REPORT

Anishinabek Nation (AN)
First Nations Learning Recovery

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations to re-revision, reset, and refocus programs, services, and supports available to Anishinabek Nation (AN) students, Staff, families, and Communities, who have experienced learning delivery challenges due to COVID-19 over the past two years. The report is intended to support the work of the AN and AN member First Nations learning recovery.

Methodology

Sisco & Associates Consulting Services Inc. (SISCO) conducted engagements through a focus group and two directed surveys with the following participant groups:

- AN Community Members; and

- AN Staff and Educational partners.

Additionally, SISCO conducted a document scan that considers the experiences of AN First Nations during the COVID-19 pandemic, including challenges, impacts,

Engagement Type	# of Participants
Focus Group (1)	11
Online survey (2)	82
TOTAL	93

Figure 1. Participation.

strengths, and opportunities to re-envision, reset, and refocus programs, services and supports for AN First Nation learning. In total, 93 people participated in the engagement process between August and December 2022 as outlined in the Figure 1.

Notes & Limitations

This report provides key findings and recommendations based on an environmental scan of literature, with narratives drawn from the 'online surveys', and focus group about the AN First Nations learning recovery from COVID-19. While the literature has been used to support trends, Community voices have been foundational to the development of the report findings and recommendations. In total, 93 people participated in the engagement process, during which very clear converging themes among the data supported the environmental scan. It is important to note that staff and educational partner survey respondents are predominantly addressing conditions they face on reserve, while learners, their caregivers, and Community members are mostly addressing conditions faced when accessing services off reserve. However, the information gathered is still relevant for both scenarios of learning recovery, as robust populations for each geographic scenario are represented.

A few additional notes for the staff and educational partners survey data include:
- Responses were received from 19 of AN's member First Nations.

- Over 83% of respondents are employed by an AN member First Nation and the remaining are employed by a school board or educational partner.

- The majority of respondents (almost 60%) work with students who are attending an on-reserve school.

- Almost a quarter of respondents work with students off-reserve in provincial schools.

- Some (17%) respondents work with both students attending on-reserve schools and students attending off-reserve schools.

- Most respondents work within elementary education.

- Representation was seen across all aspects of educational involvement, including teaching, administration, special education, and counselling.

- Representation was seen from early childhood education to post-secondary education.

A few additional notes for the learner, caretaker and community member survey data include:

- Responses were received from 23 of AN's member First Nations.

- The majority of learner and caretakers (82%) live in an AN First Nation.

- Most (54%) of respondents were a parent of a caretaker of a learner, 34% were students, and 28% were community members.

- Representation was seen across all aspects of educational involvement, including teaching, administration, special education, and counselling.

- Almost half (49%) accessed education programs off reserve, 24% on reserve, and 17% accessed programs both on and off-reserve.

Outline

This report includes three parts: Introduction, Part One: Findings and Recommendations, and Part Two: Environmental Scan.

Part One: Key Findings & Recommendations

Part One provides a summary of the key findings from the document review, online surveys, and focus group by key theme along with corresponding recommendations for how AN can support learning recovery among member First Nations.

1. Supporting the Revitalization of Traditional First Nations Learning Philosophies

   a. *First Nations definitions of educational success are different and vary by Community. Some common educational elements of lifelong philosophies among First Nations include being: wholistic, lifelong, strength-based, community-centered, culturally-based, and land-based.*

Research and lived experience show that First Nations are incredibly diverse, and this extends to how traditional learning occurs and how educational success is defined. Despite these differences, there are some common elements that are shared among Nations, and opportunity to support one another in incorporating these shared elements into schools and learning opportunities. Based on this, it is recommended that AN offer a variety of different events and opportunities that facilitate networking, relationship building, social engagement, and learning. Specifically, we recommend that AN:

- ✓ Create forums and support member First Nations Communities in developing their own indicators for lifelong learning and in delivering programming with adequate resources provided.

- ✓ Support Communities in developing flexible and adaptable assessment models that more accurately relate to their educational goals.

- ✓ Advocating for more funding to provide resources that can help Communities incorporate culturally-based learning materials in the classroom (i.e., math and literacy workbooks).

- ✓ Offer networking opportunities during which Communities can share knowledge and best practices with one another in regard to their approaches to lifelong learning and educational programming.

   b. *Prior to colonialism, Indigenous Peoples had their own traditional systems of education that supported lifelong learning.*

Through research, it is clear that Indigenous Peoples had their own traditional systems of education that supported lifelong learning, however these systems were disrupted through the process of colonization. The engagement process further solidified this, as many learners and Community members advocated for further social and education supports. We recommend that AN:

- ✓ Support member First Nations in identifying and revitalizing traditional approaches to "coming to know," which is commonly used to refer to learning through reciprocal relationships, as many Indigenous languages do not have words for education (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018).

- ✓ Facilitate dialogue among Communities to learn from one another and help to identify traditional education approaches that can be revitalized.

- ✓ Advocate for funding to develop and support AN First Nations in collaboratively developing and delivering more wholistic educational resources that promote family participation in learning, specifically through land-based and culture-based learning.

2. Addressing Ongoing Systemic Barriers to Education

   a. *First Nations have long been advocating for First Nations control over education and systems that support traditional ways of learning.*

It is clear from the engagement process and supporting research that First Nations have been advocating and working towards realizing First Nations control over education and systems that support their traditional ways of learning. AN can offer advocacy support using its extensive network and specifically, we recommend that AN advocated for:

- ✓ Forum for ongoing conversations with the Ministry of Education and Indigenous Services Canada to advocate for First Nations control over education and systems.

- ✓ Increased funding to allow First Nations to acquire the necessary tools and resources required to fully assert control over education.

- ✓ Establish a support network or table among member First Nations to collectively work on asserting educational control and share resources among each other.

   b. *Even prior to COVID-19, Indigenous learners faced systemic barriers to education, including systemic racism and discrimination.*

The pandemic has only widened the gaps and challenges that Indigenous learners face due to systemic barriers to education. We recommend that AN prioritizes addressing these systemic barriers by:

- ✓ Continue to provide a forum for conversations with the Ministry of Education and Indigenous Services Canada to advocate for changes to the educational system that address these systemic challenges (i.e. monthly education calls).

- ✓ Provide advocacy for Community resources that help address challenges associated with these systemic barriers to minimize their impacts until institutional changes occur, including increased tutoring and post-secondary supports.

- ✓ Advocating for cultural competency training of all educational staff to help address racism and discrimination that occurs within schools.

- ✓ Advocating for locally relevant Indigenous curriculum content across all levels of education.

3. Advocating for Supports for AN First Nations to Recover from the COVID-19 Impacts to Learning

   a. *The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to learning loss, as well as negative impacts to social development and mental health for everyone.*

Research and engagement data show the disruptions that occurred to learners. Educators, students, and their families experienced negative impacts to their social development and mental health. To address these impacts, we recommend that AN advocate for:

- ✓ Resources to provide mental health resources and supports for staff, students, and their families.

- ✓ Resources to provide training for educational staff on how to identify and support learners in managing mental wellness, including in virtual settings.

- ✓ Support's for member First Nations in providing opportunities for community social engagement and learning opportunities.

- ✓ Resources to support member First Nations in providing early learning opportunities, especially when learning is provided virtually (e.g., there were no virtual opportunities for kindergarten).

- ✓ Supports for member First Nations in developing culturally relevant mental wellness curriculum.

- ✓ Resources to provide increased support for upcoming graduates, noting the increased anxiety they may be experiencing due to learning delivery disruptions.

- ✓ Supports for member First Nations in providing both formal and informal learning and social opportunities (e.g., social emotional learning, unstructured learning, time to build relationships, learn to regulate emotions, etc.).

   b. *Learning loss was more significant for racialized and low-income populations.*

Research shows that COVID-19 has had greater negative impacts on racialized and lower income students. This has widened pre-existing gaps in education, which affects lifelong socioeconomic impacts. To address these challenges, we recommend that AN advocate for:

- ✓ Supports for learners by providing different methods of completing schoolwork, including virtual and physical workbook options.

- ✓ Funding to support learners through acquiring space and necessary human resources to operate learning hubs and resource centres.

- ✓ Resources for family participation and support in learning (noting challenges like competition for devices, connectivity issues, and lack of family support with work).

- ✓ Funding and resources to offer tutoring and other specialized supports, especially for learners with special needs, both in-person and virtually.

- ✓ Increased internet connectivity, especially in remote communities.

- ✓ Funding to allow schools to purchase loanable resources that support virtual learning.

- ✓ Workshops or learning opportunities for individuals (all ages) to receive training in using things like Zoom, Microsoft Office, conducting research, etc.

- ✓ Funding to support summer schools and learning opportunities, especially in the areas of literacy and mathematics.

- ✓ Track learning recovery progress among member First Nations by identifying appropriate indicators and assessments.

   4. Opportunities to support family engagement in land-based and cultural learning

   a. *The COVID-19 pandemic enhanced opportunities for family engagement in learning.*

While the COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges in learning delivery, it also enhanced opportunities for family engagement and participation in learning. Traditionally education involved participation from family and Community members. To help support ongoing family engagement in learning, we recommend that AN advocate for:

- ✓ Supports for member First Nations to provide opportunities for Community and family involvement in learning (caregivers, parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents).

- ✓ Funding to provide resources for learning activities to be done at home (i.e., meal kits that can

be cooked at home, arts or crafts, etc.).

✓ Supports for member First Nations to provide opportunities for independent projects in which learners can showcase family involvement and learning that occurs in the home environment.

   b. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need for more land-based and cultural learning to be integrated into school curriculum.

Research and engagement data supports the need to incorporate more land-based and cultural learning into school curriculum. Research also indicates that traditional learning pedagogy relies heavily on land-based learning. Going forward, efforts should be made to incorporate both formal and informal land-based and culturally relevant learning opportunities, which can promote learning and overall learner wellness. To support this, we recommend that AN advocate for:

✓ Funding to acquire resources that support land-based learning.

✓ Supports for member First Nations to provide opportunities for land-based learning.

✓ Funding for the inclusion of culture in all education topics, including mathematics and literacy (making the content more relatable to learners).

✓ Support member First Nations in incorporating physical education in daily classroom activities, which can help with learner well-being.

5. Opportunities to support digital learning and work

   a. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided increased technological skills amongst educators and learners.

Through the shift to online learning, many educators and learners experienced increased technological skills. While this introduced some challenges, it also provided opportunities to further advance these skills among learners. We recommend that AN support:

✓ Member First Nations in creating opportunities for blended learning, including by offering in-person and virtual learning options when appropriate.

✓ Advocacy for funding to continue to advance computer and technological skills by integrating use in everyday classrooms, including by acquiring necessary resources within schools (e.g., computer labs, smart boards, etc.).

✓ Communities in identifying labour trends and support learners in pursuing digital careers (e.g., IT, marketing, etc.,).

Part Two: Environmental Scan

Part Two contains an environmental scan of literature and AN First Nations' educational staff, educational partners', learners', caretakers', and community members' narratives drawn from the online surveys and a focus group about learning recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The scan considers the experiences of AN First Nations during the COVID-19 pandemic, including challenges, impacts, strengths, and opportunities to re-envision, reset, and refocus programs, services and supports for AN First Nation learning. The scan is organized by the following eleven sub-sections:

1. Defining First Nations educational achievement and well-being;
2. Pre-Colonial First Nations learning;
3. Colonial Impacts on First Nations Learning;
4. Pre-COVID-19 First Nations learning;
5. COVID-19 impacts on learning delivery;
6. COVID-19 impacts on learning;
7. COVID-19 impacts on learning in AN First Nations;
8. COVID-19 impacts on learning delivery in AN First Nations;
9. Ontario learning recovery;
10. First Nations specific learning recovery; and
11. Strengths & opportunities.

1. Defining First Nations Educational Achievement and Well Being

Settler colonial measures of educational success are generally based on attendance, grades, standardized test scores and graduation rates. In contrast, "For many Indigenous students, the definition of success involves empowerment and the actualization of individual and collective self-determination rather than achievement in standardized testing or financial gain" (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018, p. 21).

In recent decades, Indigenous communities have sought to utilize frameworks that better reflect their understandings of and priorities for lifelong learning (Drew, Wilks & Wilson, 2015). Notably, the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) defines lifelong learning as:

> *"a philosophy that involves the development of knowledge, skills and values throughout all stages of a person's life – from early childhood through adulthood. It also recognizes that learning is not just an intellectual process, but one that permeates all aspects of an individual's life, including their role in the community, performance in the workplaces, personal development and physical well-being," (CCL, 2010, p.3).*

In 2010, the CCL developed the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (Figure 2) to reflect some common educational elements of lifelong learning philosophies among First Nations, including:

- wholistic;
- lifelong;
- strength-based;
- community-centered;
- culture-based; and
- land-based.
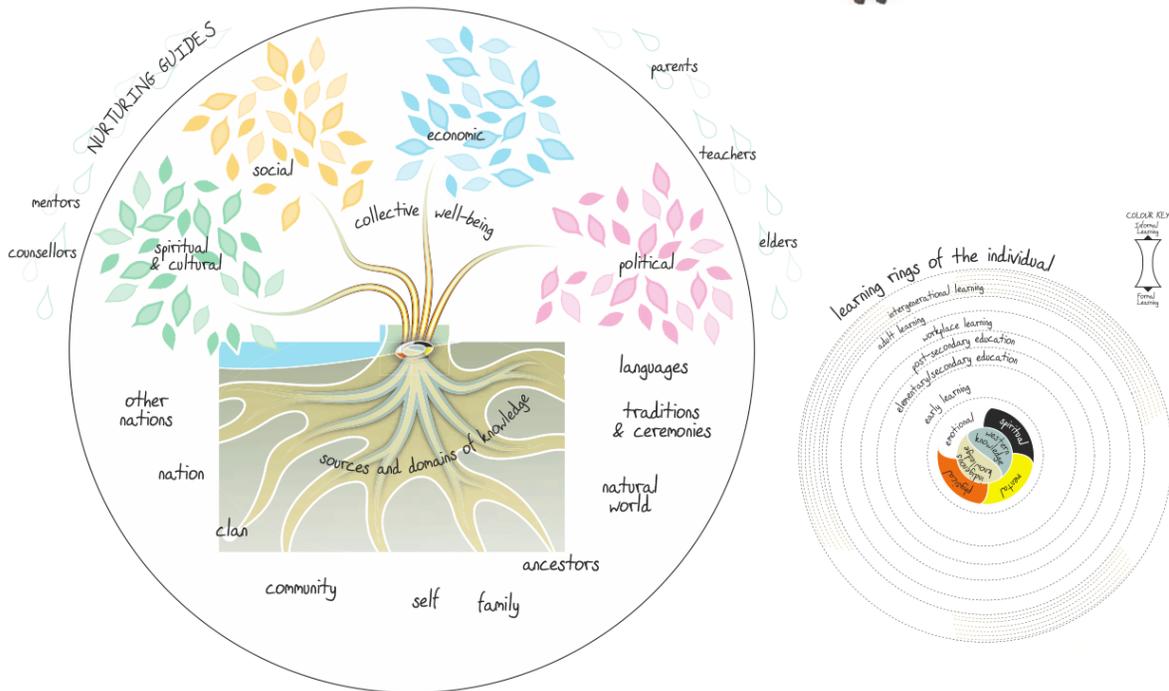
Figure 2. CCL First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model.

That same year, the CCL created the Composite Learning Index (CLI) which provide the basis for measuring Canada's annual progress in lifelong learning (CCL, 2010). The CLI consists of 17 indicators and 26 specific measures, which are organized into the following four pillars of learning:

1. Learning to Know

2. Learning to Do

3. Learning to Live Together

4. Learning to Be (CCL, 2010)
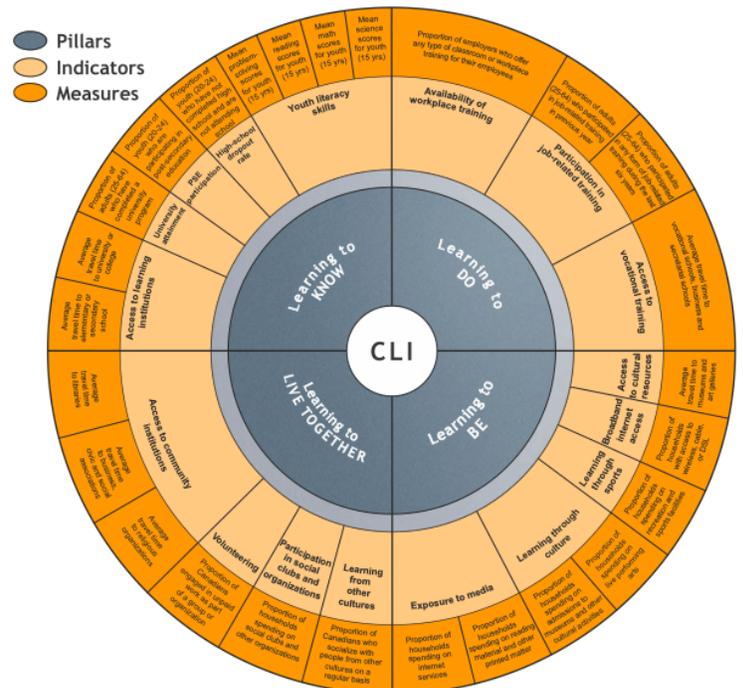
More detailed fact sheets about the 2010 CLI indicators can be found on CCL's website at www.cli-ica.ca.

Figure 3. CCL Composite Learning Index (CLI).

2. Pre-Colonial First Nations Learning

Prior to settler colonialism on Turtle Island (North America) Indigenous Peoples had their own traditional systems of education, based in their own ways of knowing and doing, which supported lifelong learning (McCue & Filice, 2011). These approaches relied on observation and practice, family and group socialization, oral teachings, and participation in community ceremonies (McCue & Filice, 2011). The responsibility for educating youth was shared among parents, grandparents, members of the extended family and Community Elders (McCue & Filice, 2011).

Many Indigenous languages do not have words for education. Instead, the phrase "coming to know" is commonly used to refer to the process of learning through reciprocal relationships (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018). The interconnectedness of all living things is key in directing learning, as all of creation plays a part in teaching throughout the lifelong learning process (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018). An important part of this process is learning one's roles and responsibilities to these relationships (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018).

3. Colonial Impacts on First Nations Learning

Since the arrival of settlers in Turtle Island (North America), colonial powers have systematically interrupted First Nations' traditional learning, and attempted to prevent and destroy transmission of traditional knowledge (First Nation Lifelong Learning Table, 2021). For example, a number of policy regimes under the Indian Act were created, which promoted assimilation and thereby prevented Indigenous Peoples from transmitting traditional cultures and languages, including:

- The outlawing of gathering and practicing ceremonies, language, culture;
- The development and enforcement of Residential and Day School Systems (also took effect through the British North America Act (1867); and
- Enfranchisement (relinquishment of rights) of First Nations Peoples pursuing education and professional degrees (also took effect through The Gradual Civilization Act), which prevented First Nations from participating in the colonial education system and gaining recognized degrees of knowledge through the fear of losing community ties and rights (Charette, 2019).

Additionally, ongoing discrimination, systemic and structural racism have created barriers for many First Nations learners in obtaining formalized education as these systems lack the support for and acknowledgement of Indigenous student experiences and needs (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018; Toulouse, 2016). Last, intergenerational trauma from settler colonialism—especially the Residential and Day School systems—have had profound negative impacts on Indigenous learners (Gaywsh & Mordoch, 2018). As a result, Indigenous learners living with trauma can experience challenges participating in the education system due to lack of confidence, family disconnection, stress triggers, and fragmented identity (Gaywsh & Mordoch, 2018).

4. Pre-COVID-19 First Nations Learning

First Nations have long been advocating for First Nations' control over education and systems that support traditional ways of learning. First Nations have been working to revitalize their languages, cultures, and belief systems through education since the end of the Residential School system (Brant-Birioukov, 2021). However, most of this work has been community-based, with little support from provincial, territorial, and federal governments (Brant-Birioukov, 2021).

Most First Nations learners in Ontario live in urban areas (off reserve) and attend publicly funded schools (although some publicaly funded learners live on reserve). As a result of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* Calls to Action (2015), Indigenous education has become a part of the mainstream curricular expectations, however there is still a lot of work to do to realize this expectation (Brant-Birioukov, 2021). Currently, Indigenous perspectives are relegated to being supplemental or alternate options, which reinforces the colonial supremacy of Eurocentric methods of thought and implies inferiority of Indigenous knowledge (Brant-Birioukov, 2021).

As a member of the United Nations (UN), Canada is committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable education for all through the provision of internet infrastructure development to communities without access by 2030 (Pavel & Burga, 2020)*.* The Government of Canada's investment into the *Connecting Canadians* program in 2014—which aims to provide high-speed broadband internet access to rural and remote communities (including First Nations)—represents a significant step toward this goal (Pavel & Burga, 2020). Despite this initiative, substantial changes and improvements are required to meet the broader goal of achieving equitable education within Canada by 2030 (Pavel & Burga, 2020).

The First Nations Lifelong Learning Table (FNLLT) was established in 2016, as a collaborative process for the development and implementation of a First Nation Education Strategy (FNES) that will meet the unique needs of Indigenous learners and communities (FNLLT, 2021). The FNLLT provides a forum for First Nations to address issues and build opportunities for First Nations lifelong learning within the public education and training sector (FNLLT, 2021).

While progress and commitments have been made in recent years, First Nations learners continue to experience achievement gaps (FNLLT, 2021). This is largely due to the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism, including systemic racism (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018). For example, students are expected to adapt to the unwritten rules and expectations of schools, which were developed to support the settler colonial agenda (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018). Indigenous learners are also more frequently directed into non-academic streams and special education programs, based on faulty assumptions, biases, and culturally inappropriate assessment tools (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018).

5. COVID-19 Impacts on Learning Delivery

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally shifted the methods of education delivery worldwide, including First Nations across Turtle Island. Many students, families, and educators were required to navigate virtual learning and educating for the first time. School closures were recurrent as governments were constantly balancing learning needs in regards to education, social development, and mental health against learner and community protection from COVID-19 transmission and spread (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021).

Figure 4 illustrates intermittent school closures. First, during the 2019/2020 school year, complete school closures went into effect, resulting in emergency virtual learning being developed and instituted, with lack of standardized methods and delivery. Then, during the 2020/2021 school year, there were various class and school closures throughout the year, with staggered reopening occurring regionally. Three models of learning were instituted during this time: 1) remote, 2) in-person, and 3) blended (a mix of in-person and online); with minimum standards for (a)synchronous learning delivery and assessment (e.g., differentiated student support, blended learning, smaller cohorts, infection control measures, etc.,). The diversity in approaches to school closures and instructional approaches led to a variance in

impacts on students and their learning (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). Please note that the multiple school closures with staggered and partial re-openings are not shown.
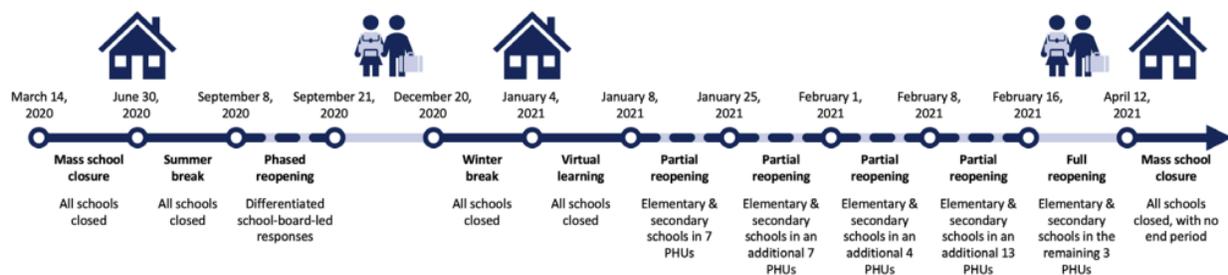

Figure 4. Ontario Public School Closures and Openings (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021).

6. COVID-19 Impacts on Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on education and learning worldwide. While some groups were more negatively impacted than others, all learners experienced significant education disruption, including through:

- school and class closures and staggered re-openings;

- multiple models of education delivery;

- varied delivery strategies and standards;

- limitation of school activities (i.e., playgrounds and extra curriculars);

- inconsistent requirements and regulations; and

- transitions between instruction types (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021).

These changes created a complex, difficult to navigate learning environment with consequences for educators, students, staff, and families. Specifically, the pandemic has contributed to:

- significant learning loss and depressed achievement;

- loss of education opportunities and support programs for students with special needs;

- negative mental health impacts for students, teachers, and their families, including but not limited to lowered sense of trust, belonging, and hope for students, as well as increased loneliness;

- limited opportunities for children to build, develop, and maintain social connections and interpersonal relationships;

- increased physical and mental health, as well as safety risks, including the reduced capacity for educators to report suspected abuse or neglect (school personnel are usually the largest group reporting);

- economic disparities due to reduced labour force participation, especially for caretakers, who did not have childcare when schools were closed; and

- widening of socioeconomic gaps (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021; PHE Canada et al., 2020; Vaillancourt et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had greater negative impacts on racialized and lower income students, whose caretakers were more likely to opt for online learning but less able to access it (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). This has widened the preexisting gaps in education, which extend to lifelong socioeconomic impacts (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). While we do not yet know the full impacts of COVID-19, educators and educational researchers are concerned about learning loss, as well as impacts on social development and mental health, which are anticipated to continue to be more pronounced for racialized and low-income populations (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021).

7. COVID-19 Impacts on Learning in AN First Nations

Indigenous Peoples have a history of overcoming obstacles with ingenuity and resilience and adapting to defend Indigenous ways of knowing (Brant-Birioukov, 2021). This was supported by what we heard about AN learners' commitment in their educational journeys, despite the complex learning environment and numerous challenges that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section is largely informed by focus group and survey input gathered from AN member First Nation learners, Community members, Staff, and educational partners, both conducted in 2022. Main challenges that were identified through the engagement process included challenges in learning consistency and assessments, funding and resources, and social and mental health issues.

Through the engagement process, participants did not identify many educational strengths associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, both learners and staff identified a few strengths related to family and relationships, including:

- Family learning together (58% learners; 55% staff);
- Spent more time with children / youth (54% learners; 61% staff);
- Built closer relationships (48% learners; 52% staff); and
- Increased family engagement in education (40% learners; 55% staff).

Learners and staff also identified the following educational opportunities that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Learning together as a family, including from the land through traditional harvesting (e.g., hunting and fishing) and other activities (e.g., cooking);
- Engaging in online culture and language events offered by other institutions or in the community that would otherwise be inaccessible (e.g., for a community Member living outside of the community);
- Increased access to resources, including devices and internet sticks, activity books and writing materials, food, crafts, and other resources;
- Flexibility to learn one-on-one or hybrid and to rest at home when needed; and
- Increased computer skills.

In analysing the survey results we note a cyclical affect between educational challenges and impacts on learners (Figure 5). Specifically, learners who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic experience educational challenges, which cause further negative impacts that in turn create challenges and so on.

The survey found that COVID-19 has impacted AN member First Nation learners (93% of learners; 97% staff) having an especially negative impact on health and well-being, especially mental health (90% learners; and 86% for staff) and social wellness (85% learners; and 86% for staff). Most learners and staff also identified impacts on emotional (80% learners; and 75% for staff), and to a lesser extent physical health (67% learners; 64% staff). Financial impacts were also mentioned by almost half of participants (48% learners; 42% staff).
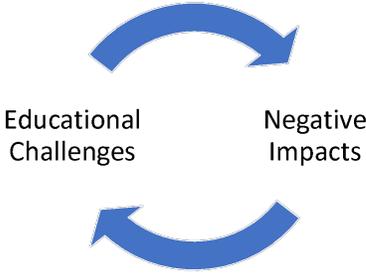

Educational Challenges → Negative Impacts

Figure 5. Challenges & Impacts Cycle.

Survey results support these findings, revealing mental health as the top educational challenge for learners, followed by social and emotional health, then online learning difficulties and student focus / retention while learning (figure 6). This is supported by focus group data, which revealed that learners experienced mental health challenges associated with adjusting to virtual learning, and fears of re-entering in-person environments when schools re-opened. It is important to note that the anxiety that learners experienced in returning to in-person learning may be attributed in part to returning to colonial education systems. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers, learners, and their families experienced increased levels of anxiety, including general, health and social anxiety. Participants also noted that some students seem to have lost the desire to be in school, especially because extracurricular activities were restricted. Given the disruption to learning, many students who were on track to progress to the next stage of their education journey may be feeling heightened anxiety over meeting grading and learning requirements. These findings are further supported by a study, which found that Indigenous learners and families are among those most likely experiencing moderate to severe general anxiety symptoms relating to COVID -19 education disruption (Arriagada et al., 2020).

Top Educational Challenges Identified by Learners & Caretakers	Top Educational Challenges Identified by Staff & Educational Partners
1. Mental health (85%)	1. Social and emotional (81%)
2. Social and emotional (78%)	2. Online learning difficulties (78%)
3. Online learning difficulties (75%)	3. Limited attendance (78%)
4. Student focus / retention (72%)	4. Incomplete work (72%)

Figure 6. Top Educational Challenges.

In contrast, a majority but far smaller proportion of staff and education partners identified mental health (67%) as an educational challenge for learners, which could be because they were less aware or less equipped to support learners in this regard. Staff also identified social and emotional health (81%) as an educational challenge, but were almost equally concerned with online learning, limited attendance, and incomplete work. Combined with engagement comments, the results suggest that learners focused on educational challenges related to their well-being and learning experience, whereas staff and educational partners were more concerned with student behaviour and performance. This could also be interpreted to suggest that learners experienced mental health and online learning challenges that impacted retention and focus, and ultimately decreased engagement in online school. While decreased attendance was not a large concern to students, this represents a significant challenge for staff. Figure 6 displays the top educational challenges identified by learners and caretakers,

compared to the top challenges identified by staff and educational partners based on survey responses. Figure 7 summarizes the specific educational challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and their impacts, based on data from focus groups and textual survey responses.

Importantly, the vast majority of learners (88%) and staff (87%) said that they felt that learning loss occurred, and that the loss was significant. Focus group input supports this, with participants sharing that learning loss occurred for all learners, but those without reliable internet, or at home / school support experienced more significant losses. Focus group participants also said that internet and technology issues are worse for remote and isolated community learners, which can lead to greater learning loss. Indigenous communities, particularly in the North, have been lacking this infrastructure for years before the COVID-19 pandemic, but pandemic restrictions and virtual learning have brought this to the forefront as connectivity is now essential for education (Pavel & Burga, 2020).

Specific Learning Challenges	Specific Impacts on Learners
• Chronic understaffing and lack of teacher presence • Challenges engaging students & assessing performance online • Lack of access to a device, internet (especially for rural and remote communities) and workspace • Lack of supports for special education learners • Loss of extra-curricular activities, including community, cultural and language events • Difficulties with supporting virtual learning in the home while working remotely • Technological difficulties • Online learning fatigue and focus and retention while learning virtually • Less interaction & social bonding • Teachers learning curve in teaching online • Difficulty transitioning between online and in-person	• Mental health issues, including anxiety and depression • General regression emotionally, socially, and academically • Loss of interest, lack of motivation, and low engagement, attendance, and issues with assignment completion • Impact of supporting learners online on family relationships • Financial and other impacts of leaving employment to support learners • Loss of friends • Students with special needs experienced even greater hardships • Decreased grades for some and lenient grading for others, which caused them to struggle to keep up • Additional burdens and delays to "catch up", including credit recovery, and summer learning programs

Figure 7. Learning Challenges and Impacts on Learner.

Participants identified specific learning loss in numeracy and literacy, as well as social and emotional skill development. Focus group participants shared that learners have experienced gaps in social skill development, which is normally gained through group work and socializing with peers in classroom settings, and expressed concern that this may have long term effects on learners. The survey revealed that a significant minority of learners (43%) have been informed by an education staff member that they are behind in a subject. Overall, both learners and their caretakers as well as educational staff and partners are fairly confident that learners will successfully complete the next level of their educational journey. Although learners and their caretakers are generally more confident (51%) compared with staff, who were only somewhat confident (63%). Struggling students tend to experience greater learning losses and slower recovery (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). However, it is important to note that the way in which learning is measured in public school tends to focus on numeracy and literacy, and overlook non-cognitive, social, and emotional skills; creativity; and the capacity for collective action (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021).

These challenges, impacts, and learning losses have contributed to the already widening economic and educational achievement gaps and illustrate where supports are falling short. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated already disproportionate stress and hardships experienced by racialized and low-income households and students (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021; Statistics Canada, & Children First

Canada, n.d.). These students are more likely to access other programs through schools, such as meal programs and school-based health care, which are not available when schools are closed (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). Further, these families are more likely to be employed at lower paying jobs, and unable to afford childcare, thereby requiring parents to miss work and lose income when schools close (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). Lower income families often experience more crowded living conditions that are less conducive to studying, and caretakers in these householders are less likely to have remote work options making it difficult to supervise and support virtual learning (Statistics Canada, & Children First Canada, n.d.).

As First Nations Peoples are overrepresented among low-income households, we can surmise that Indigenous learners and their families are experiencing greater pandemic hardships compared to their non-indigenous counterparts (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). First Nations students also experience unique challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic due to the impact of colonization and access barriers to ongoing reconciliation efforts to mitigate colonial influence during school closures (Brant-Birioukov, 2021; Patterson, 2021).

8. COVID-19 Impacts on Learning Delivery in AN First Nations

The impacts that COVID-19 has had on learners and educators, as discussed above, are related to and furthered by impacts experienced by AN member Nations in learning delivery to their communities. We have heard that these impacts extend to areas of accessibility, resources, participation, and mental health; and that they effect both learners and educators.

At the beginning of the pandemic a number of supports were made available, although reliant on larger capacity school boards, and provincial frameworks and documents, which provided greater resources and accessibility for learners and educators. Outside of this initial support, educators struggled to keep learners engaged virtually in their communities, as there was a lack of virtual education policy as well as recognized gaps in connectivity and technology access and support. These accessibility struggles were compounded by individual learner barriers in technology, lack of support working from home, and household competition for connectivity, which all lead to lowered time spent in the educational environment. Learning delivery was particularly challenging in isolated communities because of unreliable internet connectivity and lack of device access. Further into the pandemic, as learning model transitions became more common, more nuanced impacts on learning delivery became apparent in the form of platform / infrastructure issues and lack of training for staff. Educators found it difficult to navigate these exclusively virtual environments and provide all resources to students, leading to increased gaps for learners.

Further challenges were experienced due to a lack of funding, which left First Nations schools unable to effectively plan learning delivery approaches or appropriately respond to the rapidly changing educational environment. Teacher shortages lead to learning delivery being provided by staff who are not teachers. Some classes also had to be shifted to split grade classes, which often meant half of the students had less instruction or guidance during class time. Educators experienced difficulty providing specific learning supports, including tutoring, therapies, and post-secondary supports online, which created many challenges for educators and learners.

Educators also struggled with providing consistent learning delivery and associated assessments throughout the pandemic. As learners were required to transition between virtual and in-person

learning, assessment of progress became increasingly difficult. Educators struggled to consistently gauge, monitor, and track learning progress, making it challenging to provide accurate feedback and complete standard report cards. It was also difficult for both learners and educators to engage in learning when the consistency of learning delivery was continuously changing and evolving. Challenges occurred with providing consistent schedules, delivery methods, and establishing learner routines.

Additionally, many learners faced connectivity and mental health challenges, which decreased learner engagement and participation. At the community level, efforts were made to help address connectivity issues, including through initiatives like acquiring fibre-optics, establishing mobile learning stations, and increasing service within remote areas. Some communities also created safe outdoor and land-based learning opportunities to help reduce the reliance on fully virtual learning environments. Some First Nations have also amended community policies to allow for devices to be loaned to students, so that students could participate in virtual classrooms. Communications between staff, educators, families, and learners also proved to be difficult. New information and safeguards were constantly evolving throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring timely and accurate communications was challenging.

Additionally, many students chose to exit the class learning environment in favour of pursuing independent course work. This has resulted in learning gaps, especially in literacy and Anishinaabemowin. Staff also struggled with mental health issues that impacted morale. Staff absences and shortages have also contributed to inconsistent and uneven learning, as classrooms have been combined to include several grades in some situations as an attempt to mitigate staffing concerns.

9. Ontario Learning Recovery

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and education disruptions, the Government of Ontario developed a framework for learning recovery in public schools, entitled *Ontario's Learning Recovery Action Plan for Students*. The plan is broken down into five key sections, including:

1. Measure & Assess through the reimplementation of The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing in Spring 2022. Using those results, a new baseline will be identified, along with proposed interventions and targets for Fall. This will be followed by continual educational assessments, and reassessment of baselines, interventions, and targets.

2. Comprehensive Tutor Supports involving targeted, culturally relevant programs for students at risk, expanded year-round math and reading tutoring in person and online, one-on-one teacher tutoring, as well as connecting with community organizations and resources to provide more comprehensive supports.

3. Focus on Student Resilience and Mental Well Being will be maintained through the Ontario Student Mental Health Strategy, as well as stabilized and strengthened funding though Grants for Student Needs. These initiatives can be used to leverage the best evidence on student mental health to provide support to learners, provide mental health training for educators, create a resilience or mental wellness graduation requirement, as well as provide continued support through mentally healthy classrooms and school environments, effective and responsive school mental health support, and connections to the provincial mental health system.

4. Strengthen Numeracy and Literacy Skills through early reading interventions, professional assessments, strengthened summer learning, virtual resources, as well as the provision for free school board summer learning for Indigenous students living on reserve.

5. <u>Modernize Education</u> by shifting focus to learning skills and world of work, aligning curriculum with labour market demands, focusing on life skills, skills for Ontario growth, competition, and high wage growth. To further these aims, investments have been made into pilot programs for entrepreneurial pursuits and experiential learning, developing modules for skilled trades, training guidance counselors in the skilled trade pathways, and expanding access to dual credit programs, including for Indigenous students specifically. Also included in the modernization of education is increasing Indigenous educators in the public education sector, as well as providing alternate entry pathways for Indigenous language teachers (Government of Ontario, 2022).

Additionally, the Ministry of Education have noted increased investments to school boards aimed to support learning recovery through the following:

● Grant for Student Needs (GSN) to support students with special education needs; de-streaming support; curricular and extra-curricular initiatives to promote success; development and leadership; limited time funding to hire staffing support to support learning recovery; and network connectivity, infrastructure, security and operations for virtual learning environments.

● Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF) to develop and deliver high impact initiatives for de-streaming, job skills, tutoring, mental health, STEM, reading support and summer learning.

● Mental Health (MH) funding to help retain school mental health workers; engage stakeholders in mental health data collection; and retain school focused nurses in Public Health Units.

● Increased funding for Summer Learning.

● School Repair and Renewal funding for 2022-2023 school year.

● Funding for the broadband modernization program to enable all Ontario schools to provide reliable access for online learning (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Ontario's Learning Recovery Strategy maintains a focus on well-being, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and trauma informed approaches (PHE Canada et al., 2020). To achieve well-being, it is recommended to utilize guided learning, outdoor learning, physical health education, and social emotional learning, as well as patient, student centered approaches, including Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (PHE Canada et al., 2020). To ensure equity, inclusion and accessibility, educators are encouraged to foster a sense of acceptance and belonging, collaborate with outside service providers, engage in student centered learning while utilizing strengths-based approaches, and utilize the STEP Framework (Figure X) for program modification (PHE Canada et al., 2020).

The use of trauma informed approaches is also seen as best practice for learning recovery, and can be achieved through:

● building staff trauma awareness;

● developing and sharing coping strategies;

● creating and fostering a supportive, welcoming environment;

● developing positive relationships with students and families based on a shared vision of learning success; and

● utilizing PHE Canada's Teach Resiliency website (PHE Canada et al., 2020).

Social and emotional learning is key in recovery as loneliness has been exacerbated by COVID-19 policies and is known to have negative impacts for learners in terms of physical and mental health, as well as academic achievement (Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Through social and emotional learning, individuals learn to regulate and manage emotions, how to set and achieve personal goals, as well as how to establish and maintain strong relationships (Surrey School District, n.d.). This is considered foundational in learning (Vaillancourt et al., 2021).

The Summer Learning Plan aims to support learning recovery through the:

- expansion of core programs and courses;
- expedition of the course upgrading process;
- creation of focused programs for those with special education and mental health needs;
- communication of volunteer opportunities;
- creation of summer programs in provincial and demonstrational schools;
- development of a key concept map for the next school year; and
- development of targeted supports for vulnerable students, including non-credit courses and leadership opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2020).

The modifications on each Physical Education activity sheet from the PHE Home Learning Centre are aligned with the learning outcome and are provided utilizing the STEP Framework. The STEP Framework describes four main activity components - space, task, equipment, and people - that can be modified to meet the needs of each individual participant and provide a supportive learning environment (Kiuppis, 2018).

It is also important to note that the modifications we listed on each PE activity sheet is not comprehensive list of modifications. It is essential to get to know children and youth, and their abilities, before making modifications. This includes taking time to:

- Ask about their abilities and needs
- Understand the type of support they require (e.g., communication, physical, social)
- Define safety and how safety measures can be applied
- Determine their skill level in relation to the activity
- Balance the relationship of skill level to the complexity of the task
- Evaluate the success of the activity based on the modifications and adjust as necessary

S Space

- Where is the activity happening?
- Modify the physical space of the activity to match the skill level of participants and remove obstacles and distractions(e.g., distance travelled, size of playing area, use of different zones.

T Task

- What is happening?
- Modify the focus, difficulty, instructions, or skills of the task to provide participants with variation, creativity, and individualized progression.
- Instructions can be modified to incorporate visual, tactile, and verbal cues (e.g., a picture communication system or designated auditory or visual signals).

E Equipment

- What is being used?
- Modify the purpose, type, and use of equipment (e.g., size, shape, colour, texture, weight, etc.).
- Specialized equipment is available, but it is also easy to modify equipment if you are creative (e.g., balls with textures or sounds, plumbing pipe to use as ramps for throwing).

P People

- Who is involved?
- Modify the structure and formation of participant groupings based on their abilities.
- Rules can be modified to allow for different levels of participation within the same task.

Figure 8. The STEP Framework.

Effective Early Reading Instruction has also been identified as being important to recovering literacy rates. Early reading is critical, as it sets the foundation for reading and learning later in life and has implications leading into adulthood impacting individuals socially, emotionally and physically (Flanagan et al., 2015). Effective early reading instruction is characterized by:

- evidence based methods;
- systematic, explicit instruction with repetition;
- learning oral language through listening and speaking to develop reading foundations;
- starting with smallest blocks of language to form basis of learning; and
- being student centered in the context, pace, adaptation and assessment through building on prior knowledge, culture and language to showcase differentiation and transferability, seeing oneself in reading experiences (*Effective early reading instruction: a guide for teachers* 2022).

To further support the recovery of literacy and help students reach their full potential, the Community Literacy Catalyst Program has been implemented. This program supports the building of local capacity for sustainable, community-based literacy programs, through partnerships between Frontier College and five (5) Northern Ontario First Nations (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Schools provide critical support to student's mental health through structured group environments, physical education, connection with peers, and access to mental health supports. Ontario's approach to learning recovery aims to uphold these supports by keeping mental health supports available when schools close, expanding virtual mental health supports, and by providing mental health training to educators (Ministry of Education, 2020).

In the transition back to school, the Ministry of Education has stated learning recovery will include:

- a more comprehensive refresh period, which will be more reflective of uneven learning;
- funding for special education and mental health needs to close existing and emerging gaps;
- adaptations to learning assessment based on "ON Growing Success" guidelines;
- an online Learn at home portal with mental health resources;
- Health and Safety protocols developed with the Ministry of Labour;
- adapting class to health advice;
- bussing considerations;
- fluency between face-to-face and online delivery;
- synchronous learning approaches for fluidity; and
- access to technology and connectivity, facilitated by Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2020).

10. First Nations Specific Learning Recovery

While the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted learning delivery across the globe, First Nations learners require specific approaches that consider their experiences and unique needs. Despite Ontario's Learning Recovery plan acknowledging the gaps that are increasing for marginalized and racialized students, First Nations students were hardly mentioned throughout this document. Ontario's plan specifically mentioned First Nations students in three priority areas, including:

1. Providing free school board summer learning for Indigenous students on reserve to strengthen numeracy and literacy skills;
2. Creating targeted summer programs for vulnerable students, students with special education or mental health needs, and Indigenous students; and
3. Expanding access to dual credit programs, including for Indigenous Students (Government of Ontario, 2022).

Additionally, the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table (2021) brought forward further considerations for Indigenous learners including transportation; social supports; accessibility to remote learning; involving Leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers in COVID-19 monitoring and response; working in a culturally sensitive way; and addressing crowded living environments (Science et al., 2021).

Of particular importance is the accessibility to remote learning. As mentioned, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many First Nations learners faced challenges with internet connectivity. Specifically, a lack of connectivity has been a longstanding issue within Northern Indigenous communities, which can drastically impact learners' ability to engage in online learning environments. Therefore, learning recovery efforts should prioritize addressing these issues, as connectivity and its infrastructure are essential components to providing equitable access to education (Pavel & Burga, 2020).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, despite provincial schools reopening to prioritize the economy, many First Nations and their affiliated schools chose to prioritize community health and remain closed while COVID-19 cases were still high (Brant-Birioukov, 2021). During school closures, many began hosting class and learning opportunities in outdoor settings to help mitigate the risks of COVID-19 exposure and took the opportunity as a chance to reconnect with the land through outdoor, land-based learning (Brant-Birioukov, 2021). This is of particular importance, as Western definitions of schooling have kept learners separate from their natural and cultural contexts, failing to recognize their role in the learning process (Judson, 2022). In the paper *Imaginative Ecological Education* (2022), Dr. Judson explains that in the current and pre-pandemic schooling experience, there has been a disconnect between learners and their local environments leading to a lack of understanding and interconnectedness of the world around us (Judson, 2022). Connection to the land is essential in Indigenous knowledge, which has been dismissed in the Western model of schooling and should be implemented for the benefit of all learners (Judson, 2022).

Both formal and informal learning opportunities are important to AN First Nations learning recovery efforts. Research shows that both school-based play and social connection increase well-being and capacity for learning (McNamara & Vaillancourt, 2021). Further, many First Nations educational philosophies and approaches to education prioritize community involvement and land-based learning. Community collaboration is essential as family and community members each play a role in sharing oral teachings that are based in ancestral language and knowledge of how to live well (Brant-Birioukov, 2021). Families and communities have historically been the main teachers and supports for learners. These traditional education systems were dismantled through colonialism, and are a component of reconciliation efforts in education. These social ties and relationships are critical to the development and functional capacity of learners, which cannot be adequately substituted through virtual connection (Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Indigenous People see the self as being intrinsically linked the environment's ecology through reciprocal relationships from which knowledge is gained (Brant-Birioukov, 2021). Providing opportunities for learning to occur within nature can help to foster these relationships both with community and with the land.

Math and literacy were seen as being most effected by school closures throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Advocacy for reworking mathematics curriculum has been ongoing for decades, with little change being made (Aikenhead, 2021). The current assessments of students in math divides students into either "math people" or "not math people," which fails to account for flexibility in interest or outside influencing factors like teacher and class environment (Aikenhead, 2021). Math instructors are typically "math people," which makes it difficult for them to relate with students who tend to be more math averse (Aikenhead, 2021). Aikenhead's report goes on to explain that there is a gap for most people in the ability to apply school based decontextualized math in the context of the workplace (2021). This shows that there is likely a general issue or breakdown in the way math is currently taught. Aikenhead explains these different scenarios as wholistic (workplace) or reductionist (school-based) as workplace math is contextualized and aims to achieve a goal, while school-based math education is isolated from any real context (2021). This is particularly detrimental for Indigenous learners who are

immersed in or striving to attain a more wholistic culture and way of life. Providing culture-based mathematics learning opportunities can help create a more relatable context for students which can allow them to understand and appreciate the real-world applications of what they are learning (Aikenhead, 2021).

In terms of early reading, Indigenous learners tend to have lower literacy rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts, due to factors like colonialism, racism, unemployment, and low education levels (Flanagan et al., 2015). In closing this gap, it has been suggested that summer learning may prove effective as the largest losses occur over this time. Summer learning programs have been shown to be effective methods for targeted learning, with greatest impacts noted for less-advantaged learners and those in early grades (Flanagan et al., 2015). While there is data on summer learning programs in provincial schools, data is missing for these programs in First Nation schools and reserve communities (Flanagan et al., 2015). There are programs which have shown positive results for First Nation learners such as:

- Confident Learners, a Canada wide First Nations literacy initiative targeted toward early learners in First Nation schools; and

- Splish, Splash and Learn, a pilot program developed for First Nation on-reserve communities to decrease learning loss through the summer (Flanagan et al., 2015).

New assessment models that support the importance of autonomy and agency for both learners and educators can support learning recovery (Younghusband, 2021). Reflecting and reassessing education delivery models and providing varied opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate their knowledge supports both learners and educators in feeling empowered (Younghusband, 2021).

11. Strengths and Opportunities

While the COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges and associated impacts to learning, it also helped in identifying several strengths and opportunities that can support learning recovery. Both educators and learners showed a commitment to learning and undertook creative ways in continuing their educational journeys. As the pandemic continuously evolved, educators and learners continued to be adaptive and flexible in their approaches to overcome learning challenges.
Despite the hardships associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, it provided opportunities for families to have control over their children's learning and focus on what is relevant based on their own lived experience. What stood out most, is that AN First Nations communities were able to engage in family-oriented and land-based learning during this difficult time. AN learners, their caretakers, community members, educational staff and partners referenced as a strengths and benefit.

At the community level, efforts were made to help address connectivity issues, including through initiatives like acquiring fibre-optics, establishing mobile learning stations, and increasing service within remote areas. Some communities also created safe outdoor and land-based learning opportunities to help reduce the reliance on fully virtual learning environments. Some First Nations have also amended community policies to allow for devices to be loaned to students, so that students could participate in virtual classrooms. Communications between staff, educators, families, and learners also proved to be difficult. New information and safeguards were constantly evolving throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring timely and accurate communications was challenging.

Despite the various challenges that were presented in virtual learning, it also led to increased technological skills and capabilities. Virtual learning created unprecedented access to technology, which was seen as a strength for students as it provides learning opportunities that may not have been available otherwise. Through the engagement process we heard that some participants who live outside of the community benefited from the shift to online learning as they were able to participate in different courses or workshops. Had these opportunities been in-person, it is unlikely that they would have been able to attend.

Learners were also exposed to different technologies and had the opportunity to become proficient in different virtual environments, which can be applied in future learning. It also provided a positive change for students who typically struggle with in-person learning. Some staff shared that organizational skills and school process have improved, including through increased engagement by conducting virtual meetings. In learning recovery efforts, there is opportunity to improve access to online supports, as well as building educational capacity for virtual learning. Restructuring learning approaches to include different environments can be beneficial to the different student learning styles, including a blend of in-person and virtual learning activities.

During the engagement process, participants were generally happy with the support that was provided by AN to its member First Nations. The AN has supported communities with constant dialogue and relationship building through the monthly education calls, advocacy for community support, and its networking abilities.

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Appendix A: Learners Survey Results

Please note, survey responses are included by question, with the exception of the consent question and questions 8, 17, 18, 21, and 25, which includes text. We have incorporated the textual responses into the report.
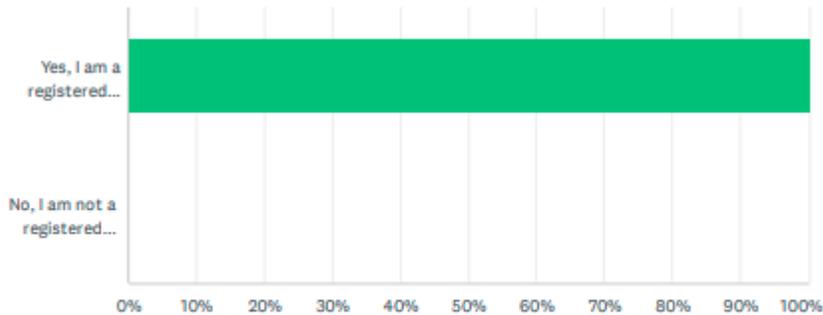
Q2 What is your age range?

Answered: 67   Skipped: 1
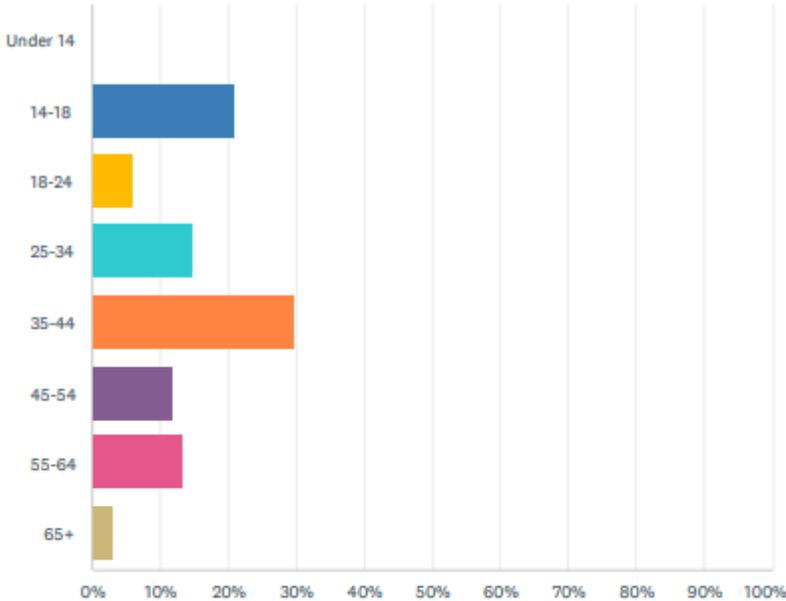
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 14	0.00%	0
14-18	20.90%	14
18-24	5.97%	4
25-34	14.93%	10
35-44	29.85%	20
45-54	11.94%	8
55-64	13.43%	9
65+	2.99%	2
TOTAL		67

Q4 Are you a member of an Anishinabek Nation (AN) community?

Answered: 66   Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I am a registered member of an AN community	100.00%	66
No, I am not a registered member of an AN community	0.00%	0
TOTAL		66

Q5 Which AN member First Nation are you a member of?

Answered: 62   Skipped: 6

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation	11.29%	7
Fort William First Nation	11.29%	7
M'chigeeng First Nation	9.68%	6
Alderville First Nation	8.06%	5
Curve Lake First Nation	8.06%	5
Nipissing First Nation	8.06%	5
Serpent River First Nation	8.06%	5
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	6.45%	4
Biigtigong Nishnaabeg	4.84%	3
Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory	4.84%	3
Aamjiwnaang First Nation	3.23%	2
Garden River First Nation	3.23%	2
Atikameksheng Anishnawbek	1.61%	1
Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation	1.61%	1
Beausoleil First Nation	1.61%	1

Dokis First Nation	1.61%	1
Sheguiandah First Nation	1.61%	1
Wahnapitae First Nation	1.61%	1
Whitefish River First Nation	1.61%	1
Zhiibaahaasing First Nation	1.61%	1
Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation	0.00%	0
Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek	0.00%	0
Chippewas of Georgina Island	0.00%	0
Chippewas of Rama First Nation	0.00%	0
Henvey Inlet First Nation	0.00%	0
Long Lake #58 First Nation	0.00%	0
Magnetawan First Nation	0.00%	0
Michipicoten First Nation	0.00%	0
Mississauga First Nation	0.00%	0
Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation	0.00%	0
Moose Deer Point First Nation	0.00%	0
Munsee-Delaware Nation	0.00%	0
Namaygoosisagagun First Nation	0.00%	0
Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg	0.00%	0
Pawgwasheeng Pays Plat First Nation	0.00%	0
Red Rock Indian Band	0.00%	0
Sheshegwaning First Nation	0.00%	0
Thessalon First Nation	0.00%	0
Wasauksing First Nation	0.00%	0
TOTAL		62

Q6 Do you live in an AN First Nation?

Answered: 62   Skipped: 6
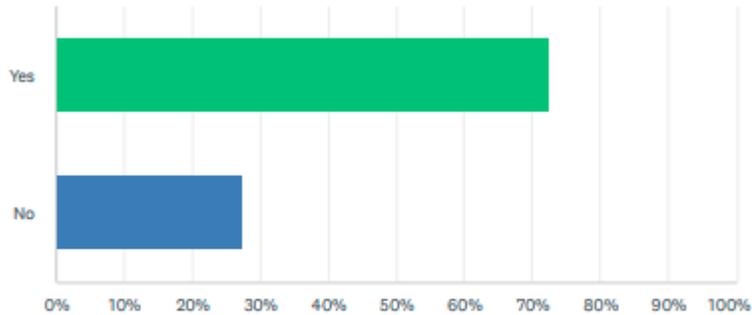
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	72.58%	45
No	27.42%	17
TOTAL		62

Q7 In which First Nation community do you live?

Answered: 45   Skipped: 23

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Fort William First Nation	15.56%	7
Nipissing First Nation	13.33%	6
Serpent River First Nation	11.11%	5
Alderville First Nation	8.89%	4
Curve Lake First Nation	8.89%	4
M'chigeeng First Nation	8.89%	4
Biigtigong Nishnaabeg	4.44%	2
Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation	4.44%	2
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	4.44%	2
Sheguiandah First Nation	4.44%	2
Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory	4.44%	2

Atikameksheng Anishnawbek	2.22%	1
Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation	2.22%	1
Beausoleil First Nation	2.22%	1
Garden River First Nation	2.22%	1
Namaygoosisagagun First Nation	2.22%	1
Aamjiwnaang First Nation	0.00%	0
Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation	0.00%	0
Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek	0.00%	0
Chippewas of Georgina Island	0.00%	0
Chippewas of Rama First Nation	0.00%	0
Dokis First Nation	0.00%	0
Henvey Inlet First Nation	0.00%	0
Long Lake #58 First Nation	0.00%	0
Magnetawan First Nation	0.00%	0
Michipicoten First Nation	0.00%	0
Mississauga First Nation	0.00%	0
Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation	0.00%	0
Moose Deer Point First Nation	0.00%	0
Munsee-Delaware Nation	0.00%	0
Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg	0.00%	0
Pawgwasheeng Pays Plat First Nation	0.00%	0
Red Rock Indian Band	0.00%	0
Sheshegwaning First Nation	0.00%	0
Thessalon First Nation	0.00%	0
Wahnapitae First Nation	0.00%	0
Wasauksing First Nation	0.00%	0
Whitefish River First Nation	0.00%	0
Zhiibaahaasing First Nation	0.00%	0
TOTAL		45

# Q9 From what roll are you taking this survey? (select more then one if applicable)

Answered: 61   Skipped: 7
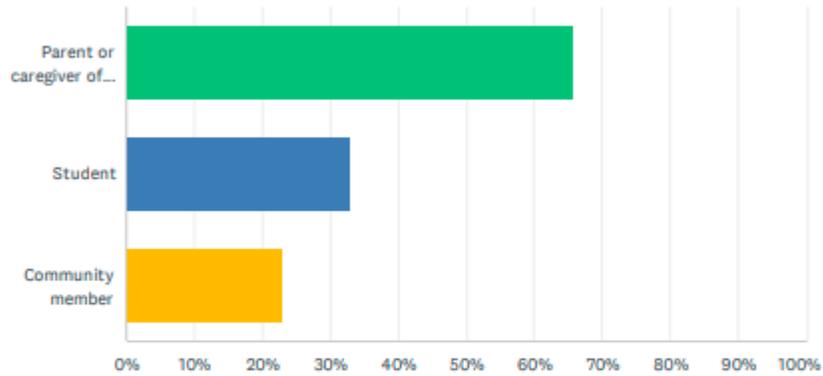
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Parent or caregiver of child or youth	65.57%	40
Student	32.79%	20
Community member	22.95%	14
Total Respondents: 61		

# Q10 Do you currently participate in any education programs, supports, and services? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 59   Skipped: 9
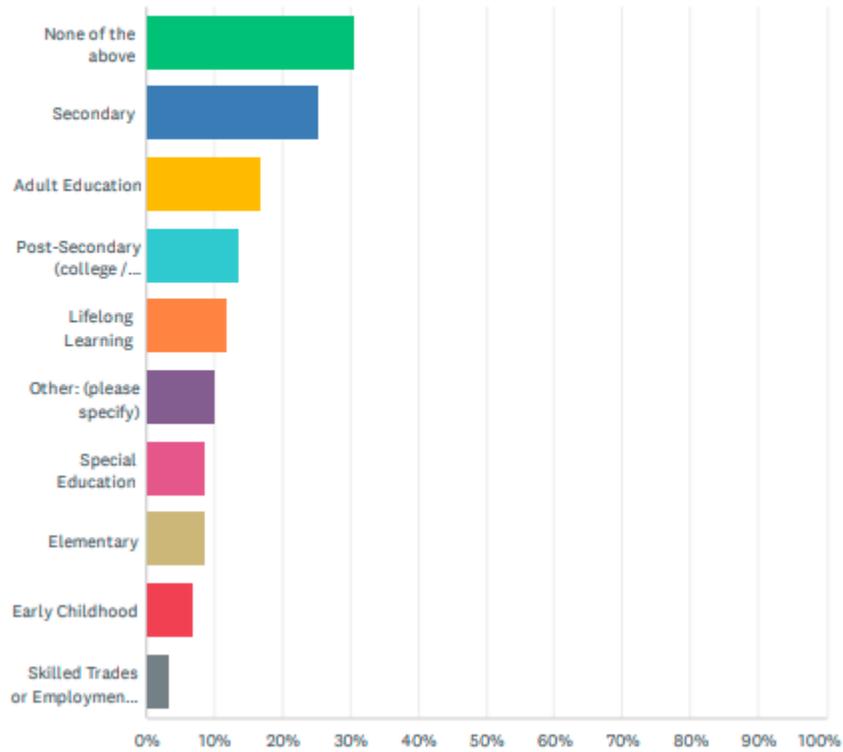
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	30.51%	18
Secondary	25.42%	15
Adult Education	16.95%	10
Post-Secondary (college / university)	13.56%	8
Lifelong Learning	11.86%	7
Other: (please specify)	10.17%	6
Special Education	8.47%	5
Elementary	8.47%	5
Early Childhood	6.78%	4
Skilled Trades or Employment Training	3.39%	2
Total Respondents: 59		

Q11 Do you have children or youth in your care currently participating in any education programs, supports, and services? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 59   Skipped: 9
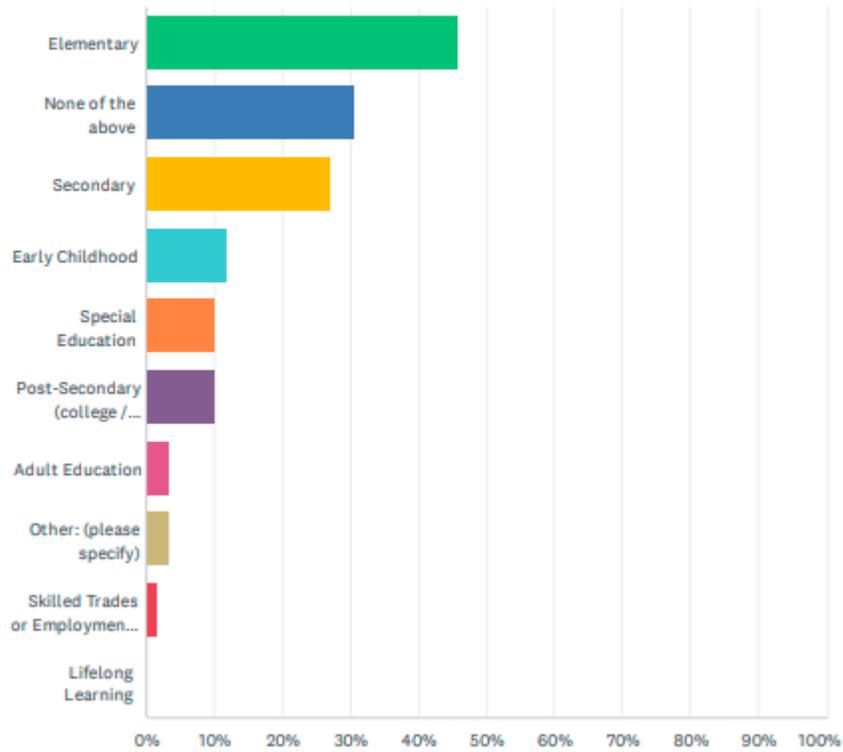
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Elementary	45.76%	27
None of the above	30.51%	18
Secondary	27.12%	16
Early Childhood	11.86%	7
Special Education	10.17%	6
Post-Secondary (college / university)	10.17%	6
Adult Education	3.39%	2
Other: (please specify)	3.39%	2
Skilled Trades or Employment Training	1.69%	1
Lifelong Learning	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 59		

Q12 Where do you or the children/youth in your care access education programs?

Answered: 60   Skipped: 8
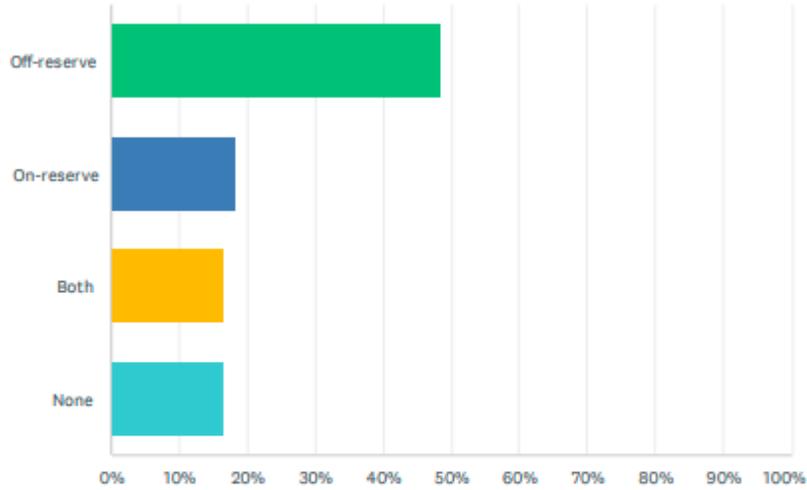
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Off-reserve	48.33%	29
On-reserve	18.33%	11
Both	16.67%	10
None	16.67%	10
TOTAL		60

Q13 Has the COVID-19 pandemic effected you or your children/youth as learners?

Answered: 60   Skipped: 8
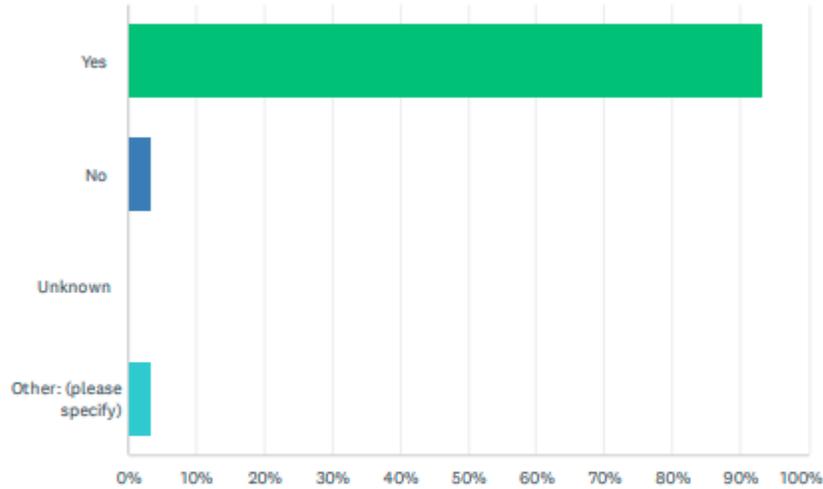
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	93.33%	56
No	3.33%	2
Unknown	0.00%	0
Other: (please specify)	3.33%	2
TOTAL		60

Q14 Has COVID-19 effected one or more of these areas in your household? (check all that apply)

Answered: 60   Skipped: 8
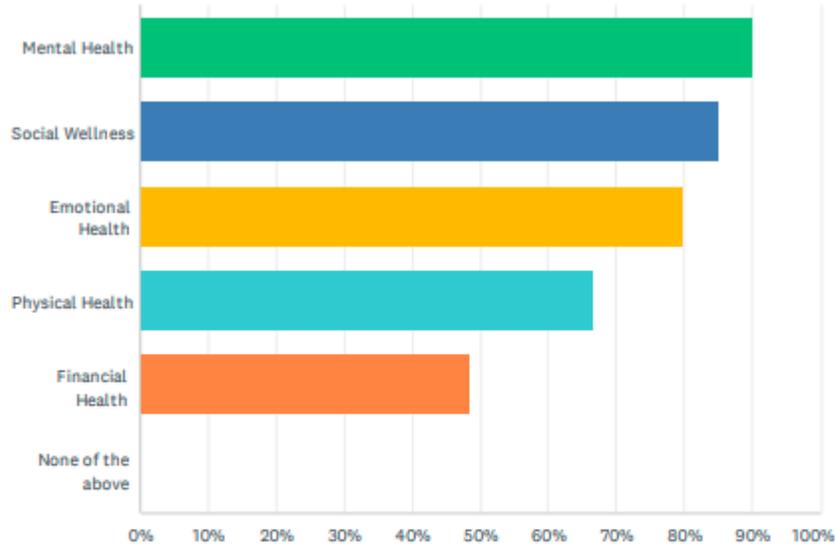
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mental Health	90.00%	54
Social Wellness	85.00%	51
Emotional Health	80.00%	48
Physical Health	66.67%	40
Financial Health	48.33%	29
None of the above	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 60		

Q15 What were some of the educational challenges that you or your children/youth faced as a result of COVID-19? (check all that apply)

Answered: 59   Skipped: 9
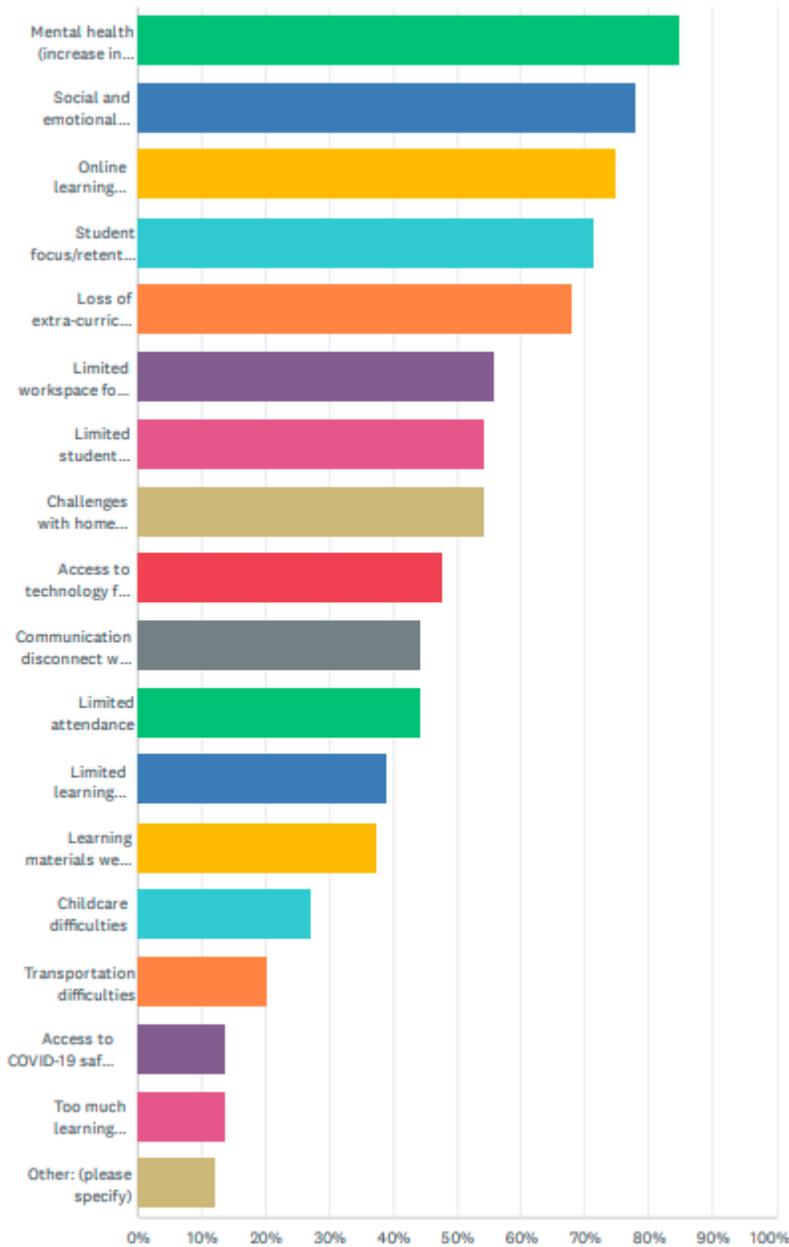
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mental health (increase in anxiety, etc.)	84.75%	50
Social and emotional health	77.97%	46
Online learning difficulties (ex. Internet connection, limited knowledge on software)	74.58%	44
Student focus/retention while home learning	71.19%	42
Loss of extra-curricular activities	67.80%	40
Limited workspace for home learning	55.93%	33
Limited student supports	54.24%	32
Challenges with home teaching (ex. Parents/caregivers helping with material)	54.24%	32
Access to technology for on-line learning	47.46%	28
Communication disconnect with school/board administration or teacher	44.07%	26
Limited attendance	44.07%	26
Limited learning material or repeat material	38.98%	23
Learning materials were not effective for learner	37.29%	22
Childcare difficulties	27.12%	16
Transportation difficulties	20.34%	12
Access to COVID-19 safety equipment	13.56%	8
Too much learning material	13.56%	8
Other: (please specify)	11.86%	7
Total Respondents: 59		

Q16 What were some of the educational strengths that you or your children/youth faced as a result of COVID-19? (check all that apply)
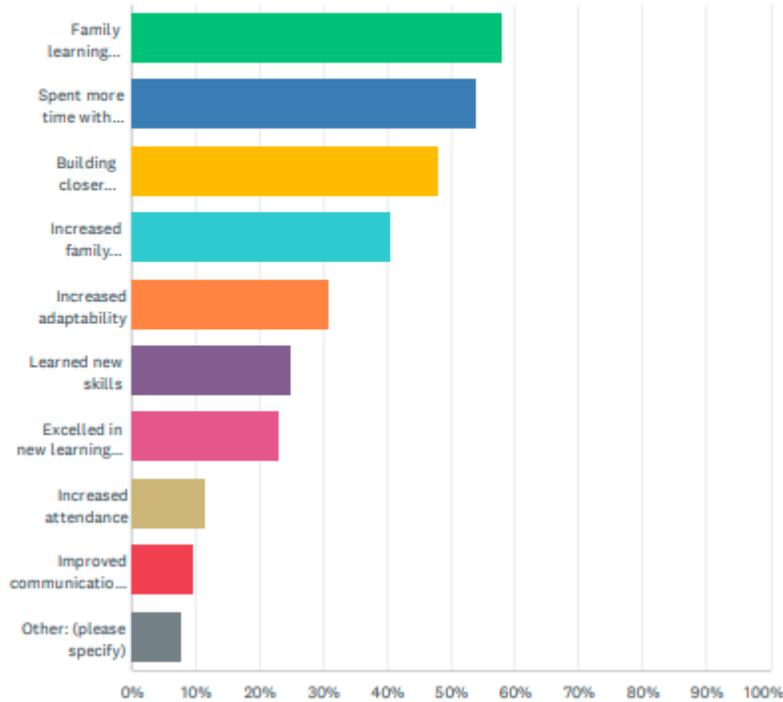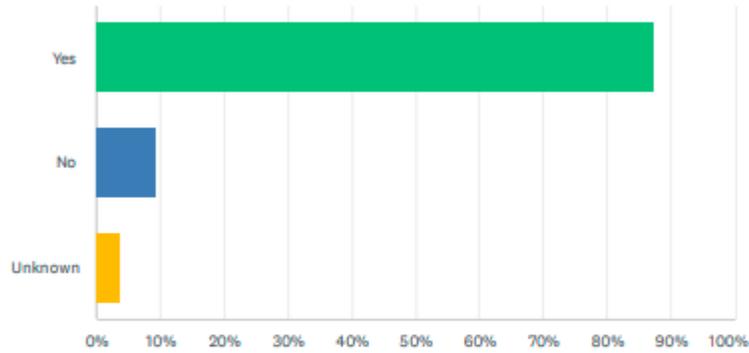
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Family learning together	57.69%	30
Spent more time with children/youth	53.85%	28
Building closer relationships	48.08%	25
Increased family engagement in education	40.38%	21
Increased adaptability	30.77%	16
Learned new skills	25.00%	13
Excelled in new learning platforms	23.08%	12
Increased attendance	11.54%	6
Improved communication with school/board or teacher	9.62%	5
Other: (please specify)	7.69%	4
Total Respondents: 52		

Q19 Do you feel that learning loss occurred?

Answered: 55   Skipped: 13

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	87.27%	48
No	9.09%	5
Unknown	3.64%	2
TOTAL		55

Q20 How would you rate the amount of learning loss that occurred?

Answered: 48   Skipped: 20
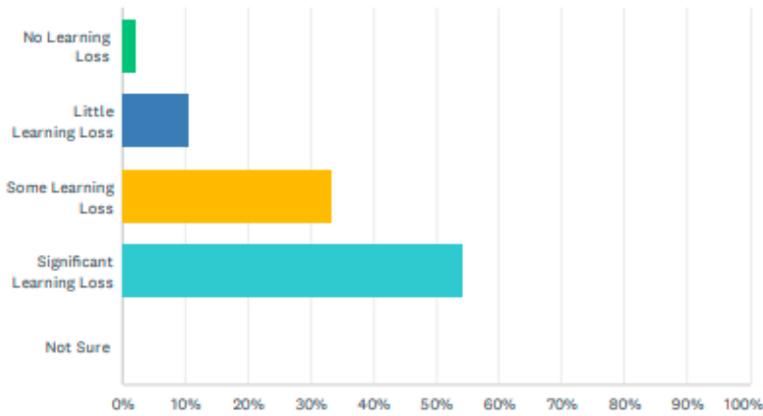
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No Learning Loss	2.08%	1
Little Learning Loss	10.42%	5
Some Learning Loss	33.33%	16
Significant Learning Loss	54.17%	26
Not Sure	0.00%	0
TOTAL		48

Q22 Has a teacher or education staff informed you that you or your child/youth are "behind" in a subject due to COVID-19?
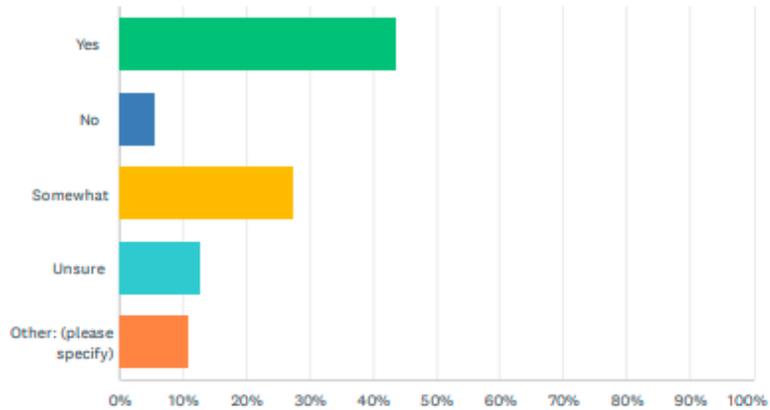
Answered: 53   Skipped: 15
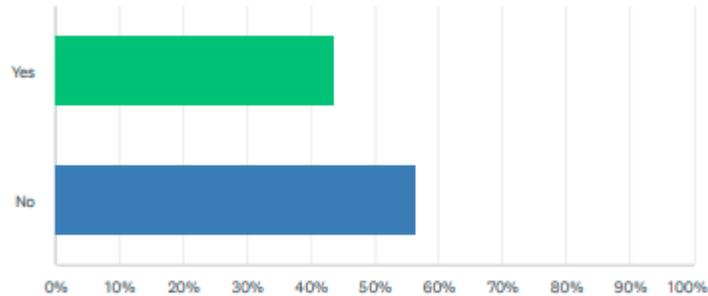
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	43.40%	23
No	56.60%	30
TOTAL		53

Q23 Do you feel confident in your or your children/youths ability to successfully complete the next level of their educational journey?

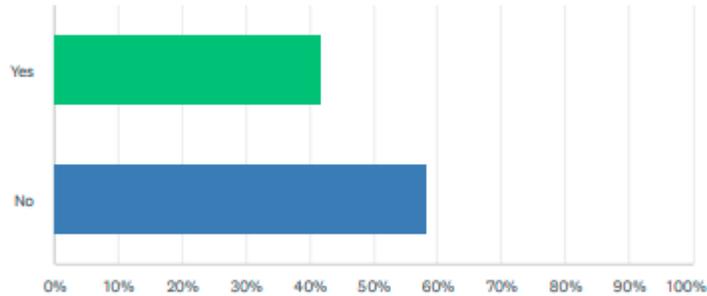Answered: 55   Skipped: 13

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	43.64%	24
No	5.45%	3
Somewhat	27.27%	15
Unsure	12.73%	7
Other: (please specify)	10.91%	6
TOTAL		55

Q24 Has your school, school board, or community offered any additional supports for learning recovery?

Answered: 55   Skipped: 13

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41.82%	23
No	58.18%	32
TOTAL		55

Q26 We would like to know how Anishinabek Nation can better support learning recovery for students. Please rate the level of importance of required support for yourself or students for each category below.

Answered: 54   Skipped: 14

	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRITICAL	NOT SURE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
After School Tutoring Supports	1.89% 1	11.32% 6	41.51% 22	13.21% 7	22.64% 12	9.43% 5	53	3.72
Student Support Workers	1.85% 1	7.41% 4	24.07% 13	24.07% 13	38.89% 21	3.70% 2	54	4.02
Digital Support Programs (i.e., Learn to Read software)	5.56% 3	1.85% 1	35.19% 19	27.78% 15	25.93% 14	3.70% 2	54	3.78
Increased Class-Time	13.21% 7	18.87% 10	24.53% 13	9.43% 5	15.09% 8	18.87% 10	53	3.51
Increased Homework	30.19% 16	28.30% 15	13.21% 7	5.66% 3	5.66% 3	16.98% 9	53	2.79
Weekend or Summer Learning Camps	12.96% 7	22.22% 12	31.48% 17	9.26% 5	11.11% 6	12.96% 7	54	3.22
Training for Teachers / Parents	0.00% 0	9.26% 5	31.48% 17	20.37% 11	25.93% 14	12.96% 7	54	4.02

Appendix B: Staff Survey Results

Please note, survey responses are included by question, with the exception of the consent question and questions 9, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21, and 23 which include text. We have incorporated the textual responses into the report.
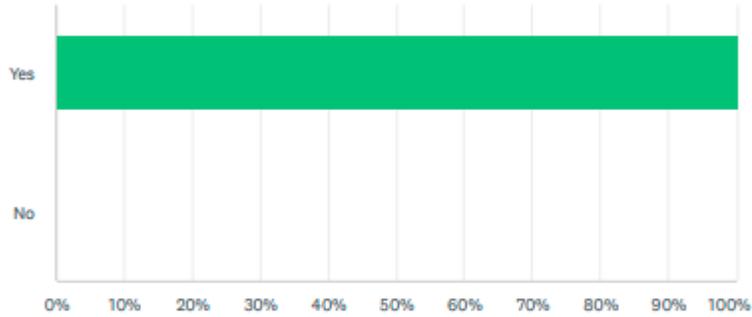
Q2 What is your age range?

Answered: 38   Skipped: 0
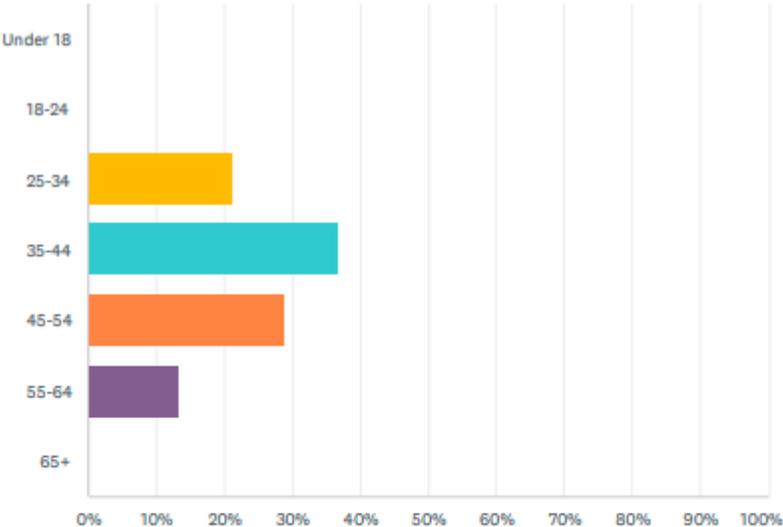
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	0.00%	0
25-34	21.05%	8
35-44	36.84%	14
45-54	28.95%	11
55-64	13.16%	5
65+	0.00%	0
TOTAL		38

Q3 Are you currently employed as an education staff working with AN First Nations students?

Answered: 38   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	38
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		38

Q4 Which AN community do you work with? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 37   Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Whitefish River First Nation	24.32%	9
Beausoleil First Nation	10.81%	4
Biigtigong Nishnaabeg	8.11%	3
Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory	8.11%	3
Aamjiwnaang First Nation	5.41%	2
Atikameksheng Anishnawbek	5.41%	2
Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation	5.41%	2
Curve Lake First Nation	5.41%	2
Garden River First Nation	5.41%	2
Mississauga First Nation	5.41%	2
M'chigeeng First Nation	5.41%	2

Wahnapitae First Nation	5.41%	2
Wasauksing First Nation	5.41%	2
Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation	2.70%	1
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	2.70%	1
Long Lake #58 First Nation	2.70%	1
Michipicoten First Nation	2.70%	1
Moose Deer Point First Nation	2.70%	1
Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg	2.70%	1
Nipissing First Nation	2.70%	1
Serpent River First Nation	2.70%	1
Sheguiandah First Nation	2.70%	1
Sheshegwaning First Nation	2.70%	1
Zhiibaahaasing First Nation	2.70%	1
Alderville First Nation	0.00%	0
Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation	0.00%	0
Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek	0.00%	0
Chippewas of Georgina Island	0.00%	0
Chippewas of Rama First Nation	0.00%	0
Dokis First Nation	0.00%	0
Fort William First Nation	0.00%	0
Henvey Inlet First Nation	0.00%	0
Magnetawan First Nation	0.00%	0
Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation	0.00%	0
Munsee-Delaware Nation	0.00%	0
Namaygoosisagagun First Nation	0.00%	0
Pawgwasheeng Pays Plat First Nation	0.00%	0
Red Rock Indian Band	0.00%	0
Thessalon First Nation	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 37		

Q5 Are you employed by an AN First Nation?

Answered: 36   Skipped: 2
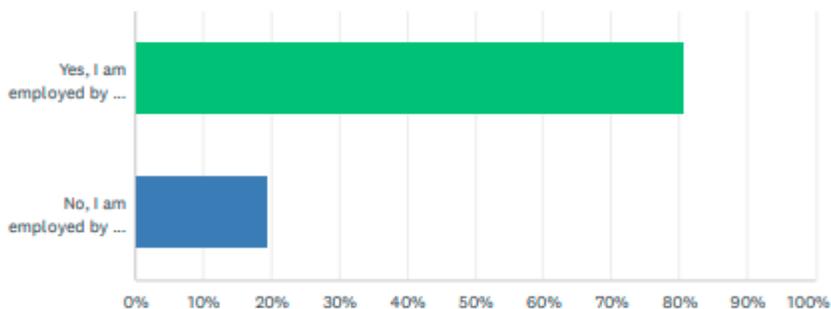
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I am employed by an AN First Nation	80.56%	29
No, I am employed by a school board or education partner	19.44%	7
TOTAL		36

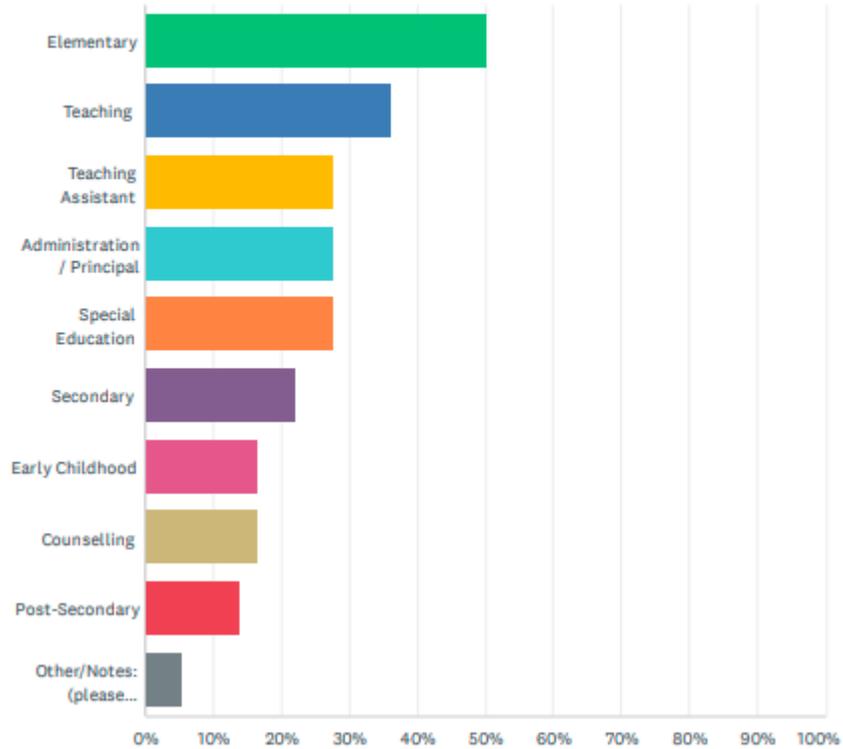# Q6 Which group of students do you primarily work with?

Answered: 36   Skipped: 2
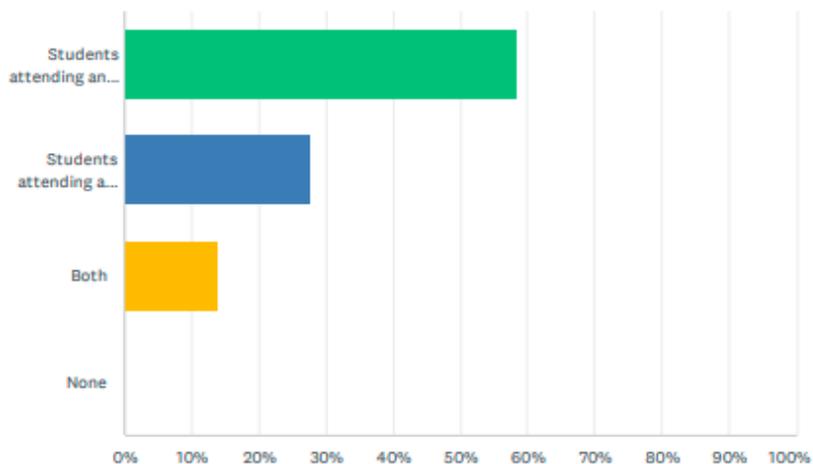
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Students attending an on-reserve school	58.33%	21
Students attending a provincial school, located off reserve	27.78%	10
Both	13.89%	5
None	0.00%	0
TOTAL		36

Q7 What areas of education are you currently involved in? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 36   Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Elementary	50.00%	18
Teaching	36.11%	13
Teaching Assistant	27.78%	10
Administration / Principal	27.78%	10
Special Education	27.78%	10
Secondary	22.22%	8
Early Childhood	16.67%	6
Counselling	16.67%	6
Post-Secondary	13.89%	5
Other/Notes: (please specify)	5.56%	2
Total Respondents: 36		

Q8 Has the COVID-19 pandemic effected your students?

Answered: 36   Skipped: 2
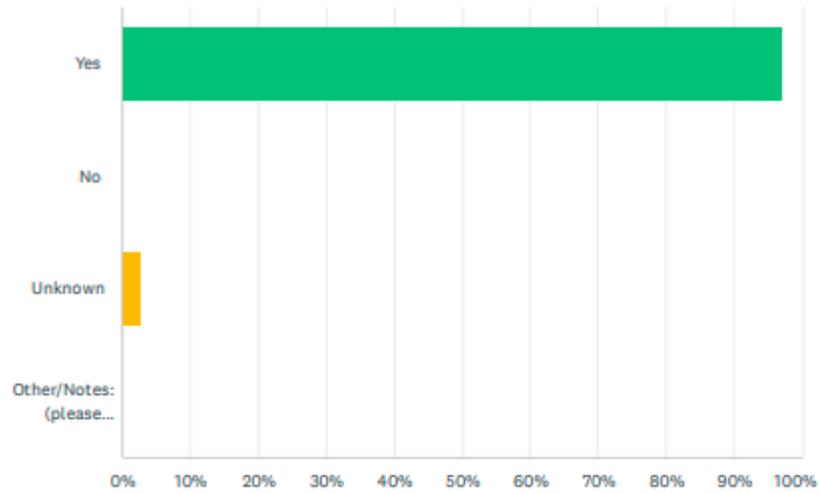
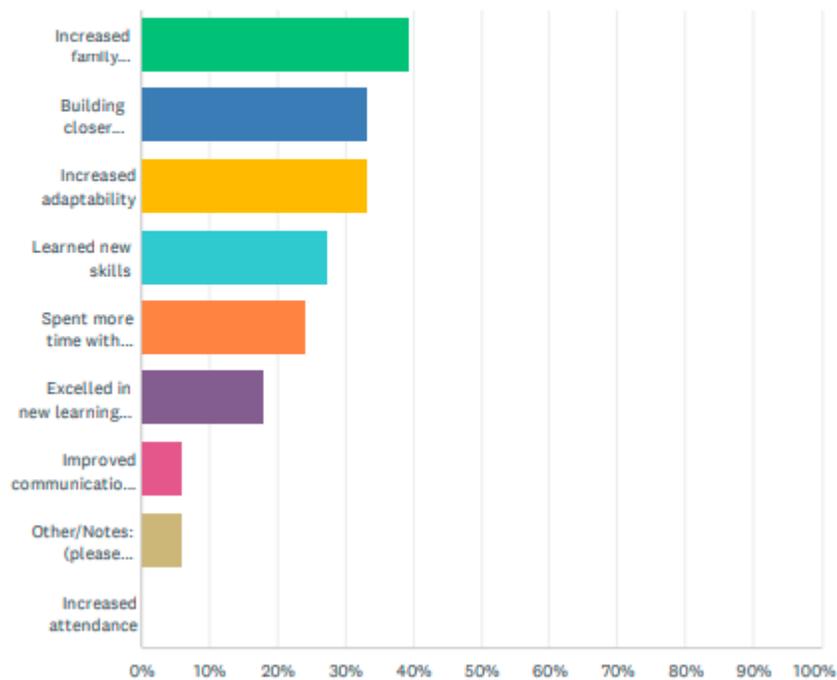| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	97.22%	35
No	0.00%	0
Unknown	2.78%	1
Other/Notes: (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 36		

Q10 What were some of the educational challenges that your students faced as a result of COVID-19? (select all that apply)

Answered: 36   Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Social and emotional health	80.56%	29
Online learning difficulties (ex. Internet connection, limited knowledge on software)	77.78%	28
Limited attendance	77.78%	28
Incomplete work	72.22%	26
Access to technology for on-line learning	66.67%	24
Mental health (increase in anxiety, etc.)	66.67%	24
Student focus/retention while home learning	66.67%	24
Behavioural changes	66.67%	24
Communication disconnect with families	63.89%	23
Loss of extra-curricular activities	63.89%	23
Limited workspace for home learning	61.11%	22
Less one-on-one support for students	61.11%	22
Limited student supports	55.56%	20
Challenges with home teaching (ex. Parents/caregivers helping with material)	55.56%	20
Disconnect with students learning retention	52.78%	19
Childcare difficulties	36.11%	13
Learning materials were not effective for learner	30.56%	11
Transportation difficulties	22.22%	8
Access to COVID-19 safety equipment	11.11%	4
Other/Notes: (please specify)	5.56%	2
Total Respondents: 36		

Q11 What were some of the educational strengths that your students faced as a result of COVID-19? (check all that apply)
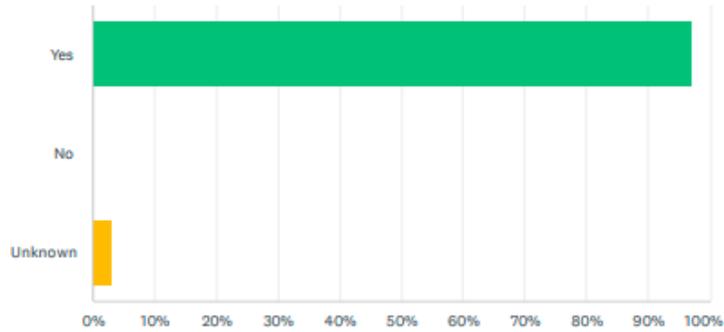
Answered: 33   Skipped: 5

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increased family engagement in education	39.39%	13
Building closer relationships	33.33%	11
Increased adaptability	33.33%	11
Learned new skills	27.27%	9
Spent more time with children/youth	24.24%	8
Excelled in new learning platforms	18.18%	6
Improved communication with family	6.06%	2
Other/Notes: (please specify)	6.06%	2
Increased attendance	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 33		

Q14 Do you feel that learning loss occurred?

Answered: 33   Skipped: 5

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	96.97%	32
No	0.00%	0
Unknown	3.03%	1
TOTAL		33

Q15 How would you rate the amount of learning loss that occurred?

Answered: 32   Skipped: 6
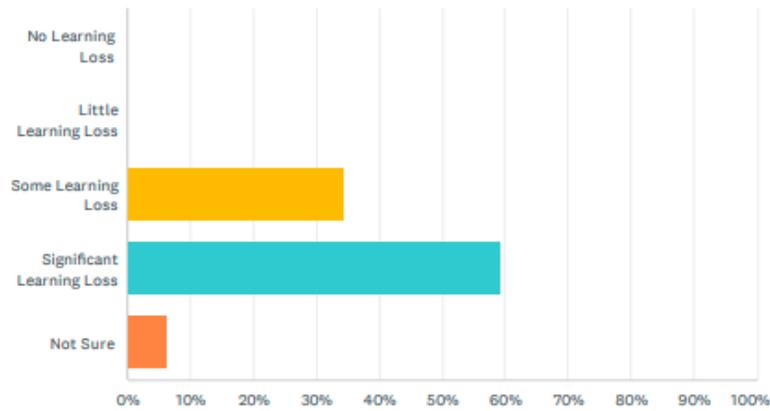
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No Learning Loss	0.00%	0
Little Learning Loss	0.00%	0
Some Learning Loss	34.38%	11
Significant Learning Loss	59.38%	19
Not Sure	6.25%	2
TOTAL		32

Q17 Are there any tools that you have accessed that can quantify learning loss?

Answered: 32   Skipped: 6
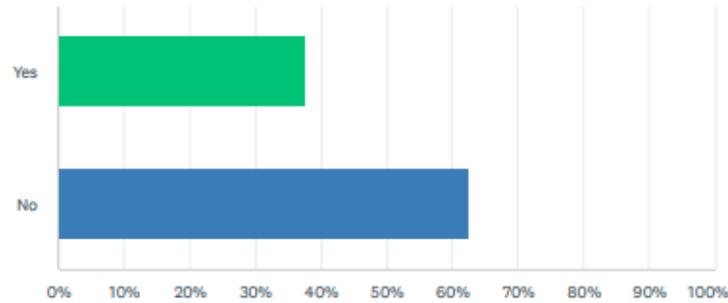
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	37.50%	12
No	62.50%	20
TOTAL		32

Q19 Do you feel confident in your students ability to successfully complete the next level of their educational journey?
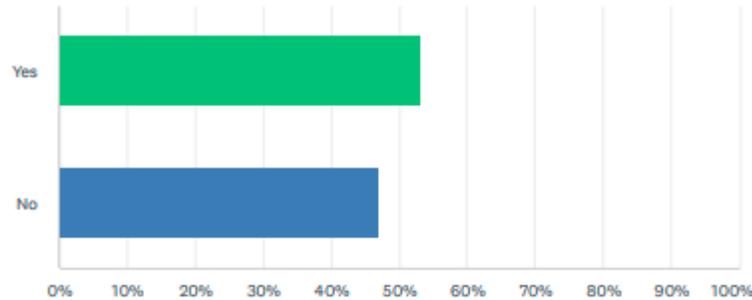
Answered: 32   Skipped: 6
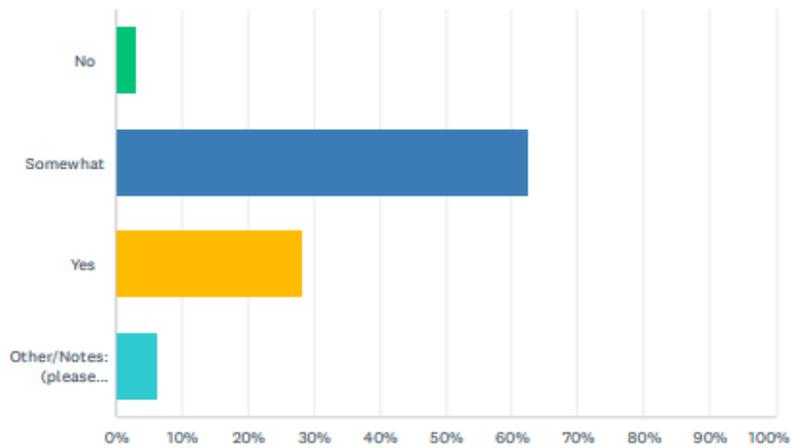
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	3.13%	1
Somewhat	62.50%	20
Yes	28.13%	9
Other/Notes: (please specify)	6.25%	2
TOTAL		32

Q20 Has your school, school board, or community identified any additional supports for learning recovery?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	53.13%	17
No	46.88%	15
TOTAL		32

Q22 We would like to know how Anishinabek Nation can better support learning recovery for students. Please rate the level of importance of required support for each category below.

	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRITICAL	NOT SURE	TOTAL
After School Tutoring Supports	0.00% 0	10.00% 3	36.67% 11	40.00% 12	13.33% 4	0.00% 0	30
Student Support Workers	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 5	43.33% 13	40.00% 12	0.00% 0	30
Digital Support Programs (i.e., Learn to Read software)	0.00% 0	10.00% 3	33.33% 10	36.67% 11	20.00% 6	0.00% 0	30
Increased Class-Time	10.00% 3	20.00% 6	33.33% 10	23.33% 7	10.00% 3	3.33% 1	30
Increased Homework	23.33% 7	40.00% 12	16.67% 5	13.33% 4	3.33% 1	3.33% 1	30
Weekend or Summer Learning Camps	0.00% 0	26.67% 8	30.00% 9	30.00% 9	13.33% 4	0.00% 0	30
Training for Teachers / Parents	0.00% 0	6.67% 2	13.33% 4	36.67% 11	43.33% 13	0.00% 0	30