

# Beyond Access to Inclusion: The Axworthy Years, 2004-2014

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## Abstract

For at least a decade now, the University of Winnipeg, an urban institution on Treaty One land in the heart of the Métis Nation, has challenged existing academic models and practices, and has incorporated strategies that address the social divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in order to more effectively serve the learning needs of its surrounding community. This paper demonstrates how an inner-city university has used internal policies and programs to help support the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. Seven community learning initiatives were recently evaluated for impact. The paper provides an overview of the positive outcomes of these learning initiatives on a community of underrepresented learners.

## Highlights of the Findings

Evaluated programs had **overall approval ratings of more than 90%** by children & youth, parents & guardians, & schools.

### Five Best Practices Identified in the Evaluations

- ❖ Supporting families by providing **culturally-relevant and free learning opportunities** to a community of underrepresented learners in all levels of education and, at every possible opportunity, within a wraparound model of free transportation, materials and supplies, and meals or snacks.
- ❖ Strengthening community partnerships by hiring **Indigenous leaders and role models** with authentic relationships to community.
- ❖ Building **social capital** among youth through peer mentoring and role modelling opportunities.
- ❖ Encouraging connections of Indigenous youth to **education, employment, leadership opportunities, and civic responsibility**.
- ❖ Fostering a **sense of belonging** to the university community in children, youth, and their families by effectively using its resources and infrastructure to extend its reach into the community.

### Programs evaluated at the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre:

Pow Wow Club

Let's Speak Ojibway to Our Kids

Sacred Seven Healthy Teen Relationships

Summer Indigenous Math Leadership Camp

### Programs evaluated at the Innovative Learning Centre:

Science Kids on Campus (formerly, Eco-Kids on Campus)

Adventure Kids Summer Camp (formerly, Eco-U Summer Camp)

The Model School at the Collegiate High School

## Methods and Sample

- ❖ The researchers adopted both **qualitative and quantitative** methods, including surveys, short answer questionnaires, Likert scale statements, in-person, telephone or family interviews, and many other instruments.
- ❖ **940 evaluation participants** in total, including children and youth, parents and guardians, school stakeholders.
- ❖ The evaluation reports produced **168 pages of findings, outcomes, best practices, and lessons learned in the programs**.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This study informed our understanding of **key guiding principles** to positively impact Indigenous educational outcomes:

- ❖ A willingness to **listen to and respect** the wisdom of the community you are intending to serve. The community knows what it wants and needs.
  - ❖ A clear university **governance model** and formal policy framework for community engagement that makes it an institutional priority.
  - ❖ Good **fundraising capacity** to support low-income students.
  - ❖ **Culturally relevant programming** that encourages multigenerational engagement.
  - ❖ Promoting a clear model of **civically engaged youth**.
  - ❖ Educational strategies and learning opportunities for youth that include **experiential learning**, engaging traditional knowledge and cultural teachings, co-curricular activities such as skill-building workshops and employment experiences.
- The costs of these **preventive investments** in community programs are vastly outweighed by their far-reaching social and fiscal benefits for society.

