

# **Charter of Commitment**

## **First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education**

This document has been drafted for consideration for adoption by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and for recommendation to the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association as a National Charter of Commitment.

The development of this Charter is guided by:

- *The Canadian Constitution Act, 1982*
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), September, 2007
- Ontario's First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007)
- *It's our Vision, It's Our Time – First Nations Control of First Nations Education*, Assembly of First Nations, July 2010
- *The Accord on Indigenous Education*, Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010
- *The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations*, Institute for Catholic Education – Second Edition 2011

*(Key provisions of these documents are set out in the Appendix)*

### **Intent**

The intent of the Charter is to articulate the support by school boards for:

- First Nation, Métis and Inuit knowledge systems and learning models
- The central value of culture, language and knowledge of history in contributing to the well-being of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, families and communities
- A holistic approach that addresses spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual development in relation to oneself, family, community and environment
- Ensuring that there is a mechanism for school boards to periodically report on their progress towards achieving the goals of the Charter

### **Vision**

First Nation, Métis and Inuit identities, cultures, languages, values, ways of knowing and knowledge systems will flourish in all Ontario schools.

### **Principles**

This Charter of Commitment:

- Supports a socially just society for First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples
- Reflects a respectful, collaborative and consultative process among First Nation, Métis and Inuit knowledge holders and knowledge holders in the general education community
- Promotes partnerships among schools, school boards and First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities
- Values the diversity of First Nation, Métis and Inuit knowledge and ways of knowing and learning

### **Goals**

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association on behalf of member school boards will collaborate with education partners in Ontario to support, endorse and foster the following goals:

### ***Respectful and Welcoming Learning Environments***

- Support all school and board staff in creating learning environments that instill a sense of belonging for all learners in Ontario and that are more accepting, respectful, welcoming and supportive of First Nation, Métis and Inuit learners.
- Promote strategies that encourage First Nation, Métis and Inuit students to participate in the full range of school activities including recreation and leadership roles.
- Foster initiatives that provide students with positive transition experiences in moving from First Nation communities to provincially funded schools.
- Promote respectful and welcoming environments so that all schools are positioned to encourage involvement of families of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students and of community members.

### ***Respectful and Inclusive Curriculum and Classroom Programs***

- Actively identify opportunities to integrate First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives in delivery of curriculum in the classroom across the full spectrum of subjects and from K-12.
- Consult with Elders and other First Nation, Métis and Inuit experts in traditional knowledge, cultures and histories to bring relevant local perspectives to instruction planning.
- Promote shared planning with First Nation, Métis and Inuit families in student transitions, student supports and curriculum resources and include these measures in Education Services Agreements between First Nation communities and school boards.
- Share successful initiatives of integration of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives among school boards and with the Ministry to support continuous improvement in curriculum and program planning that incorporates First Nation, Métis and Inuit content.

### ***Culturally Responsive Pedagogy***

- Advocate for teacher education programs that include courses on First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives and that prepare teachers to incorporate these areas of knowledge across their teaching practice.
- Provide professional development within school boards that offers teachers opportunities to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives, learning models and learning styles.
- Involve Elders and others with expertise in local First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities in supporting teachers to incorporate First Nation, Métis and Inuit content in their program delivery in accurate, culturally sensitive and appropriate ways.

### ***Valuing First Nation, Métis and Inuit Expertise***

- Partner with First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations and learning institutions to engage their expertise in appropriate ways to incorporate First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives in school programs.
- Consult with First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations and learning institutions.

### ***Culturally Responsive Assessment***

- Promote assessment practices that actively support achievement of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students through acknowledgement of a range of learning models and learning styles.
- Promote the elimination of cultural and other forms of bias in student assessment.

### ***Affirming, Revitalizing the Languages of Canada's First Peoples***

- Recognize the central role of language in supporting identity and culture and in validating First Nation, Métis and Inuit world views.
- Be proactive in promoting indigenous languages in schools, including consideration of language immersion programs.
- Promote the development of resources in First Nation, Métis and Inuit languages.

### ***First Nation, Métis and Inuit Representation in Staff and Leadership***

- Promote voluntary confidential self-identification of First Nation, Métis and Inuit staff in school boards.
- Encourage increased representation of First Nation, Métis and Inuit staff in boards through hiring and promotion practices.
- Collaborate with universities and colleges and with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, to improve access, transitional support and retention strategies to increase the numbers of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people enrolling in and completing secondary, post-secondary, teacher education and early childhood education programs.

### ***Non-Aboriginal Learners – Foster Commitment to First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education***

- Promote curriculum that ensures grade-appropriate instruction across the curriculum related to First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions to both historical and contemporary Canada.
- Encourage opportunities for all students to experience First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures and the components of an inclusive and welcoming school environment.

### ***Research***

- Create awareness of education research by First Nation, Métis and Inuit educators and researchers.
- Partner with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities at all levels in ethically based and respectful research processes.

***August, 2013***

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### **REFERENCES**

#### **The Canadian Constitution Act, 1982**

#### **RIGHTS OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA**

**35.** (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

(2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit, and Metis peoples of Canada.

(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

#### **The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), September, 2007**

*Article 14: (1) Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. (2) Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination. (3) States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.*

#### **Ontario's First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007)**

##### **Vision**

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario will have the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to successfully complete their elementary and secondary education in order to pursue postsecondary education or training and/or to enter the workforce. They will have the traditional and contemporary knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to be socially contributive, politically active and economically prosperous citizens of the world. All students in Ontario will have knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditions, cultures and perspectives.

#### ***It's Our Vision, It's Our Time – First Nations Control of First Nations Education*** **Assembly of First Nations, July 2010**

“The purpose of the policy framework presented in this paper is to reaffirm the First Nations’ vision of lifelong learning presented in the ICIE 1972 policy\* and reassert First Nations inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights to education. This policy framework provides strategic recommendations that will enable the development and implementation of education, legislation, governance frameworks, policies, programs and services for all levels of education for First Nations learners at all stages of lifelong learning. Key elements of First Nations’ lifelong learning addressed in this paper include language immersion, holistic and culturally relevant curricula, well-trained educators, focused leadership, parental involvement and accountability and safe and healthy facilities founded on principles that respect First Nations jurisdiction over education.”

"All peoples have the right to maintain their cultural and linguistic identities and education is essential to actualizing this right. First Nations control over education will provide the means to acquire the necessary skills to be self-empowered and self-sufficient and to maintain First Nations cultural values and languages. This is essential to actualizing an individual's success in society. It will also provide a strong foundation for empowering proud First Nations peoples who are fully able to contribute to the development of their families, clans, communities and nations."

*\* STATEMENT OF VALUES (ICIE 1972 Policy)*

*"We want education to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honored place in Indian tradition and culture. The values that we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. They are found in our history, in our legends and in the culture. We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the important Indian values he will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian.*

*We want the behavior of our children to be shaped by those values which are most esteemed in our culture. When our children come to school, they have already developed certain attitudes and habits that are based on experiences in the family. School programs that are influenced by these values respect cultural priority and are an extension of the education which parents give children from their first years.*

*These early lessons emphasize attitudes of:*

- *self-reliance*
- *respect for personal freedom*
- *generosity*
- *respect for nature and*
- *wisdom*

*All of these have a special place in the Indian way of life. While these values can be understood and interpreted in different ways by different cultures, it is very important that Indian children have a chance to develop a value system which is compatible with Indian culture.*

*The gap between our people and those who have chosen, often gladly, to join us as residents of this beautiful and bountiful country, is vast when it comes to mutual understanding and appreciation of differences. To overcome this, it is essential that Canadian children of every racial origin have the opportunity during their school days to learn about the history, customs and culture of this country's original inhabitants and first citizens. We propose that education authorities, especially those in Ministries of Education, should provide for this in the curricula and texts which are chosen for use in Canadian schools."*

*(From: National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, Indian Control of Indian Education: Policy Paper, 1972)*

### ***The Accord on Indigenous Education, Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010***

Establishing mechanisms and priorities for increased Indigenous educational engagement, establishing partnerships with Indigenous organizations and communities and using educational frameworks based on Indigenous knowledge are trends that have important implications for the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE). New ways of engagement are required in order to address these trends. The time is right for a concerted and cooperative effort that creates transformational education by rejecting the “status quo”, moving beyond “closing the gap” discourse and contributing to the well-being of Indigenous peoples and their communities. At the same time, ACDE recognizes that it has a role and responsibility to expand educators’ knowledge about and understanding of Indigenous education.

The processes of colonization have either outlawed or suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems, especially language and culture and have contributed significantly to the low levels of educational attainment and high rates of social issues such as suicide, incarceration, unemployment and family or community separation. In secondary schooling, for instance, 2006 graduation rates are still below 50 percent nationally for Aboriginal students and only 8 percent for university degree attainment, in contrast to the 14 percent Canadian average for persons over 15 years of age. In response, Indigenous people and their organizations and communities have become more involved in decision-making and policy development in order to improve all levels of education. Major national studies and government commissions have called for this type of political and educational involvement and have recommended that Indigenous knowledge systems have a central position in educational policy, curriculum and pedagogy, in order to make significant improvements to Indigenous education. Individual and collective efforts to make such improvements are being enacted in local, regional, provincial and national contexts. ACDE joins these efforts through its member faculties, schools, colleges and departments of education across Canada. As a national organization, ACDE supports and encourages increased national dialogue and cooperative action for improving Indigenous education.

### ***Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (2011), Institute for Catholic Education***

In 1998, the first edition of the *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations* was released within the Catholic education community. Immediately, the *Expectations* were used as a framework for designing Ontario Catholic curriculum, in the development of youth leadership, teacher education and administrative programs and to support the work of local board initiatives.

Now in 2011, the second edition of the *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations* has been released. After extensive consultation within the Catholic community the seven overall and fifty-two specific expectations have been validated and remain unchanged. The Institute for Catholic Education invites all stakeholders to continue to embrace and use the *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations* to guide their programming and work in Catholic education. The seven overall expectations are:

1. A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community
2. An Effective Communicator
3. A Reflective, Creative and Holistic Thinker
4. A Self-Directed, Responsible, Lifelong Learner
5. A Collaborative Contributor
6. A Caring Family Member
7. A Responsible Citizen