

Elders teach students traditional skills.



Catch of the day!



Socially Responsible Students at Lutsel K'e



One of the murals students painted as a social responsible anti-bullying campaign.



The first two graduates of Lutsel K'e Dene School.



Students painted murals with artist John Rombough.

By Devin Roberts, Lutsel K'e Dene School

Lutsel K'e Dene School (LKDS) is a small school of 72 students located in the remote Northern community of Lutsel K'e, Northwest Territories¹. A disconnect between schools in Northern Canada and the communities they serve can exist. Despite this, Lutsel K'e Dene School has found success by promoting social responsibility with its students.

The South Slave Divisional Education Council (the school board that serves Lutsel K'e) tracks the success of schools with data

collection in numeracy, literacy, language and social responsibility. In 2014-2015, the overall student attendance rate was 81 per cent, which was an increase of 13 per cent compared to the previous three years when the attendance rate had been 68 per cent. Enrollment increased from 64 students in 2013-2014, to 72 by September 2014.

We believe the positive change in enrollment and attendance could possibly be attributed to a reemphasis being placed on social responsibility by staff and students. In 2014-2015, the school underwent a change with five new teachers coming to the school. The LKDS staff decided that a renewed

focus on social responsibility was important. The Positive Behavior Interventions & Support (PBIS) model was decided upon by using a matrix for positive behavior that was designed by staff and students.

Students at Lutsel K'e Dene School participate in a four-team house challenge system that rewards good behavior and positive social interaction. Teachers acknowledge students with "Eagle Feathers" for demonstrating positive behavior and acting socially responsible.

The feathers are collected as a competition among the four school teams. Teams and students are acknowledged for

collecting the feathers on the P.A. system or at school assemblies. Student assemblies were used to acknowledge positive behavior and monthly challenges were organized using the school's goals as a focus for each challenge.

Community involvement also plays a significant role in teaching social responsibility. In Lutsel K'e, elders often come in and share their traditional knowledge with students. Elders share stories, teach students to sew, participate in on-the-land learning excursions, and even painted four murals. Local artist John Rombough lead a group of students in painting school-uniting murals that were featured at three local media outlets.

Lutsel K'e is a community filled with talented individuals willing to share their experience and knowledge with our students. At our spring camp this past April 2015, the school had community members join the camp and share their traditional knowledge with our students. Elder teachings focused on treating others with respect and developing traditional skills. This shared sense of community is the focus of both our school and community.

A focus on extra curricular activities also helped to promote social responsibility, as students were required to be positive role models in their school in order to participate in school activities. In 2014-2015, Lutsel K'e Dene School sent two middle school girls to compete in the Northwest Territories track and field competition for the first time in many years. Girls' and boys' basketball teams were also formed for the first time and competed at the annual Cager basketball tournament in Yellowknife. Popular sports like volleyball and soccer also had their programs expanded, with 37 students travelling to two different tournaments. This amount of students involved in athletics represented nearly 60 per cent of the entire student population.

In June of 2015, two high school students wrote the English Language Arts 30-2 diploma exam for this first time in the history of the school. The 2015 school year ended with the school celebrating its first two (ever!) graduates of Grade 12, with a large ceremony that was attended by 250 community members.

Students, staff and community members have all noted that the school has undergone a change in the right direction, which many

attribute to the positive behaviors being reinforced by the PBIS program and an overall focus on social responsibility. ○

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Note

1. The community is located on the south shore near the eastern end of Great Slave Lake and until 1 July 1992, it was known as Snowdrift, as the community lies near the mouth of the Snowdrift River. According to the 2011 Census, the population of the community was 295 people. Although not accessible by road there is an airport, Lutselk'e Airport, with scheduled services from Yellowknife and an annual sealift is provided by Northern Transportation Company Limited from Hay River in the summer. Lutselk'e Water Aerodrome is available in the summer months when the lake is clear of ice.

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