



# Celebration of Success

## Premier Award for School Board Innovation

Showcase Directory - March 16, 2017



# Premier Award for School Board Innovation

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## **Bike Program Lord Selkirk School Division**



### **The overall goals of the Bike Program are to:**

- Provide Lord Selkirk Education Centre (LSEC) students with a hands-on, introductory trades opportunity.
- Provide a positive mentorship opportunity for at-risk youth.
- Provide connections with community organizations such as RCMP, City of Selkirk, Community Living, and community members.
- Provide bicycles and bicycle repairs for youth and adults in the community, which also supports a healthy lifestyle and sustainability.
- Provide a program that allows at-risk students to achieve a sense of belonging, independence, mastery and generosity (as described by Dr. Martin Brokenleg's 'Circle of Courage').
- Provide at-risk students the opportunity to learn hands-on, real-world skills that they can use immediately to better their lives, in addition to building leadership skills and having the opportunity to see positive results in the larger community.
- Provide students with a sense of pride and ownership.

### **Why do you think this program deserves recognition?**

The Lord Selkirk S.D. Bike Program deserves recognition because it creates connections within the community to help develop confidence and provide experience for the most at-risk students. It allows students to develop mastery and independence by learning skills that they can then use to give back to their communities. Students are able to meet their educational and social-emotional goals while developing leadership skills that are valued by society.

This program deserves recognition because it demonstrates that a simple idea can capture and hold the interest of students - all kinds and types of students. It can be duplicated and shared, as well as be expanded and deepened to create even richer experiences for young people in any school.

The program can serve as a template for programs other than bike programs that can be used by at-risk students to have a far reaching positive effects on their lives and on the larger community.

The Lord Selkirk School Division (LSSD) Bike Program was initiated by two teachers, Tyler Farrand and Steve Grahame, in response to a number of needs within the school system and the broader community. The program has just entered its second year and has started to expand from last year's initial programming level.

The program was designed to meet the following needs:

1. Provide students at the Lord Selkirk Education Centre (LSEC), which is the satellite campus of the Lord Selkirk Regional School, with the opportunity to participate in a hands-on introductory trades program.
2. Provide LSEC students the opportunity to learn leadership skills and provide positive mentorship to younger students. For at-risk youth, opportunities like these are non-existent.

3. Provide integrated training to clients of Selkirk Community Living, which is a local non-profit that provides both day and residential services to persons with mental disabilities.
4. Provide the opportunity for elementary students to learn the basics of bike repair while under the supervision of a teen-mentor in a positive environment that fosters co-operation and skill building.
5. Provide a needed service to the larger community by having both the teen-mentor and the elementary mentee repairing and distributing bikes to those in need.
6. Provide students enrolled in the program with the opportunity to repair a donated bike and take it home for themselves.

Between September and February, LSEC students have the opportunity to sample the program through a once-a-week programming option that allows them to become familiar with the tools and procedures prior to opting into the full program in February.

Divisional elementary school students also have the opportunity to try the program prior to signing up in the spring. These students are taught by previously-trained LSEC students who work in conjunction with division staff to provide a once-a-week programming option to these students.

From February through March, eight LSEC students receive an intensive 25-hour training program from a master bike mechanic; this training takes place at Community Living Selkirk. This training also includes two clients of Community Living, who use the training to prepare for job placements within the community as well as assist with the bike program later in the spring. Leadership training is also provided to the students so that they can be successful mentors in the next phase of the program.

In April, LSEC student bike mechanics practice the skills they have learned throughout the training by repairing unclaimed bikes donated from the City of Selkirk and local RCMP. These bikes are then provided to students and community members who are in need of bikes.

In May and June, LSEC student bike mechanics travel to four divisional elementary schools to provide an 8-day workshop. The LSEC mechanics train Grade 5 and 6 students in the basics of bike repair. These groups of students then work together to repair bikes brought in by members of the school community and provide repaired donated bikes to students who need a bike.

At the end of the program, the RCMP partners with all participants for a bike rally to promote safety within the school community.

The program serves the Selkirk and district community as a whole. By providing the training, at-risk youth have the opportunity to test the waters of trades training, while learning employment and leadership skills. In turn, these students take the knowledge that they have learned and share it with younger students. Ultimately, these students have the opportunity to learn and give back to the community on a level that they would not normally experience. The community as a whole has the opportunity to donate their used bikes back into the community and has the ability to gain access to a bicycle if one is needed.

The Bike Program is organized and run by existing Lord Selkirk S.D. staff, who use the program to meet the needs of the individuals involved. Approximately 40 days of direct staff time with the students is committed to the program with the ongoing program costs being about \$3000.00 per year. The Bike Program is supported by the school division budget as well as a number of community grants.

Success was measured in the first year by having six bike mechanics successfully complete all of the training and participate with 20 elementary students to donate 50 bikes back into the Selkirk-area communities. During this time, the at-risk students who participated in this program had better attendance and have continued to have strong attendance after the program was completed. All of the students in the program either graduated in June 2016, or returned for the 2016-2017 school year.

## Nelson McIntyre Collegiate - Project-Based Learning (in Partnership with The Forks) Louis Riel School Division



DIVISION SCOLAIRE  
**LOUIS RIEL**  
SCHOOL DIVISION

The goal of this program is to increase engagement, 21st century skill development, and sense of identity to assist with Career Development. In 2015-2016, Grade 9 was completely restructured, and next year, we will introduce Grade 10. Grade 11 will be restructured in 2018-2019 and Grade 12 in 2019-2020 so that the model will grow one year at a time and follow the students.

### Program Development

This program was developed by a team of educators from across Louis Riel School Division and the Administrators of Nelson McIntyre Collegiate. Ten educators from across the division were asked to envision “the perfect high school”. Through research, visitations, and design meetings, the team re-vised high school to incorporate deeper learning, engagement, career development, and the 6Cs- Collaboration, Character, Creativity, Critical thinking, Communication, Citizenship (Fullan).

### Unique Features of the program:

1. **Interdisciplinary Learning:** English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Applied Information Technology are taught in an interdisciplinary block through a Project-Based Learning Model. NMC's approach to Project-Based Learning focuses on the following pillars:
  - a. Deep Learning-an inquiry approach to learning
  - b. Relevance and Authenticity
  - c. Student Voice and Choice
  - d. Public Audiences for products and performance
  - e. Continual Revision, Critique and Reflection for improvement
2. **Mathematics- “flipped, self-paced approach”:** Through “practice and tracking software”, as well as teacher developed online instruction, students will learn mathematics at the pace and starting point appropriate for them. All students move at their own pace, through a system of mastery checks (formative assessments) and summative assessments.
3. **Career Development through Weeks Without Walls:** Three times a year, we suspend classes to allow students to learn about interests, strengths and careers through experiential learning. Students choose from a number of different themes and explore those themes through industry experts, tours, and activities. Students reflect on their experiences through My Blueprint, Portfolio development and other activities.

### Examples of themes for this year include (there are actually 15 in total):

- Exploring Manitoba Through Photography
- On the Sidelines: Behind the Scenes of Sport
- Caring for Animals
- Creating Beats
- Bike Repair
- Beyond the ER: Careers in Health
- How it's Made: Manitoba's industries & Trades
- Exploring Indigenous Culture
- Social Action

4. **Elective “Project Blocks”:** For ½ credit of the students' electives, they will choose from a “project block” list where inquiry, interdisciplinary opportunities, and authentic public audiences become part of the work. This year's project blocks include: Developing one's own Social Action Plan, Creating a Local Foods Cafe and recipe book, Protecting the Butterfly Ecosystem, Exploring Indigenous Culture through Art.

5. **Partnerships:** We currently have a formal partnership with The Forks. We connect with The Forks through project work and experts. Our students learn from their experiences there, and then contribute to The Forks by developing products or performances for them.

### Who does the program serve?

Our experience indicates that this program serves all students because it allows for strong students to move beyond a “ceiling” of expectation, and it allows an entry point for our weaker students since it incorporates such varied learning opportunities, styles, and pacing. It is by definition, differentiated.

### Costs:

**Staffing:** In the first year of each grade in development, staffing will be increased to a 20-1 student to teacher ratio to allow for teachers to develop new pedagogy. In year 2, the grade 9 teachers will be staffed at the normal ratio and grade 10 teachers will be staffed at a lower level. By the end of four years, we should be able to function with regular staffing ratios. Four teachers for each grade in development were/will be provided with 4-6 Professional Learning days per grade for designing projects. **Other costs:** *Weeks without Walls* will cost approximately \$4000. Costs will only increase slightly over the years, as these sessions, plus a few new ones will become multi-age. In other words, the themes will not be grade specific.

### Success Rates:

We are currently collecting baseline data. This data, when compared to previous year's TTFM data indicates that student engagement and motivation is higher than in previous years. In addition, data connected to rigor, relevance, and valuing school outcomes indicate higher results than previous years.

Some striking results are:

- Attendance Rates are excellent (91.04%). Most notable, two previous non-attenders attend regularly. This is true in spite of the tremendous distance some students travel.
- Student reflections on their first *Weeks without Walls* was overwhelmingly positive. 64 out of 65 students indicated that they would highly recommend their session to others. 97% are looking forward to the next session.
- 92% of students indicate that they are learning what they need to learn for their goals in math.
- 100% of students indicated that the learning they were doing in school is important for their lives.

## **VISION - “Very Important Stuff I Obviously Need” Mountain View School Division**



The program was developed through the Life-Work Career Development Curriculum. The goal of the program is to provide authentic and relevant learning experiences that will assist students with the transition to life outside of school.

The VISION project was developed in the 2015-16 school year at Gilbert Plains Collegiate, a rural high school with an enrolment of approximately 70 students in Mountain View School Division. “VISION” stands for Very Important Stuff I Obviously Need; it evolved from discussions with teachers, students, parents, and community members - with an often heard, “they should teach that in school” comment, as well as students asking for relevance in their education.

All staff were brought together to establish the common goals of providing relevant and authentic learning experiences, meaningful student-adult connections, and progressive community building. Through the lens of the Career Development curriculum, teachers devised a program where students were divided into multi-grade groups that cycle through topics with individual teachers, scheduled as a class within the regular timetable. Topics were initially chosen by the teachers, with ongoing student involvement through round table sessions. Each topic incorporated the Nine Essential Skills set out by Workplace Education Manitoba (Reading, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Thinking, Digital Technology, and Continuous Learning), and students completed a skills inventory reflection at the end of each topic. Resumes were developed through the evidence compiled from these inventories, as well as skills gained through volunteer opportunities supported by the many community connections and the annual Volunteer Fair hosted by the school.

The implementation of the project began with Block One of Jennifer Katz’ Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning, through a school-wide community building activity and learning style/multiple intelligences surveys completed by all staff and students. These ideas were revisited over the course of the year to promote inclusion, encourage students to make connections with their personal strengths and challenges, and appreciate those of others.

First semester topics were Respect in Sport, Emergency First Aid, Canteen/Business Management, Online Awareness, and Mental Wellness. After feedback from the students, the topics of Basic Vehicle Maintenance, Personal and Workplace Safety, History of Culture and Religion, Current Events, and Career Planning were established for the second semester. In some cases, teachers were sent for additional training (Emergency First Aid), and experts were brought in for further support (Food Safe Handling and Self-Defense). By the end of the year, students received not only a high school credit in Life/Work Building 30S, but also industry-standard certificates in Emergency First Aid, Respect in Sport, WHMIS - Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (1988 and 2015), and Food Safe Handling Level 1, all without financial cost to the student. They each researched and developed a career plan, created a resume, and participated in a final panel interview involving self-reflection of skills, goals, and participation in the process.

Teachers were highly motivated to co-plan this project which provided them the autonomy to deliver meaningful content in their personal areas of strength. Parents and community members were impressed by the practical nature of the topics, and the students enjoyed the relevance, flexibility, opportunity for input, and variety throughout the semester. The initial year ended with plans to shift to a half credit in Career Development to allow for more diverse activities that may not directly link to a single curriculum. Students continued to meet with teachers for the same amount of time, and new topics of Basic Home Maintenance, Study Skills/Time Management, Standard First Aid/CPR, Problem Solving, and Public Speaking/Volunteering were added.

First year costs for the program were covered through the school budget, approximately \$1200 for professional development and \$2200 for specialist instructors and certification. Expectations are that costs will continue to be similar in subsequent years, depending on topics.

Students were engaged through relevant and authentic learning, and were provided a forum for student voice and collaboration. The VISION project promotes inclusion, enables students to learn about themselves, identify their skills, establish learning goals, and assist in their transitions to life outside of high school.

## Rivers Collegiate Wetland Centre for Excellence Rolling River School Division



The ultimate goal is to increase student engagement and successful completion of Manitoba curricular outcomes through differentiated instruction and incorporation of Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory.

The Wetlands Project involves learning where students identify challenges and create responses/solutions in real life context outside the traditional classroom. The project has been integrated into a variety of classes at Rivers Collegiate, and students from surrounding Rolling River S.D. schools come to learn about wetlands. Examples of student activities include water quality testing, species inventory and identification, placing nest boxes, planting, winter ecology, and the use of technology to produce a website and promotional materials. The wetlands are an environmental conservation project that serves students in Rivers and surrounding area.

### **Innovative nature of the project**

The Wetland Centre of Excellence project, in partnership with local, provincial, and national organizations, is one of approximately 22 similar facilities in Canada hosted by a school or school division. We offer a nature-based program and facility where high school students are able to learn about wildlife, local uplands plant life, wetland aquatic life, and the overall local environment. They are also able to explore and develop leadership and teaching skills when instructing and working alongside of elementary aged students. The concept of sustainability is an underlying principle of lessons and activities developed by and for students. One goal of the program has been to train students to prepare a program for introducing younger students to important science curriculum unit 1: Habitats and Communities. We have had four grade four classes from two different schools come to the wetland in 2015 and 2016 to take part in this learning opportunity. Another goal of our project is to plan, prepare and open the facility to the larger public to ignite a sense of wonder about nature in our local context together with the local community's Health and Tourist initiatives as well as with our municipality leaders.

### **Sustainability of the innovation present within the project**

Socio-Cultural - Providing facilities that all community members and all other potential users can access and utilize equally because there are no restrictions that will be in place to accessing the area. The wetland area is part of the town's Aspen walking trail system that links the Rivers town site to Lake Wahtopanah and Rivers Provincial Park.

Environmental - Protection of local wetlands and wildlife areas for staff, students, and community members to enjoy and provide educational opportunities through the information provided at this site (signage, programming, and school curriculum). We are also looking to monitor the impact of the local housing development and farm land that abuts the wetland ecosystem.

Tourism/Economic - Providing an area that would sustain eco-tourism and opportunities for further economic development through Greening projects. As a part of our partnership with the town of Rivers and their economic development plan, it is foreseen that the wetland will be one of a series of attractions to be part of a larger economic strategy for the town/municipality.

Academic - With the recent shift in political direction we believe this project can be readily addressed in the present government's focus on literacy and numeracy. Our focus can include a reflection that involves reading skills based on materials related to wetlands and biodiversity. Numeracy can also be easily addressed and considered given the large number of scientific and math based activities that are part of our related program.

### **Ability to transfer the innovation to other systems or schools**

At Rivers Collegiate, three classes are designed to support our Wetland Centre of Excellence project: Outdoor Education: Sustainability and Survival (Grades 9 & 10) and Wetland Management (Grade 12). Another related course implemented in 2014-15 and 2015-16 was Sustainable Energy: Wind & Solar Power (Grade 9 & 10 levels) had students look at our wetland with another set of lenses and develop programming around projects that were used to reinforce the main wetland project.

Other courses that have been involved in this project are: Computer Drafting & Design (Gr. 11 & 12), Broadcast Media (Grade 10) assisted in the development of our projects and continued the conversations about the direction of our school. Our science department (Grade 7-12) has also utilized the wetland as both a hands-on learning opportunity and a real life learning space to explore the wonders of the natural world. Our Wood Working vocational program has also played a major role in the development of our wetland area, building docks, boardwalks, and wood duck and bat boxes. As well, teachers in other courses are encouraged to venture to the wetland to connect this space to their curriculum where possible, including Art, ELA, Science, Biology, Current Topics in Science, Inter-disciplinary Science, Math, and Global Issues.

Over the past few years, we have worked very closely with a number of organizations to provide students with networking opportunities and experiences with other professionals in this field. Some of our partners include: *Fort Whyte Alive, Little Saskatchewan River Conservation District, Ducks Unlimited Manitoba & Canada, Oak Hammock Marsh Eco-Van, Caring for our Watersheds, Manitoba Education (ESD), Manitoba Conservation, Parks Canada, Green Manitoba, Nutrients for Life, Brandon University, Assiniboine Community College, Royal Roads University, EECOM, Trees Canada, RainBarrel.ca, Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network, Thomas Sil Foundation, Rivers & Brandon Community and Area Foundations, Healthy Together Now, Municipality of Riverdale, and several First Nations leaders.* In spring 2017, our school will also take part in the Manitoba *Envirothon* competitions.

### **Cost of the innovation relative to the benefits achieved**

The cost of the innovation relative to the benefits achieved is minimal when considered against the cost of not promoting such a change within our high school system. Students are involved in much more authentic and relative learning experiences and have the opportunity to apply concepts and knowledge acquired through collaboration with community partners. This type of education fosters the idea of community citizenship and helps develop within the child a sense of place, sense of wonder, and a sense of identity. As a result, they learn more about the advancement of sustainable ideas for the future and their place within this world.

### **Client Support for the innovation**

Ducks Unlimited Canada	\$5,000 start-up grant and ongoing support
Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Grants	\$2,000
Rolling River School Division Grants	\$2,000
Thomas Sil Foundation	\$10,000
Brandon and Rivers Community and Area Foundation	\$14,000
Rivers Healthy Community	\$500
Little Saskatchewan River Conservation District	Expertise, equipment and financial support

### **Major Awards**

<i>MB Conservation Districts Award</i>	<i>December 2016</i>
<i>Canadian Wildlife Federation Youth Conservation Award</i>	<i>June 2016</i>
<i>World Wildlife Federation Project "Black Knot" Bursary</i>	<i>September 2015</i>

Our project is an interdisciplinary and multi-method pedagogy. A major focus in our school over the past four years has been looking at professional development around differentiated instruction. Staff members are instructed and expected to use a variety of teaching approaches when delivering outcomes to students, in an attempt to support each individual learner. In our opinion, adding environmental learning to this mix only continues to support Differentiated Instruction and Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory.

Students are making stronger connections between concepts learned in one class and another as well as making stronger connections between school, community and real life. The engagement level of some students has increased when we think of students volunteering to set up docks or cleaning up an area of invasive plant life. At the end of the day, we have also found that a number of student who have struggled with traditional classroom based instruction have had the opportunity to show their expertise in hands on learning and become leaders in these settings. With praxis as our end goal, we move beyond the traditional classrooms focus on theory and technology. Praxis simply defined means, "thoughtful action informed by theory and technology". We believe this approach is one that few high school curricula consider.

## **STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics**

### **Turtle Mountain School Division**



The goal of the program is to increase the amount of time students experience science and math outside of regular class time. To increase engagement and cross curricular connections.

STEM education helps to bridge the ethnic and gender gaps sometimes found in math and science fields. STEM education can be useful in encouraging students to pursue STEM related careers, because it is based on activities that are hands on, real life application. The work is relevant and engaging.

At Boissevain School our STEM (integrated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) program was instituted in the Fall of 2016 and runs year long as a course option opposite of our grade 6, 7 & 8 band classes. The STEM course began in a coordinated effort between the principal, Stephanie Emberly, and the 7th grade math and science teacher, Tara Pipella. Prior to implementing the program the school had three dilemmas that they were trying to resolve.

The first dilemma came from examining our data regarding mathematical ability in our students. We needed to find a way to increase class contact time in middle years science and mathematics in a way that was innovative, cross curricular, and highly hands-on and engaging. Second, for students not taking band, the elective course entitled “non-band” was not sufficiently rigorous nor consistent with our goals as a school to increase proficiency in mathematics-so we needed a stronger option. Third, could we find a way to encourage students that are currently disengaged from math and science to re-engage with the topics and enhance the likelihood that they would pursue higher mathematics/sciences, particularly as this relates to gaps traditionally seen in these areas such as girls and minorities not pursuing STEM areas as careers later in life.

Amongst our 48 students participating in STEM first semester, 21 are female. In a survey given to the students regarding their attitudes about science and math the female students reported a 38% increase in feeling more interested in math and science. The male students reported a 10% increase in their interest in math and science. It should be noted that many of the male students were “neutral”, stating that they liked math and science going into the STEM class to begin with.

Costs to run the program have been reasonable. We have purchased some teacher support resource books for \$72.42. There have been incidental expenses along the way for science experiments, however those costs have been mitigated by using recycled materials from students’ homes in a variety of ways. Overall for the year we anticipate spending no more than \$500.00.

In summary, STEM will continue to be a focus moving forward in our school as we feel that it has multiple benefits for our students. STEM develops a set of thinking, reasoning, teamwork, investigative, and creative skills that students can use in all areas of their lives. STEM is cross curricular and relevant as the focus is on solving real-world issues. STEM lessons immerse students in hands-on inquiry and open-ended exploration involving students in productive teamwork. STEM lessons allow for multiple right answers and reframes failure as a necessary part of learning.

## **Stingers Credit Union - Technical Vocational High School's Student Operated Credit Union Winnipeg School Division**



Stingers Credit Union (aptly named after our school mascot) is a community branch of Assiniboine Credit Union (ACU) that is operated entirely by student volunteers at Tec Voc High School. The impetus for our student-run credit union came out of an identified student need. After polling our grade nine students, answers to two questions required action: 'Do you have your own bank account?' and 'If not, why do you not have an account?'. We found that only 25% of our grade nine students had bank accounts. Reasons for not having an account included 'I will never have enough cash to worry about saving', 'I don't have any cash to open an account with', 'I don't know how to get an account', 'I don't have enough pieces of identification to open one'.

The innovative features of Stingers Credit Union are threefold. Firstly, we were able to find a community partner that understood the importance of removing barriers and reestablishing the hope of our underbanked students. Our students require only one piece of identification to open a membership while other financial institutions require a minimum of two. Moreover, ACU generously contributes the \$5.00 share it normally costs to open a membership for each Stingers Credit Union member. This membership entitles the student to a free chequing and savings account. Not only are these accounts service charge free for the time they are at our school, they are free for the rest of their lives.

The second innovation was our students. Under the guidance of their staff mentor (Kathleen Mira), students operate all aspects of the credit union. Students are trained as Member Service Representatives (MSR) following ACU's training procedures and acquiring the same skills the credit union builds in its own professional staff. These skills include: the responsibilities accorded with handling cash, confidentiality, professionalism, computer skills, behavior in a business environment, and improved communication skills as he or she is required to deal not only with their fellow students but also teachers and administrators. This training provides students with a sense of professional pride and heightens their self-esteem. These students have developed a deep understanding of how financial institutions operate and the importance of being a part of one.

The final innovation was that the school division did not incur any additional costs or staffing time to operate the credit union. Stingers Credit Union shares the same space and equipment with our school store and we were able to recruit students from our existing Business courses for its operation. We opted to create a sustainable model that would reinforce skills that students were already learning in existing courses and not create a separate 'Credit Union' course. Our Accounting students became the Member Services Representatives, our Marketing students organized membership drives, in-class promotional presentations and creating web pages, brochures and posters, and Management students scheduling and supervise the volunteers. Stingers is a hub of activity where students can hone their business skills and truly be a part of a team.

By the end of our first membership drive we had 125 active members with chequing accounts. Two months later we knew our initiative was morphing into the social change instrument that we hoped it would be. Eighty-five of the 125 members had opened a second savings account where they were transferring funds for their savings goals: graduation expenses, family gifts, a car, or post-secondary education. Our initial membership numbers have tripled and continue to thrive as new grade nine and ten students join us annually. We have had in excess of 130 students involved in the credit union's operation thus far and enrollment in our Business courses has increased substantially.

Our staff also noted a significant increase in student engagement. The topic of personal finance now becomes relevant when a student has some money to manage and a place to manage it. For example, the financial literacy unit in our mandatory Grade 10 Career and Technology Studies course was expanded to include a technology based budgeting project whereby students utilize accurate and realistic projections. Prior to this project, students have extensively researched a chosen career as part of a career studies unit. In doing so, they found realistic income projections. Students then determine

expenses by outlining a lifestyle (e.g., transit vs. car, apartment vs. house, and asset building vs. travel). Financial planning concepts (e.g., taxation, education, insurance, finance, and savings) are introduced. Students also conduct financial feasibility studies (e.g., mortgages vs. renting, banks vs. credit unions, buying vs. leasing). The results have students adjusting their lifestyle expectations—earning more, spending less or a combination of the two.

Many of our students have marketed themselves and their new skills and have found part-time and summer employment. Their skill set is a natural fit for most employers as they exhibit solid customer service skills combined with a strong practical base of banking procedures. As one employer summarized “She knew the banking process – all the checks and balances - and the format that the money has to be in when it had to be deposited.” Our graduates have gone on to business programs at university or college. Others have started as clerks with a company and have gradually been given increased responsibility. These students are essentially creating their own livable wage jobs and in many cases overcoming cultural and poverty challenges.

This initiative has kept students invested in learning and committed to staying in school. This approach has also allowed some students an alternative; an opportunity to train for a career in credit unions or banking that might not have seemed a possibility for them before. This partnership offers students an opportunity to learn, participate, and work with confidence alongside credit union professionals. It promotes educational opportunities, develops a better trained work force and strengthens our economic system. This has improved communications, understanding and relationships between our school and the greater community. We are now involving students’ families by introducing them to a variety of planning tools at our parent teacher conference evenings and have established a formal internship leading to employment with ACU.

We initially celebrated the success of our partnership with each other but have recently shared our achievements with others. Each fall ACU hosts our students for a full day of tours and career pathway presentations to celebrate our partnership. To reciprocate, we have had numerous ACU employees volunteer to be guest speakers so they can see Stingers Credit Union in operation first hand and enjoy lunch with our students. ACU hosted an evening in a private box for twenty of our students and staff who volunteer at the credit union to enjoy a professional hockey game and pizza dinner with their management team. This equitable treatment of all partnership participants has proven to be a pillar of our partnership.

Numerous media outlets who have completed feature stories about our undertaking have returned to do follow-up pieces on our progress. ACU shared the early success of this initiative that meets the needs of the underbanked at their National Credit Unions Conference. We presented our model at the annual Educators of Business and Information Technology SAGE, where our students received a standing ovation for their presentation. Since then we have received numerous enquiries seeking details of how we started our project and know of two similar credit unions that have been opened since our presentation.

2016 has proven to be the year of recognition of our partnership. We were featured as a promising practice by the National Career Pathways Network at their Indianapolis conference and were presented the Chair’s Global Best Partnership Award at the International Partnership Network conference in Oslo.

Tec Voc High School was the first vocational school in Manitoba. The creation of Stinger Credit Union has allowed us to continue the mantra that the original founders established: “Knowledge without practice makes but half an artist”. Our partnership is ultimately offering young people a unique learning experience to develop personal finance and employability skills.