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**Plan for
Student
Success**

plains
talk

it's
our
time

According to the **First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model**, the First Nations learner dwells in a world of continual re-formation, where interactive cycles, rather than disconnected events, occur. In this world, nothing is simply a cause or an effect, but the expression of the interconnectedness of life. Furthermore, learning is a lifelong process that begins at birth and progresses through childhood and adulthood.

The important lessons we can take from the **First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model** are that living is learning, living is adapting, living is changing, living is growing.

There may be times when we wish to improve events, but the actual mechanics or process of making the improvement may be elusive. It could be extremely useful to have a straightforward way to set a course or strategy for making the change, for developing the steps to contribute to the improvement, the adaptation, the change, the growth, the learning.

Something we might call a **Change Paradigm** is just this kind of straightforward way to go about making an improvement. The **Change Paradigm** poses three questions:

1. *Where am I now?/Where are we now?* (a verbal picture of now)
2. *Where do I want to be?/Where do we want to be?* (a verbal picture of the future)
3. *How do I get there?/How do we get there?* (a verbal picture of what has to be done and the tools needed)

The **Change Paradigm** and answers to these three questions can help us work out a plan for making the changes we want.

For example, responding to *where are we now?* can help us articulate and describe the positive and negative characteristics of our situation. Responding to *where do we want to be?* can help us articulate and describe our goals and ambitions, the kinds of behaviours, attitudes, skills and knowledge that are part of our ideal. Responding to *how do we get there?* can help us identify, describe and locate the tools, resources, and teachings that can get us to our ideal.

And as the **First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model** informs us, learning is a continuous process throughout our lives, so that we could use the **Change Paradigm** many times as we adapt to circumstances and grow and build our lives.

The **Change Paradigm** can be applied to education, with the objective of achieving beneficial changes for both individuals and communities through the creation of a **Plan for Student Success**.

In order to plan for student success, it is important to measure performance. The simplest and easiest definition of **performance measurement** in education is that *it's the process of determining how much or how often an event, action, or behaviour occurs*. The fact is, we're always engaged in some type of performance measurement in our daily lives. Consider the following. We may ask questions like:

- Are you feeling better today?
- Is my child taller this month?
- Is your exercise and diet program working?
- Did we have more snow this winter?
- Is my infection better this week?

When we ask questions like these, our answers are measuring performance. Our answers may be **quantitative**, in terms of numbers, (centimetres of snow, for example), or **qualitative** in terms of **words** or **descriptions** (**better** or **much better** or **worse** or **much worse**, for example). Answers to the questions above might be:

- Are you feeling better today? **Much worse.**
- Is my child taller this month? **One centimetre taller!**
- Is your exercise and diet program working? **Lost 3 kilograms in 2 months!**
- Did we have more snow this winter? **Much less.**
- Is my infection better this week? **Better.**

Why Do We Measure?

We measure because we want to know about changes. We want to know what has grown or shrunk, whether something is more or less than it was last year or last month, and so on. We measure to make reasonable and accurate assessments of events, characteristics, and changes. For example, we measure:

- To record growth (of children, livestock, trees, etc.).
- To record recovery from or worsening of infection/disease.
- To understand and compare where we are with respect to a statistical standard.
- To improve something like a school curriculum or grades in a course.

- To show that a program or strategy is working.
- To determine if something was accomplished.
- To compare our educational system to an ideal like the **Plain Talk 18 First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model**.
- To record acquisition or use of First Nation language.
- To record skills in traditional activities.
- To track enrollment of First Nations members in postsecondary education.
- To track First Nations language use in First Nations schools.

By measuring something systematically, examining the results, and taking successive actions to produce positive changes, we can say we've adopted a model of continuous improvement.

What can be measured?

The simple answer is that **anything** can be measured. But just because something **can** be measured doesn't mean it **should** be measured. Performance measurement always involves an expenditure of time, effort, and money. That means that the thing being measured should have value and be useful and meaningful. For example, to measure, every day, how deep the snow is in a particular location will probably tell us nothing at all, unless we take into account how the wind is blowing snow around, and even then, so what? What value or use or meaning would these measurements have?

With respect to education, we can measure anything that's important to a community and its members (students, parents, teachers, Elders, etc.). Things that are measured are usually called **indicators** or **performance indicators**. **Plain Talk 21 First Nations Performance Indicators Checklist** contains examples of indicators that a community might want to explore and measure, in an effort to make significant changes and improvements in their educational systems.

There are two types of indicators: outcome and delivery. Outcome indicators measure performance as recorded, in general, by standardized tests, and expressed in numbers or percentages. Examples of outcome indicators in education would be number or percent of students who graduate from high school, or the grades in various courses in school. Delivery indicators are events or actions that may have a significant impact, positive or negative, on outcome indicators. Examples are the quality and number of First Nation-speaking teachers, which can have a profound influence on the ability of students to speak the First Nation language.

Adopting and taking control of measurement systems in education has many advantages for First Nations communities. However, the point of measurement is not just to measure, it's to **use**

the measurement system to show achievement of the vision of holistic lifelong learning, or to show what needs to be addressed to get closer to the vision. That is, the process of measuring something doesn't really have a **meaning** or value unless the results are compared to something. For First Nations communities, the results of measurements of indicators might be compared to:

- a) the ideal of the **Plain Talk 18 First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model**;
- b) the results of a previous measurement of the same indicator; or
- c) the results of another group (other First Nations or national or provincial standards).

A Community Plan for Student Success

Step One: Where are we now?

Several components of the **It's Our Time First Nations Education Tool Kit** can provide some of the information needed to answer *where are we now?* **Plain Talk 21 First Nations Performance Indicators Checklist** lists a number of characteristics that may be considered important to a community's education system. A review of these characteristics can help form a summary of *where are we now?* A completed Checklist provides a profile of the current situation, identifying and measuring areas or items that are in good shape as well as those that may require attention. Examples of what characteristics might be important to a First Nations community's school system include:

- Teachers can speak a First Nation language;
- Students can speak a First Nations language;
- There are resources and materials in the school library;
- Teachers are highly skilled and qualified, accepting responsibility for teaching all children in an inclusive environment;
- Schools provide differentiated instruction and multiple levels and methods of student support;
- Students have opportunities to hear legends, stories, myths;
- Cultural materials and examples are on display in the school;
- Computers are available;
- Schools build personal identity and self-esteem;
- Elders are involved in school activities; and
- The school curriculum has a First Nations perspective.

Plain Talk 21 First Nations Performance Indicators Checklist is a strong starting point, with its contents of over 130 items organized into 17 categories. Consultation with members of the community can identify additional characteristics that might be important to the community.

There are other ways to describe *where are we now?*—a variety of assessment instruments, questionnaires filled out by community members, discussions and interviews with teachers, students and parents, and school data like graduation and attendance rates.

Step Two: Where do we want to be?

The characteristics (behaviours and events) contained in **Plain Talk 21 First Nations Performance Indicators Checklist** can help describe a community's goals and aspirations in the same way it helped describe *where are we now?* A review of these characteristics can generate a summary of *where do we want to be?* Areas that need attention can be ranked according to a community's priorities and capacities.

The **First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model** is a key resource for articulating a vision for the future of the community's education system. The sources and *domains of knowledge as well as the collective well-being* (the expression of the sources and domains of knowledge) sections of the **Model** are particularly rich in insights and ideas.

As with *where are we now?*, consultations, discussions and interviews with community members can lead to solid directions for the future.

Step Three: How do we get there?

The last step of creating a **Plan for Student Success** describes what has to be done, what resources and materials are needed, what expertise must be acquired, where funding might come from, what must be done to work toward the goals of *where do we want to be?*

The **First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model** is an excellent source of inspiration, direction and ideas for implementing a **Plan for Student Success**. For example, the *sources and domains of knowledge* represented by the roots of a tree in the **Model**, describe important knowledge that resides in family, clan, community, nation, other nations, traditions and ceremonies, and First Nations languages. In addition, nurturing guides represented by water drops surrounding a tree, provide the wisdom of parent, Elders, teachers, mentors, counselors and other respected members of the community.



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Identification of sources of funding for a **Plan for Student Success** will take ingenuity and effort. To improve your chances for success, consider reviewing **Plain Talk 24 Practical Guidelines for Writing Proposals**.

Keep in Mind

A **Plan for Student Success** is developed to address particular conditions. That means that all **Plans for Student Success** have to be evaluated to determine whether the Plans worked out and produced the results or outcomes expected. If the **Plain Talk 21 First Nations Performance Indicators Checklist** was the basis for developing the summary of *where are we now?*, the **Checklist** could be used again at the completion of a **Plan** to identify areas that improved. Once that information is available, a new **Plan** can be created to address other issues or address the same issues in another way.

A **Plan** may focus on one particular age group in the community, in which case it may be necessary or desirable to use the **Change Paradigm** to create different **Plans** for other age groups.

it's our time...

*I do not think the measure of a civilization
is how tall its buildings of concrete are,
But rather how well its people have learned
to relate to their environment
and fellow man.
Sun Bear, Chippewa Tribe*

