature review further indicated that there are several differences between First Nations and non-First Nations parental involvement in, and satisfaction with, the education system. These differences include:

- Lack of communication between First Nations parents and school personnel in parent-school events and extra-curricular activities.<sup>1</sup>
- Breakdowns in communication between First Nations parents and schools.
- No real understanding of teachers and administration of First Nations culture and worldview.
- First Nations parents fear and mistrust of the school system.

The literature review further indicated that there are many barriers that limit parental involvement in schools. These barriers include:<sup>2</sup>

- Negative educational experiences of First Nations parents.
- Barriers to communication.
- Limited understanding by the schools of First Nations issues and values.
- Cultural awareness.
- Poverty and illness in First Nation families.
- Lack of engagement strategies by the schools.
- Intimidation, racism and bullying.
- Negative parent-teacher contact; and
- “Segregation” of First Nations students.

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<sup>1</sup> R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. Parent and Education Engagement Partnership Project: A Discussion Paper. (2002). R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd: 7

<sup>2</sup> Ibid pg 10

Successful engagement strategies that contributed to successful parent-school interactions, according to the literature, were.<sup>3</sup>

- **Governance strategies/initiatives**

Such as First Nation/Aboriginal Education Committees; the promotion of First Nations parents as members of Parent Advisory Committees; and parents as sitting members of District Boards of Trustees.

- **First Nations support services**

These services include home-school liaison activities; cultural/First Nation education support services; and other support functions.

- **School orientation activities**

Such as orientation days for new First Nations students and their parents prior to the first day of school; one-on-one meetings with parents and First Nation support staff and teachers early in the year; and parent handbooks that plainly outline school programs, policies, supports and expectations.

- **Cultural awareness/culturally inclusive activities**

Such as cultural events to encourage parental involvement; and creating a space for students and parents that is inviting in the school.

- **Other strategies**

That includes using the schools as a community resource and offering seminars and workshops to parents.

Finally, the literature review concluded that strategies that were most effective in facilitating parental participation in First Nation schools included:

- **Fostering Supportive Home Environments:** including strategies to assist families with parenting and creating conditions to support student success in learning.
- **Promoting Shared Decision Making:** including strategies that facilitate family and community partnering in school decision-making.
- **Expanding Family, Community, and School Communication:** including strategies that promote effective communications so that the parent's, schools and communities needs are all heard and responded to.
- **Coordinating Resources and Services:** including strategies that coordinate programs to provide services for families, students, schools and communities.

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<sup>3</sup> R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. [Parent and Education Engagement Partnership Project: A Discussion Paper](#). (2002). R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd: 16-22

- **Fostering Volunteer Support.**
- **Supporting Youth Development.**
- **Supporting Learning Outside of School.**
- **Expanding Community Development.**<sup>4</sup>

## **THE STUDY**

In order to learn about the visions and expectations about parent committees in First Nation schools the First Nation Education Council issued a request to collect information from each First Nation school in the region.

This data collection was conducted during March 15 and April 15, 2009. Respondents were requested to e-mail or fax their survey back to the FNEC and analysis was conducted thereafter of the survey results by the independent consultant Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald of Katenies Research and Management Services based in Akwesasne, Quebec.

There were a total of 115 respondents representing 16 First Nation communities and 22 schools who participated in the directors/teachers/educators survey. There were an additional 173 parent respondents representing 13 First Nation communities that participated in the parent survey.

Preliminary findings of the survey were presented at the 19th Annual First Nations Education Conference which was held on April 28, 29 and 30, 2009 at the l'Hôtel Delta of Montréal. The theme of the conference was *"The School Success of Our Children, a Shared Responsibility."*

The conference welcomed more than 200 participants, as well as, 31 speakers. The event brought together school interveners and parents from twenty First Nations communities throughout Quebec. In addition, students, teachers and administrators from the Quebec provincial school network equally participated in, and contributed to, the success of the conference.

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<sup>4</sup> What do we mean by Family and Community Connections with Schools? Module 1. Family and Community Relations. (2005). Southwest Educational Development Laboratory: 4

The following is a summary of the school directors, teacher and educator survey.

## **THE SCHOOL DIRECTORS, TEACHER AND EDUCATORS SURVEY**

Participants in the survey represented 11 different First Nation communities. The breakdown of respondents by community is illustrated in the following table.

**Table 1**  
**Number of Respondents by First Nation community**

<b>First Nation Community</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
1. Gesgapegiag	12
2. Kahnawake	31
3. Kanehsatake	6
4. Kitigan Zibi	5
5. Lac Simon	12
6. Listuguj	1
7. Mashteuiatsh	12
8. Opitciwan	7
9. Pikogan	11
10. Wendake	4
11. Wemotaci	14

The First Nation Schools who participated in the survey were as follows:

**Table 2**  
**Number of Respondents by First Nation School**

<b>First Nation School</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
1. Amikobi	3
2. Amishk	2
3. AGP	1
4. Amik-Wiche	9
5. Kahnawake Survival School	7
6. Karonhianondnha	8
7. Kassinu	2
8. Kateri School	17
9. Kitigan Zibi	5
10. Kiwetin	9
11. Manu	1

First Nation School	Number of Respondents
12. Migwan	11
13. Mikisiw	2
14. Nikanik	10
15. Nikanik (secondary)	2
16. Rotwennakete	5
17. Seskitin	7
18. Seskitin (primary)	2
19. Ts8taie	6
Total Non-Respondents	4
Total Respondents	113

When asked if the respondents provided training for parents such as committee training or parenting skills they responded as follows:

**Table 3**  
**Number of Respondents who Provide Training for Parents**

Provided Training	Number of Respondents
Yes	38
No	51
Didn't know	10
Total non-respondents	16
Total respondents	115

The kinds of training provided ranged from:

- Prevention of bullying and violence.
- Keeping safe on the internet.
- Literacy.
- Fundraising.
- Committee training.
- Cooking for diabetes prevention.
- Speech and language training.
- Helping with homework.
- Parenting skills.

When asked if their school had a parent committee 63% of the respondents indicated they had a parent committee in their school. The following table illustrates the breakdown of responses.

**Table 4**  
**Number of Schools with a Parent Committee**

Schools with a Parent Committee	Number of Respondents
Yes	73
No	32
Didn't know	9
Total non-respondents	1
Total respondents	115

Of those respondents who indicated they had parent committee they were asked if they felt a parent committee was useful. They indicated that a parent committee was useful because:

- Parent involvement is important and it is important for us to see what is happening in the school.
- It is important to have input on school solutions.
- It is important to have better school relations and for parents to be informed in order to assure quality and representative education.
- Their involvement and collaboration is important in order to define guidelines and services for the school,
- Parent committees are an essential component to our mission and mandate which is to include parents in the decision-making processes according to our cultural belief systems.
- It keeps our administration on their toes.
- We would be more effective if there were more parents involved.
- Sometimes they don't report back to us which limits their usefulness to a certain extent.

When asked what they viewed as the *vision* of a parent committee in their school they indicated that a vision should include the following elements:

- Overseeing the smooth running of school life for their child.
- Authorizing educational outings and field trips that are educationally meaningful.
- Being the main players to student success.
- Mediating between school and parent.
- Quality assurance activities (assuring directors make decisions that do not conflict with First Nation values.

- Promoting school activities.
- Endorsing a code of conduct.
- Ensuring a consultative role for parents.
- Participating in the decision making processes of the school.
- Supporting educational needs of the school and promoting healthy environments for the students.
- Putting in place parental governance and responsibility.
- Encouraging parental participation.
- Helping set up students for success.
- Fostering positive perceptions concerning school.
- Supporting staff and students.
- Reinforcing a positive learning environment.
- Having decision making powers.
- To work in partnership with the teachers to support the educational goals of our school.
- Parents who are interested in making sure the school programs are successful
- To put in place parental governance as parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education
- To integrate the school into the community.
- Encouraging parent participation in school activities and their children's education.
- Providing positive feedback and comments.
- Organizing extra curricular activities.
- Organizing after/during school and helping out during activities.
- Having parents in classrooms a lot and having fun as a community of learners.
- Partnerships to work together as a team for the development of the children
- Positive thinking about the school as a whole.
- Supporting students and staff members.
- Reinforcing a positive learning environment.
- Communication.
- Getting input from parents on issues regarding their children at home and at school e.g. how much rest they get, homework assignments, etc.
- Helping involve more parents in what is going on in the school.
- Full participation in the success of the children.
- Ensuring there is "decision-making" versus "recommending" ability.
- Parental involvement in the classrooms and/or school events.

When asked if their school didn't have a parent committee whether they thought one was needed 45% (52) of the respondents indicated they thought one was needed.

When asked if they felt it was important to have input from parents on the development of the school curriculum, initiatives related to school success, etc. 80% (93) of the respondents said *yes*, two respondents said *no*, and 18% did not reply to this question.

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL

When respondents were asked if they had participated in activities at their school they reported they had participated in the following activities:

**Table 5**  
**Summary of Parent Participation in the Schools**

Activity Participated In	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	No Response
Une journée porte ouverte à l'école. <i>A school open house</i>	90/ 78%	19/ 17%	6/ 5%
Une rencontre du comité de parents. <i>A parent committee meeting.</i>	51/ 44%	60/ 52%	4/ 3%
Une rencontre au sujet du comportement ou des réalisations d'un enfant en classe. <i>A meeting regarding student's classroom behavior or achievement.</i>	101/ 88%	10/ 9%	4/ 3%
Une conférence destinée aux parents et aux enseignants. <i>A parent teacher conference.</i>	87/ 76%	22/ 19%	6/ 5%
Une activité visant à recueillir des fonds pour l'école. <i>A school fund raiser program.</i>	107/ 93%	11/ 10%	0/ 0%
Une conversation téléphonique au sujet du comportement ou des réalisations d'un enfant. <i>Talked via phone about student's behavior or achievement.</i>	100/ 87%	17/ 15%	0/ 0%
Accès à des renseignements sur les devoirs d'un enfant par téléphone, par courriel ou l'Internet. <i>Accessed information about student's assignments via e-mail, internet or phone.</i>	51/ 44%	63/ 55%	1/ .9%
Tutorat à titre de bénévole. <i>Volunteered as a tutor.</i>	59/ 51%	52/ 45%	4/ 3%
Participation à un cours sur le rôle parental. <i>Participated in a parenting class</i>	25/ 22%	97/ 84%	0/ 0%

<b>Activity Participated In</b>	<b>Oui/ Yes</b>	<b>Non/ No</b>	<b>No Response</b>
Participation en tant que conférencier ou moniteur. <i>Participated as a guest speaker or instructor</i>	<b>37/ 32%</b>	<b>76/ 66%</b>	<b>2/ 2%</b>
Participation à une décision avec d'autres parents et l'école. <i>Participated in a school – parent decision making activity.</i>	<b>66/ 57%</b>	<b>46/ 40%</b>	<b>3/ 3%</b>
Une soirée familiale à l'école. <i>Family night at school.</i>	<b>70/ 61%</b>	<b>55/ 48%</b>	<b>0/ 0%</b>
Une visite scolaire à une entreprise locale, un centre culturel ou un musée. <i>A field trip to a local business, cultural centre or museum.</i>	<b>94/ 82%</b>	<b>22/ 19%</b>	<b>0/ 0%</b>
Autre (veuillez préciser) : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational trips.</li> <li>• Apple picking, sliding, skating.</li> <li>• School concerts.</li> <li>• Local family trips to the sugar bush.</li> <li>• Field trips out of town.</li> <li>• Theatre evenings, book stores, outdoor education (camping, hiking) international trips.</li> <li>• Prom.</li> <li>• Christmas Concerts.</li> <li>• Science Fairs.</li> <li>• Workshops for students, field trips, tours to institutions, guest speakers, work placements, etc.</li> <li>• Sortie scolaire dans le bois.</li> <li>• Visite poste de police, palais de justice, bibliothèque municipale.</li> <li>• Activité récompense à chaque mois.</li> <li>• Sortie éducative, méritas rendez-vous autochtone.</li> </ul>	<b>15/ 13%</b>	<b>6/ 5%</b>	<b>94/ 82%</b>

The majority of respondents reported having participated in activities in their school. These activities included a *school open house* (78%), *parent committee meetings* (44%), *meetings regarding student's classroom behavior and achievement* (88%), *parent teacher conferences* (76%), *a school fund raiser program* (93%), *family night at school* (61%) or *a field trip* to a local business, cultural centre or museum (82%).

Several respondents further reported that they had *talked via phone about student's behavior or achievement* (87%) or participated in a *school parent decision making activity* (57%).

In contrast, there were also several respondents who *had not* accessed information about their student's assignments via e-mail, internet or phone (55%), volunteered as a tutor (45%), participated in the school as a speaker or instructor (84%) or participated in a parenting class (84%).

The implications for parental involvement planning, therefore, is more emphasis on getting information out to the community and parents, recruiting community members as speakers and instructors in the school and providing more opportunities for programs and classes, especially pertaining to parenting.

## VISION FOR A PARENT COMMITTEE

When asked what they see as their vision for a parent committee for their school respondents reported as follows:

**Table 6**  
**Summary Vision Statements for a Parent Committee**

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas/ I don't know	No Response
Orienter la prise de décisions concernant les programmes et les services éducatifs locaux des Premières Nations. <i>To guide and make decisions about local First Nations education programs and services</i>	80/ 70%	24/ 21%	24/ 21%	0/ 0%
Accroître la participation des parents des Premières Nations à la scolarité de leurs enfants. <i>To enhance First Nation parent engagement in their child's education.</i>	113/ 98%	3/ 3%	5/ 4%	0/ 0%

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas/ I don't know	No Response
Améliorer les services de soutien offerts aux Premières Nations, comme les activités de liaison entre la maison et l'école. <i>To enhance First Nation support services such as home-school liaison activities.</i>	104/ 90%	7/ 6%	13/ 11%	0/ 0%
Améliorer les services de soutien éducatif et culturel des Premières Nations. <i>To enhance First Nations cultural and education support services.</i>	94/ 82%	8/ 7%	6/ 5%	7/ 6%
Favoriser la participation des parents à l'école par l'entremise de défenseurs des intérêts des Premières Nations, de travailleurs de soutien et de personnes-ressources pour la famille. <i>To nurture parent involvement in the school through First Nation advocates, support workers and family resource workers.</i>	93/ 81%	8/ 7%	10/ 9%	4/ 3%
Planifier des rencontres avec les parents pour discuter de questions touchant leurs enfants. <i>To plan and assist parents with meetings/issues related to their children</i>	89/ 77%	15/ 13%	8/ 7%	3/ 3%
Promouvoir et coordonner des activités culturelles qui se déroulent à l'école auxquelles les parents et les familles seront invités à participer <i>To promote and coordinate cultural events in the school in which First Nation parents and families are invited to participate in such activities.</i>	100/ 87%	3/ 3%	5/ 4%	7/ 6%
Organiser des dîners à l'école, des repas et des activités connexes. <i>To support school dinners, meals and other related events.</i>	77/ 67%	13/ 11%	8/ 7%	17/ 15%
Offrir de l'orientation aux nouveaux élèves et enseignants avant la rentrée des classes, au début de l'année scolaire. <i>To provide orientation for new students and parents prior to commencement of classes at the beginning of the school year.</i>	72/ 63%	30/ 26%	7/ 6%	6/ 5%

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas/ I don't know	No Response
Encourager l'utilisation de l'école en tant que ressource communautaire, notamment pour des danses, utiliser le gymnase de l'école, etc. <i>To nurture use of the school as a community resource such as dances, use of the gym, etc.</i>	87/ 76%	13/ 11%	7/ 6%	8/ 7%
Autre (veuillez préciser) : Other (please specify) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of school kitchens.</li> <li>• To support the language objectives of the school.</li> <li>• Fundraising.</li> <li>• Parental involvement is very important – unfortunately the parents who need to be there for the children often are the ones we can't or don't reach.</li> <li>• Fundraising.</li> <li>• Take teacher support into account.</li> <li>• Volunteer in class.</li> <li>• To help with rides etc.</li> <li>• Encourager les cuisines collectives</li> <li>• Support extra curricular activities by volunteering to coach sports.</li> </ul>	7/ 6%	1/ .9%	2/ 2%	105/ 91%

The majority of respondents indicated what they saw as a vision for a parent committee for their school included *guiding and making decisions about local First Nations education programs and services (70%), enhancing First Nation parent engagement in their child's education (98%), enhancing First Nation support services such as home—school liaison activities (90%), enhancing First Nations cultural and education support services, nurturing parent involvement through First Nation advocates, support workers and family resource workers (81%) and promoting cultural events in the school in which First Nation parents and families are invited to participate (87%).*

In addition, respondents reported the vision for a parent committee should also include *planning and assisting parents with meetings/issues related to their children (77%), supporting school dinners, meals and other related events (67%), providing orientation for new students and parents prior to commencement of classes at the beginning of the school year (63%) and nurturing the use of the school as a community resource such as dances and use of the gym (76%).*

**SCHOOL/PARENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**  
**RELATIONS ENTRE L'ÉCOLE, LES PARENTS ET LA COMMUNAUTÉ**

When asked if any or all of the following apply to their school respondents reported that the following characteristics applied to their school:

**Table 7**  
**Summary of School/Parent and Community Relations Characteristics**

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas/ I don't know	No Response
Je comprends la philosophie et les buts de l'école. <i>Parents understand the school's philosophy and goals.</i>	71/ 62%	16/ 14%	22/ 19%	6/ 5%
L'école encourage les parents à participer à l'apprentissage de leurs enfants. <i>The school encourages parents to assist in their children's learning.</i>	97/ 84%	10/ 9%	5/ 4%	3/ 3%
Les parents participent aux activités d'apprentissage. <i>Parents support learning activities taught in school.</i>	51/ 44%	44/ 38%	17/ 15%	3/ 3%
Les parents participent en aidant les enseignants dans les classes. <i>Parents are adequately involved in providing assistance to teachers in the classroom.</i>	29/ 25%	81/ 70%	10/ 9%	0/ 0%
L'école encourage les parents à visiter l'école et à observer les activités qui s'y déroulent. <i>The school encourages parents to visit the school and observe activities.</i>	98/ 85%	14/ 12%	8/ 7%	0/ 0%
Les parents offrent leur aide lors des activités parascolaires. <i>Parents are involved in assisting extra curricular or after school activities</i>	44/ 38%	67/ 58%	14/ 12%	0/ 0%
L'école transmet suffisamment d'information aux parents sur le rendement de leurs enfants. <i>The school provides enough information to parents about their children's performance.</i>	99/ 86%	13/ 11%	8/ 7%	0/ 0%
L'école informe les parents de ses plans et activités. <i>Parents are informed enough about school plans and activities.</i>	101/ 88%	10/ 9%	10/ 9%	0/ 0%

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas/ I don't know	No Response
Les membres de la communauté et les parents estiment que l'école est une ressource. <i>The school is seen as a resource by community members and parents.</i>	63 / 55%	24 / 21%	38 / 33%	0 / 0%
Les enseignants et l'administration estiment que les parents sont une ressource pour l'école. <i>Parents are seen as a resource to the school by the teachers and administration.</i>	82 / 71%	10 / 9%	24 / 21%	0 / 0%
Les parents encouragent leurs enfants à aller à l'école. <i>Parents encourage their children to attend school.</i> Not always	83 / 72%	19 / 17%	10 / 9%	3 / 3%
Les parents estiment qu'il est important que leurs enfants soient scolarisés. <i>Parents consider schooling to be important to their children.</i>	80 / 70%	16 / 14%	17 / 15%	2 / 2%
Les parents encouragent leurs enfants à être ponctuels à l'école. <i>Parents encourage their children to arrive at school on time.</i>	71 / 62%	23 / 20%	16 / 14%	5 / 4%
Il y a une collaboration positive entre la communauté, les parents et l'école. <i>There is a positive collaborative relationship between the community, parents and the school.</i>	80 / 70%	19 / 17%	17 / 15%	0 / 0%

Respondents generally reported that the following characteristics applied to their school: *parents understand the school's philosophy and goals* (62%), *the school encourages parents to assist in their children's learning* (84%), *the school encourages parents to visit the school and observe activities* (85%), *the school provides enough information to parents about their children's performance* (86%) and *the parents are informed enough about school plans and activities* (88%).

Respondents also reported that *parents are seen as a resource to the school by the teachers and administration* (71%), *parents encourage their children to attend school* (72%), *parents consider schooling to be important to their children* (70%), *parents encourage their children to arrive at school on time* (62%) and *there is a positive collaborative relationship between the community, parents and school* (70%),

In contrast some respondents reported that parents *are not* adequately involved in *providing assistance to teachers in the classroom* (70%) nor are *parents involved in assisting extra curricular or after school activities* (58%). Some respondents also were mixed regarding whether *parents support learning activities* taught in the school (44% said *yes* and 38% said *no*).

Implications for school/parent and community relations planning is more emphasis on using parents as resources to the school and how they could enhance their role in the school by providing assistance in extra curricular or after school activities, as well as, encouraging them to take more active roles in placing education as a high priority with their children (in terms of school attendance, arriving on time and active learning). Respondents rated the school, parent and community relationship at their school as *excellent* (6%), *good* (43%), *average* (41%) and *poor* (10%),

**Table 8**  
**School Rating by Number of Respondents**

Number of Respondents	RATING	Percent of Respondents
7	Excellent/Excellent	6%
50	Bonnes/Good	43%
47	Moyennes/Average	41%
11	Mauvaises/Poor	10%
0	Médiocres/Very poor	0 %
115	Total respondents	100%

When asked what the respondents thought the *greatest strengths* were in the relationship between their school, the community and the parents they reported:

- Promotion of Education.
- Empathy towards the community.
- A better understanding and involvement from all parties.
- Collaboration.
- Understanding.
- Working together more as a team.
- They encourage the parents to attend functions for their children.
- They try to provide “therapists” for the children who are in need (occupational and speech therapy).
- The Mohawk language we are trying to preserve and protect binds us in a common goal.
- The students and alumni who share the history of the school.
- Parents who phone and/or meet with the Principal and/or Director of Education on a regular basis

- I think some parents are interested in their school.
- Proximity
- Our culture.
- I find that the parents who are involved in extra-curricular activities are really devoted.
- Communication.
- Openness.
- The overall sense of community attached to this relationship. It makes all parties answerable to each other
- That our school is open to the community. A lot of parents do cooperate in the school but there could be more.
- We always invite the parents to attend school activities such as speeches, student of the month, art shows, etc.
- Common values and goals for the students.
- Some of our parents are very involved and very supportive. They work hard to help in any way they can
- Easy access to communication.
- A willingness to get involved.
- A community school with community values.
- The school informing the community and parents of the happenings at school so that they are aware of what's going on and of the students' achievements.
- We operate on an open door policy. Parents are encouraged weekly to get involved, visit, and participate. The staff stays in close contact with the parents regarding any situations both good and bad.
- Cultural ties, ceremonies and visits from Elders.
- Some parents are very supportive.
- Many community members volunteer their time for cultural learning.
- We need the parents involved.
- Communication is the key to have parents and students involved in learning and sharing.
- All our teachers are from the community. Parents are glad to get a call from a teacher whether it is good or bad.
- The school really tries to accommodate special students.
- We always have an open door welcoming parents to see what we're doing. There are many cultural and extra activities happening (parents, community members are impressed by what is going on here).
- Familiarity because we are a community school
- There are few dedicated parents who seem to be there for everything and in turn see and appreciate the effort of the school.
- Collaborative efforts.
- Community perspectives need improvement.
- Common goals – to provide a good education by native teachers in the community
- A conscious effort is made to bring parents in. It is a close knit community.

- Teachers work collaboratively to improve the learning
- Communities have several reporting sessions with the parents.

Respondents were asked finally what things *they thought do not help* the school parent relationship in their community. Their responses were as follows:

- Lack of community interest and involvement in the school system.
- Lack of stability in staffing. There are major changes from one year to another.
- Not enough field trips within the community or projects with other agencies.
- Gossiping among community members about the school and staff members.
- There are parents who ask for services (therapy) for their children but they don't do their work at home. It's wasted funds that could be used for other children's whose parents are willing to do their part.
- Disorganization.
- Lack of resources from the community.
- Drugs.
- Unemployment.
- Lack of awareness regarding education.
- Parents who do not get involved regularly in their child's success or make education a priority.
- Lack of communication in a timely manner to parents – both verbal and written.
- Administrative issues related to the school leadership.
- Inadequate revisiting of the Mandate, Mission, Goals and Objectives throughout the year.
- Rumors that the provincial schools are better than First Nation Schools.
- Discipline of students can be a controversial issue in a small community.
- Some community members still do not believe in our local institutions or services.
- There is a lack of trust.
- Inadequate information regarding school fees.
  
- Flow of communication needs to be enhanced perhaps through a school website so students and parents can access information about homework assignments and school events. Perhaps a newsletter can be offered online. It seems that a lot of students have access to computers and the internet in the home, which would be needed to be able to offer this type of service
- Parents making assumptions, getting angry and not taking responsibility for their child's actions e.g. blaming the school.
- Also, a parent's negative school experience keeps them away.
- Parents in the community have a negative attitude about the school. We need to do a better job in terms of advertising our school's strengths.
- Gossip – people who have never been to the school but "heard" about this or that. What they hear is not necessarily true so they send their children outside the community.

- A lack of universal understanding by certain members in the community about the school who have accepted rumor and falsehoods as truth.
- When parents do not get involved in their child's education.
- I think that it's very important for parents to be involved so that their child could better succeed in his/her education.
- How parents are not concerned if their child misses a lot of school or are chronically late.
- Parents don't have time for their children to do homework at home.
- Parents won't assume responsibility for their child's behavior. All bad news is perceived as the school's fault.
- Some parents seem intimidated or too uncomfortable to get involved in the school.
- Politics.
- Lack of community involvement in educational activities.
- Lack of proper communication.
- Parents do not give their time to physically be present in the school or to help on special days.
- Apathy in general about education and its importance among young parents.
- Not enough feedback from parents, we just hear the negative comments. We need to hear the good stuff.
- Lack of involvement from most parents. Busy lifestyles.
- Major behaviour problems without support or consistency.
- Cultural barriers.

Respondents were consistent with the literature review findings in that they reported the greatest strengths in the relationship between their school, the community and parents were governance strategies (parent committees), First Nations support services (especially for special needs), cultural awareness (Mohawk language and culture), involvement in shared decision making, effective communication, open door policies, and supporting learning outside the school.

Respondents were further consistent with their reporting of what *did not help* the school parent relationship in their community. As indicated in the literature, respondents similarly noted barriers to, and lack of, communication, fear and mistrust of the school system (rumors and gossiping), negative educational experiences of First Nation parents and lack of priority for education among parents and the community.

## **THE PARENT SURVEY**

One-hundred-seventy-three (173) respondents participated in the parent survey representing 13 different First Nation communities. The breakdown of respondents by community is illustrated in the following table.

**Table 9**  
**Number of Respondents by First Nation Community**

First Nation Community	Number of Respondents
1. Gesgapegiag	55
2. Kahnawake	47
3. Kanehsatake	2
4. Kitigan Zibi	12
5. Kitcisakik	12
6. Listuguj	33
7. Manawan	9
8. Mashteuiatsh	2
9. Opitciwan	11
10. Pikogan	4
11. Timiskaming	5
12. Wendake	8
13. Wemotaci	9

When asked if they had a child in school 100% of the respondents reported they had one or more children in school.

The names of the First Nation Schools where the parents reported their child attended were as follows:

**Table 10**  
**Number of Respondents by First Nation School**

First Nation School	Number of Respondents
1. Alqsitew Gitpu School	29
2. Amishk	3
3. AGP	1
4. CEGEP de Trois Rivieres	4
5. Centre de formation des adultes	2
6. Cesar Newashish	1
7. Ecole Secondaire OTAPI	6
8. Indian Way School	2
9. Kahnawake Survival School	9
10. Karonhianondnha	7
11. Kateri School	50

First Nation School	Number of Respondents
12. Kitigan Zibi	12
13. Kiwetin	5
14. Migwan	4
15. Mikizicec	12
16. Nikanik	8
17. Niska	11
18. Rotinennakihte/ 19. Ratihente	2
20. Seminaire Marie Reine du Clerge	1
21. Simon Pineshish Ottawa	7
22. Step by Step	5
23. Wejgwapniag	9

When asked how many children parents had attending school the majority reported they had one to three children in school. The breakdown is as follows:

**Table 11**  
**Number of Children Respondents Reported Attending School**

Number of Children in School	Number Reported
One child	53
Two children	73
Three children	31
Four children	14
Five children	5
No children	2
No response	4

The grades represented by the children attending school as reported by the respondent parents were:

**Table 12**  
**Grades Represented by Respondent's Children**

Grade	Number of Children Reported
Nursery	14
Pre-K	10
Kindergarten	36
Grade 1	42
Grade 2	32
Grade 3	29
Grade 4	22
Grade 5	30
Grade 6	48
Grade 7	9
Grade 8	28
Grade 9	6
Grade 10	5
Grade 11	7
Grade 12	2
Secondary 1	17
Secondary 2	3
Secondary 3	12
Secondary 4	3
Other	11

When asked if the respondents received training such as committee training or parenting skills 69% (119) reported they *had never received training* from their school. The breakdown is as follows:

**Table 13**  
**Number of respondents who provide training for parents**

Provided Training	Number of Respondents
Yes	37
No	119
Didn't know	6
Total non-respondents	11
Total respondents	173

For those *who did receive training* (21%), the kinds of training they reported receiving was as follows:

- Bullying and suicide prevention.
- Parenting skills.
- Speech /language.
- Health.
- Healthy food.
- Activities with children.
- How to raise children.
- Preventing danger and injury prevention.
- Playtime.

When asked if their school had a parent committee 55% (96) respondents indicated they *had a parent committee*, 15% (26) *did not* and 24% (41%) *did not know* if they had a parent committee or not.

**Table 14**  
**Number of Schools with a Parent Committee**

Schools with a Parent Committee	Number of Respondents
Yes	96
No	26
Didn't know	41
Total non-respondents	10
Total respondents	173

Of those respondents who indicated they had parent committee they were asked if they felt a parent committee was useful. They indicated that a parent committee was useful because it closed the gap between parents and the school by getting more parents involved in school activities and decision making.

When asked if they didn't have a parent committee, whether they thought their school needed one, 36% (63) of the respondents reported they felt a parent committee was needed.

When asked if they felt it was important to have input from parents on the development of the school curriculum, initiatives related to school success, etc. 83% (144) of the respondents reported *yes*.

When asked what the parent respondents thought the vision of a parent committee should be they reported it should encompass:

- Talking about the importance of my child.
- Working together.
- Helping parents and teachers communicate and get more involved.
- Having parents involved a bit more in their children's education and participating/inputting and taking on more responsibility.
- Supporting teachers and school staff.
- Communication/sharing.
- Getting together and helping school.
- Being more involved with the education of our children.
- Giving parental input related to behavior in the home environment.
- Giving the best possible education for all children.
- Discussing different points of view and opinions.
- Understanding the needs of the children and who will fight for it.
- Parents representing parents. *Just parents.*
- Having parents have a say in what goes on in their children's school.
- Being part of their children's education.
- Exchanging different points of view.
- Helping all around.
- Offering the best education and increasing parental participation in developing programs.
- To better the school for the students.
- Ensuring quality education and enrichment by providing extra curricular activities.
- Actually helping the kids
- Updating the curriculum.
- Having a voice regarding necessary changes and also contributing to the school your child attends.
- More parental involvement.
- Facilitating student academic success.
- Improving the school environment i.e. discipline, extra-curricular activities.
- Hosting sports tournaments with other schools.
- Parent committees should be open to everyone and have meeting minutes provided to all parents (via public notice letters of minutes even if you don't attend)
- So the children may excel.
- Acting as a liaison between the school and parents and promoting parental involvement.
- Parents can share their views regarding the school and types of assignments, homework, as well as, being more actively involved in all areas of the school's activities.
- To stop smoking and bullying in the schools.
- Ensuring a safe, healthy and successful learning environment with the teachers and administration.

- Getting together and helping the school.

## INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL

When asked if they had participated in any of the activities at their local school parent respondents reported they participated in activities as follows:

**Table 15**  
**Summary of Respondent Activities in their Local School**

	Oui/ yes	Non/ no	No Response
Une journée portes ouvertes à l'école. <i>A school open house</i>	136/ 79%	24/ 14%	13/ 7%
Une rencontre du comité de parents. <i>A parent committee meeting</i>	50/ 29%	106/ 61%	17/ 10%
Une rencontre au sujet du comportement ou des réalisations de mon enfant en classe. <i>A meeting regarding my child's classroom behavior or achievement.</i>	142/ 82%	22/ 13%	9/ 5%
Une conférence destinée aux parents et aux enseignants. <i>A parent teacher conference.</i>	107/ 62%	50/ 29%	16/ 9%
Une activité visant à recueillir des fonds pour l'école. <i>A school fund raiser program.</i>	104/ 60%	59/ 34%	10/ 6%
Une conversation téléphonique au sujet du comportement ou des réalisations de mon enfant. <i>Talked via phone about my child's behavior or achievement.</i>	94/ 54%	67/ 39%	12/ 7%
Vous avez accédé à des renseignements sur les devoirs de votre enfant par téléphone, par courriel ou l'Internet. <i>Accessed information about my child's assignments via e-mail, internet or phone.</i>	71/ 41%	97/ 56%	5/ 3%
Vous avez fait du tutorat à titre de bénévole. <i>Volunteered as a tutor.</i>	38/ 22%	119/ 69%	16/ 9%
Vous avez assisté à un cours sur le rôle parental. <i>Participated in a parenting class.</i>	31/ 18%	132/ 76%	10/ 6%
Vous avez déjà agi en tant que conférencier ou moniteur. <i>Participated as a guest speaker or instructor.</i>	26/ 15%	132/ 76%	15/ 9%
Vous avez pris part à une décision avec d'autres	81/	102/	0/

	Oui/ yes	Non/ no	No Response
parents et l'école. <i>Participated in a school parent decision making activity.</i>	47%	59%	0%
Une soirée familiale à l'école. <i>Family night at school.</i>	69/ 40%	82/ 47%	22/ 13%
Une visite scolaire à une entreprise locale, un centre culturel ou un musée. <i>A field trip to a local business, cultural centre or museum.</i>	82/ 47%	81/ 47%	10/ 6%
Autre (veuillez préciser) : <i>Other (please specify)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High school tour of university</li> <li>• Student led conferencing.</li> <li>• Sit on the board of the education system</li> <li>• Haven't been involved because I have a little one at home</li> <li>• After school teacher tutoring is needed</li> <li>• To protect and take care of problem</li> </ul>	15/ 9%	29/ 17%	129/ 75%

Parent respondents reported that *they had participated* in a *school open house* (79%), a *meeting regarding their child's classroom behavior or achievement* (82%), a *parent teacher conference* (62%) and a *school fund raiser program* (60%).

Several parent respondents also reported that they *had not participated* in a *parent committee meeting* (61%), *accessed information about their child's assignments via e-mail, internet or phone* (56%), *volunteered as a tutor* (69%), *participated in a parenting class* (76%), *participated in a parent decision making activity* (59%) *attended a family night at school* (47%) or *participated in a field trip to a local business, cultural centre or museum* (47%).

The implications for parental involvement planning, therefore, is more emphasis on getting information out to the community and parents, recruiting community members as speakers and instructors in the school, as well as, tutors and in field trips. Also, providing more opportunities for programs and classes, especially pertaining to parenting.

When asked what they see as the *vision* for a parent committee for their school respondents reported as follows:

**Table 16**  
**Summary of Parent Respondent Vision Statements**

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas I don't know	No response
Orienter la prise de décisions concernant les programmes et les services éducatifs locaux des Premières Nations. <i>To guide and make decisions about local first Nations education programs and services.</i>	<b>123/ 71%</b>	<b>16/ 9%</b>	<b>21/ 12%</b>	<b>18/ 10%</b>
Accroître la participation des parents à la scolarité de leurs enfants. <i>To enhance participation as a parent in my child's education.</i>	<b>130/ 75%</b>	<b>22/ 13%</b>	<b>9/ 5%</b>	<b>12/ 7%</b>
Améliorer les services de soutien, comme les activités de liaison entre la maison et l'école. <i>To enhance support services such as home-school liaison activities.</i>	<b>137/ 79%</b>	<b>11/ 6%</b>	<b>16/ 9%</b>	<b>9/ 5%</b>
Améliorer les services de soutien éducatif et culturel des Premières Nations. <i>To enhance First Nation cultural and education support services.</i>	<b>102/ 59%</b>	<b>12/ 7%</b>	<b>14/ 8%</b>	<b>45/ 26%</b>
Favoriser la participation des parents à l'école par l'entremise de défenseurs des intérêts des Premières Nations, de travailleurs de soutien et de personnes-ressources pour la famille. <i>To nurture parent involvement in the school through First Nation advocates, support workers and family resource workers.</i>	<b>112/ 65%</b>	<b>21/ 12%</b>	<b>31/ 18%</b>	<b>9/ 5%</b>
Planifier, diriger et animer des rencontres pour discuter de questions touchant les enfants. <i>To plan, conduct and assist with meetings/issues related to my children.</i>	<b>107/ 62%</b>	<b>21/ 12%</b>	<b>12/ 7%</b>	<b>33/ 19%</b>
Promouvoir et coordonner des activités culturelles qui se déroulent à l'école.	<b>116/ 67%</b>	<b>26/ 15%</b>	<b>14/ 8%</b>	<b>17/ 9%</b>

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas I don't know	No response
<i>To promote and coordinate cultural events in the school.</i>				
Organiser des dîners à l'école, des repas et des activités connexes. <i>To support school dinners, meals and other related events.</i>	<b>119/ 69%</b>	<b>24/ 14%</b>	<b>12/ 7%</b>	<b>18/ 10%</b>
Offrir de l'orientation aux nouveaux élèves et enseignants avant la rentrée des classes, au début de l'année scolaire <i>To provide orientation for new students and teachers prior to commencement of classes at the beginning of the school year.</i>	<b>101/ 58%</b>	<b>40/ 23%</b>	<b>16/ 9%</b>	<b>16/ 9%</b>
Encourager l'utilisation de l'école en tant que ressource communautaire, notamment pour des danses, utiliser le gymnase de l'école, etc. <i>To nurture use of the school as a community resource, such as dances, use of the gym, etc.</i>	<b>110/ 64%</b>	<b>27/ 16%</b>	<b>19/ 11%</b>	<b>17/ 9%</b>
Autre (veuillez préciser) : <i>Other (please specify)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christmas and graduation concerts</li> <li>• Culture Day, Gym, Recess.</li> <li>• Heritage Fairs</li> <li>• Orientation for parents too</li> <li>• To see more funding instead of taking money from children's education.</li> <li>• Funding, budgeting program development, policies, grievances, concerns, etc.</li> </ul>	<b>6/ 3%</b>	<b>4/ 2%</b>	<b>7/ 4%</b>	<b>156/ 90%</b>

The majority of respondents reported the vision for a parent committee in their school should include *guiding and making decisions about local First Nations education programs and services (71%), enhancing participation in their child's education (75%), enhancing First Nation support services such as home—school liaison activities (79%), enhancing First Nations cultural and education support services ((59%), nurturing involvement through First Nation advocates, support workers and family resource workers (65%), and promoting cultural events in the school (67%).*

In addition respondents reported the vision for a parent committee should also include *planning and assisting with meetings/issues related to their children (62%), supporting school dinners, meals and other related events (69%), providing orientation for new students and teachers prior to commencement of classes at the beginning of the school year (58%) and nurturing the use of the school as a community resource such as dances and use of the gym (64%).*

## SCHOOL/PARENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Respondents were asked to report if any or all of the following applies to their local school. They responded as follows:

**Table 17**  
**Summary of School Community Relations**

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas I don't know	No Response
Je comprends la philosophie et les buts de l'école <i>I understand the school's philosophy and goals.</i>	124/ 72%	21/ 12%	20/ 12%	8/ 4%
L'école encourage les parents à participer à l'apprentissage de leurs enfants <i>The school encourages parents to assist in their children's learning.</i>	143/ 83%	14/ 8%	10/ 6%	6/ 3%
L'école permet aux parents de participer aux activités d'apprentissage. <i>There are opportunities for me as a parent to support learning activities taught in the school.</i>	109/ 63%	24/ 14%	32/ 18%	4/ 2%
J'ai l'occasion de participer en aidant les enseignants dans les classes. <i>I have an opportunity to be involved in providing assistance to teachers in the classroom.</i>	68/ 39%	51/ 29%	36/ 21%	18/ 10%
Les parents peuvent visiter l'école et observer les activités qui s'y déroulent. <i>There are opportunities for parents to visit the school and observe activities.</i>	112/ 65%	11/ 6%	28/ 16%	22/ 13%
Les parents peuvent offrir leur aide lors des activités parascolaires. <i>There are opportunities for parents to be involved in assisting with extra curricular or after school activities.</i>	111/ 64%	16/ 9%	36/ 21%	10/ 6%

	Oui/ Yes	Non/ No	Je ne sais pas I don't know	No Response
L'école me transmet suffisamment d'information sur le rendement de mon enfant. <i>The school provides enough information to me as a parent about my child's performance.</i>	127/ 73%	18/ 10%	5/ 3%	23/ 13%
L'école informe les parents de ses plans et activités. <i>The school keeps parents well informed about school plans and activities.</i>	125/ 72%	27/ 16%	5/ 3%	16/ 9%
J'estime que l'école est une ressource pour la communauté et ma famille. <i>I see the school as a resource to community and my family.</i>	119/ 69%	19/ 11%	19/ 11%	81/ 47%
L'école considère les parents comme une ressource pour les enseignants et l'administration. <i>The school sees parents as a resource to the teachers and administration.</i>	89/ 51%	25/ 14%	41/ 24%	18/ 10%
J'encourage mon enfant à aller à l'école. <i>I encourage my child to attend school.</i>	143/ 83%	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	30/ 17%
J'estime qu'il est important que mon enfant soit scolarisé. <i>I consider schooling to be important to my child.</i>	143/ 83%	1/ .6%	1/ .6%	28/ 16%
J'encourage mon enfant à être ponctuel à l'école. <i>I encourage my child to arrive at school on time.</i>	152/ 88%	0/ 0%	2/ 1%	19/ 11%
Il y a une collaboration positive entre la communauté, les parents et l'école. <i>There is a positive collaborative relationship between the community, parents and the school.</i>	123/ 71%	23/ 13%	17/ 10%	10/ 6%

Respondents generally reported that the following characteristics applied to their school: they *understand the school's philosophy and goals* (72%), the school *encourages parents to assist in their children's learning* (83%), the school *encourages parents to visit the school and observe activities* (65%), the school *provides enough information to me as a parent about my children's performance* (73%) and the school *keeps parents informed about school plans and activities* (72%).

Respondents also reported that *parents are seen as a resource to the school by the teachers and administration* (63%), *I encourage my child to attend school* (83%), *I consider schooling to be important to my children* (83%), *I encourage my children to arrive at school on time* (88%) and there is a *positive collaborative relationship between the community, parents and school* (71%),

Respondents also reported that their school uses parents to *provide assistance to teachers in the classroom* (39%), they have opportunities to be *involved in assisting extra curricular or after school activities* (64%), are seen as a *resource to the community and my family* (69%) and are *resources to the teachers and administration* (51%).

Implications for school/parent and community relations planning is more emphasis on using parents as resources to the school and how they could enhance their role in the school by providing assistance in extra curricular or after school activities, as well as, to the community.

Respondents were asked to rate the school, parent and community relationship at their local school. They rated their school as *excellent* (11%), *average* (27%), *poor* (5%) and *very poor* (1%).

Number of Respondents	RATING	Percentage of Respondents
19	Excellent/Excellent	<b>11%</b>
66	Bonnes/Good	<b>38%</b>
47	Moyennes/Average	<b>27%</b>
8	Mauvaises/Poor	<b>5%</b>
2	Médiocres/Very poor	<b>1%</b>
30	No responses	<b>21%</b>

When asked what the respondents thought were the *greatest strengths* in the relationship between them as a parent and the school and community they reported:

- The bus picking up kids on the reserve.
- I enjoy the fact that the language and culture has eased the relationship.
- The teacher speaks Mi'qmaq to the students.
- Just knowing that my children have the education they need to succeed in life.

- The community plays a big role in my children's education.
- Communicating.
- Communication in regard to my child's current behavior and achievements.
- The open door policy – as a parent I feel comfortable walking into observe my child's accomplishments.
- I love the friendliness of the school staff and how well informed we are by the principal.
- The positive relationship that is made between families and school. They are always welcoming at the school.
- Motivation.
- Algonquin language.
- The culture.
- The flexibility.
- Getting involved.
- Communication. Especially for single or working parents.
- Although teachers are busy with other students –our goals are the same for safe, educated, healthy children.
- Good communication between teachers and parents when it comes to achievement and behavior of students.
- Trying to keep our Mohawk language alive.
- To be involved with your children with school activities such as presentations, science fairs or fundraisers. I like to get involved and support the school.
- Being local and giving opportunity to have Mi'qmaq culture and language along with an academic program that enables them to continue in or out of the area schools.
- Wisdom and being open minded.
- With smaller classrooms each child receives individual attention; therefore, it makes it easier to have open communication regarding parent/school/community issues.
- Culture Day.
- The school and I have a good relationship. The school has called me to inform me of some problems the students have given my child last year and the solution was very good. Thanks for the help.
- Family oriented and open communication.
- Having good programs, good teachers and other people who work at the school along with supportive parents.
- Our school supports the maintenance of our culture. Teachers incorporate healthy attitudes and activities which are also enhanced by local community organizations.
- Parents are always welcomed by the school and are encouraged to participate in any capacity. This is good to show students their parents are important.
- To always be involved in child's schooling and extra curricular activities.
- We know each other, live in the same community and share the same values about culture and language

- That everybody works to teach the children.
- Co-operation
- The greatest strength is that we as parents want the best for our children to ensure that they get the services and assistance they need.
- Parents are always invited to attend different events i.e. school committees, however, it is usually during work hours and not always convenient to attend.
- Teachers have made an effort to inform parents about what they do in class through different activities. They also invite parents to class to participate in school curriculum.
- To get involved.
- To keep guiding the children on a safe and healthy path towards their future.
- I'm happy with everything regarding my children's education
- Showing your children you are interested and want them to achieve their dreams and goals. Also, to encourage your kids to push themselves to achieve high grades.
- Making your child feel more comfortable around people within the community.
- More information is needed and should be followed through instead of just discussing situations,
- Keep telling the children that doing good in school is important
- Share your thoughts and ideas as a parent and/or community member with others and hear their ideas in order to plan ahead for future activities etc. That would bring the school members and the community together in decision making.
- The fact that school is located in the community makes it for easy to go to the school to get information regarding my child.
- Parents are always welcome at the school and to participate in activities. There are even family-oriented activities, designed to encourage participation of the family.

When asked what things they thought *did not help the school* parent relationship in their community they reported:

- Giving, funding or money to people who have to drive their kids to school
- All the days off – that's why not many kids go to this school.
- Sometimes I'm not informed on what is going on in my children's school life, and if I am, it is always last minute.
- When they don't tell you anything right away about your child and the situation gets worse.
- There is a lack of involvement from parents, as well as, a lack of importance regarding education.
- Education stops when the children leave school rather than being continued at home.
- I believe that before the administration makes major decisions about changing curriculum they should consult with the parents. For example: all of a sudden

this school year they decided not to continue with the French program until the child reaches grade 4. We live in the province of Quebec and if we should move away next year my child would be going into grade 4 and with no French classes. He would be behind causing him to really struggle in school. This is just one example of decisions being made by a handful of people that affects all of the students.

- There is not enough parent support. Even though the school tries very hard to involve the parents.
- I do think that the school parent relationship is necessary.
- The teachers are too busy to talk with the parents.
- There is lack of communication and miscommunication. It needs to be less political and with little upper management intervention. Facts first.
- Funding and lack of school activities.
- We need to have more open communication through radio station coverage of events, global open house invites, etc. Plus community involvement for honoring ceremonies for student and community members (more than once a year).
- There is not enough local newspaper coverage for school events and celebrations.
- Jealously and animosity.
- Lack of funding.
- Teachers are underpaid and overworked.
- Parents (some) are not accepting of children's special needs or behavior problems and blame it on the teacher or the school.
- There is not enough enforcement or discipline regarding bullying.
- I think there is no problem with this school. I will send my other child there as well. Thanks for being a great school.
- I cannot think of anything. I love our school mainly because of our children learning their language and culture. I do feel we need more Mi'qmaq Immersion. We only have it in kindergarten – we need at least up to Grade 6.
- Parents who are not involved in their children's education.
- Cut backs
- Not enough parents willing to participate. The school does not offer "incentives" for parental involvement.
- Bullying.
- Closed doors.
- More information should be published in the local newspaper.
- A lot of talk but not coming through.
- A need for better education (higher education).
- The fundraisers activities that required kids to go door to door to collect money. I don't like that. The fundraisers that actually sell things are far more interesting. That way the person actually gets something for their money and school gets what they need. So everyone is happy.
- They tell you what they are going to do but they don't do it down the line.
- I haven't any problems with either school my child was in.

- How can parents get their kids to do well in school when the school tells them they cannot fail in elementary school? So, they figure why do the work, you'll pass anyway.
- The bullying activities that was done need to be followed through the whole year because the kids are trickier and smarter with their tactics. The school needs to follow through on rules of how and what students bring and wear to school.
- Pizza fund raisers (enough) find something new.
- Parents who do not participate in their child's education, but are right there, when their child does something negative, to support them. For example bullying, not being disrespectful to the teacher, etc.
- Discipline – students do not show respect for teachers. Administration does not take an active role. Parents are not accountable.
- Too many PD days.
- No extra curricular activities.
- Too focused on special needs, nothing to enrich students who can advance.
- Probably the increase in young parents not supporting and disciplining their kids.
- Other parents not parenting their children and depending on the teachers to teach their children morals, discipline and proper social skills. Parents accusing teachers of being the problem with their child's poor school performance.
- Harassment of teachers by parents.
- Labeling by some staff.
- Zero tolerance policies on lateness in winter
- We need different methods of communication such as email or an online blackboard where parents can go to view what up coming projects/tests/assignments their child should be preparing for.
- Too many teachers are closely related to some students and neglecting the ones they are not related to.

Respondents were consistent with the literature review findings in that they reported the *greatest strengths* in the relationship between their school, the community and parents were governance strategies (open door policies and friendly staff), the flexibility, First Nations support services, cultural awareness (e.g. Mi'qmaq language and culture and culture days), effective communication and working together to achieve a healthy school environment.

Respondents were further consistent with their reporting of what *did not help* the school parent relationship in their community. As indicated in the literature, respondents similarly noted barriers to, and lack of, communication, mistrust of the school system (rumors and gossiping) and not enough enforcement of discipline regarding bullying. There were a lot of concerns reported about lack of parents being involved in the schools, too much focus on special needs and miscommunication.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Literature dealing with First Nations education reinforces the need for community engagement and open dialogue between the community and the school. Parental involvement in their children's education is important in terms of ensuring positive educational outcomes.

Parental involvement in education results in many dividends such as higher student achievement, higher aspirations, better attendance, improved classroom and school climate and more positive relationships between parents and teachers.

We found in our literature review that there are general principles that support parental participation which are essential. These include:

- Parents should be partners in the educational process;
- Teacher's should receive training about parent involvement;
- Educators should ask parents how they want to be involved in their children's education;
- Policies should clearly define involvement and should be developed together; and,
- Resources should be provided to schools to develop parent involvement programs.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly in our survey for the directors, teachers, educators and parents the findings were consistent with our literature research. We found that respondents generally felt that First Nation schools encourage parents to visit the school and observe activities (85%), provide information to parents about their children's performance (86%) and keep parents informed about school plans and activities (88%).

Respondents further reported that parents are seen as a resource by the school, teachers and administration (71%), that there is a positive collaborative relationship

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<sup>5</sup> Chabot, L. (n.d.). *Engaging First Nations Parents in Education: An Examination of Best Practices*. Canada: p. 5-8.

between the community, parents and school (70%) and that parents' consider schooling to be important to their children (70%).

When asked if parent respondents participated in school activities most reported that they had attended a open house (79%), participated in a parent teacher conference (62%), school fund raiser program (60%), as well as, meetings regarding their child's classroom behavior or achievement (79%).

Many parents, however, reported that they had not participated in parent committee meetings (61%), parenting classes (76%), and parent decision-making activities (59%) or attended family night at their school (47%). Over 69% of respondents indicated they had never received training from their school.

Both the director, teacher, educator and parent survey respondents reported high numbers of parent committees in their schools. Over 63% of respondents in the directors' survey and 55% in the parent survey reported having a parent committee in their school.

Most respondents reported that they felt a parent committee was useful. They indicated parent committees were useful because it is important to have input on school solutions and that parents be informed in order to assure quality and representative education.

When asked to rate the school, parent and community relationship at their local school survey respondents from the director, teacher, educator and parent surveys rated their schools as *excellent* (6% and 11% respectively), *good* (43% and 38% respectively), *average* (41% and 27% respectively) and *poor* (10% and 5% respectively).

The *greatest strengths* reported by the respondents in the relationship between their schools, the community and the parents were further consistent with our literature review findings in that they reported the governance strategies (open door policies and friendly staff), the flexibility, First Nation support services, cultural awareness and language, effective communication and working together to achieve a healthy school environment.

What they reported *did not help the school* parent relationship in their community were barriers to communication, mistrust, negative educational experiences of First Nations parents and lack of priority for education among parents and the community.

In conclusion, the implications for parent involvement planning is more emphasis on getting information out to the community and parents, recruiting community members as speakers, instructors and volunteers in the school and providing more opportunities for programs and classes, especially pertaining to parenting skills.

Based on the research from the literature review, the director, teacher, educator and parent surveys it is recommended that practices that encourage positive parent and school relations should consist of the following:

- Schools need to build on what works well locally. Begin the school-family partnership by identifying with families, the strengths, interests, and needs of families, students and school staff. Then design strategies that respond to identified strengths, interests and needs.
- It is important to be flexible. Recognize that effective parent involvement takes many forms. The emphasis should be on parents helping children learn, and this can happen in schools, homes, or anywhere in a community.
- Every First Nation has its own needs; they need to be addressed specifically and locally
- Think outside the box and use strategies and processes that allow for creativity and flexibility.
- Recognize and address barriers.
- Establish parent clubs, parent-student activities and other incentives to encourage school, parent and community partnerships<sup>6</sup>

The ultimate outcomes are increased student achievement, greater knowledge and skill for family members on how to support their children academically, physically and emotionally and there are improved relations and supports for the schools academic efforts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Chabot, L. (n.d.). *Engaging First Nations Parents in Education: An Examination of Best Practices*. Canada: p. 5-8.

<sup>7</sup> What do we Mean by Family and Community Connections with Schools. 2005 Southwest Educational Development Laboratory: 6-7



# **APPENDIX**



## SCHOOL DIRECTORS, TEACHER AND EDUCATORS SURVEY

The FNEC is collecting information to learn about your visions and expectations about parent committees in First Nations schools. We would appreciate your participation in this important survey. Please complete the following questions and e-mail or fax this survey back to us **BEFORE APRIL 8, 2009 AT 3:00 pm** at (418) 842-9988 or at [info@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:info@cepn-fnec.com). All your responses are completely CONFIDENTIAL.

**Directions:**

**Circle your answer for each question and fill in the blanks where requested.**

What is the name of your community?	
What is the name of your school?	
How many students do you have attending your school?	
What grade levels do you offer at your school?	
Do you provide training for parents such as committee training or parenting skills?	
If yes, what kinds of training?	

**PARENT COMMITTEES**

	Yes	No	I don't know
Does your school have a parent committee?	X	X	X
If you answered yes, do you feel a parent committee is useful?			
If your school doesn't have a parent committee do you think one is needed?	X	X	X
Do you feel it is important to have input from parents on the development of the school curriculum, initiatives related to school success, etc.?	X	X	X
What do you see as the vision of a parent committee in your school?			

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL**

**Have you participated in the following activities at your school?** (Please circle all that apply.)

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
A school open house.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A parent committee meeting.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A meeting regarding student's classroom behavior or achievement.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A parent-teacher conference.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A school fund raiser program.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Talked via phone about student's behavior or achievement.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Accessed information about student's assignments via e-mail, internet or phone.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Volunteered as a tutor.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Participated in a parenting class.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Participated as a guest speaker or instructor.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Participated in a school-parent decision making activity.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Family night at school.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A field trip to a local business, cultural centre or museum.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Other (please write in):	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

**What do you see as your vision for a parent committee for you school?** (Please circle all that apply)

	Yes	No	I don't know
To guide and make decisions about local First Nations education programs and services.	X	X	X
To enhance First Nation parent engagement in their child's education.	X	X	X
To enhance First Nation support services such as home-school liaison activities.	X	X	X
To enhance First Nation cultural and education support services.	X	X	X
To nurture parent involvement in the school through First Nation advocates, support workers and family resource workers.	X	X	X
To plan and assist parents with meetings/issues related to their children.	X	X	X
To promote and coordinate cultural events in the school in which First Nation parents and families are invited to the school to participate in such activities.	X	X	X
To support school dinners, meals and other related events.	X	X	X
To provide orientation for new students and parents prior to commencement of classes at the beginning of the school year.	X	X	X
To nurture use of the school as a community resource such as dances, use of the gym, etc.	X	X	X
Other (please specify)	X	X	X

**SCHOOL/PARENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**Do any or all of the following apply to your school?**

	Yes	No	I don't know
Parents understand the school's philosophy and goals.	X	X	X
The school encourages parents to assist in their children's learning.	X	X	X
Parents support learning activities taught in school.	X	X	X
Parents are adequately involved in providing assistance to teachers in the classroom.	X	X	X
The school encourages parents to visit the school and observe activities.	X	X	X
Parents are involved in assisting extra curricular or after school activities.	X	X	X
The school provides enough information to parents about their children's performance.	X	X	X
Parents are informed enough about school plans and activities.	X	X	X
The school is seen as a resource by community members and parents.	X	X	X
Parents are seen as a resource to the school by the teachers and administration.	X	X	X
Parents encourage their children to attend school.	X	X	X
Parents consider schooling to be important to their children.	X	X	X
Parents encourage their children to arrive at school on time.	X	X	X
There is a positive collaborative relationship between the community, parents and the school.	X	X	X

**How would you rate the school, parent and community relationship at your school?**

	<b>Excellent</b>
	<b>Good</b>
	<b>Average</b>
	<b>Poor</b>
	<b>Very poor</b>

**What do you think the greatest strengths are in the relationship between your school, the community and the parents?**

**What things do you think do not help the school parent relationship in your community?**

*Thank you for participating in our survey.*

**Please return to the FNEC before April 8, 2009 at 3:00 p.m.**

**By fax at: 418-842-9988**

**Or**

**By E-mail at: [info@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:info@cepn-fnec.com)**

# PARENT SURVEY

The FNEC is collecting information to learn about your visions and expectations about parent committees in First Nations schools. We would appreciate your participation in this important survey. Please complete the following questions and e-mail or fax this survey back to us **BEFORE APRIL 8, 2009 AT 3:00 pm** at (418) 842-9988 or at [info@cepn-fnec.com](mailto:info@cepn-fnec.com) . All your responses are completely CONFIDENTIAL.

**Directions:**

**Circle your answer for each question and fill in the blanks where requested.**

What is the name of the community where you live?	
Do you have a child in school?	
What is the name of the school your child attends?	
How many children do you have attending school?	
What grades are they in?	
Do you receive training from the school your child (or children) attend such as committee training or parenting skills?	
If yes, what kinds of training have you received?	

**PARENT COMMITTEES**

	Yes	No	I don't know
Does your school have a parent committee?	X	X	X
If you answered yes, do you feel a parent committee is useful?			
If your school doesn't have a parent committee do you think one is needed?	X	X	X
Do you feel it is important to have input from parents on the development of the school curriculum, initiatives related to school success, etc.?	X	X	X
What do you see as the vision of a parent committee in your school?			

**INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL**

**Have you participated in any of the following activities at your local school?** (Please circle all activities that apply.)

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
A school open house.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A parent committee meeting.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A meeting regarding my child's classroom behavior or achievement.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A parent-teacher conference.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A school fund raiser program.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Talked via phone about student's behavior or achievement.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Accessed information about my child's assignments via e-mail, internet or phone.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Volunteered as a tutor.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Participated in a parenting class.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Participated as a guest speaker or instructor.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Participated in a school-parent decision making activity.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Family night at school.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
A field trip to a local business, cultural centre or museum.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Other (please specify):	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

**What do you see as your vision for a parent committee for your school?** (Please circle all that apply)

	Yes	No	I don't know
To guide and make decisions about local First Nations education programs and services.	X	X	X
To enhance participation as a parent in my child's education.	X	X	X
To enhance support services such as home-school liaison activities.	X	X	X
To enhance First Nation cultural and education support services.	X	X	X
To nurture parent involvement in the school through First Nation advocates, support workers and family resource workers.	X	X	X
To plan, conduct and assist with meetings/issues related to my children.	X	X	X
To promote and coordinate cultural events in the school.	X	X	X
To support school dinners, meals and other related events.	X	X	X
To provide orientation for new students and teachers prior to commencement of classes at the beginning of the school year.	X	X	X
To nurture use of the school as a community resource such as: dances, use of the gym, etc.	X	X	X
Other (please specify)	X	X	X

**SCHOOL/COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Do any or all of the following apply to your local school?

	Yes	No	I don't know
I understand the school's philosophy and goals.	X	X	X
The school encourages parents to assist in their children's learning.	X	X	X
There are opportunities for me as a parent to support learning activities taught in the school.	X	X	X
I have an opportunity to be involved in providing assistance to teachers in the classroom.	X	X	X
There are opportunities for parents to visit the school and observe activities.	X	X	X
There are opportunities for parents to be involved in assisting with extra curricular or after school activities.	X	X	X
The school provides enough information to me as a parent about my child's performance.	X	X	X
The school keeps parents well informed about school plans and activities.	X	X	X
I see the school as a resource to community and my family.	X	X	X
The school sees parents as a resource to the teachers and administration.	X	X	X
I encourage my child to attend school.	X	X	X
I consider schooling to be important to my child.	X	X	X
I encourage my child to arrive at school on time.	X	X	X
There is a positive collaborative relationship between the community, parents and the school.	X	X	X

How would you rate the school, parent and community relationship at your local school?

	Excellent
	Good
	Average
	Poor
	Very poor

What do you think the greatest strengths are in the relationship between you as a parent, the school and the community?

What things do you think do not help the school parent relationship in your community?

*Thank you for participating in our survey.  
Please return to the FNEC before April 8, 2009 at 3:00 p.m.  
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