

**ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION  
ADVOCACY PAPER FOR MANDATORY FIRST NATION, MÉTIS AND INUIT COMPONENTS IN  
ONTARIO'S SOCIAL STUDIES AND HISTORY CURRICULUM  
(A PROJECT OF OPSBA'S FIRST NATION TRUSTEES COUNCIL)**

**June 2015**

**INTRODUCTION**

In September, 2014, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association adopted the following resolution of its First Nation Trustees Council:

**That a position paper be developed to advocate for mandatory elementary and secondary curriculum components in First Nations, Métis and Inuit history that includes treaty education, the history and legacy of residential schools and the impact of the *Indian Act*.**

Within OPSBA's priorities for *The Whole Child and Student Well-Being* and *New Generation Education*, the First Nation Trustees Council has maintained an emphasis on First Nation, Métis and Inuit content in the Ontario curriculum, particularly in the areas of Social Studies and History. The importance of this work has been deepened by the 2013 call for action to teach the history of residential schools by the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). When Justice Sinclair was embarking on the work of TRC, he made the following remarks to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

"Mainstream Canada sees the dysfunction of Indigenous communities, but have no idea how that happened, what caused it, or how government contributed to that reality through the residential school policy. They do not realize that just as Indigenous children were taught that they were inferior, so were non-Indigenous children. They do not realize that for the non-Indigenous child, this teaching had an insidious aspect – it reinforced a false belief in their own superiority. This too must be addressed. Most Canadians do not realize therefore that for there to be true reconciliation, they must be part of the solution.

Education, delivered through residential schools, was the tool for assimilation. It was education that helped to perpetuate the situation we see today for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

We at the TRC believe that it will be education, again, that will be the tool that best addresses all of that, for education will create knowledge, and from knowledge will come understanding. From understanding will come respect – both self respect for Indigenous people and mutual respect for all.

....That history is something that we all must teach our children and grandchildren. That history must be offered in classrooms across the country. We call for these things so that in a few generations, in place of disruption, dysfunction and disrespect, we will see a Canada where the relationship between Indigenous Canadians and non-Indigenous Canadians is founded on mutual respect.”

Speaking in Saskatoon in April, 2015, TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson said she hopes the legacy the TRC leaves behind will inspire jurisdictions across Canada to include the residential school history as a required course to graduate high school. She stated:

"Education was the tool that was used to assimilate and Christianize and otherwise diminish and damage all of these generations. It was also the tool that was used... mindlessly, to keep the whole rest of the community ill-informed and ignorant. We need to teach an honest history that includes the history of the indigenous peoples of Canada, whose homeland it is and that the history of this American continent didn't begin with the arrival of the Europeans."

OPSBA commends the Ontario Ministry of Education for the framework for positive change that is represented by the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. It has been a driver of the assiduous approach to a curriculum review process that has increased the infusion of First Nation, Métis and Inuit content throughout the curriculum. Incorporating First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives in arts, literature, communications, law is important to building an understanding of Indigenous peoples as a vibrant and relevant force in today's Canada. This is making a significant difference in Ontario schools. The revised First Nation, Métis and Inuit Studies curriculum and textbooks at the secondary level are an excellent resource in developing a portrayal of both historical and contemporary First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples.

We take pride as well in the remarkable work school boards, schools and teachers have undertaken to raise the level of knowledge about First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and world views, including offering excellent resources on treaties, the *Indian Act* and residential schools. We have consulted with school boards in the development of this paper and their advice is incorporated in the Section *Strengthening the Ontario Curriculum* (p.5) which addresses the Ontario Social Studies/History curriculum for specific grades. This advice illustrates a great depth of understanding and passion for telling the whole story.

#### INTENT OF THIS ADVOCACY PAPER

The intent of this paper is to advocate that the continuing curriculum review process include consideration of mandatory elements that will offer every student in Ontario exposure to the significance of treaties, the development of the *Indian Act* and the causes, history and legacy of Canada's Indian Residential Schools System. The establishment of residential schools was enabled by government policies that supported assimilation of First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples and it is

important to provide that enabling context. While First Nations and Inuit peoples are identified in the Indian Residential School Settlement of 2007, addressing this history must also acknowledge that thousands of Métis children were separated from their families to attend residential schools with the same goal of assimilation and eradication of culture.

All elementary students are taught the Social Studies and History curriculum (Grades 1-8). All secondary students have, as a compulsory credit, Grade 10 History. These would appear to be the most fertile areas for consideration for inclusion of learning expectations, in an age-appropriate way, that focus on the context that surrounded the development of the Indian Residential School system and its ongoing impacts.

The central issue of our proposal is that Ontario should ensure that the curriculum contains clear expectations in history subjects that every Ontario student is required to take so that we as a province address and be accountable for acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the historical context that gave rise to residential schools, the impact for First Nation, Métis and Inuit children and their families, and the legacy that continues in Canada to this day. It is recognized that the specific content would take into account age appropriateness.

## RATIONALE

All four education goals defined in Ontario's 2014 *Renewed Vision for Education* are relevant to the aims of this paper:

**Achieving Excellence:** Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship.

**Ensuring Equity:** All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.

**Promoting Well-Being:** All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging and the skills to make positive choices.

**Enhancing Public Confidence:** Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.

In describing the promotion of well-being, the *Renewed Vision* document states:

“Children and students who have strong relationships and a positive sense of self – and who can understand and manage their own health and emotions – are in a better position to reach their full potential in the future. Their sense of well-being supports their learning because it makes them more resilient and better able to overcome challenges.”

Well-being is built on a strong and positive sense of identity and knowing one's identity is respected. As Justice Sinclair noted we have to undo the effects of past teaching in which Indigenous children were made to feel inferior and rebuild a strong sense of equity.

Education is the powerful tool we have at our disposal to change this. The teaching of history must have a purposeful continuum that starts with imparting an understanding of the rich culture, history, diversity and world views of Indigenous peoples prior to first contact. This is essential to the next steps on the continuum where students can come to understand the losses suffered and the profound impacts of the *Indian Act*, significance of treaties, and the history and continuing legacy of Canada's residential schools.

As a result of advocacy by First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations, of increasing awareness of long-standing gaps in curriculum, and the deep effects, province by province, of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, great changes are at work across the country. Recognition of the need to make these issues a solid, necessary and significant part of history education for all students has been growing rapidly in Canada.

### ***What is Happening in Canada***

In speaking of the work of the TRC, Justice Murray Sinclair has eloquently articulated why all Canadian students need to learn those vital components of First Nation, Métis and Inuit history that have not been well understood, or understood at all, by the average Canadian graduate of our education system. He has taken his message to the Council of Canadian Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) and gained their support.

In 2012, the North West Territories and Nunavut introduced mandatory curriculum on residential schools, *The Residential School system in Canada: Understanding the Past – Seeking Reconciliation – building Hope for Tomorrow*. ([http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/Early-Childhood/ns\\_-\\_residential\\_schools\\_resource\\_-\\_second\\_edition.pdf](http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/Early-Childhood/ns_-_residential_schools_resource_-_second_edition.pdf)) This represents 25 hours or approximately one-fifth of the Grade 10 Northern Studies credit.

Manitoba Education released *From Apology to Reconciliation* a guide for Grade 9 and 11 teachers of Social Studies. It was developed in response to the Government of Canada's 2008 formal apology to Aboriginal people who attended residential schools. The project was created to help Manitoba students in Grades 9 and 11 understand the history of the residential school experience, its influence on contemporary Canada, and our responsibilities as Canadian citizens. <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/far/>. The province's mandatory Grade 11 history credit has five distinct themes, the first of which is *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Peoples*.

In 2007, Saskatchewan undertook to make treaty education a mandatory component of curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 12 and in 2014 committed to addressing the need for mandatory education on the history of residential schools.

In March 2014, the Alberta Minister of Education stated: *"In the spirit of reconciliation, the Government of Alberta commits that all Alberta students will learn about the history and legacy of residential schools, along with the history of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada. Provincial Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum will include enhanced mandatory content for all Alberta students on the significance of residential schools and treaties."*

The TRC indicated in March 2014 that Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the Yukon have also committed to teaching about residential schools.

## THE ONTARIO CURRICULUM

In recent years Ontario has introduced significant changes to the Social Studies and History curriculum and has integrated important content on First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories. This is representative of a positive trend of examining all curriculum through the lens of the experiences, cultures and perspectives of Canada's First Peoples. We advocate that this approach be continued and strengthened so as to achieve a clear mandatory continuum of access to the histories of First Nation, Métis and Inuit for all Ontario students. Advice we have received tells us that it is equally important to have a robust process for engagement of First Nation, Métis and Inuit representatives throughout the curriculum review process with a transparent protocol that ensures authentic involvement.

In developing this paper, we have examined in particular the current curriculum areas set out below and have consulted with program staff in our member boards and accessed other sources of expertise. The advice we received is captured in detail in the sections for each grade area:

Grade 6 Social Studies

Grade 8 History

Grade 10 Canadian History - Academic

Grade 10 Canadian History - Applied

All Ontario students will study these curriculum areas and they offer rich opportunities to learn about the history of Canada's First Peoples and the events, legislation and government policies that have deeply impacted their lives and identities, creating legacies that extend to the present day. In focussing on these areas, we also acknowledge that to fully appreciate the critical interactions that occurred between First Peoples and the settlers of Canada, it is equally important that we understand the vibrant cultures and effective economic, education and governance systems that were in place among First Peoples prior to contact. This is essential to an understanding of the significance of treaties and the impacts of the *Indian Act* and the residential school system.

A member board that contributed advice put it this way:

*"It is necessary to understand all contemporary events have roots in history and that the writers of history do so from within the contexts of their own beliefs, values, and world views. First Nation, Métis and Inuit people have often been portrayed in a stereotypical way that has frequently led to feelings of marginalization and cultural degradation.*

*In order to understand the deep and profound impacts of the Indian Act, significance of treaties, and the history and continuing legacy of Canada's residential schools one must first understand the rich culture, history, diversity and world views of Aboriginal peoples prior to first contact.*

*Therefore it is integral to educate students on this prior to any mention of the treaties, residential school or the Indian Act. This could be accomplished in the Grade 4 curriculum when students begin to develop an understanding of "how we study the past, as they use various methods to examine social organization, daily life, and the relationship with the environment in different societies that existed between 3000 BCE and 1500 CE."*

We realize that development of curriculum is highly complex and must draw together skill-building, age-appropriate bodies of knowledge, and logical structures that provide for the accumulation of skills and knowledge in an accessible learning and teaching context. We seek through this paper to offer insights into areas that we see as fundamentally important if our curriculum is going to tell the full story of

Canada and help achieve what Justice Murray Sinclair has described as “a Canada where the relationship between Indigenous Canadians and non-Indigenous Canadians is founded on mutual respect.”

Our comments and suggestions with regard to these selected areas of curriculum are significantly informed by the advice received from program staff in our school boards and include many suggestions for how social studies and history curriculum can be shaped to ensure mandatory First Nation, Métis and Inuit components that will reach all students.

We believe it is important to emphasize that a great deal, if not all, of what is suggested in the following pages is touched on in the Ontario curriculum, primarily in the form of optional examples for consideration. It is not new. What this paper calls for is to take that content and realign it in the form of mandatory curriculum components.

## STRENGTHENING THE ONTARIO CURRICULUM

### *Grade 6 Social Studies*

The Ministry curriculum document for Grade 6 Social Studies states that “students will explore the experiences and perspectives of diverse communities in historical and contemporary Canada and examine how they have contributed to the development of Canadian identity.” This is an important perspective to gain; however, there is an implied assumption that Canada’s First Peoples are in no way distinct from the “diverse communities in historical and contemporary Canada.” We would suggest that the overview of this curriculum include specific recognition of the concept of pre- and post-contact Canada.

In support of our earlier suggestion of “a clear mandatory continuum of access to the histories of First Nation, Métis and Inuit for all Ontario students”, one possible approach would be a specific strand such as:

#### **Grade 6: Heritage, Identity and Environment: Treaties and the Reserve System**

Overall Expectations:

**A1. Application:** analyze both past and present impacts of treaties and the reserve system on the Aboriginal peoples and explain some key short- and long- term consequences of these interactions.

**A2. Inquiry:** use the social studies inquiry process to investigate the historical and contemporary impacts of treaties and the reserve system.

**A3. Understanding Context:** demonstrate an understanding of the significance of treaties and the reserve system on Aboriginal peoples, describing the significant impacts treaties had on their way of life.

In examining specific expectations in the current curriculum, it is clear that a great many of them include important aspects of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories. However, the expectations draw on a list of examples and there are no expectations that exclusively focus on First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories. Expectations A2.1 and A3.4 are respectively described as follows:

formulate questions to guide investigations into different perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experience of two or more distinct communities in Canada (e.g., *the development of the reserve system from the perspective of First Nations, European settlers and the federal government; the forced relocation of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War from the perspective of Japanese Canadians, the government at the time, and the government that issued an apology to Japanese Canadians; the formation of ethnic neighbourhoods from the perspective of the newcomers, their children, the people already in the neighbourhood, the local school, and /or the agencies and governments that provide services in the neighbourhood*)

describe significant events or developments in the history of two or more communities in Canada (e.g., *First Nations: arrival of European explorers and settlers, the fur trade, the reserve system, the Indian Act, residential schools; French Canadians: expulsion of the Acadians, loss of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham; Japanese: forced relocation during World War II, the apology for this action from the federal government in 1988; Germans: religious freedom for Mennonite immigrants, the renaming of Berlin, Ontario to Kitchener during World War I*) and how these events affected the communities development and or identity

### Suggestions for alternative approaches

Feedback that we have received offered a range of alternative suggestions. The central theme was that there should be a set of expectations exclusively focused on First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories or, alternatively, that an expectation calling for comparisons between communities must require that First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities have a primary place in this comparison. Many of the suggestions included rich content elements and demonstrate how to ensure an exclusive focus on First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories. These came from a broad range of respondents and are set out below. There are many similarities among the suggestions. Where suggestions from several respondents were identical they are only reported once but most suggestions are documented here to demonstrate the breadth of options:

- there should be specific and overall expectations that are more explicit for and to First Nations Métis and Inuit people's cultures, histories and perspectives.
- formulate questions to guide investigations into different perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experience of two or more distinct communities in Canada.
  - The development of the reserve system from the perspective of First Nations – First Nations must be one of the two distinct communities to be investigated (e.g., *how did reserves come about, what were some of the restrictions for First Nation people living on reserves, how did the Indian Act reflect the reserve system ?*)
  - (e.g., *Indian Act, significance of treaties, the history that led to the establishment of residential schools, the development of the reserve system from the perspective of First Nations, re-location of the Inuit, the perspective of the government*)
- formulate questions to guide investigations into different perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experience of two or more First Nation, Metis, or Inuit communities
  - (e.g., *the development of the reserve community from the perspective of First Nations, European settlers, and the federal government, land claim and treaty negotiations from the perspective of the First Nations and Canadian government, negotiations with respect to the establishment of Nunavut from the perspective of the Inuit, or hunting and fishing rights from the perspective of various First Nation, Metis and Inuit people/communities and/or organizations and the pertinent ministries.*)

- Infuse specific expectations, rather than examples, throughout Strand A: Heritage and Identity to identify the significance and importance of the First Peoples of Turtle Island in both historical and contemporary contexts.
- formulate questions to guide investigations into different perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experience of First Nation, Métis and Inuit and other distinct communities in Canada including at least one First Nation, Métis and Inuit community. A sample question could be: Why were First Nations peoples relocated to reserves?
- wording expectations from an asset model instead of a deficit model is a way to ensure that students see that Indigenous people are still here today and are thriving. While a lot of history and social studies focuses on conflict, we have the opportunity to focus on successes within the relationship between Canada and the First peoples. Finding a way to make this focus on success a part of the curriculum provides a new insight for all students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
- exposure to the meaning of treaties would also give students awareness of how the wealth and success of today's Canada is built on interpretation of treaties and the contributions of First Nations.
- mandate that one of the communities must be a First Nations community. (Compare the First Nations community with another First Nations community) this provides an alternative to the current expectations which treat First Nations as a large entity rather than recognizing the enormous diversity that exists in First Nations.
- create a specific expectation which addresses First Nation, Métis, and Inuit content exclusively, such as “describe significant events or developments in the history of First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada” (e.g., *arrival of European explorers and settlers, the fur trade, the reserve system, the Indian Act, residential schools, Robinson-Huron Treaty, numbered treaties, formation of Métis communities as a distinct people*)

Focus on

- Process of negotiating, creating and signing treaties (Robinson-Huron Treaty, Numbered Treaties), and analysis of current treaty negotiations (for example, Treaty 6; Algonquin land claim; Nunavut)
- Formation of Métis communities as a distinct people, with unique history, culture, and language (include not only Red River Métis communities, but also Ontario and Quebec communities)
- The struggles of Métis peoples to hold the government of Canada to their promises to enter into treaty discussions – a struggle that continues to this day
- formulate questions to guide investigations into different perspectives on the historical experience and contemporary impact regarding the development of the reserve system from the perspective of First Nations, European settlers and the federal government.
- consider the dominant influences that were at play in creating the Canadian identity, during the time of colonization, and those that were silenced as a result of the initiatives that were subsequently implemented.
- identify and describe the significance of pre-Confederation and Numbered treaties and how this has impacted the relationship between First Nations and non-First Nations people and Canada's identity
- explain why residential schools were created and identify the impact that the residential school experience has had on First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities.
- First Nation, Métis and Inuit **must** be one of the two distinct communities where significant events or developments are investigated: arrival of European explorers and settlers, the fur

trade, the reserve system, the Indian Act, the religious influence (Black Robes), residential schools

- describe significant events or developments in the diverse history of First Nation, Métis, Inuit communities in Canada (e.g., *arrival of European explorers and settlers, the fur trade, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the reserve system, creation of Nunavut, the Indian Act, residential schools, the apology from the federal government in 2008; the numbered treaties, the Mi'kmaq war bounties, The Great Law of Peace*) and how these events affected the communities' development and or identity
- describe significant events or developments in the history of two or more First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities in Canada (e.g., the arrival of Europeans, the fur trade, the reserve system, the Indian Act, residential schools, banning of ceremonies and gatherings, enfranchisement, DEW Systems, hunting and fishing rights (seal hunt, whale hunts, etc.) Métis land rights and status
- formulate questions to guide investigations into Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experience of First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit communities in what is now called Canada") OR re-word expectations to be more specific solely to Aboriginal histories. The case could be argued that you should always start with the original perspective—it is often easier for us to examine the experiences of those in other places, or those who came after Canada became a country, but we should only do so after examining the perspectives and situations of events that came before Canada became a country—i.e. the experiences, events, histories, etc.... of the Indigenous peoples as well as the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
- consider the dominant influences that were at play in creating the Canadian identity, during the time of colonization, and those that were silenced as a result of the initiatives that were subsequently implemented.

### **Grade 8 History**

The overview of the Ontario curriculum document for Grade 8 history indicates: *“Students will examine the internal and external forces that led to Confederation and territorial expansion and of the impact of these developments on long-time Canadians, including First Nations, as well as new immigrants. Through an examination of inequalities in the new nation, students will learn that many of the rights and freedoms we have in Canada today are the result of actions taken by people in this era to change their lives.”* The period in Canadian history covered in Grade 8 is one that had seismic effects for Canada’s First Peoples in terms of the loss of land, the rise of the reserve system, the *Gradual Civilization Act*, the *Indian Act* and the establishment of residential schools. The language in the overview section of the curriculum document should present stronger references that articulate more clearly how the “inequalities in the new nation” were borne most deeply by First Peoples. This includes the history of broken promises endured by Métis people whose issues were ignored and whose existence was often denied.

Again, a review of curriculum expectations shows that they raise important examples of events in First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories; however, these are interspersed in a list of examples that can dilute the focus. Expectations A1.1 and A1.2 are respectively described as follows:

evaluate the importance of various internal and external factors that played a role in the creation of the Dominion of Canada and the expansion of its territory (e.g., *the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, the American civil War, changes in British attitudes towards British North America, Fenian raids, the*

*construction of the transcontinental railway, the Red River Resistance, the creation of the North-West Mounted Police, the numbered treaties, the Indian Act) (Focus: Cause and Consequence; Historical Perspective)*

assess the impact that differences in legal status and in the distribution of rights and privileges had on various groups and individuals in Canada between 1850 and 1890 (e.g. with reference to land ownership in Prince Edward Island, married women's property rights, women's political rights, property qualifications for the franchise, restrictions on Chinese immigration, the rights and legal status of "status Indians" on reserves, the privileged lifestyle of industrialists in contrast to the lives of workers in their factories, discrimination facing African Canadians)

We would suggest there should be a strand that is focussed on how the *Indian Act* came into being and the issues that flowed from it including its lasting impacts to the present day.

One example of how this emphasis could then be construed in Expectations A1.1 and A1.2 would be:

**A1.1** evaluate the importance of the colonial shift that played a role in the creation of the Dominion of Canada and the expansion of its territory (e.g., *collapse of Aboriginal economies, Canada's desire to control the land and First People, changing relationship between the Canadian Government and the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Peoples, (Sovereign Nation to Wards of the State), the construction of the transcontinental railway, the Red River Resistance, the Métis Scrip, the creation of the North-West Mounted Police, the numbered treaties, the Indian Act) and make connections to present day Canada (Focus: Cause and Consequence; Historical Perspective)*

**A1.2** assess the impact that differences in legal status and in the distribution of rights and privileges had on First Nation and Métis People in Canada between 1850 and 1890 (e.g. with reference to land ownership, treaties: *Acts to Protect Land 1850, the Gradual Enfranchisement Act 1869, Indian Act, the rights and legal status of "status Indians" on reserves, assimilation)*

Feedback that we have received offered a range of alternative suggestions including one suggestion that in telling the history of Canada "the Grade 8 History curriculum could be exclusively focused on First Nation, Métis and Inuit content."

The central theme was that one or more expectations must be exclusively focused on First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories. As was the case with Grade 6 curriculum, many of the suggestions included rich content elements. These are set out below.

#### Suggestions for alternative approaches

- Prioritize First Nation, Métis and Inuit groups and individuals as a separate expectation from other groups.
- From the First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspective, evaluate the importance of various external factors that played a role in the creation of the Dominion of Canada and the expansion of the Dominion of Canada  
Assess the impact of the Indian Act with respect to legal status of "status Indians". Specifically, discuss how this legislation both imposed legislation by giving and stripping the rights of people.
- Expand expectations focussed on First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples to include deculturation and discrimination.

- Expectations allude to “immigrants and other ethnocultural minorities”. First Nation, Métis and Inuit people should not be lumped into an ethnocultural minorities group.
- Include a specific expectation that asks students to describe and assess the impact that the Treaties, Reserve system, Residential Schools, and the Indian Act had on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.
- To ensure authentic and deep understanding of the histories of the Indigenous people of this land (as articulated in Ontario’s First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework), emphasize throughout the Social Studies curriculum that “Aboriginal history” is “Canadian history.”
- Consider how language such as “Assess the impact” diminishes the vast, far-reaching, intergenerational impacts that so many choices and historical events had on Aboriginal communities.
- This time period saw the start of the Indian Residential School System and this should be an integral part of the teaching in this (and other) grades. This should be a mandatory part of Ontario curriculum (following in the footsteps of other provinces).
- Curriculum throughout the elementary grades should include more age appropriate content on Indigenous communities, experiences, etc. This will potentially encourage more students to continue in-depth studies in First Nation, Métis and Inuit Studies at the secondary level (currently we seem to still suggest that those are the courses—the only courses—where you will learn about Indigenous histories, traditions, experiences, contemporary contexts, etc.)
- Include specific expectations around the development and implementation of the Indian Act and the effects it has had on First Nation and Inuit peoples and around the loss of status.
- Describe how First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples were impacted by policies and different forms of legislation (e.g. *Indian Act, Manitoba Act, residential schools*) during this period and explain some of their consequences, both past and present.
- Describe and analyse the different perspectives, e.g. Métis, First Nations, federal government perspectives, on the causes and results of the Red River Rebellion and North-West Rebellion
- Describe the treaty-making process and its role in the development of Western Canada
- Describe how different legislations (e.g. *Indian Act, Manitoba Act, scrip*) impact Métis peoples and communities, both past and present.
- Expectations should include the historical significance of Métis peoples and the creation of the Manitoba Act, 1870 (created out of *Metis Bill of Rights, 1869*)
- Encourage analysis of the *Indian Act*, and unilateral amendments made to Indian Act. The current wording in the curriculum expectation, i.e., “the rights and legal status of ‘status Indians on reserves’” does not accurately reflect the reality of all First Nations peoples at the time. Following the *British North America Act, 1867*, and the *Indian Act, 1876* there was no concept of “rights,” but rather conditions and/or limitations placed upon them. It is important to also discuss not only status Indians on reserve, but also status Indians off reserve, disenfranchised Indians, and non-status Indian peoples.
- Expectations should include the Métis scrip system and the Inuit disc numbering system
- Include the contribution of First Nations peoples to the War of 1812 and their indispensable military contributions throughout Canada’s history.
- Each expectation in the Grade 8 History curriculum should be rewritten to specifically address First Nation, Métis and Inuit content. The “building of Canada” from 1850 – 1914 required decisions and actions that had tremendous impact on Aboriginal peoples that we still see today. Expectation A1.1 could be reworded to state “evaluate the importance *and impact* of various internal and external factors that played a role in the creation of the Dominion of Canada *and the expansion into traditional First Nations, Métis and Inuit territory.*”

## **Grade 10 Canadian History (Academic)**

The introduction/overview section of the Ontario curriculum document for Canadian History since World War 1, Grade 10 (Academic) makes scant reference to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and these references give no prominence to Canada's First Peoples but continue the trend of inclusion among diverse groups, e.g. *"During this period, predominant attitudes towards women and towards immigrants, First Nations, Métis and Inuit, and other minority groups, affected the development of Canadian identity and citizenship."*(B.3 – Big Ideas).

The premise of this advocacy paper is that the histories of First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples is foundational to the history of Canada and this needs to be reinforced through the curriculum. There are 66 specific expectations in the Grade 10 Canadian History (Academic) curriculum and only two (D3.3 and E2.3) exclusively address First Nation, Métis and Inuit issues. We suggest that there needs to be a substantive set of expectations with a specific First Nation, Métis and Inuit focus.

Feedback that we have received on how to accomplish the goal of specific expectations focuses on two of the current expectations (B2.5 and E2.1 - see below) and the suggestions received could be adapted for alternative expectations:

describe attitudes towards and significant actions affecting ethnocultural minority groups in Canada during this period (e.g., with reference to racism and anti-Semitism, segregation, discrimination in jobs and housing, residential schools, restrictions imposed by the Indian Act or the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, groups helping new immigrants), and explain their impact

describe some significant ways in which Canadians have cooperated and/or come into conflict with each other since 1982 (e.g., conflict over the 1992 cod moratorium; political protests such as those against the G20 meetings in Toronto or the rise in university tuition in Quebec; strikes; racism and hate crimes; continuing legal conflict and/or political protests over Aboriginal title and land claims; the Idle No More movement; continuing tension between Quebec and the federal government; cooperation in response to natural disasters as the 1998 ice storm or the Saguenay and/or Red River floods; cooperation among members of social reform movements), and analyze these interactions from various perspectives

Respondents have supported an approach of having specific and overall expectations that are more explicit for and to First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples' cultures, histories and perspectives.

Throughout the Grade 10 Canadian History course, there are connections that can be made in every section studied. These expectations include: learning about the creation, experience, impact and healing of the Indian Residential school system; First Nation, Métis and Inuit contributions to WWI and WWII; the importance of Wampum Belts to First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples and their relationship with Canada; local traditional territories.

### Suggestions for alternative approaches

There are many similarities among the suggestions. They are documented here to demonstrate the breadth of options and additional content that could be considered:

- include a specific expectation that focuses on struggles for First Nation, Métis and Inuit rights with examples such as: the impact of First Nations' rights on Quebec sovereignty (First Nation opposition to 1980 & 1995 referendums); intergenerational legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the Harper 2008 Apology; *Re Eskimo, 1939* case – section (91) 24 *British North America Act*, granting Inuit rights; Status Indian right to vote (1960); Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996); American Indian Movement (1960s) – significance to development of Indian rights, reclamation of First Nation identity, culture, and language; National Indian Brotherhood (today, Assembly of First Nations); *White Paper, 1969* and *Red Paper, 1970* response; generational resurgence among First Nation, Metis, and Inuit youth to revitalize culture, language and traditions in daily life
- describe how First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have come into conflict\* over continuing legal conflict and/or political protests over Aboriginal title and land claims with specific examples that include the Oka Crisis, James Bay Hydro Development Project (*Paix de Braves Treaty*), Caledonia, Ipperwash.  
**(\*It has also been suggested that the concept of “conflict” in the context of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories be explored. What is perceived as conflict by one party can be perceived as becoming empowered to assert one’s position by another.)**
- describe attitudes towards and significant actions affecting First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada during this period (e.g. residential schools, treaties such as 1923 *Williams Treaties, 1973 Calder Case, 2003 Powley Case (Supreme Court affirmation of Métis Aboriginal rights), land claims, enfranchisement, restrictions imposed by the Indian Act: ban of ceremonies, voting rights, the pass system*) and explain their impact
- describe some significant ways in which Canadians have cooperated and/or come into conflict with First Nations, Métis and Inuit since 1982 (e.g. *political protests over Aboriginal title and land claims: Oka, Ipperwash, Burnt Church, Caledonia ; the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP);the Idle No More movement; Children in Care, Sixties Scoop, Jordan’s Principle, Shannen’s Dream, Murdered and Missing Women*), and analyze these interactions from various perspectives
- describe attitudes towards and significant actions affecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples during this period (enfranchisement, segregation, discrimination in jobs and housing, residential schools, restrictions imposed by Indian Act, soldiers returning from war, )
- with regard to Expectation E2.1 which refers to the cooperation or conflict between Canadians it is noted that there have been so many involving First Nations people that it seems odd that there wouldn't just be an expectation specifically dealing with that issue.
- terminology is important. The Indigenous peoples of this land should not be grouped with other cultural groups who have immigrated. It is somewhat offensive that the term “ethnocultural minority” would be used for the First Peoples of this land. They are distinct groups with distinct histories and realities.
- it might be helpful to have an expectation around the fact that many First Nation people do not consider themselves to be Canadian. They were here long before Canada was “founded.”
- a specific expectation with respect to the fact that First Nations, Métis and Inuit are three separate identities might be helpful in this course.
- a specific expectation around the effects the *Indian Act* has had on First Nations peoples might provide greater depth to the expectation outlined in D3.3
- a specific expectation around the loss of status would be beneficial as well.
- identify and describe some key factors that affected the relationship between First Nation, Métis and Inuit and Canada and assess their significance for both.

- describe how First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples were impacted by policies and different forms of legislation during this period (1914-1929) (e.g. residential schools, amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1920, voting rights) and explain some of their consequences, both past and present
- describe the treaty making process during this period (1914-1929) (e.g. Treaty 9, Treaty 11) some of its consequences, and different perspectives (e.g. First Nations' perspectives, federal perspectives) on the treaty making process
- describe policies of assimilation used by the federal government during this time period (1945-1982) (e.g. residential schools, the 60s scoop, enfranchisement/removal of Indian status) and some of their impacts on communities.
- identify some ways that Aboriginal peoples demonstrated resistance to federal policies of assimilation during this period (1945-1982) (e.g. The White Paper, the land claim process, amendments to the Indian Act in 1985 resulting from Sandra Lovelace Nicholas and Jeanette Corbiere-Laval's court cases in the 1970s, National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, Indian Control of Indian Education Policy document) and their differing goals and perspectives.
- describe some significant events that have impacted the relationship between the federal government and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities during this time period (1982-present) (e.g. Bill C-31, Oka, Ipperwash, Caledonia, the federal apology for Indian Residential Schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Federal court case granting rights and affirming federal responsibility towards Métis in 2013, Bill C-45).
- Explore the issues that led to the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990, the role of Elijah Harper in asserting the constitutional rights of First Nations, and the ongoing legacy of this assertion of rights.
- identify the different types of treaties the federal government has entered into with First Nations and Inuit communities during this time period (1914-present) (e.g. pre-confederation treaties, historic treaties, and comprehensive land claims, specific land claims); include consideration of failure to engage with Métis people on treaty issues and consider the relevance and implications for contemporary Canadian society. What are some steps that you feel could lead Canada towards true reconciliation?
- explain Canada's role in the development of the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. What are the implications of this document, and the fact that it is governed by existing Canadian Law, including the *Indian Act*?
- a separate expectation dedicated to First Nations Métis and Inuit is needed with the examples pointed towards residential schools, reserves, the *Indian Act*, the 60's Scoop, Inuit relocation, etc., so the choice lies strictly within the scope of First Nations, Métis and Inuit issues.

### **Grade 10 Canadian History (Applied)**

The introduction/overview section of the Ontario curriculum document for Canadian History since World War 1, Grade 10 (Applied) makes no reference to First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples. There are 57 specific expectations in the Grade 10 Canadian History (applied) curriculum only two of which (D3.2 and E2.2) exclusively address First Nation, Métis and Inuit issues. As with the Grade 10 Canadian History (Academic) curriculum, we suggest that there needs to be a substantive set of expectations with a specific First Nation, Métis and Inuit focus.

A helpful starting point would be in Strand A which deals with Historical Inquiry and Developing Transferable Skills; for example an expectation such as A1.3 which requires students to “assess the credibility of sources and information relevant to their investigations (*e.g. by considering the*

*perspective, bias, accuracy, purpose, and/or context of the source and values and expertise of its author*) would be ideally suited to exploring how the credibility of sources and information contributes to the state of ignorance most Canadians have about the Residential School System.

By and large, the examples in the specific expectations throughout this curriculum give no prominence to Canada's First Peoples but continue the trend of inclusion among diverse groups, e.g.

describe some significant challenges facing immigrants and other ethnocultural minorities in Canada during this period (1914-1929) (*e.g., racism and anti-Semitism; segregation and discrimination in jobs and housing; immigration policy, including the 1919 Immigration Act; the quality of life on reserves; restrictions imposed by amendments to the Indian Act in 1920; residential schools*), and explain some of their consequences (B2.3)

identify some major social movements in Canada during this period (1945-1982) (*e.g., civil rights, women's, Aboriginal, environmental, peace, sovereignty, labour, or youth movements*), and explain their goals and perspectives (D2.2)

Respondents were very supportive of a range of expectations that had a dedicated focus on First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories and that would enhance students' understanding of the foundational place of Canada's First Peoples. They suggested variations in the expectations currently in the Ontario curriculum that would accomplish this goal.

#### Suggestions for alternative approaches

- describe some significant challenges facing First Nation, Métis and Inuit Peoples in Canada during this period (1914-1929) (*e.g., treatment of First Nation, Métis and Inuit soldiers, the quality of life on reserves; restrictions imposed by amendments to the Indian Act in 1927, treaties such as 1923 Williams Treaties, enfranchisement, restrictions imposed by the Indian Act: ban of ceremonies, voting rights, the pass system ; residential schools*), and explain some of their consequences
- identify some major social movements in Canada during this period (1945-1982) (*e.g., civil rights, United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, National Indian Brotherhood/ Assembly of First Nations, the White Paper/Red Paper, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Inuit Tapirisat*) and explain their goals and perspectives
- describe some significant challenges facing First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples during this period (1914-1929) (*e.g., racism, segregation and discrimination, residential schools, loss of language, loss of rights, unable to vote, enfranchisement, quality of life on reserves, etc.*) and explain some of their consequences
- Identify some major social movements involving First Nation, Métis and Inuit people during this period (1945-1982) (*e.g., Formation of the Assembly of First Nations, Formation of the National Indian Brotherhood, Indian Control of Indian Education, Opposition to the 1969 White Paper, Development of the Red Paper, James Bay Pipeline, etc.*)
- specific expectations around the *Indian Act* and the effects it has had on First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples and around the loss of status should be included.
- describe how First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples were impacted by policies and different forms of legislation during this period (1914-1929) (e.g. residential schools, amendments to the Indian Act in 1920, voting rights) and explain some of their consequences
- describe the treaty making process during this period (1914-1929) (e.g. Treaty 9, Treaty 11) some of its consequences, and different perspectives (e.g. First Nations' perspectives, federal perspectives) on the treaty making process

- describe policies of assimilation used by the federal government during this time period (1945-1982) (e.g. residential schools, the 60s scoop, enfranchisement/removal of Indian status) and some of their impacts on communities
- identify some ways that First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples demonstrated resistance to federal policies of assimilation during this period (1945-1982) (e.g. The White Paper, the land claim process, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (formerly named Inuit Tapirisat of Canada), amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1985 resulting from Sandra Lovelace Nicholas and Jeanette Corbiere-Laval's court cases in the 1970s, National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, Indian Control of Indian Education Policy document) and their differing goals and perspectives
- describe some significant events that have impacted the relationship between the federal government and First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities during this time period (1982-present) (e.g. Bill C-31, Oka, Ipperwash, Caledonia, the federal apology to Inuit for forced relocation of Inuit families to the High Arctic, the federal apology for Indian Residential Schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Federal court case granting rights and affirming federal responsibility towards Métis in 2013, Bill C-45) (This contains additional examples to enhance current Expectation E2.2)
- identify the different types of treaties the federal government has entered into with First Nations and Inuit communities during this time period (1914-present) (e.g. pre-confederation treaties, historic treaties, and comprehensive land claims, specific land claims); include consideration of failure to engage with Métis people on treaty issues and consider the relevance and implications for contemporary Canadian society.
- expand the expectations that are dedicated to First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories and perspectives to allow for more in-depth consideration of recent social movements that impact life today, including Oka Crisis, Caledonia, James Bay Project, Idle No More, Intergenerational legacy of Indian Residential Schools; First Nation, Métis and Inuit advocacy for rights to be recognized in repatriation of Constitution Act, 1982 and Charter of Rights and Freedoms (National Indian Brotherhood, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Métis National Council); Recognition of "Aboriginal rights" in *Constitution Act* and Charter of Rights and Freedoms; *White Paper, 1969* and *Red Paper, 1970* response.
- much of the historical treatment of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people in Canada limited their full participation in it. Canadian history often precludes such experiences, as many teachers are comfortable teaching from perspectives that they are most familiar with. A key question could be:

*How have the following examples affected the relationship between Canada and the original people of this land?*

Aboriginal people were only granted the right to vote in Canadian federal elections in 1960

- Aboriginal people would lose their status (i.e. lost their treaty and statutory rights as native peoples, and their right to live in the reserve community) if they did one of the following:
  - Joined the army
  - Became doctors/lawyers and other professional designations
  - Became enfranchised (Prior to 1982 if an Aboriginal man married a non-Aboriginal woman, that woman would gain status, and if a non-Aboriginal man married an Aboriginal woman, that woman would lose status). This meant that they were unable to pass on 'status' as a result, and their Indian ancestry was no longer recognized by the Canadian government

### ***General Comments about the Curriculum***

In addition to addressing specific curriculum documents as outlined above, we received a number of general comments that illustrate the depth of interest in ongoing review and change:

- a dedicated expectation for First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories is needed if we want to specifically include those challenges and movements in the national picture, not just as an aside or a choice.
- all Canadians need to understand we are all treaty people.
- all Canadians need to learn that the treaties are relevant today.
- in addition to addressing traditional systems of education “prior to first contact”, we should also address education on the emergence of the Métis Nation prior to effective control; this is integral to an appreciation and understanding of one of the three recognized Aboriginal peoples of Canada who today compose approximately 30% of Aboriginal peoples in Ontario today.
- the history of residential schools should definitely be a separate mandated expectation in both Grade 10 Canadian History courses.
- the residential school system needs to be a mandatory part of curriculum. I cannot tell you how many times this phrase gets spoken at professional development for staff at all levels: “I had no idea—why didn’t we learn about this before?” The TRC and public media have done much to bring the topic into the public consciousness, but there is still much that is not understood, many who do not know the particulars of a system that has deeply impacted relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This is something that, out of all colonizing events that occurred, has perhaps the most direct link to us in a public school board context. There is much that needs to be repaired and reconciled in that relationship between “school” and “family/community”—and if educators and administrators and people at all levels of school boards do not understand this history, they cannot understand how and/or why to move forward in a good way, in good faith, to situate themselves, their students, their schools as critical pieces to the reconciliation process.
- in order to give a fair representation of First Nation, Métis and Inuit issues, the focus needs to ideally be extended to include recognition for the Sixties Scoop and treaties as well as discussions about the concept of deculturation and gender discrimination (i.e. Bill C-31, Bill C-3, etc.). Additionally, First Nation, Métis and Inuit issues should not be taught as ‘history’ per se; it should be recognized that First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples are still impacted today.
- there should be a way to try and problem-solve these issues and get students to think of solutions in terms of reconciliation. How likely is it that First Nations can beat the oppressor in the oppressors’ courts? What would a Canadian do if someone pitched a tent in their back yard and just because they spoke a different language, worshipped differently, the new arrival tried to impose their values and if the Canadian didn’t accept it, he would be told to move? Exercises to help students visualize such a scenario would support learning about such a complicated reality and developing empathy.
- in addressing First Nations’ identity, it is important to address the topic of “legally constructed definitions of identity.”
- teaching the history of Canada should open up perspectives that the developing Canada saw First Nations as being in the way of Canada’s market economy and advancement and that First Nations’ resources actually pay significantly for Canada today; this would counter the myth among taxpayers that First Nations do not pay their way. There is a need for valid information

about both First Nations' economic contributions to Canada and the economic barriers they encountered, e.g., First Nation farmers were not allowed to compete with settler farmers

- First Nations made treaties with the intent they would be honoured; their belief system was not driven by materialism or greed; it was a “communal” way of life and the colonists – the other parties to the treaties – carried different belief and value systems. This is truly Canada’s history.
- as an aboriginal person who has been educated in Ontario, I am somewhat baffled by the fact that my children - going through the same system 30 years later - still fail to see First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives show up in their education. I believe that we can do better. I think more emphasis about how history has informed or shaped the current realities of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people is required in all curriculum documents. Much of the curriculum, although we are doing a better job, still leaves the learner looking at First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples as historic figures who are no longer relevant. I am often asked to visit classrooms to help students connect to the curriculum (specific strands) through my personal story. On many occasions, when I reveal my ancestry, students have actually gasped. Some students genuinely do not think Aboriginal people still exist today. I have colleagues in other Boards who corroborate this experience, as they too have experienced very similar reactions from students.
- there are many great initiatives being developed throughout the province to address some of the needs for students, but they are not happening everywhere because many times it is driven by the passions and efforts of individuals. Yes there are more and more teachers every year coming on board and recognizing the ‘**WHY**’ we need to teach these topics, but there are still many gaps that need to be addressed for the education of **ALL** students in Ontario. There are unique approaches and programs underway in other areas of the country that I think should be considered.
- we do believe the expectations could and should be rewritten to provide the specificity to increase knowledge and understanding regarding First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples and most importantly the relationship with all Canadians. The expectations should specifically state the knowledge and understanding of First Nation cultures, languages, histories and perspectives without being inserted into the colonial frame of reference. Aboriginal content should not be examples of ways to achieve expectations but rather expectations unto themselves.
- First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) peoples have remained strong and resilient despite historical losses. Building collaborative partnerships with First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, families and communities allows FNMI peoples to see themselves in the education system in meaningful ways. Non-FNMI peoples need to be provided with opportunities to learn about the histories, experiences and world views of Canada’s First Peoples and the many indispensable contributions they have made to Canada past and present. When this is accomplished all learners will then share a mutually respectful vision that reconciles injustices of the past and allows everyone to move forward together.

### ***Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Studies Curriculum***

As we work towards a desired level of change in the curriculum as discussed above, it is important to recognize that Ontario’s First Nation, Métis and Inuit Studies curriculum and the textbooks that support it are exemplary documents. The many suggestions we have offered for change in the Social Studies and History curriculum are evident in the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Studies curriculum. The textbooks have been written to draw strongly on First Nation, Métis and Inuit expertise, to be highly relevant for Indigenous students and inspirational for non-Indigenous students, and to offer an extensive and comprehensive portrayal of the histories and lived experiences of First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples.

These are optional courses and it is heartening that an increasing number of students enroll in them. They provide an account of Canada that all Canadian students should learn in school. Short of making First Nation, Métis and Inuit Studies a mandatory course, a great deal of the content could be readily incorporated in the Social Studies and History curriculum to ensure access to these rich histories for all students. It is encouraging that the perspectives and content we advocate for already exist in Ontario curriculum documents.

## SUPPORTING TEACHERS

It is impossible to overestimate the positive role that teachers can bring to teaching First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives. With strong support and resources they can make this curriculum come alive for students and engage them in seeing the relevance to their lives and to Canada today.

Many respondents underscored the importance of readily accessible resources and professional development for teachers. It is recognized that this has been a prominent strategy in Ontario's First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework which led to the development of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Teachers' Toolkit and which continues to support capacity-building among teachers. It is recognized as well that Ontario's teachers' federations support and contribute to the growing knowledge-building of teachers as they work to embed First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives into classroom content. A notable example is the Books of Life initiative.

School boards themselves have developed rich resources to support local initiatives in First Nation, Métis and Inuit education. It is recognized that the majority of Ontario teachers are not of First Nation, Métis or Inuit heritage and that for many it is a daunting learning curve to get to a comfort level with the subject matter. The more that can be done to build capacity in manageable pieces the more success we are likely to see in how First Nation, Métis and Inuit issues are routinely taught in the classroom. One example, which is replicable by other boards, is the resource *First Nation, Métis and Inuit: Tracing Our Historical Footprints*, developed jointly by Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB and York Region DSB with financial support from the Ministry's Aboriginal Education Office. The structure of the resource in a series of topic cards is a creative and accessible approach to helping teachers embed First Nation, Métis and Inuit content in the curriculum and benefits greatly from the advice of local Elders and content that makes it relevant to the territories where the local school board is situated.

Advice we have received indicates that while resources are important, it is essential that teachers develop a level of comfort with teaching First Nation, Métis and Inuit content in the curriculum. This means that the integration of mandatory components in the curriculum has to be accompanied by corresponding professional development for all teachers.

Feedback calls for broad-ranging efforts to support teachers and includes:

- (changes to the Social Studies/History curriculum) depend heavily upon access to authentic and appropriate resources to support teachers in the classroom. A curricular support resource is therefore essential and necessary in order to ensure that consistency can be found in and confidence built in the authenticity of the delivery of this curriculum to all students.

- in order to alleviate discomfort for educators, another possible way to address the significance of First Nation culture pre-contact, treaties, the *Indian Act* and residential schools would be to create a mandated learning continuum from Grades 1-10. A self-contained resource guide containing themes and topics could be provided for each grade designed to provide teachers with the materials they need to complete a 10-20 hour unit. With this information teachers would be able to avoid duplication and ensure their teaching builds on what has been taught in previous grades, as well as, lay the foundation for the next grade.
- the issues from my experience are lack of teacher knowledge, understanding and comfort to cover the topics and a lack of desire or not recognising the need to teach in this topic area. To address these areas, our board has taken an active approach, continually offering Professional Learning opportunities and has created Professional Learning Communities.
- resources are essential to support teachers with the content of First Nation, Métis and Inuit history and culture which the majority of teachers have not received in their own education/training.
- a central clearing house of resources is needed.
- in our experience, educators tend to be more anxious about addressing Aboriginal examples or experiences in the curriculum expectations —mostly because they don't want to “say the wrong thing.” If the expectation provides alternative options they opt for a different group).
- it is our belief that unless there is a clear, explicit, mandated unit, course or module that is required within courses, teachers, schools, or boards can overlook the FNMI piece for something they feel is more important.
- we need to remain mindful of creating opportunities for staff to increase their own understanding, awareness, and connection to local Aboriginal communities (and authentic, diverse voices from that community) so that they feel better equipped to teach about the roles, the challenges, the issues, the potential for renewed relationships.
- the issues from my experience are lack of teacher knowledge, understanding and comfort to cover the topics and a lack of desire or not recognising the need to teach in this topic area. To address these areas, our board has taken an active approach and continually offers Professional Learning opportunities and has created Professional Learning Communities.
- resources are essential to support teachers with the content of First Nation, Métis and Inuit history and culture which the majority of teachers have not received in their own education/training.
- the biggest challenge teachers face, in terms of teaching the expectations with the suggested First Nation, Métis and Inuit examples is finding grade appropriate resources. Teachers in our board who are deeply committed to teaching First Nation, Métis and Inuit content have struggled to do so because of this. Recommendations to achieve accessible high quality resources might include a resource document to guide First Nation, Métis and Inuit instruction across disciplines focused in three areas: the *Indian Act*, treaties and residential schools; an easily accessible, well-advertised resource bank – e.g., EduGains or a separate website similar to *THINK FEEL ACT* (EY resource) – that is available to all educators at various grade levels and that would include: video clips – interviews with residential school survivors, a virtual guided walk through residential schools, discussions with elders, lawyers, politicians activists, historians and anthropologists; copies of primary documents – treaties, Indian Act, diaries, firsthand accounts, maps, photographs; copies of age-appropriate PDFs or digital resources that would allow for cost effective access to fiction and non-fiction supporting documents (e.g., levelled books, short stories, art works, magazine articles, info-graphics ); a bibliography of cost effective and readily accessible resources (e.g., research summaries, story books, museums, art galleries); a central repository of the resources school boards are currently using.

- the role of Faculties of Education in incorporating First Nation, Métis and Inuit content in teacher education programs is critical. A robust set of Ontario College of Teachers Additional Qualifications courses to support teachers in their professional practice and comfort level with the content would also be helpful.

## CONCLUSION

We believe we have made strong and cogent arguments for including mandatory components in Ontario's Social Studies and History curriculum. These arguments imply recommended directions for change and this paper makes only one overarching recommendation:

**That there be a clear continuum in Ontario's Social Studies and History curriculum that will ensure mandatory components on First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories that includes treaty education, the historical and ongoing impact of the Indian Act, and the history and legacy of residential schools.**

We are at a juncture in Canada's history where we have the opportunity to engage in a deep and meaningful process of reconciliation. As TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson tells us:

*"Whether or not we were aware of it at the time, we created this situation by Canadian laws and policies. Now we are waking up to the fact that we are going to have to work together to build our way out of it by reshaping and redesigning our notion of society and our notion of what is fair and just in this country."*

Education is the way forward. As educators and education policy makers we can, through the decisions that are made about what is taught in schools and how it is taught, make it our goal that every student in Ontario graduates with a balanced knowledge of the forces that have led to today's Canada. This is not about diminishing the contributions of anyone including the diverse communities of settlers and immigrants who came to this land. It is, however, about acknowledging and filling in the gaps that have diminished the stature and identity and rightful place of Canada's First Peoples both historically and in terms of their rights in today's society, rights that include self-determination to create their own future.

The release on June 2, 2015 of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides the imperative to undertake this direction. The Chair of the Commission, Justice Murray Sinclair reminds us: "Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem — it is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us."

June, 2015

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Current Ontario curriculum documents and textbooks

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Ontario Ministry of Education Capacity Building Series

The Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework

The FNMI Teachers' Toolkit

*First Nation, Métis and Inuit: Tracing Our Historical Footprints*, developed jointly by Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB and York Region DSB

*Books of Life*, an Aboriginal education awareness and literacy initiative of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)

From Apology to Reconciliation, a guide for Grades 9 and 11 Social Studies Teachers in Manitoba

The Residential School System in Canada, a comprehensive residential schools curriculum package developed in partnership among the Legacy of Hope Foundation, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Nunavut

*100 Years of Loss – The Residential School System in Canada*, Legacy of Hope Foundation

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