

Report on the

Aboriginal Family Counsellor Program

Aboriginal Education Council

School District #73 (Kamloops/Thompson)

School Year 2016-2017



Prepared by

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Based on Data Compiled by the Counsellors

Report on the Aboriginal Family Counsellors 2016 -2017

Background: This statistical update has been provided to highlight the caseload and program activities for the Aboriginal Family Counsellor Program for the school year 2016-17. The update will include comparative data from the 2012-13 to 2016-17 school years. Included in this year's report are case studies from Aboriginal Family Counsellors.

Counsellors Involved in the Program for 2016-17 Include:

Amanda Big Sorrel Horse, B.Ed	Corinna Lampreau, BSW
Ashley Broadfoot, B. Ed, M. Ed (Counselling)	Peter Michel, B.Ed
Barb Dubois Paynter, MSW, RSW	Tara Tribute Babcock BSW, M. Ed (Counselling)
Lynn Duck Chief, BSW	Marilee Draney Welch BSW, M. Ed (Counselling)

Counselling	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Total Number of Students Referred For Counselling and Prevention Groups	562	703	681	647	749
Total Number of Students Referred for Individual Counselling	281	298	270	257	285
Elementary	97	108	112	103	156
• Males	60	55	64	48	84
• Females	37	53	48	55	72
Middle/Secondary	184	190	158	154	129
• Males	83	84	63	75	49
• Females	101	106	95	79	80
Total Number of Males in Individual Counselling	143	130	127	123	133
Total Number of Females in Individual Counselling	138	159	143	134	152



Prevention Groups	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of Students Referred for Participation In Prevention Groups	281	405	406	389	464
• Elementary	104	161	161	168	176
• Middle/Secondary	177	244	245	221	288
Total Number of Females in Prevention Groups	225	315	303	289	358
• Elementary	75	122	115	123	132
• Middle/Secondary	150	193	188	166	226
Total Number of Males in Prevention Groups	56	90	103	100	106
• Elementary	29	39	46	45	44
• Middle/Secondary	27	51	57	55	62
Total Number of Groups	16	24	32	25	37
• Males	n/a	n/a	12	9	9
• Females	n/a	n/a	20	16	28

NOTE: The total number of groups includes only groups facilitated by the Family Counsellors. This is the first year that funding has not been received from the Canadian Women's Foundation and all of the groups have been funded by targeted dollars. Two additional Aboriginal Girls Groups were facilitated by Aboriginal Education Workers without the direct support of AFC.

Family Composition of Students in Counselling	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Single Parent	115	108	116	109	120
Intact	49	47	48	50	38
MCFD/SCFS	35	32	25	19	18
Extended	41	42	32	33	34
Blended	38	30	27	45	61
Independent Living	12	16	20	3	1
Transitional*	n/a	n/a	6	6	9

* A "transitional" family situation is when a student has lived in different family situations throughout the school year or for the majority of the school year.



**Aboriginal Girls Group
Year End Moccasin Square Garden**

Observations About this Year's Aboriginal Family Counsellor Update

- The number of students referred for individual counselling up from the previous year. There was no additional one to one counselling time added but in November a day was added to support the need for three additional Aboriginal Girls Groups in schools that did not have an assigned Aboriginal Family Counsellor assigned. There were eight AFC working 7.2 Full Time Equivalent
- More elementary students received counselling support than secondary students this year. This is a change in the trend from previous years where there were more secondary students receiving support.
- The Family Composition of students in counselling continues to indicate that Single Family households make up the largest group. Our statistics indicate that the new concept of "Transitional" family situations is evident and does pose challenges for the students. The number of "children in care" accessing AFC support is showing a declining trend as is the number of students in "Independent Living" situations.
- There was a large decrease in the number of males participating in Aboriginal Boys Groups this year as the only groups report here were facilitated by our lone male Aboriginal Family Counsellor. Students (and their parents) are still finding value in what is learned and experienced in the both our Aboriginal Girls and Boys Groups. Schools are also seeing positive school-related results from participants in Groups and there is less and less resistance to students leaving class to attend group.
- This year was the first year funding for the Aboriginal Girls Groups (AGG) was totally supported by targeted funding. In the past funding for the grade 5 to 9 Aboriginal Girls Groups was through a grant from the Canadian Women's Foundation and in partnership with the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Centre. This stable funding allowed for the development of stable curriculum and has given the groups a firm foundation for the future. Four new AGG groups were added this year, three at the elementary and one at the secondary level.
- There continues to be high caseloads in our alternate programs this year. Students in those programs have higher numbers of multiple issues such as: alcohol and drugs, depression, self-esteem, peer relationship conflicts and low motivation. It hoped that by increasing counselling time in these programs we can better help our students to achieve success in school and in life.

Key Issues Comparison in One to One Counselling

*Key Issue definitions follow on next page

Key Issues	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17
	All	% + - 12-13 & 13-14	All	% + - 13-14 & 14-15	All	% + - 14-15 & 15-16	All	% + - 15-16 & 16-17	All
Alcohol & Drugs	92	33%	122	-42%	71	-72%	67	-19%	54
Anger Management	56	-27%	41	24%	51	20%	71	31%	93
Anxiety	54	17%	63	11%	70	10%	120	29%	155
Cultural Support	139	-5%	132	12%	149	11%	158	-16%	133
Depression	47	77%	83	-35%	60	-38%	50	-4%	48
Grief & Loss	76	67%	127	-4%	122	-4%	108	-11%	96
Low Motivation	71	90%	135	-47%	72	-88%	100	22%	122
Mental Health Diagnosis	*	*	*	*	32	*	25	84%	46
Parent/Child Conflict	75	32%	99	-40%	59	-68%	93	1%	94
Parenting Support/Skills	48	-6%	45	96%	88	49%	47	34%	63
Peer Relationship	85	91%	162	-40%	97	-67%	143	10%	157
Self-Esteem	129	47%	190	-10%	171	-11%	198	11%	219
Self-Mutilation	10	70%	17	24%	21	19%	27	-4%	26
Sex Education	63	16%	73	-3%	76	4%	27	30%	35
Sexual Abuse	28	-14%	24	0%	24	0%	9	56%	14
Suicide	13	23%	16	38%	10	-60%	22	-18%	18
Violence	46	-4%	44	20%	53	17%	13	85%	24

*Data not collected on Mental Health issues prior to 2014-15

NOTE: The number of key issues far exceeds the caseload data. Students are often dealing with multiple and complex issues when they are referred to or seek counselling services from the Aboriginal Family Counsellors. For example, a student who is struggling in school may have drug and alcohol issues related to grief and loss or depression which would likely impact self-esteem.

Key Issues Analysis

The AFCs tracked issues related to mental health for the third year in an effort to have more data on the rising need for mental health support for students. There was an 84% increase of students with mental health issues between 2015-16 and 2016-17. The AFCs will continue to track those needing support within the school system as well as those who are referred for support to outside agencies.

There was a slight decrease in the number of incidences that involved suicide and suicide ideations. A change to Suicide Protocol that is used in the school district was implemented in the spring of 2016 and that has provided more support and direction for our AFC in dealing with attempted suicide and suicide ideation in school settings. Each community in our school district has designated Suicide Protocol that must be followed by the staff in the schools.

Referrals for issues related to *Alcohol and Drug* continue show a decreasing trend since the 2012-2013 school year. Issues relating to *Anger Management* also had a significant increase of 31%. There continues to be focus on dealing emotions in our Aboriginal Boys and Girls Groups. Sex Education was also a focus in both Aboriginal Boys and Girls Groups with the support of a third year nursing student who facilitated presentations and discussions with secondary groups.

Anxiety is another issue that continues to be a problem across the district – this is not unique to Aboriginal students as it reported to be one of the top mental health issues facing all students in our district.

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Definitions of Key Issues

Alcohol and Drugs: Use or abuse of alcohol and drugs could be on a continuum from moderate use to serious and frequent use to addiction.

Anger Management: Difficulty in dealing with or controlling anger. E.g. students who push the anger down or have explosions of anger; can become enraged or belligerent with peers or adults in the classroom, on the playground, at home etc.

Anxiety: Feelings of worry, fear, insecurity, apprehension or uncertainty of a realistic or fantasized threatening event or situation; multisystem response to a perceived threat or danger which can impair physical or psychological functioning.

Cultural Support: Cultural support and/or teachings provided by the Counsellor or cultural resources are brought in for the student.

Depression: Feelings of despondency, hopelessness, inadequacy, lack of energy; continuum could be moderate, manageable, short term depression or could be chronic, severe depression requiring ongoing counselling and/or medication.

Grief and Loss: Various kinds of loss including death (or suicide) in the family or a close friend, separation or divorce of parents, death of a companion pet, leaving a community and home and moving to another place.

Low Motivation: Observed in students who are capable but have no or little drive and no goals or aspirations.

Mental Health Diagnosis: Refers to a wide range of mental health conditions — disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior. Examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviors.

Parent/Child Conflict: Frequent conflicts/disagreements between the student and parents, guardians, caregivers.

Parenting Skills: Suggestions on parenting skills and strategies made by the Counsellor to the parent via home visits, phone calls, emails and/or a referral to community programs that support parents and/or a referral to private counselling for couples or family.

Peer Relationships: Difficulty or conflicts in relationships with friends or dating partners.

Self-Esteem: Having negative self-image of one's abilities, talents, physical attributes, future possibilities etc.

Self-Mutilation: Cutting or other forms of physical self-harm.

Sexual Abuse: Different levels of sexual abuse from inappropriate touching to rape.

Sex Education: Providing support or information regarding safe sex, STD's, sexual relationships, provides support for pregnancy tests.

Suicide: Ideation or attempt.

Violence: Incidents where the student is either the perpetrator or the victim or the witness to violence in the home or in a personal relationship.



"Plate Smashing "
Aboriginal Girls Group



Aboriginal Dance Play
Aboriginal Girls Group Year End



Aboriginal Girls Group
Art Projects



Aboriginal Girls Group Year End
Pow Wow Grounds

CASE STUDIES by the Aboriginal Family Counsellors

The following case studies will profile specific cases from our 2016-17 counselling caseloads. Each case study will indicate the following: the issues facing the student when they were referred to us, the strategies that were used to improve the situation, and the results/outcomes that were achieved through counselling.

Case Study No. 1 - Elementary Student

Presenting Issues:

One of the students that I supported this year was a first time client to me but a previous client of our Aboriginal Counselling program. Right before school started she dealt with the loss of her mother. Her mother struggled with drug addiction, and had passed tragically leaving her two children to grieve her loss. When I first met this student she was curled up in a ball, sitting in the front lobby of the school waiting for her step-mom to come pick her up. This student had extreme anxiety and grief and loss that she couldn't handle a day at school. She was not only grieving, but also shuffled between Dad's home and step-mom's home weekly.

Strategies Used:

In our month together this student brought memories of Mom. I felt their connection by looking at pictures, reading the obituary, and sharing in the good and bad stories. From here we began working on a memory journal and grief and loss exercises through art and narrative stories. This student had many up and down days. She found it hard to interact with friends because they did not understand her grief. We thought it would be a good idea to have her in our Aboriginal Girls Group where she was free to express herself in a safe environment.

Results/Outcomes:

So many amazing outcomes emerged throughout the year. Her teacher saw her as a leader as months went by in the classroom. In a way it was like she could break free of the ups and downs of mom's addiction and truly focus on herself. She became a leader in our Girls Group and found health ways to express and talk about her emotions.

Later in the year run to further support her, I connected her with a grief and loss group through the Hospice Society where she was able to be with other young girls who had lost someone in their life. She found the experience rewarding and it was impactful to meet others who were experiencing the same grief.

She became culturally connected and started to traditional dance with her school dance group. This was powerful because her father and stepmother are Non-Aboriginal and it gave her connection with her mother who passed and the student felt it was important to stay connected to her culture. Step-mom and I became close while supporting this student and step-mom wanted to show her daughter how much she meant to her. She ended up adopting both the student and her brother. It was a touching and powerful time for the family.

Case Study No. 2 – Elementary Student

Presenting Issues:

A Grade 7 boy presented with issues of being bullied and anxiety at the beginning of the school year. He was worried about a couple of students who had been bullying him. When he shared this info with the AFC, together they were able to talk to the LART and principal about how he could feel safe in the school and in turn be part of the classroom routine more regularly.

Strategies Used:

As the fall months moved forward and the bullying had stopped, he was still experiencing disengagement while in the classroom and anxiety about attending class. There was a meeting with parents, the AFC and school staff, in order to make school a peaceful and successful place for him to be. For several weeks the AFC was meeting with the student several times a week as he would "shut down" (i.e. leave the classroom, and even school building and grounds).

Further, there was more CEA and AEW support put in place on a daily basis and his mother even worked with him in an isolated room. Slowly, he began to reintegrate in to his classroom on a regular basis. In April he even attended the Strength of Being a boy conference with the AFC and 3 other male students from his school. He engaged and participated in this exciting day.

The student also struggled with past trauma and physiological issues that caused bowel issues. Our team of support put a plan in place to help when he had "accidents" and the AFC arranged with his mother to take the student to physicians and initiated a referral to a pediatrician.

Results/Outcomes:

This student has been engaged academically and he is excited about moving to the high school next year for grade eight. He is feeling confident in the school and is well connected to the Aboriginal programming. The elementary AEW brought him to the high school to meet the high school AEW who gave him a tour around the school. Lastly, the LART at the elementary school, the high school counsellors, the student's parents and the AFC held a meeting to ensure that the student his transition is well supported in the fall at the high school.



Aboriginal Girls Group Activities



Case Study No. 3 – Elementary Student

Presenting Issues:

This male elementary student has difficulty forming friendships and maintaining good grades in school because of his poor attendance. His family had undergone difficult transitions this year that have left him confused and anxious.

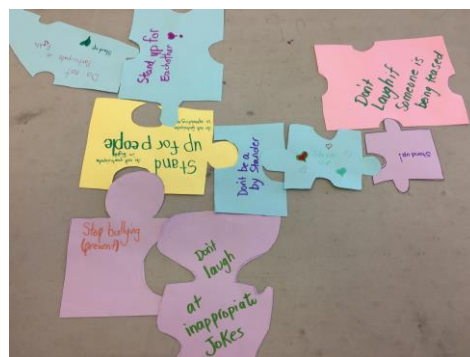
Strategies Used

I always practice with the knowledge that the relationship is the key when working with children in a counselling capacity. This case was no different. To build this relationship and provide a non-threatening atmosphere I used play therapy. During these activities the student was more open and communicative than he would be if we were just talking. The student and I frequently talked about belonging and the importance of a healthy connection with his peers and school environment. Throughout the year we worked on coping strategies with the goal of reducing stress. Some of these strategies included mindfulness activities, such as, breathing techniques, communicative strategies and art activities. I would consistently follow up with what was working and what was not working during following visits.

School climate was a large factor in deciding how to work best with this student. The more time away the student seemed to have the greater stress he was under when he returned due to his teacher's expectations and mounting workload. I was able to be a part of some collaborative team planning around this student where several strategies were discussed. The student's work load while absent became based on mandatory assignments and I was able to work with the teacher around providing an environment that conveyed belonging to the student when he returned from being absent.

Results/Outcomes:

After working closely with the student, his family, and the school this student was able to overcome his anxiety and attend school on a regular basis. We were able to increase his sense of belonging and connection to his school and his peers.



Case Study No. 4 – Secondary Student

Presenting Issues:

Early this fall, a grade nine student was referred to me. The referral was a result of a conversation between a parent and administration at the school. At the time of the referral the single father had a number of concerns regarding his teenage daughter. The concerns were: within the last six months his daughter was returned to his care, this resulted in the student being in a new catchment and starting a new school and the father noticed at home his daughter was having a hard time expressing her feelings and communicating with him and the staff school wanted to help the student feel welcome and to begin connecting with adults and students at the school.

Strategies Used:

My main focus was to build rapport with both the father and the student. This really helped to lay the foundation for the relationship and address the needs of this family. I used a solution focused and strength based approach with this student. We met on a weekly basis throughout the year and our sessions focused on: healthy ways of coping with stress and change, different and healthy ways we can communicate with each other and healthy coping skills for grief and loss. The school, family and I put together a support system which included both school staff and outside community agencies. The school support included Aboriginal Girls Group and this program helped to connect this student with other youth at the school and help her to develop new friendships.

Results/Outcomes:

As a result of working both with the parent and student I was able to help create a strong support system for both the parent and the youth. This holistic approach helped support the family both at and outside of school and allowed for supports to be in place throughout the summer. At the end of the school year the student was able to identify and express how she was feeling, she demonstrated positive coping skills for stress and she had developed positive friendships at her new school.

Case Study No. 5 – Secondary Student

Presenting Issues

There was a young secondary school student in grade 10 who suffered from severe anxiety and ADHD. This student was so anxiety stricken they would not attend school until a unique and supportive school environment could be established that nurtured and supported the needs of the student.

Strategies Used

Smaller class sizes and a flexible school schedule were established that helped to foster the optimum learning time for the student. The student started to attend school daily and was motivated to complete school work as well interact with adults and peers in a positive way.

Success has been achieved through focusing on solution based strategies, art therapy, aromatherapy, natural based formulas (diet and supplements), and weekly counselling sessions. With continued support and teaching the student basic life skills such as budgeting, hygiene, cooking, effective communication strategies, and goal setting this student will be highly successful in life and in the academics.

Results/Outcome

As many youth do, they will turn to self-medicating themselves and so did this youth who was consuming alcohol/drugs daily. To this date the student is still using drugs/alcohol recreationally around 2-3 times a month as compared to using drugs/alcohol daily at the start of the year. I believe that is success and it is huge stride for this youth. The student now attends school daily and is motivated to move forward in a positive way. The student is focusing on small goals and the success of attaining those goals.

Case Study No. 6 – Secondary Student

Presenting Issues:

Student presented with grief issues surrounding her step- father's recent diagnosis with cancer. Student attended grade 9. She was worried about the future and about her mother.

Strategies Used

The relationship between the AFC and student was previously established as the student had attended Aboriginal Girls Group for several years. As a result of the established trust the student was willing to openly share with AFC.

The student drew her family (genogram) which helped her realize her familial supports as she had a large extended, blended family. She made a list of supports in her family as the AFC gave her additional names of supports within the community.

Journaling was an integral tool in helping this student to write about what is happening in her life and to reflect. Activities like writing funny family stories, writing a page on each family member and the student was also encouraged to draw when writing seemed too cumbersome.

Results/Outcomes:

The student has identified family supports for herself as well she will continue to stay in contact with the AFC on an as needed basis throughout the summer months. She is now feeling stronger emotionally and is able to understand and use the family and community supports that she has.

Case Study No. 7 – Secondary Student

Presenting Issues:

This youth was referred for Aboriginal Family Counsellor for support for a variety of reasons- worries about completing school, family, personal health, financial struggles and relationship issues. Last year this youth quit school because they were feeling so stressed by pressures at school. The youth tried to complete on-line courses but didn't have the energy or motivation to follow-through. This year the youth switched schools and decided to come back to school full time and went through some hard times again but this time was determined not to quit school. The youth missed some time from school due to health reasons but still kept on trying. The youth felt really good about accomplishments early in the school year and held on to those feelings and was determined to get through the second term.

Strategies Used

The Aboriginal Family Counsellor had worked with this youth the previous year and I knew the youth's struggles to stay in school and succeed at school. The AFC was able to support this youth when the youth started to become anxious about their grades and problem solve ways to talk to the teachers and complete the assignments. The AFC met with the principal, the youth and the youth's father to help establish a plan of support. The AFC met with the student while they were home and through texting kept in touch with the youth.

Perhaps the most important part was the relationship the youth had made with the AFC; the youth felt they could trust the AFC and that the course assignments would work out. The AFC had advocated for this youth earlier in the school year and the youth knew that the AFC would be there to support them if there were any issues with completing assignments. The school was very helpful and accommodating to the youth's needs. The school acknowledged the youth's struggles and how determined they were to succeed.

Results/Outcomes:

The youth missed some time from school due to health reasons but still kept on trying. The youth felt really good about accomplishments early in the school year and held on to those feelings and was determined to get through the second term.

Towards the end of the school year, the youth was in a car accident and unable to attend school for the month of June but was so determined to pass their courses that they went in to the school while unable to walk and made a plan with the school principal about how they could finish the courses at home. Although the youth was in a lot of pain- they kept at it and gradually completed the work.

The youth is currently getting better physically, and will make a full recovery from the car accident. The youth passed and is moving ahead to the next grade! This youth is really trying to find a way to complete their schooling and graduate with a grade 12 Dogwood Diploma and is well on their way to doing this.

