

**Interview with Gitz**

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:00:05.01

My name is Gitz.

*Q: What do you do?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:00:09.02

I work with kids. I don't really know what my title is, FNMI Coordinator, I was former FNMI coordinator with Learning through the Arts with the Wood Buffalo Region.

*Q: What is the most significant learning through the Learning through the Arts program?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:00:34.19

I would say that the most significant effect I've seen on the students with the FNMI perspective, would you mix up the students -- FNMI and non-FNMI -- it brings validation to our cultural practices. So we, who we are as people is there and it's, you know, in the curriculum and side by side. It validates our identity, our experience.

[retake]

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:01:08.14

The most significant effect it has on FNMI students with Learning through the Arts is that it validates our culture. Having our history, having our past, having our practices within the curriculum just shows our students that it's on par. It's not some forgotten, you know, old way of being. It's, it's there, it's still relevant today.

[retake]

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:01:51.18

I find that the most significant effect that this has had on the FNMI students with Learning through the Arts is that our culture is not really something on display but rather something tangible within the curriculum. It validates our students to show that, you know, it's on par with what is presented.

*Q: How has Learning through the Arts helped with student engagement?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:02:25.06

I've seen students go from... It's like they're reaching into the text books and pulling out the information, and then have, then forming it for themselves. Rather than just seeing a piece of paper, I've seen the students engaged by really taking the information and creating something with it. Whether it's like music, whether it's, you know, dance, whether it's poetry -- all those artistic components are finally visualising and an experience of learning.

*Q: Can you think of examples of this?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:03:06.21

I just did planets with students, and space, and so there were all these questions about space. But having the kids create and shape their own planet and then talk about the planet, present it, the planet, and having that on day 1, and then on day 4 we talk about colonising -- which planet would you potentially colonise within the solar system?

00:03:29.00

And the kids were saying, "This is the planet I worked on and this is why we can't, we cannot be..."

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:03:35.15

Working on these planets, they presented, say, "We can't colonise Jupiter," and they give me the specific reasons why we can't colonise Jupiter. So it's actually pretty cool, and then they're bringing up facts even after, you know. I heard this on the radio or I Googled it or I Wikipedia'd this information. So it's, you see them engaged even after class has ended.

*Q: Were you surprised the grades improved?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:04:23.14

I think I was a bit surprised. 'Cause you don't really know the effect it's gonna have. You go into it with a good perspective and the hope that this will work, but you don't really quite know until you actually see the results of what you put in with the kids, and what the kids are putting back. That's the aim and we hit it, so yeah, it did kind of surprise me a bit.

*Q: How do you personally feel about the work you do?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:04:48.22

It's cool, it's really cool. I mean I wish when I was in high school I had the same thing because of being able to engage in a different way of learning. And it's, it's cool, it's a really weird feeling.

*Q: How do you think this impacts the larger Wood Buffalo region? What would you personally like to see happen?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:05:27.15

The ripple effect that this is gonna have in the region... I guess you don't really know. But if kids are going home and they're bringing stuff that they've created or flipping a switch inside of them... 'Cause I know we did an after school program up in Trinity and several of our students made a film last year, they're now acting in different plays now.

00:05:47.19

And they might become huge actors, they might not, but this is like a component of themselves that has opened up. And even if they're not on the stage we're seeing some of our students backstage, but they still have a connection with each other. They're still there, they're still entertaining it.

00:06:01.10

Would that have happened? Possibly, but we are giving a venue for this to actually happen.

*Q: What does this mean to you personally?*

LTTA1 - Gitz @ 00:06:16.25

I think the school structure is evolving. It was very... we didn't have a lot when I was... Like 10 years ago we didn't really have a lot. I see the teachers... I see the whole inter-academic structure kind of evolving, like I said. It's growing past some archaic black and white notion of, of education.

00:06:42.06

And the inclusion of the arts is, is really something different and a lot of people were on the fence with it, but when you see how kids get engaged... And it's really the process towards that end result that really informs and educates them. And it really, there was a lot of empowerment that comes through it.

00:07:01.11

You know, being younger and being in the system, and being -- now being in the system -- I was I was born 10 years later.

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### **Interview with Issapaakii**

*Q: Why is it important for you to be in the classroom?*

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:07:24.06

It's important, I feel that it is important for me to be in a classroom because I bring, I wanna bring aboriginal awareness into the class, I wanna share my culture, and, and with the students, with all students in the classroom. So that in the future there is gonna be that balance, the common understanding between all nations, I guess you know between the non-aboriginal students and our aboriginal students to build that bridge between them and that there will be that common understanding and a respect between both cultures.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:08:17.06

'Cause I feel like right now that the non-aboriginal people, the non-aboriginal students have very little understanding, very little awareness of the aboriginal culture. So I feel that this is, to me this is very important. And I, and I think also because I was a residential school victim, I was deprived of my language, my culture, everything of who I really am.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:08:56.24

And so it took me many years to, to just be able to bring that back and I want to share this with the children -- both native and aboriginal students. But I think it's so important that our children, our aboriginal children begin to understand, to know their history, their language, and, and to bring it back and be able to, to speak it, be able to understand it, be able to, you know...

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:09:32.14

And we have all our teachers out there, all of them. We are not in lack of any, any, you know, we've got people that speak Dene, people that speak Cree, people that are, are historians. Our historians are, are in the long-term care now. And after all the, you know, they've spent their lives experience it and, and lived it. They were trappers, they were hunters, you know, and they have all that knowledge.

00:10:07.21

But they are sitting in the long-term care not, not utilising, not teaching. This is what our students need to know.

*Q: What do you think the students gain from your visits to the classroom?*

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:10:35.17

I think... I shouldn't say I think, I know because of the response that we get from the students what, what they're learning from, from, you know, from our sharing with the kids, what they're learning is that, that they aboriginal people, the original people from this land, they are learning respect, they are learning, you know, a little bit of the culture that they never knew.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:11:09.10

A lot of the students that, after we have our classes, that come up and, you know, they'll, they'll say, "I didn't know this, I didn't know that, but thank you for letting me know, thank you for sharing." Many of these non-aboriginal students come and, you know, they come and they give me a hug and that means a lot to me when these kids come and hug me because they're feeling something they...

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:11:39.03

They're hearing something and they're feeling it. So it comes from here to her (gesturing from head to heart). It's not only book knowledge doesn't only come here, but when you can feel something here it's gonna last you a long time, forever to know these things. And I think like especially for the non-aboriginal students in the classroom, they are so interested to know, oh, so this is the way aboriginal people a long time ago.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:12:10.11

So this is what the culture means. So this is what the tepee means. They're not just gonna walk past the tepee now and just see, you know, the tepee but they're gonna know this is what the tepee means. So this is, you know, the, the traditional teachings that we bring into the classroom.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:12:34.11

Somewhere down the road when they become adults, there isn't gonna be that racism anymore, there isn't going to be that line between the two. There's gonna be that common understanding and that's what I, that's what I'm hoping and that's why I keep doing what I'm doing.

*Q: What would you like to see LTTA do next?*

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:13:34.02

What I would like to see LTTA do next is to connect with the outlying communities, our aboriginal outlying communities. We have five communities that surround Fort McMurray. They need to connect with, they need to walk into these classrooms there are all native students in the classroom.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:13:56.04

They need to make connections with the, with the principle, with the teachers, but most of all with the children. And bring what they, what the LTTA teaches in the classroom about, you know, what they're teaching, bring that out to the communities, share that with the kids. And, and because...

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:14:16.43

I'm not looking at today, I'm looking at down the road, the future. So there isn't gonna be that, almost like a line, almost like a barrier between the communities, the aboriginal communities and Fort McMurray. They need to come together. A lot of our students come when they're, they're not going to school out in their communities they come here to Fort McMurray.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:14:44.10

Now, why doesn't Fort McMurray come out there and share and come out there for the day and share with them? And see for yourselves, you know. I think that's so important that, that because this, this barrier has been there forever and, and I, and I've had students, when I was in one of the school when I was at FNMI, when I was in one of the schools it was very, very hard for these aboriginal children to come into Fort McMurray to go to school.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:15:25.10

I would have to, sometimes I would sit with the student because they were so scared seeing a big school. So what I would do is just try to ease them into school. It shouldn't be like that. They should be able to just come in if they want to come to school in Fort McMurray. They should just come in and no, no intimidation, nothing like that.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:15:59.14

But because there is no communication, there is no, no, you know, awareness between them, and I think that needs to happen and it needs to happen soon -- right away! This is what I would like to see even starting in September. You know, and I'm, I know they would very, they would really welcome, very welcome you into their communities.

*Q: Can you name some of the communities you're referring to?*

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:16:48.15

What I would like to see, and I would like to this to happen like even starting in September, is start making that contact. It's not gonna happen immediately or, you know, they're going to be comfortable but it's go-, it needs to happen on a continuous basis.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:17:07.05

Go out to the... there's Fort Mc-, uh, Fort Chip, but that's a bit of a way. You've got to go there by plane, you know.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:17:15.15

For Chip, there's Fort McKay. Fort McKay is a 45-minute drive. Anzac is next, that's about 15 minute drive. Janvier is maybe, maybe an hour drive. Conklin is about a 2-hour drive. That's all it is. But what, but what I think coming out there with, you know, just... what...

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:17:43.05

What you bring out there, LTTA, is so valuable to these kids. They would just love it to be able to do these, you know... And, and I know that at one time we took the, one of the, our music teacher, took her band out to Fort McMurray, Fort McKay -- they absolutely loved it just because it was something different. It came from outside of their community and they were so welcoming, you know, just to have that... And there's so much that...

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:18:20.01

In the time that I have worked for LTTA there is so much that you can bring to our native communities, to our native students in the schools. And, and, you know, just to be able to sit there and, and make tepees with them. Kids know how to make tepees but do they really know what everything means? Probably not.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:18:45.25

But that would be a very good teaching for them and, and, you know, there's a lot of other things, teaching, sharing about medicine wheels, you know. And I think with the 5, 5 native communities they need that, not only Fort McMurray, you know. And I think for me, I would feel like I'm accomplishing something. When I...

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:19:14.20

My heart is with my aboriginal children. What I see today, I did not have-- that was taken away from me by force. I couldn't speak my language because they, you know... It was punishment. I was punished for talking my language, they washed my mouth out with soap.

LTTA1 - Issapaakii @ 00:19:36.00

The punishment that we got going to residential schools, they don't have that today in these class. But that, you know, I still feel the effects of residential school. But I see the freedom today and I want, I would... You know, I'd work and work to be there with my kids.

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### **Interview with Gabby St. Martin**

*Q: Can you tell us your name?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:20:20.03

My name is Gabriel St-Martin and I'm in grade 10.

*Q: What do you like most about learning subjects like social studies?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:20:31.17

What I like most about having Learning Through the Arts with our subjects is that it lets us expand more in... shoot, I lost it... in expanding our ways in how we see it. So usually they just give us one path and then that's what you take to get to that, but then Learning Through the Arts is like, but then you do it this way and that other way, but you can also still make it to there. You just are more expressive with it. That's what I love about it.

*Q: How has learning through the Arts boosted your self-confidence?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:21:18.29

It let me be who I was because in most classes you're have to sit, be yourself and not be yourself, not kind of be yourself. Just listen to the teacher, be quiet. In Learning Through the Arts we did skits and plays and presentations, and we just were very visual and active in doing our presentations. That allowed me to show who I was through them.

*Q: How has Learning Through the Arts made you feel about your cultural background?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:21:52.00

It's made me more interested in it because at first I knew about my cultural but I wasn't quite interested in it. I was like okay, that's my cultural, that's who they were. But then when like Issapaakii would come in and explain the stories and about the turtle with the world on his back and the mother that would... I can't remember the exact story but it was so beautiful.

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:22:20.21

And it just made me realise that it not just a cultural, it has people's stories and lives in it that make it more interesting and not just this was a cultural, that was a person's life.

*Q: Tell us about yourself.*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:22:46.00

I started in grade 8 when it first opened and I've been coming since then.

*Q: How many classes have you had through Learning Through the Arts?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:22:54.05

About 2 or 3. I haven't had any in grade 10 though. I feel like it stopped once you get to high school which is kind of sad.

*Q: Did you would with Shelly MacDonald in Social Studies?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:23:19.14

Just the bit that they taught us in the social unit that they would give us and I only had a few pages on it. It didn't give us... It just told us the impacts and the government and stuff. But then when Issapaakii came in, she explained the experience of it and how it formed other people's lives and the reason why so many aboriginals are struggling today.

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:23:42.18

At first I thought they were just homeless 'cause they were lazy, which I feel really bad thinking that now because I now understand that it wasn't just because they're lazy but because they were forced to go to a school that restricted them being who they were and separating them from their families.

*Q: What would you say is the value of these kinds of classes for your generation?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:24:26.00

I find our generation is really immersed with technology and that does allow us to search out more and see more and stuff, but we lose contact with we are. I guess because we're always so immersed with how we present ourselves on the internet and now how we present ourselves in real life. Learning Through the Arts makes us express ourselves.

*Q: Tell us a little bit about the Ancient Pathways Program?*

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:25:06.27

We usually do activities, warm up activities before we start the main thing, which usually the leader I guess or the... Getz would usually do an activity for us. Like one time we had to make dream catchers and he brang in actual twigs. We had to bind and then start making the, the dream catcher itself and Issapaakii showed us how too.

LTTA1 - Gabby @ 00:25:33.21

And I wish that there was more of that in the After School Program than us doing acting activities but do like, go outside and experience more of the aboriginal cultural since it's called Ancient Pathways.

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### **Interview with Sarah Neiman**

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:26:12.05

Hi, my name is Sarah Neiman.

*Q: Can you describe a Learning Through the Arts lesson?*

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:26:32.25

When I am doing Learning Through the Arts sessions, say in a math class, it differs from the traditional method that teachers use to teach math in that students are engaged in a different way. The first thing you would notice when you walk in the room is that the students are usually not sitting at their desks.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:26:50.13

They usually standing up, they're usually creating a balance pose to show that algebra is a balanced equation, or they're demonstrating in some way percentages with their body, or their clapping, stomping, or tapping a rhythm to show a fraction or a ratio. The first thing you would notice is it generally looks nothing like a traditional method.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:27:16.02

One session that I had a lot of fun with in a math class was exploring algebra, which is all about balance through movement. I asked students to create poses that showed balance, and then I asked them to transform those poses as their algebraic equation transformed.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:27:40.12

It was a challenge for some of the students not to pull out every trick they learned from their cheer team but I think in the end what they came away with was that algebra was something that had a focus, that it wasn't just "I've done these 20 exercises and now I know about algebra".

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:28:01.02

They said, "Oh, I fundamentally understand that algebra always must be balanced."

*Q: Can you tell us about your art? How did you come to this program?*

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:28:31.05

I am a musician. I specialise in opera. I have a Bachelor of Music Education and then a Masters in Voice Performance from the University of Western Ontario. I actually grew up here in Fort McMurray and came back after graduating to make a little bit of money and pay down some debt, and very happily stumbled upon Learning Through the Arts.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:28:54.12

And it's now been three years.

*Q: Can you share a specific example of how LTTA improves confidence and self-esteem?*

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:29:16.20

Whenever I'm in sessions I have the great joy of observing students changing before my eyes. One of the most moving times for me was when I was working in a grade 7 math class.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:29:36.19

When I went through the school system, I don't know where I got this in my head but I got it in my head that I was a musician and therefore I didn't need to be good at math, and I had it in my head that I was a girl and therefore I shouldn't be good at math, that that should not be one of the things I was good at.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:29:53.28



And I think I let myself off the hook and I didn't try very hard and I just said, "Oh I'm a musician, I'm a girl, I'm not going to try to figure this out." Now that, now that I'm an adult and I realise, "Oh, I actually do need these skills," I'm back in the classroom watching girls checking out the same way.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:30:14.17

And it is always a pleasure when I can get them engaged in a math lesson and watch their face transform as they realise, "Oh, I get this! I can, I can do this." And usually it's as simple as reframing the way that they are learning, differentiating the instruction to allow them to access that concept in a, in a different way that isn't pencil and paper.

*Q: Has LTTA had an impact on the region?*

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:31:10.06

Beyond school communities and beyond the students that Learning Through the Arts effects, the wider artistic community in Fort McMurray has truly benefited from the presence of Learning Through the Arts in our community. For McMurray is not, you know, a haven for artists and that's just a sad reality that we're trying to change but we're not there yet.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:31:33.17

And having work where you are an artist doing your art and sharing your art with students is just a fabulous addition to many artists' careers here in Fort McMurray, and it allows us to keep artists, local artists, here in Fort McMurray which I can't even tell you how many ripples that creates through our community.

*Q: What's your personal interest in LTTA?*

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:32:23.05

Why I work for Learning Through the Arts and what Learning Through the Arts, what makes it meaningful to me is that I was in this exact school system, that I grew up in this town and I went through a system that sometimes supported me in the way that I wanted to learn and sometimes it didn't.

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:32:43.10

And now I'm noticing that students have so much more to choose from, that they, that they aren't stuck in something that just can't work for them. There are so many students who are going to have just greater success because of this. I hated that...

[retake]

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:33:16.12

Learning Through the Arts is more than just a job for me, it is a meaningful impact on the community and on the students who go to school in the very district I did...

LTTA1 - SarahN @ 00:33:32.00

When I was going through this school system I didn't have choices. I was stuck sometimes showing my learning in a way that I just couldn't be successful and what makes is meaningful is now students can choose to find success in many, many different ways.

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**Interview with Brad St. Denis**

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:34:02.24

I'm Brad St. Denis. I've been teaching here for the last three years and I've been a teacher for 8 years in English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Physical Education.

*Q: Can you tell me about your experience of Learning Through the Arts?*

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:34:20.00

Myself personally, I've experienced Learning Through the Arts as a, as a teacher and kind of also as someone that's trying to adapt some of those things into my own personal teaching practices too. So I've been able to partner with Learning Through the Arts for the last 3 years in the classroom with some of my students in classes, with Marcy Marcel, and some other great artists.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:34:42.07

And it's, it's been great so far and it brings in lots of projects and things that allow the students to apply the knowledge that we're learning in the classroom.

*Q: How do you think Learning Through the Arts supports academic achievement?*

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:34:59.10

I think Learning Through the Arts is a great support for academic achievement for the students because while we end up tackling a lot of the, the knowledge based stuff in the classroom, sometimes we're not able to make time for a lot of extra projects that allow the students to experience what they're learning.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:35:18.17

And so by doing some of the projects that Learning Through the Arts brings in, they get some hands-on learning where they're actually experiencing or building and using skills and, and the knowledge that they learned to, and applying that knowledge with skills and real skills that they can use outside of the classroom as well, whether it's, you know, drawing or things that are hands-on and artsy that way, or writing or, or with film and drama and, and any other kind of aspect that, that they bring in when they come.

*Q: How do you think Learning Through the Arts has improved student engagement?*

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:35:55.22

In the three years that I've been able to do Learning Through the Arts, usually when the artists come into the classroom and work with me and my students, we have been able to have the students... They automatically seem more engaged because of the, the hands-on tasks we end up bringing them in with, or some of the projects that we do, whether...

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:36:15.19

My first year we did some video poetry and it brought the kids' interest to another level to have that extra aspect of using video and, and getting their poems finished, and then reapplying them and reworking them to, to be in this, this new medium that, that the kids were able to have lots of fun and at the same time still being part of the learning process.

*Q: Describe how a Learning Through the Arts lesson differs from a tradition class?*

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:37:02.19

Learning Through the Arts differs from a traditional teaching method in that it, it is more hands-on. It's more, more student driven and kind of interest driven. It, it might now always, you know, reach every single student but it's going to reach more students in that room than, than your traditional sort of sit and listen educational approach.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:37:26.00

And it's kind of the direction that, that education is going these days where we have project based learning and Learning Through the Arts is one of the, the drivers for, for that and becoming a more inclusive part of what education is today.

*Q: How has working with artist-educators influenced your teaching methods?*

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:37:47.23

\*(background noise during answer) Being able to work with artists in the classroom for me has influenced my teaching methods by allowing me to see that I can do a lot of these things that I thought maybe weren't approachable because I thought I didn't have the skill as, say, an artist with drawing or painting or with, with film and things that I don't have exposure to...

[retake due to noise]

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:38:23.06

Learning Through the Arts has influenced my teaching by allowing me to see that a lot of the things that these professional artists do are things that are attainable for, for everybody as long as, you know, you have a plan and stick to it. And it's great having the artist come in and show us a simple approach to reach a level that, that they have been able to reach themselves.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:38:41.28

So the students see that and, and myself as an educator, I get to see that and I get ot kind of pull that and reapply it in classes that I, that I continue to teach into the future.

*Q: Do you see your students differently when you've got an artist-educator in the room?*

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:39:03.15

When we have an artist-educator in the room with Learning Through the Arts, I get to see my students differently in that they're, they're experiencing learning. So they're more involved, they're usually a little bit more focused so it's a little bit easier to keep them being driven towards the curriculum.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:39:18.15

And a lot of times I kind of attribute it to, you know, like the old Karate Kid movie where Mr. Miyagi is tricking them into actually learning. And so sometimes they don't really realise it and it's great. At the end it all kind of comes together and the students still might not realise it until, you know, the day of a test or a final project that, that's different and the have the knowledge.

*Q: Do you have a personal story?*

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:40:34.15

Like I said, I've been part of Learning Through the Arts for the last three years and been able to do that in the classroom. And every year I've been part of a new project. The first year we, we did some video poetry and one of, one of the girls that was kind of a reluctant learner and wasn't really happy with poetry really attacked the, the kind of film aspect of it in being able to attach music and things.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:40:56.06

And that made her really happy that she could have that draw and it became something where she was able to identify with emotions. And the second year we did a utopia project and attaching that and comparing it to the Renaissance in grade 8 social studies. And as students that couldn't quite wrap their head around the idea of what world view was and identify with that idea, and then they started to compare that with, with this utopia.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:41:22.28

And the First Nations, we had an elder come in and work with the students as well, which was great. And they were able to finally kind of, through all those different experiences, get that idea of, okay, what a world view is and how many different world views can exist because of all of the different experiences that different people get to have, which was, which was really, really great.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:41:43.20

And then this final year we did amazing Renaissance videos for interviews and things. And the kids, at first after already having been going through the Renaissance for, for two months and things getting kind of dry really just kind of picked up and jumped in and created these characters from, from a lot of these old philosophers and, and writers and based interviews off of them. And they turned out, they turned out great and it was lots of fun to see the kids smiling and laughing and creating their own bloopers and things like that with the videos.

LTTA1 - Brad @ 00:42:12.29

It was just a great experience. Every year I've done Learning Through the Arts I think it's been beneficial to me and the students in the room.

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### **Interview with George McGuigan**

LTTA1 - George @ 00:42:25.27

George McGuigan, Superintendent, Fort McMurray Catholic schools.

*Q: Tell me why you think the arts are a critical part of education?*

LTTA1 - George @ 00:42:37.21

When we look at education today, especially when we're looking at the changes in education in Alberta that are coming forward and talking 21st century learners, we're looking at getting engaged

thinkers, ethical citizens and entrepreneurial spirit. Anything we can do with art infused education through the LTTA certainly works well in that mindset because of the differentiating instruction and the opportunity for students to get up out of their seats and be engaged and be involved in the classroom.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:43:09.00

So anything we can do in that neighbourhood to help students is probably best interest for everybody.

*Q: What are the main benefits of Learning Through the Arts?*

LTTA1 - George @ 00:43:20.21

Probably one of the biggest benefits of Learning Through the Arts is the idea that we get the students involved in, in curriculum and instead of paper and pencil tests all the time, if we're trying to work with students, we have them be thinking about critical thinking skills, getting involved in team work because when you have arts infused education and the students are then up and out of their seats, they work as part of a team, and with those aspects in it it becomes a much more well rounded education.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:43:51.21

And if you look at a lot of brain theory out there, the research says we only use about 10 per cent of our brain. So when you have arts infused education, we're increasing the ability for us to use more parts of the brain, which then helps the students who need that part to gain an understanding of concepts and etc.

*Q: How do you think artist-educators support teachers in the classroom?*

LTTA1 - George @ 00:44:23.15

What the Royal Conservatory and the Learning Through the Arts Program, what we've been able to do is we bring in artist-educators into the system who are trained by the Royal Conservatory and they work hand-in-hand with the existing teachers and they look for those areas in the curriculum that are very difficult to teach with students.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:44:44.15

And they co-work together to create lessons and units, and they come in and work side by side with the teacher and deliver those lessons in a more art infused manner so that, so that students can gain a deeper understanding of the concepts, especially the ones that are most difficult.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:45:01.04

So they come in, they sit with them, they develop relationships with the teachers and the students, and they come in and so all those lessons with them. So the student response to it is phenomenal.

*Q: How do you see Learning Through the Arts best supporting the FNMI students?*

LTTA1 - George @ 00:45:38.14

Quite correct. I mean, I've always had a passion working with aboriginal youth. All youth in general, but certainly with aboriginal youth has been, has been a passion, a passion of mine. So when I look at Learning Through the Arts and, and if you think of aboriginal people, their belief has always been since the beginning of time that the human being is made up of the person, physical, spiritual, health, and their body.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:46:05.19

And if your, in their belief in order to educate an aboriginal person you need to tap into all four of those quadrants. And what does Learning Through the Arts do? It taps in to every single one of them,

so it's a perfect fit. And what it does for the aboriginal student in particular is it brings that as the focus into the classroom.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:46:24.28

So what they had then is a number one sense of belonging to something and it makes them proud of their culture, proud of being there, and it's really made a significant difference in their outlook on school. And it's, it's been a key component to our success with the aboriginal students in our system.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:46:44.22

We are doing very, very well and I think it's safe to say that Learning Through the Arts has played an integral part in that success.

*Q: Can you talk about a former student's mother working in the Classroom?*

LTTA1 - George @ 00:47:09.04

Getz, or as I know him Ryan (last name), was a student of mine when I was principle of Father Mercredi High School. I certainly knew him mom as well. And we had numerous conversations when he was in high school, getting him through school on different topics. He, he certainly could be I would call, he was a stubborn individual as a high school student but stubborn in a good way.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:47:31.02

He knew what he wanted and he believed in his culture, and he wasn't gonna take a back seat to anybody. And you have to, I really appreciated that fact and respected him for it. And now he's come full circle. He's come back into the community working with aboriginal youth in helping them to be successful in school, especially with the Youth Empowerment Program that he worked with the students after school hours.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:47:56.23

And promoting the culture, working with the students, especially the students that may be a little bit at risk, at risk, and gives them that sense of belonging that, "hey school is important. I can be successful and I can be somebody. And I can have my culture be part of that as well."

LTTA1 - George @ 00:48:14.03

So he's, he's been very good to us and I have a lot of respect for, for Getz, I guess we'll call him.

*Q: Were you surprised to learn about improvements in the academic performance?*

LTTA1 - George @ 00:48:29.04

Not really. When, when you think about it, if you're differentiating instruction and you're preparing the students for those exams, any, any time you can provide different methods to reach the students so that they understand the material and, as I said earlier, active participation and lessons, getting up out of their seats, their, their brains tend to retain that information a lot easier.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:48:55.04

So one student I think, one of the comments before was that they, they had said that, "You know, when I'm doing a test I can see myself dancing through the answers because that's the way I was taught through LTTA." So that to me says, is a very poignant point for that. So I think that's good.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:49:17.27

So as far as the results, I think the, because they were doing those things in the classroom and providing those different modes for students to learn, I'm not surprised to see the improvement

because the students are not bored in the classroom. They're engaged and they're involved in the classroom.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:49:37.06

And, and whenever you get students involved in hands-on learning and doing, they retain it in their long term memory like that.

*Q: Have you noticed any community benefit of Learning Through the Arts?*

LTTA1 - George @ 00:50:20.22

I think, I mean we try as much as we can I think through the Conservatory to be bringing the, the artists in and training them, especially to get artists from our own region too. There's a renewed push on, and to do that, to get more artists from the community.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:50:35.09

And I think when we do that that brings the broader community and gets them involved in it, and I think the industry players play a key, key role in that when they see and understand what we're doing with the Royal Conservatory or Learning Through the Arts. And it's there, the industry's employees children who are in our school systems and working.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:50:56.08

And it's a win-win situation, right, because their children are getting exposed to the culture and the community, they're exposed to different forms of education, and the success is evident. So I think the broader community has embraced Learning Through the Arts in Fort McMurray and the surrounding areas, and I think we can only get better as we move forward.

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### **Interview with Shelley MacDonald**

LTTA1 - Shelley @ 00:51:34.02

Hi, my name is Shelly MacDonald and I'm the... (stammering/kisses air -- very cute)

LTTA1 - George @ 00:51:41.20

Hello my name is Shelley MacDonald and I'm the BC Program Leader for Learning Through the Arts and I'm also one of the FNMI mentor artist for the Learning Through the Arts Program Canada.

*Q: What would you say is the most significant effect or impact of the LTTA?*

LTTA1 - Shelley @ 00:52:11.27

The biggest impact that LTTA has on our students here, on our FNMI students is it creates a sense of belonging and it creates a sense of pride for them. They're no longer invisible. We are part of our

history of this country and when our elder goes into the classroom with an LTTA artist and shares her culture, students are able to create beautiful pieces of art that reflect their understanding of the school curriculum.

*Q: How has LTTA improved student engagement?*

LTTA1 - Shelley @ 00:52:49.11

It's fun, it's creative, it again creates a sense of community in the classroom. Students want to learn, student attendance has increased, they come to school wondering when LTTA is coming back. They high five the LTTA artists in the hall, they give the elder in residence a standing ovation, they embrace her every time that she walks in the doors.

LTTA1 - George @ 00:53:14.03

This is a wonderful program and we're looking forward to continuing to expand it across Canada.

*Q: Can you share an example of the success of LTTA?*

LTTA1 - Shelley @ 00:53:36.12

An example of a student's confidence and voice being heard in the classroom is when our elder Issapaakii tells her story of Residential School. When she tells her story it creates a sense of understanding and need for the students in the classroom to want to be better citizens, they want to write to the government, they want to affect change in their communities, and they understand more and more culture, which is integral to any piece of curriculum in any school system.

LTTA1 - Shelley @ 00:54:12.28

We need to bring in more of our aboriginal world view. This is our traditional territory, we are diverse people from all across Canada. We have wonderful culture and things to teach. It also provides a bridge, it breaks down the barriers of racism and it helps people come together and celebrate the uniqueness in everyone.

*Q: Why are arts a critical part of education?*

LTTA1 - Shelley @ 00:54:45.07

We need arts and arts based learning programs and education because students all learn in different ways. When you use the arts, students don't just have to open a math book and try to figure out a calculation, they can actually dance the rhythm, they can divide themselves in half and create fractions, they can use tableau to show the historic point in history (laughing)...

*Q: How does learning arts support the academic achievements of students?*

LTTA1 - Shelley @ 00:55:35.12

Learning Through the Arts supports the academic achievement of students by providing the teachers with a different way of assessing their students grades, their understanding in the classroom of their curriculum. It is important that we respond and are...

[END]



[retake]

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:04:49.08

We positively impact and support academic achievement by providing teachers with alternate ways to assess their students learning and understanding. If a student struggles with literacy, reading a book doesn't always work for them.

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:05:05.16

But if they are able to explore a novel through movement, through tableau, through visual art, then the teacher can still assess them and see that they're understanding. It creates a safe space for learning and creativity.

*Q: What is the role of an artist-educator and how do they partner with a teacher?*

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:05:33.00

The role of an artist-educator is to partner with the teacher to explore the curriculum with the students. So how we would do that is, for example, we would take a learning outcome from science and then we would partner with the teacher in developing the lesson plan, and then together we could co-teach and model what we want the students to do, and then the students would create their own project.

*Q: How has Learning Through the Arts improved FNMI culture?*

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:06:11.09

Learning Through the Arts has helped to promote understanding of FNMI culture by being a bridge. We are the bridge between the FNMI elders, the artist-educators, the students, and the teachers, and together we create an aboriginal world view and understanding that will help people understand and recognise the traditional territories that we are on.

*Q: Tell me about the TA that you met today.*

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:06:46.26

So for example, today in class as we were doing our final closing circle in a grade 9 classroom here in Fort McMurray, one of the teaching assistants shared in the circle that when our elder, Issapaakii told the story of Residential School, that it totally impacted her and changed her view on indigenous people.

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:07:10.29

She didn't realise that she was so closed-minded and now she opens her heart and she wants to do more and she said when she sees things in the news now about Residential School, she understands, she takes the time to share with other citizens in her community, she wants to make a difference.

*Q: What is the role of an artist-educator?*

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:07:51.25

The role of an artist-educator in the classroom is to inspire the students and the teachers to work together to explore curriculum. It excites the students a lot!! 15 minutes a tape! Oh sorry, so what does it do?

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:08:12.28

The role of the artist-educator in the classroom is to inspire the students and the teachers to explore curriculum together creatively and a wonderful community evolves in that classroom where excitement happens around learning and curriculum. It's no longer boring. It's inspirational.

LTTA2 - Shelley @ 00:08:35.05

They go home, they're excited, they share stories with their families about working with LTTA artists in the classroom.

[END]