

# Goodfish Open Campus

Board of Governor's Day of Collaboration and Conversation

December 1, 2016



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“There is a need in this community for our young people to be in school. Portage College is addressing that need,” said Jackson.

- ▶ ***“We had the buy-in from our students, parents and community members to partner with an institution that was established and recognized,” said Chief James Jackson, Chief of Whitefish/Goodfish Lake First Nation. “Portage College has always been a great supporter and we felt that it would be a great fit for our community.”***
- ▶ ***“This has become a great success for Whitefish Goodfish Lake, not just in academics, but in giving these kids the life skills they need,” said Garret Steinhauer, Assets Department for Whitefish/Goodfish Lake. “Portage’s participation has been very beneficial for everyone involved.”***



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- ▶ *“We started this program with a focus group, giving students the opportunity to voice their concerns and help build a program that would lead to success,” said Rosalie Halfe, Education Coordinator for Whitefish/Goodfish Lake First Nation. “We’ve taken a more holistic and cultural approach, away from the conventional understanding of education.”*
  
- ▶ *“This has become a great success for Whitefish [Goodfish] Lake, not just in academics, but in giving these kids the life skills they need,” said Garret Steinhauer, Assets Department for Whitefish/Goodfish Lake. “Portage’s participation has been very beneficial for everyone involved*



# Goodfish Open Campus

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# History

In the spring of 2013 the Goodfish Lake community approached Portage College to discuss a concern. They were looking for a way to meet the needs of young people who were not receiving their certificates/diplomas and/or choosing to drop out of high school.

Portage College program and student support staff met with council member to discuss the educational needs of the youth in the community. There were several meeting with the community – parents, students, elders, council members and community at large.



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## The Issue

Youth in the community were registered in high schools outside the community, and parents were dissatisfied with the results they were seeing on transcripts. Students were not attending, not receiving credits and not achieving the goals set out for them. Goodfish Community and Portage College have a long standing partnership of working together to address training needs of the community. After meetings and discussion with council members, parents and youth who provided their vision for a school that would meet their educational needs, a Steering Committee made up of Goodfish Nation and Portage College personnel was put in place to develop a program plan



# Background

Shortly after, Portage College and Whitefish Lake Administration opened the doors of the Goodfish Lake Open Campus in the Goodfish Lake community. The Good Fish Lake Open Campus serves the needs of students who cannot or choose not to remain in a regular classroom and offers students the opportunity to attend school in their community. Students have the support to engage in their own learning, to develop and work through learning plans that build on essential skills, career, life-skills, and personal needs in a blended, holistic, experiential learning environment that extends beyond the four walls of the classroom..



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In addition Goodfish Lake Open Campus offers a wide variety of pathways to pre-requisite courses accredited by Alberta Education that enable students to complete their education in preparation for post-secondary or job placement. In addition to that CTS Career Courses, Safety tickets such as First Aid, WHMIS, TDG, ATV, Bear Awareness, Dual Credit Coursework and wherever possible cultural components were incorporated.

### **Vision**

Portage College works with students and Whitefish Lake Community to create a second chance for students ages 15 – 20 to attend to the educational system in their community.

### **Mission**

Provide a second chance and fresh start for students, ages 15 – 20 to work from where they are at toward their individual learning/career goals.



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# Project

The Goodfish Lake Open Campus pilot operated between August 2014 and June 2015 with two semesters. Assessments, orientation, and program placements occurred during the first two weeks. The Open Campus operated between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 pm Monday through Friday. 18 students attended the program. Opportunities to build leadership and mentorship skills were incorporated into the program. To date the Open Campus has been running for 3 years.



# Project

The Open Campus learning environment supports students over 15 years of age and older in Goodfish Lake to build on their strengths and initial career interests as they incorporate foundational learning (level three - essential skills). Success coaches and instructors work with students to ensure that students are challenged and supported to embrace skills that enable each student to create exceptional learning experiences for themselves and those with whom they interact as mentors and members of an extended learning community. Development of the program was based on the Assumptions and Learning that Inform the Open Campus Environment how students learn

- ▶ when they are able to connect to and build on previous experiences, skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- ▶ in a holistic environment that meets their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual needs.
- ▶ when they have an opportunity to work with and are supported by role models and teachers in their community.
- ▶ when they are encouraged to participate in developing and maintaining independent learning plans.
- ▶ when they have a voice in creating a learning environment that meets their needs.
- ▶ when they can build trust and make connections with others.



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# Project

- ▶ Learning is enhanced when students are able to engage with activities that reflect the values of the community.
- ▶ In the Open Campus students are supported to meet their learning needs in daily group, cultural and community activities. Students track daily, weekly, and monthly academic and life skill goals with the guidance of a success coach and their instructors in an independent learning portfolio.
- ▶ an Open Campus Handbook has been adapted to include Circle Justice principles to encourage students to be supported and to support each others' learning pathways
- ▶ students participate in monthly steering committee meetings with success coach, instructors and coordinator of the program to ensure that the Open Campus supports students to become active participants in creating a positive learning environment for all.



# Project

- ▶ community members and mentors support and inquire with students to support their individual learning portfolios and hope-focused service-learning projects.
- ▶ students are inspired to learn in personally meaningful ways (to make sense of who they are and are becoming as learners alongside others).
- ▶ Learning is holistic (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) cultural experiences (build relationships with Portage College's Virtual Elders, use the Medicine Wheel and Circle of Courage in their learning e-portfolios).
- ▶ students focus on building essential skills/TOWES testing results as they explore career options.
- ▶ The Open Campus supports 20 students a year
- ▶ Students are supported to achieve goals (i.e. obtain diploma and/or requirements to enrol in post-secondary)
- ▶ work with community members/mentors on one community project



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# Community and College Partnerships

One of the highlights of this pilot is the nature of the ‘working and developing’ partnership agreement between GFL Band Administration/Community/Students and Portage College. The go forward a decision was made on the premise that we would work together to create a learning environment that makes sense to all stakeholders along the way. This requires open communication and a willingness to imagine how things can be otherwise when we remain open to the possibilities as a team and as individuals supporting students who have asked for a second chance and a new start.

- ▶ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) was invited to a discussion with Portage College partnering with Whitefish/Goodfish Lake in new education initiative.
- ▶ Community input and involvement. Combining academics with activities and life skills, the Goodfish Lake Open Campus gives students from age 15-20 a structured learning environment in their home community.
- ▶ Relationship with Pakan School Administration who is also the Principal of Goodfish Lake Open Campus

# Community and College Partnership

- ▶ Portage College is committed to seeing this project continue and grow, by providing teaching and training support as well as infrastructure.
- ▶ “There is a need in this community for our young people to be in school. Portage College is addressing that need,” said Jackson.
- ▶ The results of this pilot program have been excellent, as students are showing an increase in reading, writing and arithmetic levels.
- ▶ Portage College is committed to seeing this project continue and grow, by providing teaching and training support as well as infrastructure.

# Challenges

- Funding (sponsors)/sustainability daily and multi-year
- Learning environment (space) is limited
- Need two full time Instructors
- No housing for Instructors
- Moving school (trailer) closer to Pakan School is costly
- Daily transportation
- Students leaving to community schools if they feel learning needs are not met
- Steering Committee regular meeting with students



# Successes

- ▶ Student attendance improved as the year progressed
- ▶ Students began to monitor behaviours that they felt would enhance their success as learners
- ▶ Students increasingly participated in group lessons
- ▶ certificates (CSTS, WHMIS, ATV, Bear Awareness and first aid) certificates were obtained by students. Students who successfully accomplished their learning goals in participated in industry training following their experiences in the Open Campus and are currently employed.
- ▶ Students noted the strong sense of belonging and the need for the Open Campus for their present and future well-being
- ▶ Parents participated in various activities throughout the year
- ▶ Students raised funds for a future community project
- ▶ Students began planning a proposal for an extra-curricular project in the community
- ▶ Transitioned from a focus on academics' to a holistic learning environment with the assistance of community and college resources
- ▶ Daily transportation improved and maintained student attendance



# Successes

- ▶ Success coach assisted with teaching of life/study skills, building cultural connections (i.e. shopping for snacks with students; supporting students in community activities)
  - ▶ Steering committee meetings held with students, instructors, Band Administration, parents, Portage College support team
  - ▶ Students participated in two service-learning projects at Pakan School while instructional team met for Professional Development
  - ▶ Elder working with students one day a month
  - ▶ Students & instructors increasingly integrated Medicine Wheel and Circle of Courage teachings
  - ▶ Students feel supported by instructors
- 
- ▶ Students wrote diploma exams



# Successes



# Successes



# Thank You To Our Partners!

