

Still



Anti-racism, diversity and inclusivity report



SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION
community begins here



Introduction

Genuine commitment to diversity and equity goes beyond words. It requires action, accountability, and continuous reflection. Creating inclusive workplaces isn't just about policies; it's about understanding the people who make up our community and ensuring everyone feels valued and represented.

As part of this commitment, the This Is Us report from 2021 and 2025 Still Us report reflects Seven Oaks School Division's ongoing efforts to recognize, celebrate, and respond to the diversity within our staff.

In 2021, we conducted our first Staff Census to better understand the diversity within our Division. Now, with the completion of our second Staff Census in 2025, we are building on that foundation. This report continues to **highlight who we are, how we have grown, and where we still need to focus our efforts.** By comparing our data with Statistics Canada Census data, we aim to deepen our understanding and drive meaningful change.

It is essential for school staff to reflect their students because representation fosters deeper connections, trust, and a sense of belonging in the learning environment. When students see educators who share or understand their cultural backgrounds, they feel valued, seen, and supported in their academic and personal growth.

As Martin (2018) emphasizes,

"As the role of the educator evolves, the human connection and guidance will become increasingly more—not less—important" (p. 40).

This human connection is strengthened when educators can relate to students' lived experiences, affirm their identities, and integrate diverse perspectives into teaching. A culturally reflective staff not only enhances student engagement and achievement but also helps to create an inclusive school culture where all students feel empowered to succeed.

Through this work, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering a workplace that truly reflects and values the diversity of our community through kinship.

Analysis Methods

The following were used in the analysis of this data:

- Demographic comparisons, comparison from 2021 SOSD survey and comparison with Statistics Canada

Respondents – Refers to participants who actively provide an answer to a particular question.
(Those Who Provided a Response, Survey Respondents)

- Example: Out of 1000 survey participants, 600 respondents answered the question on community engagement.

Participants are individuals who take part in an event, study, survey, or activity.

- Example: The survey had 1000 participants who shared their opinions on the new program

It is important to note that the number of respondents who answered each survey question varied. As a result, the percentage of responses may differ from question to question, reflecting the varying levels of participation for each item in the survey. Because the census is voluntary, these numbers do not fully capture the complete makeup of our staff. In particular, the data related to racialized identities and Indigenous identity does not represent the actual number of Seven Oaks staff who identify in these communities.

There are many reasons for this underrepresentation: some staff may choose not to disclose personal identity information; others may feel uncertain about how categories reflect their lived experience; and for Indigenous staff especially, the legacy of colonial data collection has created understandable caution around self-identification. Additionally, categories such as “racialized,” “Indigenous,” or specific ethnocultural groups can be interpreted differently across individuals, which affects how people choose to respond.

For these reasons, the demographic percentages in this report should be understood as minimums, not totals. The lived diversity within Seven Oaks is richer and more complex than the voluntary data suggests. To honour our staff and their stories, the numbers must be read alongside the qualitative narratives, community knowledge, and the ongoing relationships that better reflect the full humanity and identity of the people who make up our division.

Our guiding question in analyzing the latest data remains: **What is the story?**

Numbers alone cannot fully capture the complexities of our experiences. This report, therefore, extends beyond statistics, incorporating personal narratives and reflections from staff to provide depth and context. As part of this approach, Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation (Safir & Dugan, 2021) serves as a foundational reference in examining critical questions: How do we know what we know? Why do we value what we value? Additionally, we consider whether long-held assumptions about data in education can be re-examined and redefined to embrace a broader, more inclusive understanding of knowledge.

Street data represents a decolonizing form of knowledge that acknowledges and honors Indigenous, Afrocentric, and other non-Western ways of knowing. It emerges through human interaction, bringing us to the ground level to listen, observe, and engage with students and adults, educators and school staff, particularly those from equity-seeking communities. By centering these lived experiences, we illuminate the diverse pathways that have brought individuals to Seven Oaks School Division, the perspectives they contribute, and the personal and professional journeys that led them to education. These stories not only help us understand our present reality but also guide our collective growth.

Through sharing these narratives, we aim to embody the core principles of Street Data in our ongoing journey of learning and transformation: Data can be humanizing. Data can be liberatory. Data can be healing (Safir & Dugan, 2021).





Darashdeep Kambo,

Learning Support Teacher at Maples Collegiate

At the age of 3, I immigrated with my family and settled in Winnipeg. We left behind familiarity, extended family, and the comforting rhythm of our lives. At the time, I was too young to grasp the full extent of the move, however, as I grew up, I later understood being the oldest child in an immigrant household came with many responsibilities. A regular occurrence in my childhood was translating phone calls for my family members, helping with paperwork, and sometimes accompanying them to meetings and appointments to ensure they would have language support to feel heard, understood, and ultimately, helped.

Growing up, this process was hard to explain to people around me as this was not a common experience. For many of my classmates, this was a foreign concept as they had grown-ups that could navigate the systems around them independently. For me, it was second nature as I understood the stark differences in the system my parents grew up with back home and the current systems my family was trying their best to navigate.

When I come to work every day, I feel grateful that I can connect with many of our newcomer 7Oaks families based on my lived experiences. I can see that many of my own students mirror these same responsibilities as they navigate an upbringing as a recent immigrant or first/second generation Canadian. We share laughs as my students feel a connection and can find commonalities through our shared experiences but also find a feeling of comradery and solidarity knowing that they have someone that understands their position.

Currently, I feel that my experience as an immigrant is a strength in my journey as a teacher, not a weakness. However, that is easier to say now than it was when I was a new Canadian. Like my family, when immigrant families come to Canada, many are solely trying to survive. The culture, language, weather, job requirements, and many other things come as a shock. My hope for our 7Oaks' community is that we can find similarities and connections with our newcomer families to help them feel that they can not only survive but instead feel that they can thrive. As educators, I strongly believe we have the power to accomplish this one child at a time, then one family, and ultimately, the entire community.

Who did we hear from?

Employment status

The majority of people working in the division who took the survey have full-time, **permanent positions (80.6%)** and. The remaining respondents **(19.4%) was comprised of full-time term positions, contract terms, part-time permanent and term positions, as well as those in substitute or casual roles.**

Who was asked:

Teachers	Education Assistants	Teacher substitutes	Clinicians
Administration	Board Administration	Secretaries	Custodians
Bus drivers	Information Tech (I.T.)	Settlement Services	

Education

The SOSD 2025 staff census survey reveals a highly educated workforce, with **38% of staff holding a bachelor's degree** and an additional **21% having a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education (PBDE)** alongside their degree. Furthermore, **20% of staff have attained a master's degree**, demonstrating a strong commitment to advanced education. In contrast, **14% possess a college certification or equivalent**, while **5% hold a high school diploma** as their highest level of education. Notably, only **2% of staff reported having no formal certification, diploma, or degree**, a significant decrease from **10.8% in 2021**, indicating a positive trend in educational attainment within the division. These figures highlight **SOSD's highly qualified workforce**, with a majority holding post-secondary credentials, contributing to a well-equipped and knowledgeable staff.

The high levels of post-secondary education among SOSD staff are unsurprising, given that most surveyed staff were teachers, who must hold at least a bachelor's degree in education. However, education levels are just one piece of the puzzle. As we emphasize to our students, **education extends beyond grades or credentials**—it is about who our staff are as individuals and **how they apply their knowledge to make a meaningful impact**. While this is more challenging to measure, it remains a crucial consideration.

Education	SOSD 2025	SOSD 2021	Stats Canada
**No certificate, diploma, or degree	2%	10.8%	
Highschool Diploma or equivalent	5%	10%	58%
College Certification or Equivalent	14%	1.5%	33%
Bachelor's degree	38%	57%	
Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education (PBDE) with a Bachelor's Degree	21%		
Master's Degree	20%		

**Paulette Walker,**

Education Assistant

My name is Paulette Walker, and I am an Educational Assistant with the Seven Oaks School Division. I have been a substitute EA at Amber Trails School for the past five years, and it has been an interesting journey. Three years ago, one of the school admins approached me and asked if I would be a part of creating a Black Student Union program at the school. There wasn't a template or an example to draw from because this was the first Seven Oaks middle school-aged program. After the first BSU meeting with the kids, I realized that they were a special group of kids. I was learning about their culture and background, and they were excited to learn about mine and each other's.

After a couple of meetings, I recognized that the kids didn't want a list of instructions about how to behave or be told what they should think; they wanted to engage on a higher level, culturally. They wanted to share their experiences about their foods, dances, music, meanings of their names, etc. They just wanted to engage with someone who they could identify with.

Later, I spoke to our school admin about Black History Month and shared how the kids could showcase their talent, culture, and get engaged on a personal level about what was meaningful to them.

For example, the kids wanted to have a bake sale at the school and donate the funds to a hospital in Africa. They wanted to paint their country's flag of birth, their parents' country's flag of birth, and honour the Canadian flag, their home country. They wanted to make their own dance uniform, which represented creativity and meaningful cultural expressions. Additionally, for Black History Month, they wanted to visit Black-owned businesses within the community. One of our biggest highlights over the past three years of our journey was performing a dance at the Black Excellence Awards in the city. Other highlights included performing at various events for Black History Month celebrations within the community.

Honestly, these kids fill my cup—to overflowing. Each time we get together for a meeting, when I see them in the corridors and hallways of our school, I feel a sense of pride and respect for them—for their efforts, for who they are as individuals. I am extremely happy and blessed that I have been a part of this wonderful journey with them.

A big shoutout to the Amber Trails School BSU, the admin, the teachers, staff, students, and parents for their contribution and support in making our BSU program a success.

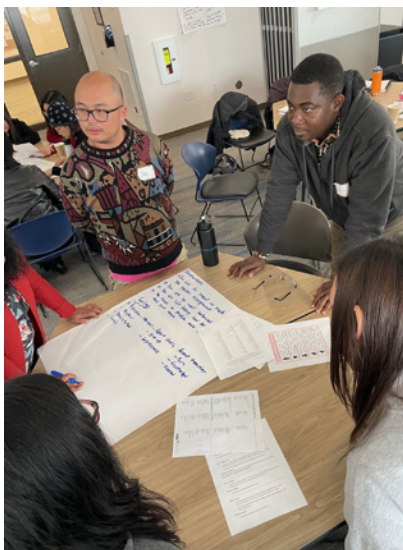
Age

The Seven Oaks School Division (SOSD) 2025 staff census survey highlights the **age distribution** among employees, showing that the largest proportion of staff falls within the **35-44 age group (35.6%)**, followed by **45-54 (28.8%)** and **25-34 (21.8%)**. Employees aged **55-64 make up 11.0%**, while those **18-24 (1.7%)** and **65+ (1.1%)** represent a smaller portion of the workforce.

Age	SOSD 2025	Age	SOSD 2021
18-24	1.7%	20-29	11.7%
25-34	21.8%	30-39	33.5%
35-44	35.6%	40-49	27.7%
45-54	28.8%	50-59	19.6%
55-64	11%	***60-69	.06%
65+	1.1%		

When analyzed by staff category, **teachers are most commonly in the 35-44 age range (41.6%)**, while **educational assistants have a more even distribution, with 34.4% between 45-54 and 25% between 35-44**. Administrative staff are largely concentrated in the **45-54 group (54.8%)**, while CUPE 949 staff are most represented in the **35-44 range (40%)**. Library technicians show a notable presence in the **45-54 age range (41.2%)**.

These figures reflect a **workforce primarily composed of mid-career professionals**, with fewer younger or older staff members, suggesting a **need for strategic planning in recruitment and succession** to maintain a balanced and sustainable workforce.



Gender Identity

2SLGBTQIA+ youth and racialized students experience higher rates of mental health challenges due to systemic discrimination and marginalization.

Having educators who understand and validate their identities can create supportive mentorship and advocacy that contribute to better student well-being and academic success. It also normalizes diversity in gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and culture, reducing stigma and promoting inclusivity.

Hiring diverse educators and 2SLGBTQIA+ staff isn't just about representation—it's about creating learning environments that are just, equitable, and affirming for all students. A truly inclusive school system reflects the diversity of the society it serves, ensuring that every student feels seen, heard, and empowered to succeed.

A diverse staff leads to stronger professional collaboration and richer perspectives in educational leadership. It ensures that school policies, staff training, and professional development opportunities are inclusive of 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives, fostering a culture of equity in education.

According to the census, the majority of respondents identified as female (73%) and male (24%), with 1% identifying as gender non-conforming and another 1% preferring not to disclose their gender identity.

Additionally, 14% of respondents indicated that they have a 2SLGBTQIA+ identity or experience, encompassing identities such as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, and gender fluid. For comparison, in the 2021 SOSD Census, 8.1% of respondents identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, reflecting an increase in reported representation.

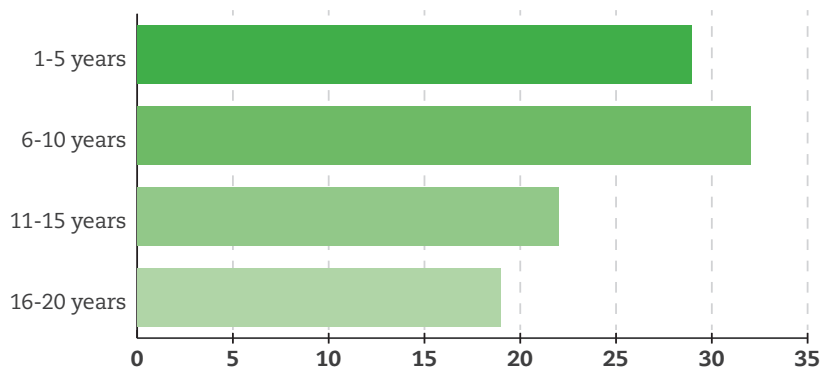


Ethnicity And Generational Status

Racial Identity. 24.4% of respondents (26.3% of Educational Assistants, 34.1% of Administrators, 22.3% of Teachers) self-identified as members of a racialized community.

This graph highlights the percentage of employees who self-identify as racialized within different employment duration categories. It provides insight into how racial diversity is represented across various levels of experience within SOSD.

Percentage of Responents Identifying as Racialized by Years of Employment



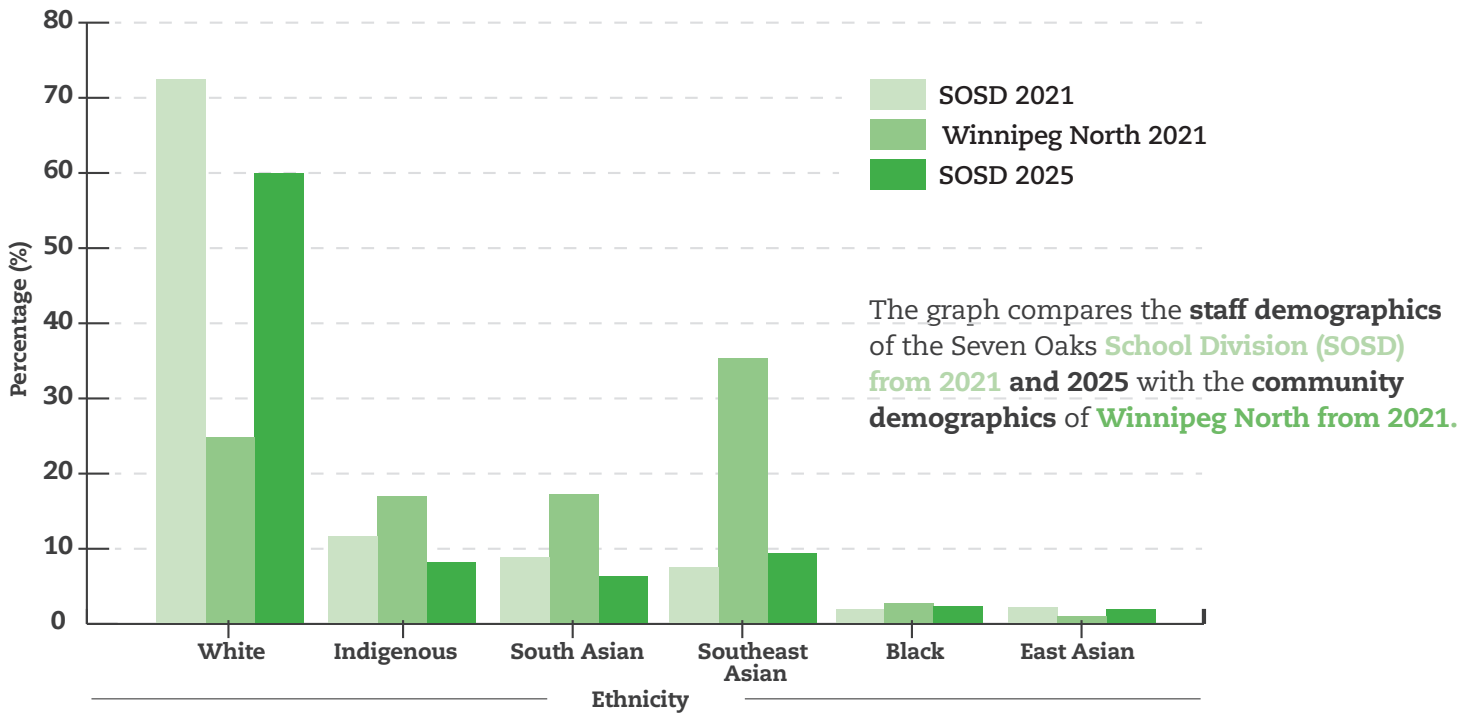
Key Findings: The number of years employed at SOSD demonstrate an acute upward gain in the number of people who are racialized that are hired/employed by the division, a similar trend from the 2021 Census.

A racialized person according to Stats Canada refers to individuals who are categorized based on race, ethnicity, or cultural background in ways that can lead to social, economic, or systemic inequities. This includes, but is not limited to, people who identify as Black, Indigenous, South Asian, East Asian, Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, or other racialized communities. Recognizing these identities is essential for fostering equity, inclusion, and representation in workplaces and beyond. At Seven Oaks we recognize that the definition of a racialized person according to Stats Canada may not represent everyone.

* When comparing the 2021 and 2025 census results, it is important to remember that the 2021 survey had a higher initial uptake, which naturally produced stronger response rates across several identity questions. The 2025 survey, while still voluntary, reflects a more typical pattern of participation. Even with these differences, both years provide valuable insight into long-term trends and continue to guide us toward a more inclusive and representative workforce.

	SOSD 2021	Statistics Canada 2021 (Winnipeg North)	SOSD 2025
White	72.5%	24.88%	60%
Indigenous	11.5%	16.87%	8%
South Asian	8.7%	17.1%	6.2%
Southeast Asian	7.4%	35.21%	9.19%
A racial identity not listed	2.6%	-----	-----
Black	2.1%	2.58%	2.2%
East Asian****	2%	0.93%	1.84%
Hispanic or Latino	0.9%	0.59%	<5%
Middle Eastern	0.7%	0.24%	<5%
Other/Multi Racial	0.2%	1.63%	-----

Demographic Comparison: SOSD 2021 vs. Winnipeg North 2021 vs. SOSD 2025



By 2025, SOSD saw encouraging movement toward a more racially diverse staff team, with increased representation across several identity groups. While there is still work ahead to strengthen alignment with the broader Winnipeg North community, the overall shift reflects meaningful progress toward a workforce that more accurately reflects the diversity and cultural richness of the families we serve.

In 2021, Indigenous staff represented 12% of respondents, and in 2025 they accounted for 8%. Because both staff censuses were voluntary, these figures should be understood as minimum indicators rather than a decrease in the number of Indigenous staff. The data reflects only those who chose to self-identify, not a full count of all Indigenous employees. Similarly, South Asian staff made up 6% of respondents in 2025 compared to 9% in 2021, representing another opportunity to strengthen alignment with the community's 17% representation. On a positive note, Southeast Asian representation increased from 7% in 2021 to 9% in 2025, marking progress toward reflecting the 35% representation within Winnipeg North.

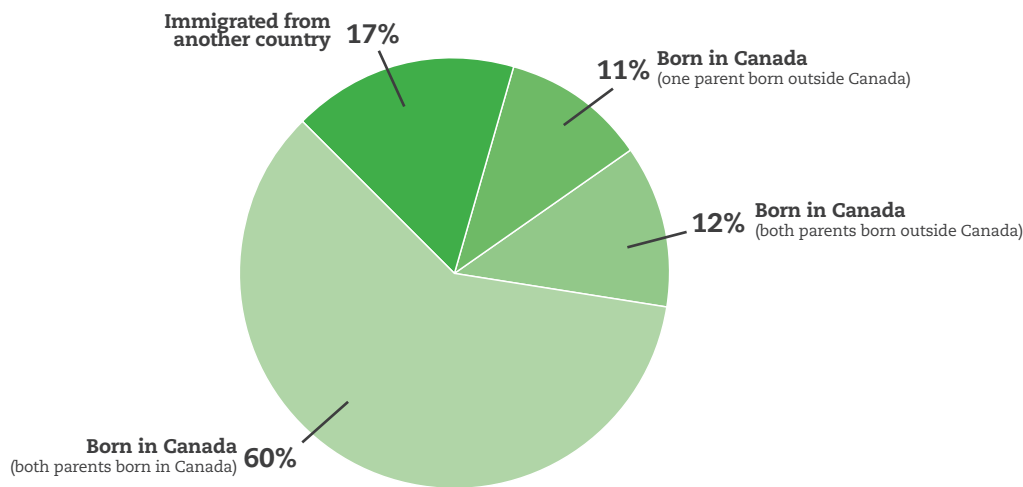
Taken together, these numbers highlight both the gains made and the continued commitment required to build a staff community that reflects the full diversity, strengths, and lived experiences of Winnipeg North.

Black and East Asian representation among SOSD staff remained relatively stable between 2021 and 2025, each hovering around 2–3%, which is similar to their presence in the wider Winnipeg North population.

Overall, the graph highlights that while there has been a modest shift toward increased racial diversity in SOSD staff over the four-year period, there is still an opportunity for the staff demographics to more fully reflect the rich diversity of the Winnipeg North, Seven Oaks community. These findings point to the continued importance of equitable hiring, retention, and leadership development strategies that prioritize representation and inclusion across all levels of the division.

Generational Status

Generation Status of Respondents



The results of the Generation Status Survey offer valuable insight into the generational makeup of the community, revealing important patterns of immigration and ancestry.

- A majority of respondents (60%) indicated that they were Canadian-born with Canadian-born parents, while a significant 40% reported having immigrant ties.
- This includes 12% who were born in Canada to two immigrant parents, 11% born in Canada with one immigrant parent, and 17% who are first-generation immigrants themselves.

Notably, nearly one in five respondents indicated that they immigrated to Canada, highlighting the ongoing influence of immigration on the community's demographics. These findings emphasize the importance of understanding generational backgrounds to better inform educational, cultural, and policy decisions that promote inclusivity and represent the full diversity of experiences within the community.





Chantal Ramraj,

Teacher at Maples Collegiate

I grew up in the Seven Oaks School Division, and now I teach here. That continuity grounds me in community—it reminds me that education is not neutral. Schools shape how we understand the world, and I carry that responsibility seriously. My work as a teacher is shaped by my lived experience as a child of colonialism, with roots in Guyana and ancestors who arrived there from South Asia as indentured labourers under British colonial rule.

My teaching is also shaped by theory—especially Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire, and the work of Walter Rodney, a Guyanese historian and revolutionary thinker who exposed the systemic underdevelopment of colonized nations.

For me, teaching is not about delivering content—it's about building consciousness. While identity work is common in schools today, I believe we need to go deeper. Identity isn't


just personal—it's shaped by larger systems: land, labour, migration, and power. I want my students to see themselves not just as individuals in a multicultural society, but as participants in ongoing collective struggles. We examine how colonialism was resisted in the Red River Resistance, how capitalism was challenged during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, and how dominant systems rely on targeting groups like 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to redirect attention away from the root causes of injustice.

Freire reminds us that the role of education is to practice freedom. Rodney teaches us that any education disconnected from the material and historical realities of the oppressed is inadequate.

That's why historical thinking concepts and geographic literacy are central in my classroom. I want students to understand how systems like settler colonialism and capitalism have shaped the land we live on, and the relationships we inherit. We use primary and secondary sources to interrogate how history is written, whose voices are centred, and whose are erased. We examine maps not just as tools of orientation, but as instruments of power and resistance. Through this, we begin to understand how the past is not past—it's present.

Canada, as a settler colony, has always struggled with the contradictions of its existence. Formed partly in response to the threat of American annexation, it nevertheless continues to give up land, labour, and resources to U.S.-based extractive interests. At the same time, many of the products and resources we consume come from exploited homelands and people around the world. Manitoba, however, offers a different entry point. It was created not just by Ottawa, but through Métis resistance, led by Louis Riel. His vision for Manitoba was not simply absorbed into Canada—it was suppressed. That history lives on today, and it informs how I teach about sovereignty, land, and governance.

In my classroom, I work to bring in material frameworks that challenge dominant worldviews. I want students to understand that knowledge isn't limited to textbooks—it lives in community, in lived experience, and in the systems that shape our world: extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. Knowing is political. My pedagogy centres voices that have been pushed to the margins and connects students to collective memory and action.



Decolonization in education has often focused on helping students form identity through decolonizing our minds—but I believe the next step is collectivity. How do we move from personal understanding to shared responsibility? How do we build solidarity across difference, rooted in justice and accountability? That's what I strive for in my practice.

Working in the same division I grew up in has deepened my sense of purpose. I'm not here to reproduce the system—I'm here to transform it with my students. If we reimagine education as a collective project—humanizing, liberatory, and rooted in historical understanding—then we begin to build a future that isn't just inclusive, but fundamentally different.

Indigenous Identity (2021–2025 Overview)

- In 2025, **8%** of respondents identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or Multiple Indigenous Ancestries).
- In 2021, **11.5%** of respondents identified as Indigenous.
- The 2021 census had a **higher initial uptake**, which naturally produced stronger response rates across identity categories.

Because both surveys were **voluntary**, these figures represent minimum indicators of Indigenous identity rather than full totals of Indigenous staff in the division.

Breakdown of 2025 Indigenous Identity Responses

- **24.8%** identified as First Nations
- **51%** identified as Métis
- Remaining respondents identified as Inuit or with Multiple Indigenous Ancestries

Over time, there has been a **growing comfort** among staff in naming their Indigenous identity, a positive and ongoing trend.

Furthermore, as part of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning ongoing efforts to strengthen equity and improve outcomes for Indigenous students in Manitoba, Seven Oaks in November 2025, participated in an Indigenous Teacher Data Collection initiative. This work is framed as a key step in supporting targeted recruitment and retention strategies for First Nations, Red River Métis, and Inuit educators across the province.

Preliminary responses from teachers and substitute teachers indicate that 129 staff currently self-identify as Indigenous, with **42 identifying as First Nations** and **87 as Red River Métis**. No respondents to date have identified as Inuit. These numbers provide an early snapshot of Indigenous representation within the teaching workforce, while also acknowledging that the census remains open and additional responses may shift this picture.

Language and Revitalization

- Fewer than **five respondents** indicated proficiency in an Indigenous language.

This highlights a meaningful opportunity to support Indigenous language learning and to increase the number of Indigenous-speaking staff within SOSD. It also underscores the enduring impact of the Residential School system, where the deliberate suppression of Indigenous languages was a central tool of cultural assimilation. The low number of language speakers today is not a reflection of disinterest, but of generations of forced interruption, loss, and harm.

And yet, the continued presence of Indigenous language speakers in our division, however small in number, reflects the remarkable resilience of Indigenous communities. Despite systemic attempts to erase these languages, families and Knowledge Keepers have carried them forward, often at great personal cost. As a school division, we have a responsibility not only to acknowledge this history, but to actively contribute to the revitalization and everyday use of Indigenous languages so they continue to grow, thrive, and be heard in our classrooms and communities.

According to 2021 Statistics Canada neighborhood data, **0.25%** of Seven Oaks residents speak Ojibwe, underscoring the importance of continued investment in Indigenous language revitalization and culturally grounded professional learning.





Charlene Heieie,

Grade 3/4 French Immersion Teacher, École Templeton

“Who am I? Where do I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?” are the Honourable Murray Sinclair’s guiding questions that have inspired me personally and professionally in recent years.

I was born and raised in Winnipeg. My parents worked hard to provide for my 2 older siblings and myself. My maternal grandmother (Koko) comes from Skownan First Nation and my paternal grandparents were from the Franco-Manitoban community of St. Malo. At the age of 10, I met my Koko for the first time. She had made the difficult decision to give my mother up for adoption at birth and they were finally reunited after 35 years. Prior to meeting her, I never knew that I had Anishinaabe roots. I never asked my Koko many questions about her past until I learned about the truth of Canada’s ugly history with Indigenous Peoples of this land. I started to ask questions about my Koko’s story, consisting

of injustices, pain, love and resilience. Knowing who I was and where I came from was an internal struggle as I reconciled with my own identity.

After teaching for 17 years in another school division, I saw some of the great work being done in 7 Oaks regarding Indigenous Education and I knew it was time to make a change. I have been given countless opportunities for cultural teachings over the last 3 years, including the Indigenous Education 7 Oaks PBDE cohort. These experiences have allowed me to embrace and celebrate my Indigeneity, which is not a sentiment I had always felt. I am grateful for the sense of belonging that I carry as I continue to grow on a personal and professional level.

I am driven to question my teaching practice, unlearning colonial practices and creating learning experiences that are rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The shift in my teaching fuels me to continue to embed Indigenous perspectives into my classroom community, including learning Anishinaabemowin words, making ribbon skirts for the children’s dolls and stuffies, lunchtime beading club, and sharing my Koko’s bannock recipe. As my students and I learn about ourselves through these processes, we learn to work together, embracing the gifts that we hold.

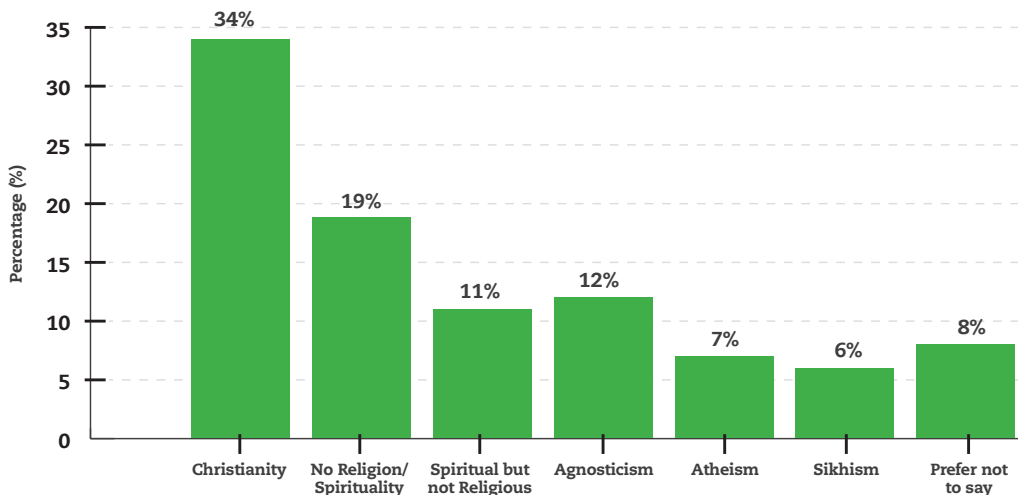
In my view, the 4 guiding questions are cyclical and evolving as we look inwards. It is a practice throughout our lives, in and out of our classrooms. My hope is that all my students proudly know who they are, where they are from, why they are here and where they are going. When we can answer these questions, I believe that we will build strong and compassionate communities.



Religion

In response to the question on religious or spiritual identity, 504 participants provided input, revealing a rich diversity of beliefs and practices.

Religious or Spiritual Identity of Respondents (N=504)



Response rates varied across survey questions, and the data reflects only those who chose to participate. These figures should be understood as minimum indicators, as voluntary reporting often leads to the underrepresentation of racialized and Indigenous identities. The actual diversity of Seven Oaks staff is broader and richer than what the numbers alone can show.

While less common, Indigenous Religions (4%), Hinduism (3%), Judaism (2%), and Buddhism (2%) also appeared among the responses, along with individual mentions of Islam, Taoism (Daoism), Baha'i Faith, and Paganism/Neopaganism.

These results highlight both the presence of dominant traditions and the wide range of spiritual perspectives within the community, including non-religious and culturally rooted belief systems. This diversity offers a meaningful opportunity to promote interfaith understanding, respect, and culturally responsive approaches within school and workplace settings.

It's important to note that Indigenous religions are often not viewed by Indigenous Peoples as "religions" in the Western sense of the term. Rather than being centered on formal doctrines, institutions, or written texts, Indigenous spiritualities are deeply rooted in land-based practices, oral traditions, relationships with ancestors, community, and the natural world. They are not separate from daily life but are woven into ways of being, knowing, and relating, a holistic worldview rather than a set of beliefs or rituals.

Because of this, some individuals may not identify their spiritual practices as a "religion" at all. Instead, they may consider themselves spiritual but not religious, or they may feel that the survey's terminology does not fully reflect the relational and ancestral nature of their spirituality. Additionally, the legacy of colonization and residential schools has deeply affected how Indigenous spiritual expressions are perceived and self-identified, both within and outside of Indigenous communities.

Recognizing this distinction is essential in creating inclusive and culturally respectful environments that honor the depth, diversity, and resilience of Indigenous spiritual traditions.



Lainie Rosner,

Teacher at Adult Education Center

I always wanted to be a teacher. Both of my parents were well-respected educators in Seven Oaks, and I grew up watching how their kindness, humour, and compassion made learning joyful and lasting. I still remember my Grade 4 assignment where I wrote—and illustrated—that I wanted to be a teacher and a ballerina.

Growing up in the world of competitive gymnastics taught me discipline and determination, but it was my summers at BB Camp on Lake of the Woods that shaped my soul. There, I learned about communal living, interdependence, outdoor survival, and the joy of celebrating Jewish identity. My Hebrew name, **Elana** (אלינה)—meaning “young tree”—feels like a perfect metaphor: deeply rooted in my heritage, growing strong, reaching out, and staying connected to the earth, its well-being, and the more-than-human world.

As the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, I carry their stories with me—their strength, their survival, and their dreams.

My grandma chose to work rather than attend ESL classes when she, my grandpa and my mother immigrated to Winnipeg. I think about her courage when I work with adult learners, especially newcomers learning English. I know what it means to feel unseen, and I want my students to feel the opposite: seen, valued, and empowered.

Sometimes I’m nervous to share that I’m Jewish, but I’ve learned the importance of being visible—to offer others a positive, authentic experience and open the door for questions, connection, and learning. Since October 7, 2023, antisemitism has skyrocketed. It is real, and scary, and education is one of the ways we dismantle it. This year, I taught *Never Far Apart*, a Holocaust memoir by Kitty Salsberg and Ellen Foster, and my class had the privilege of hearing Kitty speak at the Human Rights and Holocaust Symposium. It was powerful and unforgettable.

Jewish values like **chesed** (חסד)—loving-kindness—and **tikkun olam** (תיקון עולם)—repairing the world—guide everything I do. I intentionally choose diverse, inclusive texts that reflect my students’ identities and the truths we all need to hear. We read authors like Richard Wagamese, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ivan Coyote, and Robin Wall Kimmerer. We talk about “the danger of a single story,” and I ask my students to share their own through writing, art, and film. We listen, we question, we create.

Cadmus Delorme’s metaphor of paddling our canoes side by side—sometimes stepping into each other’s boats to learn—is how I imagine this journey. When we truly hear one another’s stories, we start to understand how we arrived here. And only then can we begin to shape the path forward—together.



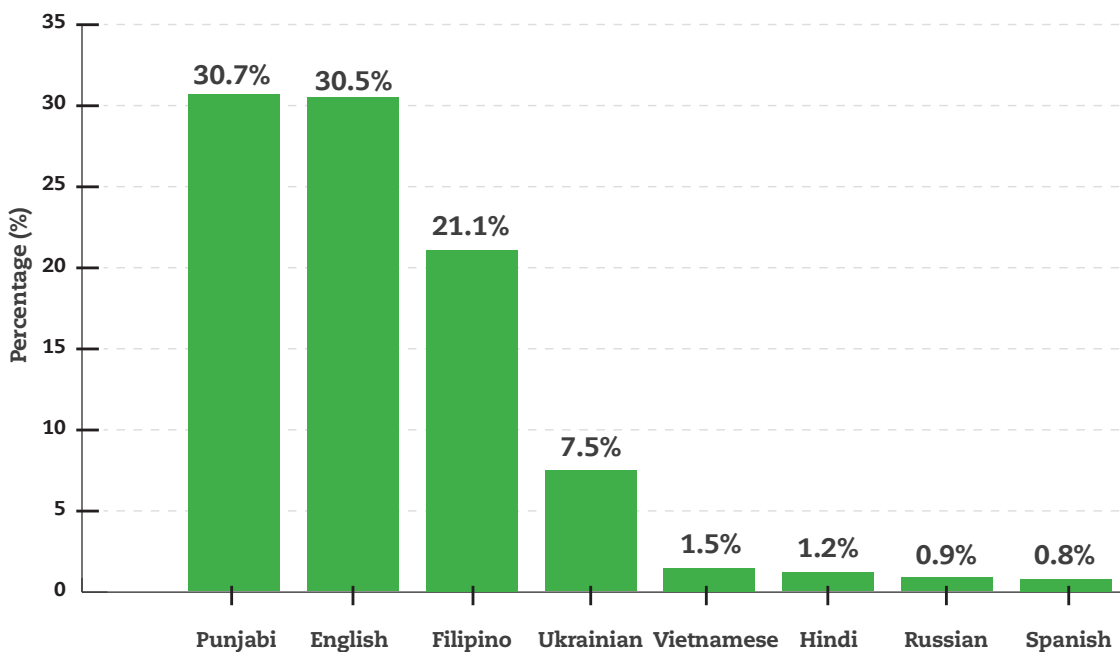
Language Proficiency

"We are learners, not experts, working together to discover ourselves and each other." - Nessa Mahmoudi, Rethinking Bilingual Education

Home Language Use in Seven Oaks School Division

In Seven Oaks School Division, 5,179 families responded to the registration question regarding languages spoken at home.

Languages Spoken at Home - Seven Oaks School Division



Punjabi (30.7%) and English (30.5%) are the most common, followed by Filipino languages (21.1%). Languages like Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Hindi, Russian, and Spanish reflect the division's rich multilingual community and cultural diversity.

Smaller but still notable percentages were recorded for **Chinese languages (0.6%)**, particularly **Cantonese**, as well as **Portuguese (0.6%)**, **Urdu (0.5%)**, and **Pashtu, Amharic, Arabic, and Tigrinia, each at 0.4%**. A small number of families also reported speaking **French and Gujarati (0.3%)**, and **Swahili and Polish (0.2%)** at home.

These results illustrate the multilingual nature of the Seven Oaks community and emphasize the need for inclusive, language-responsive approaches in family engagement, communication, and educational support.





Kateryna Kashak,

Seven Oaks Immigrant Services, Settlement Worker

When people ask me why I became a teacher, I smile and say that I can't imagine being anything else. Teaching isn't just a profession for me; it is a lifelong journey of learning and growing alongside students. Whether someone is 5 or 65 years old, we all have something valuable to share and something we can learn from each other.

My story begins in a small town in Ukraine, where I grew up in a family with two much older brothers. Their influence sparked my curiosity for more serious topics, and I loved sharing what I learned with friends, often asking my mom to buy me books so I could keep exploring new ideas. By the age of 15, I knew I wanted to become a teacher and pursued that path through college and university.

One of the most memorable moments in my career happened when a student told me that Monday and Wednesday were his favorite days because he had English class. When I asked him about the other days, he shared that in other classes, the teacher didn't listen to him or ignored his answers. That broke my heart. This experience reminded me how important it is to build strong relationships with students and to ensure that they always feel safe and respected in the classroom.

The values that guide my work are kindness, understanding, and the belief that learning is a lifelong journey. I try to teach my students that knowledge is not just about grades. It is about connecting with others, understanding different perspectives, and being open to learning from everyone.

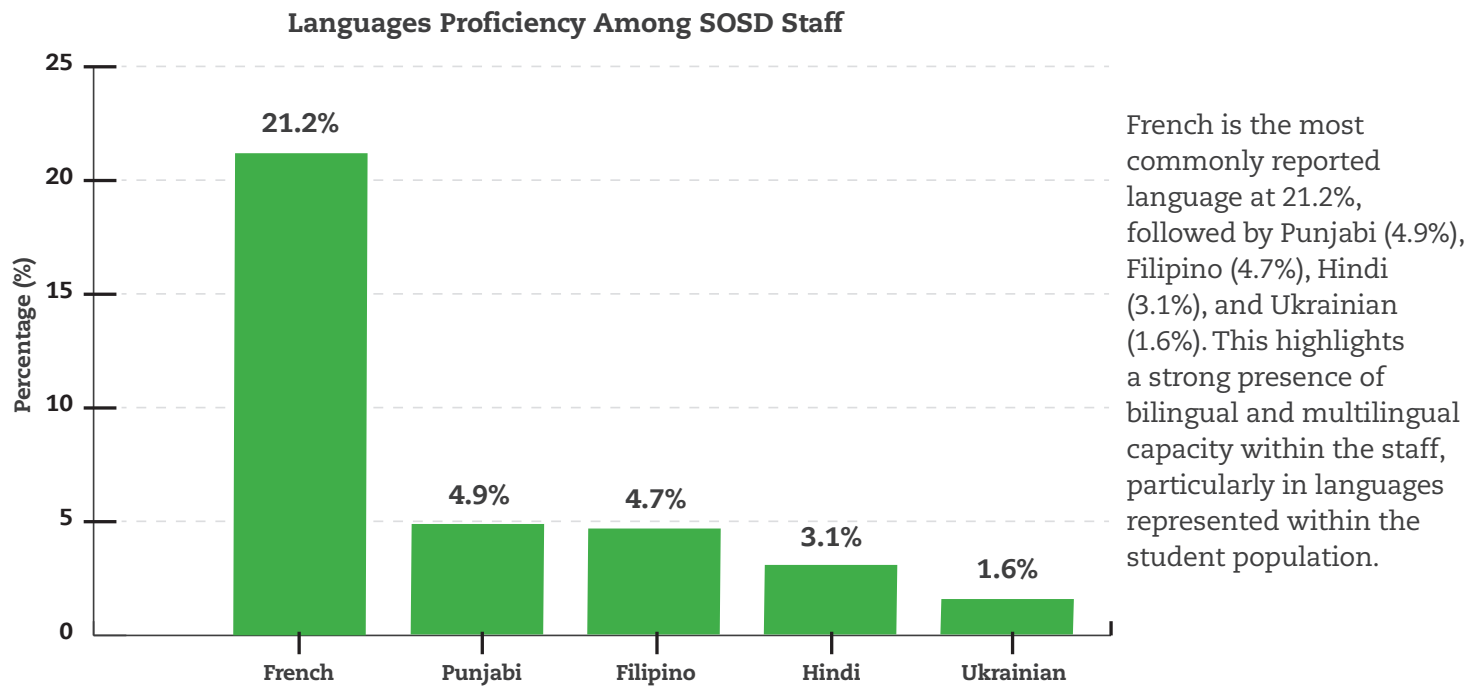
Since moving to Canada in 2022 and working with the Seven Oaks School Division as an Educational Assistant and later a Settlement Worker, I've entered an important new chapter in my journey. As a newcomer learning about the history of Indigenous Peoples, I became aware of how easily we can carry unrecognized stereotypes. Learning alongside my coworkers and meeting inspiring individuals like Niigaan Sinclair and Cadmus Delorme has helped me reflect on my own worldview and commit to being more open-minded and understanding each day.

By listening to my families' experiences, I have learned how important it is to create an environment where everyone feels included and valued. I have seen how essential it is to make sure every voice is heard, especially those who may feel overlooked because of their language, skin color, ethnicity, or orientation.

For me, teaching is not just about sharing knowledge. It is about helping people discover their potential and encouraging them to shine. When I see someone light up with excitement because they have understood something new, I know that the work I do matters. It is a beautiful thing to be part of someone's journey and to witness their growth.

Staff Proficiency

From SOSD Staff Census survey, **39% of respondents indicated a language proficiency beyond English.**



Response rates varied across survey questions, and the data reflects only those who chose to participate. These figures should be understood as minimum indicators, as voluntary reporting often leads to the underrepresentation of racialized and Indigenous identities. The actual diversity of Seven Oaks staff is broader and richer than what the numbers alone can show.

Language proficiency indicated with or less than 0.1%:

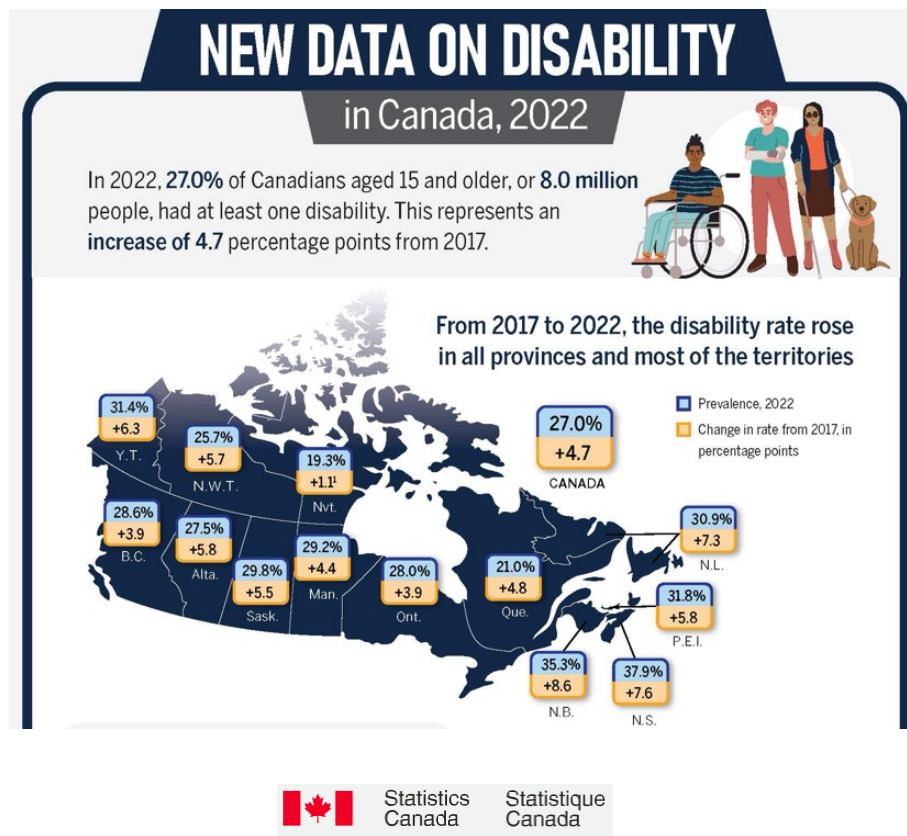
African, Anishinaabemowin, Cantonese, Croatian, German, Gujarati, Italian, Kenyan, Michif, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Welsh.

Takeaway: The linguistic landscape of Seven Oaks is richly multilingual, with a significant portion of students growing up in households where English is not the primary language.

There is a valuable level of linguistic diversity among staff, especially in languages represented within the student population. This foundation presents a meaningful opportunity to further strengthen language support by uplifting underrepresented Indigenous and newcomer languages, fostering greater inclusion and cultural connection across the school community.

Ability and Access Requirements

What is your primary employment status?



Based on a total of 459 responses. Overall, 12.2% (56 individuals) identified as persons who are differently abled and/or with access requirements, 79.3% (364 individuals) indicated they do not have access needs, and 8.5% (39 individuals) were unsure.

The data reveals that the largest group identifying with access requirements were teachers, representing 8.1% of the total workforce and accounting for 37 of the 56 affirmative responses. This was followed by Educational Assistants (1.1%), with smaller proportions represented across other employee categories. The majority of respondents from all employment groups reported not having access requirements, including 52.9% of total respondents being teachers without such needs.

Similar to 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, the most common types of disabilities reported were related to:

pain, flexibility & mobility, and mental health

Mental health emerged as a common selected category, with 18%. This was followed by chronic medical conditions (11%), physical pain (7%), and physical, functional, or mobility-related needs (7%). Other areas noted included hearing impairment (4%), vision/sight challenges (3%), cognitive impairment (1%), and intellectual/developmental disabilities (1%). Additionally, 5% of respondents selected “Unsure/Not listed here,” suggesting that there may be other needs not explicitly captured by the listed categories.

These findings provide a positive indication that individuals are increasingly willing to self-identify their access needs, particularly in areas which have historically carried stigma. The results also underscore the importance of fostering inclusive environments that recognize and accommodate a spectrum of access requirements.



Sarah Anderson,

Teacher at Maples Collegiate

“Hi, how was your day today?”

“Great—I just got off work and had a wonderful day with my students.”

The stunned reply—“Students?”—is something I hear often, a small but telling reminder of the stereotypes many people still hold about those in my community.

I’m a young teacher in my second year of the profession, and I’m also a proud permanent wheelchair user living with Generalized Dystonia. I’ve been an accessibility advocate since I was 14, sharing my lived experience to help others understand disability beyond assumptions.

Growing up in Seven Oaks School Division, I was fortunate to have educators who saw potential where others might have seen limits. Even with the complexities of my disability, I excelled academically and knew by middle school that I wanted to teach

though the absence of teachers who used wheelchairs sometimes made that goal feel distant.

What motivated me was knowing that representation matters. If we want to dismantle stereotypes and raise a generation that sees possibility rather than limitation, students need to see diverse bodies and identities in respected roles, including educators who use mobility aids.

Now, as a teacher, I see how many students especially those from equity-deserving communities live in a constant tug-of-war. On one side are the forces of discrimination, low expectations, and daily barriers that make them doubt their worth. On the other side are their allies: family, friends, educators, and community members who choose to see their humanity first, remind them of their gifts, and stand with them through challenges. I was once that rope. Now I pull alongside those allies every day.

In my classroom, I prioritize choice, voice, and agency. Students read texts that speak to them, write about what matters, and engage in conferences where I meet them where they are and push them to grow. Our final conferences are often the most powerful moments where students recognize their own learning, talents, and resilience, sometimes with surprise.

I don’t expect one course to change every life, but I do hope students leave strengthened against the shadows society casts on them. If they ever face the same kind of small-talk shock that I do, I want them to remember their power, their worth, and the allies who see them clearly. That, to me, is the real victory in the tug-of-war for well-being.



Transportation

From the **Seven Oaks School Division (SOSD) staff census survey** graph on commuting patterns, the key findings regarding **sustainable travel to work** include:

1. **Majority Drive Alone:** The predominant mode of commuting is **driving alone**, with **81.4% of staff** using personal vehicles. This is consistent across most job categories, particularly **custodians (92.3%)**, **administrators (91.3%)**, and **teachers (82.6%)**.
2. **Limited Use of Public Transit:** Only **3.7% of staff** reported using **public transportation**, with the highest proportion among **teachers (2.9%)**. This suggests that public transit access or convenience may be a barrier for many staff members.
3. **Carpooling is Minimal:** **8.3% of employees** carpool to work, with **notable participation among IT department staff (12.5%)** and **educational assistants (11.1%)**. While this is a more sustainable option than driving alone, uptake remains low.
4. **Active Transportation is Rare:** Walking or cycling (active transportation) accounts for only **6.6% of total staff** commuting, with the highest proportion among **teachers (6.1%)** and **educational assistants (9.7%)**. This suggests a need for improved infrastructure or encouragement to promote active commuting.

Sustainability Considerations:

- With a high reliance on single-occupancy vehicle use, there is an opportunity for SOSD to promote carpooling, public transit incentives, and active commuting options to reduce environmental impact.
- The low percentage of public transit users suggests potential barriers such as inconvenient routes, scheduling conflicts, or lack of accessibility.
- Encouraging walking and cycling through infrastructure improvements (e.g., bike racks, safer walking paths) could enhance sustainability efforts.

Potential Actions for More Sustainable Commuting:

- Incentives for carpooling and transit use, such as parking benefits for carpoolers or subsidies for transit passes.
- Infrastructure support for active transportation, including bike storage and change rooms.
- Educational campaigns to raise awareness about the environmental benefits of sustainable commuting.



Brian Zimmerman,

Finding My Voice as a Music Educator

One of the first challenges I faced as a music educator—and one that still shapes my teaching today—is navigating the wide cultural gap between Concert Band and Jazz. Concert Band is deeply rooted in European classical music traditions, while Jazz comes from African American culture. Before I became a band teacher, I had very little experience with classical music or the Concert Band world. Coming from a Jazz background, the values and expectations of classical music education felt foreign.

Classical music often emphasizes hierarchy, technical precision, and strict adherence to the score. The music is treated as a fixed product, and the performer's role is to faithfully interpret the composer's intent. In contrast, Jazz is fluid, participatory, and deeply rooted in improvisation. It sees music as a process, something created in the moment. Jazz is learned by listening, imitating, and collaborating in a communal setting. That method of learning—through experience, rather than notation—mirrors how many non-Western musical traditions are passed down.

As a “Jazz,” I’ve always loved helping students work through the challenges of learning Jazz. But I also bring the Jazz approach into my Concert Band classes. I try to make space for creativity, student voice, and collaborative learning, even in environments that traditionally lean toward structure and control. I believe music education should not just be about mastering technique—it should be about developing a student’s sense of self, agency, and connection with others.

Working in Seven Oaks School Division has given me the opportunity to teach in a way that aligns with these values. The level of support for music education here is outstanding. All instruments and equipment are provided to students at no cost, which means no one is excluded due to financial constraints. Every student who wants to be in band can be, and the division also subsidizes the annual trip to the Brandon Jazz Festival, giving students an opportunity to learn and grow outside the classroom.

We’re also fortunate to have access to beautiful performance spaces like SOPAC and the Maples Commons, and community-wide events like Arts in the Park—which I’ve helped organize since it began in 2001—offer unique, joyful opportunities for students to showcase their work.

I try to treat band class as something that belongs to the students. My role is to guide and support them, but the program is theirs. At Maples, a special culture has developed over time. Students join and then help shape the community. They take pride in it, pass on traditions, and build a shared identity. I hope each student feels like their voice matters and that they have a stake in the music we create together.

To me, music education is fundamentally about collaboration and human connection. When students feel ownership of their learning and pride in their community, that’s when the most beautiful music happens.

Something I am also proud of is, I started cycling to work in the spring and fall a few years ago, which is such an enjoyable way to start and end the day. Then in 2021, I discovered the fat bike and studded tires, and the ability to cycle in the winter months as well. This year, I have managed to cycle to work every day, and actually gave up my car completely.

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ANTI-RACISM, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY REPORT