



16 First Nation Trustees: Leading in Two Worlds

ONTARIO FIRST NATION, MÉTIS AND INUIT EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

In January 2007, the Ontario government launched its Aboriginal Education Strategy with the release of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. The Framework is the foundation for delivering quality education to all First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in Ontario. Through cooperation and partnerships with First Nation, Métis and Inuit families, communities and organizations, First Nation governments and education authorities, school boards, other Ontario ministries, the federal government, the Ontario College of Teachers, and faculties of education, the ministry is committed to developing strategies that will:

- Increase the capacity of the education system to respond to the learning and cultural needs of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students;
- Provide quality programs, services and resources to help create learning opportunities for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students that support improved academic achievement and identity building;
- Provide a curriculum that facilitates learning about contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives among all students, and that also contributes to the education of school board staff, teachers and trustees; and
- Develop and implement strategies that facilitate increased participation by First Nation, Métis and Inuit parents, students, communities, and organizations in working to support academic success.

In March 2014, the ministry released the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan* to build on the Aboriginal Education Strategy. The plan builds on progress to date in the implementation of the framework and guides the work of the ministry and school boards in meeting two primary objectives by year 2016: to improve student achievement and well-being among First Nation, Métis and Inuit students; and to close the achievement gap between Aboriginal students and “all students”.

FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

Excellence and Accountability: Quality education is essential for the continuing development of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The academic achievement of every First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student is supported through the delivery of quality education. The Ministry of Education provides support and resources adapted to the specific needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

Equity and Respect for Diversity: Create and nurture an academic environment for every First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student that promotes the development of a positive personal and cultural identity, as well as a sense of belonging to both Aboriginal and wider communities. Create and support an academic environment that fosters First Nation, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultures. Acknowledges the diversity found in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and endorse learning about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives in the public education system.

Inclusiveness, Cooperation, and Shared Responsibility: Cooperation among governments, ministries, educational institutions (including the Ontario College of Teachers and faculties of education), and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit families, communities, and organizations is essential for the implementation of education programs and services designed to meet the specific needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, regardless where they live.

Respect for Constitutional and Treaty Rights: Respect for Aboriginal and treaty rights protected by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION: K-12 EDUCATION

- Minister’s First Nation, Métis and Inuit Advisory Council in place since 2009.
- The Ontario Ministry of Education’s support to district school boards to develop and implement self-identification policies has been very successful:
 - In 2006, fewer than 10 school boards/school authorities had approved Aboriginal student self-identification policies
 - As of April 2013, all 76 boards and school authorities have implemented self-identification policies
- In November 2007, the Aboriginal Education Office launched a pilot project that involved the development of three urban Aboriginal education models for First Nation, Métis and Inuit and Inuit student/family/community engagement that would be applied in different urban settings based on varying geographical and demographic circumstances.
- Since 2003, First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives in the curriculum have been increased in the learning expectations, examples, and teacher prompts.
- The “Aboriginal Perspectives: Teacher’s Toolkit” is a collection of electronic resources from the Ministry of Education to help teachers bring Aboriginal perspectives into their classrooms
- The ministry supported the development of two textbooks and accompanying teacher’s resources for use in grades 10 and 11. These resources were made available in English (October 2011) and French (February 2012) and became the first Native Studies textbooks to be approved on the Trillium List
- On April 9, 2013, the Ministry signed a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and Canada, which is the first tripartite education agreement in Ontario.
- The Ministry, in collaboration with COO’s First Nation Education Coordination /Unit, AANDC and the four District School Board Associations, developed an Education Services (Tuition) Agreement Guide (September 2013).