

ABORIGINAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM A SUCCESS

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Many remember the official launch of the Martin Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program at Father Patrick Mercredi Community High School. You may remember it because former Prime Minister Paul Martin was in the small gym front and centre discussing how amazing the Science and Technology Centre is, and how excited he was to see this programming coming into the school.

But since that day the work has continued on at an incredible pace, and students are excelling within the framework of the program.

One of the most incredible parts of this program is the mentorship aspect. Our students have to opportunity to work with people that have been in aboriginal business and can share their knowledge.

Michael Hull is the classroom teacher of the program and says mentorship makes a big difference, “when young people have the opportunity to interact regularly with mentors that are business owners, this can only bring about a positive impact on education.”

The overall goal is relatively simple, to help the students to gain and retain the skills and attitude to be successful in secondary school, when they continue on in school, the workplace, and daily life.

There is also the aim to teach these students about business. Specifically, the way it functions, its role in Canadian society within an aboriginal context, opportunities it generates for individuals and Aboriginal communities, and its impact on people’s lives.

The role of the mentor is so important in this program. And we thank NAABA for their support in mentoring, especially mentors like Mitch Mercredi. He’s a former Father Mercredi student that is now back in his former high school as a mentor. Mentoring is a busy job with many responsibilities:

- Committing to the student over the time period of the Entrepreneurship program (5+ visits during the school year)
- Meeting with the students at school
- Helping the student write and refine a business plan and provide advice about pricing, budgets, advertising, and marketing
- Assisting with the development of the student’s website
- Helping the student prepare for a Trade Show display
- Supporting the student’s business start-up activities
- Helping implement strategies for the growth of the student’s venture
- Encouraging the student to develop a passion for and commitment to the venture

Deborah Kitching is the Program Coordinator and says there is no underestimating the role of the mentors in this programming, “Every single positive aboriginal role model, socially and academically, that comes into their life gives them an increased chance of educational success.”