

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

“The three homes you built will stand as a constant reminder of not only what you built, but how you built yourselves. I think all of them have a bright future in construction because of their dedication and work ethic.” M. Kirkland

Eliminating Achievement Gaps

Kainai School: Building Big Dreams with a Tiny Home Project

It came about by accident; Kainai School Principal, Annette Bruised Head-Fox, was looking for ways to engage and involve high school students in their learning. What began as an opportunity for students to experience work in the construction trades by painting and fixing the school became much more. What developed was a collaboration between industry, suppliers and the school, allowing students to build tiny homes from the ground up.



Tiny home project in progress at Kainai High School

Ten students began the program, spending part of their school day learning basic trades and working on tiny homes. They have developed hands on experience in house design, flooring, framing, plumbing, electrical, siding, interior walls, insulating, dry walling, installing

windows and doors, as well as painting and roofing. The students are experiencing hands on practice in a wide variety of trades. They had to pass a First Aid course and complete HCS 3000, a college-level job site safety course. Building the tiny homes enables students to earn as many credits towards high school completion as possible. They are also better prepared to work on commercial job sites.

For many of the participants, their confidence has increased and their school work and attendance have improved. Parents are proud of what their children have accomplished in the tiny homes program.

Some students see a future for themselves in construction. They look forward to exploring careers as electricians and carpenters. Alternatively, some participants have learned that they do not want to work in construction after graduation. Either way, career paths have become better defined.

Principal Bruised Head-Fox is looking to the future—perhaps developing a Kainai High School Industries that could benefit their First Nation

community by building these tiny homes with solar energy.

She sees that there is already a difference being made with the first ten students—they can see themselves becoming home owners in the future and have an understanding of what it takes to build a home. They can see that it’s not a dream for them; they, too, can own a home.



*“This program has meant a lot to me; it has opened up a world of possibilities.”
- Ryan*

Fundamental to this success is the collaboration that Principal Annette Bruised Head-Fox actively sought out for this project. Merit Contractors Association, the Chinook Regional Foundation for Career Transitions, and the Canada-Alberta Job Grant contributed towards this project. The support of the suppliers was also fundamental in providing materials that the school could afford.

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Closing Achievement Gaps

Discussion Starters:

1. *“The three homes you built will stand as a constant reminder of not only what you built, but how you built yourselves.”* Share examples of how your students are engaged in real world, authentic learning, and how these experiences have impacted all students, and specifically First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
2. Discuss the barriers to real world, authentic learning and brainstorm as a team how you might work collaboratively and creatively to overcome these barriers.
3. What are the partnerships you can form to provide real world experiences for your students?

For more information:

- [Inquiry Transforms Learning Environments for Students](#) Alberta Teachers Association
- [Career and Technology Foundations Challenges](#) Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia
- [Our Words, Our Ways](#) Alberta Education
- [First Nations, Metis and Inuit Professional Learning](#) Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia

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