



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees

From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education

Date: January 23, 2023

Subject: **We Walk the Path Together: An Update on Indigenous Education**

Origin: Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education – Academic Services
Daniel Stargratt, Assistant Superintendent of Indigenous Education

Purpose

Durham Catholic District School Board, in partnership with its Indigenous Education Circle (I.E.C.) and Student Indigenous Education Circle (S.I.E.C) is committed to increasing understanding and knowledge of all students about Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions. This work is fundamental to our commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; Calls to Action as it relates to education.

Background

In 2007, the Ministry of Education created the Ontario First Nation, Metis and Inuit Education Policy Framework. It set out two challenges; to improve student achievement among First Nation, Metis and Inuit students and to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates, and advancement to postsecondary schools. In its vision statement, it stated; “All students in Ontario will have knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nation, Metis and Inuit traditions, cultures and perspectives.”

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action was introduced and has deepened our understanding about historic inequities experienced by First Nation, Metis and Inuit in the colonization of Canada as well as the lingering impact. As we are called to learn from the past, to help in the present it is understood that education today is a critical gateway on the path forward. Truth is part of new understanding as we continue to learn about our shared history in a manner that is safe, respectful, inclusive and reflective of equity in the classroom.

Reconciliation is part of new relationships as we continue to learn about our shared history in a manner that is student-centred with a focus on harm reduction (healing)/life promotion and reflective of Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations, our new Multi-year Strategic Plan, board vision and mission and Catholic values.

Information/Analysis/Research

In Discovery 2023: Renewing the Vision Strategic Plan, we identified five goals within Indigenous Education to guide the learning and work we do. The five goals were as follows:

1) To ensure better understanding and provide learning about days/seasons of significance to Indigenous peoples.

The Indigenous Education Team continues to work with our communications department to highlight days/events of significance on social media and the Board website. Some examples are Truth and Reconciliation Day, the Metis Flag raising on Louis Riel Day and the National Indigenous Veterans Day. The Team continues to communicate with staff through numbered memos and the Weekly Buzz. The consultants and resources teachers have been busy delivering lunch and learns with most schools in the system and providing resources to staff to better support the learning of Indigenous perspectives, history and culture. Indigenous education has also been incorporated within our Professional development days where staff completed some deeper learning on residential schools and how we all have a role to play in Reconciliation.

2) To build understanding of authentic reconciliation.

In order to build understanding of authentic reconciliation, the Indigenous Education Unit has focussed on unpacking the papal visit. Whether within our NBE (Grade 11 English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit Voices) or NDW (Grade 12 Indigenous Issues) classes, our school leaders and our religious education chair, we continue to follow the words of our Holy Father to work toward reconciliation.

3) To continue to enhance community collaboration through authentic partnerships.

The Indigenous Education Unit has held two Indigenous Education Circle meetings (October 19 and Dec 13) with our community partners. We have had a number of communities led presentations by Indigenous Education Circle members. Some of these include learning about residential schools through a survivor lens, Metis culture and heritage, and land-based learning. We continue to build capacity with our school leaders to foster positive and active relationships with our Indigenous Community Members.

4) To successfully implement the Grade 12 Indigenous Studies course in all Secondary schools

With the roll out of the Grade 12 Indigenous Studies course NDW (Grade 12 Indigenous Issues), the Indigenous Education Team has provided both training and the opportunity for teachers to network to support the learning sessions. We currently have 1553 students enrolled in NBE (Grade 11 English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit Voices) and 93 enrolled in our new NDW (Grade 12 Indigenous Issues) course. We have purchased resources to support the course delivery. Throughout the sessions, we continue to gather feedback from both staff and our students to look for ways to ensure continuous improvement.

5) To continue to incorporate Indigenous voice within K-12 curriculum

With the addition of 3 new resource teachers (2 elementary and 1 secondary), we have been able to support teachers in schools in both student and staff learning on Indigenous education. Our focus has been in the Grade 5/6 level-interweaving Indigenous perspective into the curriculum. The Unit continues to build capacity at all levels of the organization. The Team has expanded the resources and support available to other students in French Immersion and Core French classrooms. As a team, we have worked collaboratively with other units to expand the infusion of Indigenous perspectives. A few examples are working with outdoor education on land-based learning, working with our numeracy unit and working with our science unit to highlight Indigenous stem.

Next Steps

As we transition to our new Multi-Year Strategic Plan *Inspire 2026*, we will continue to collaborate with our Indigenous Education Circle and our Student Indigenous Education Circle and work to deepen understanding of Indigenous education across the curriculum. We will continue to build capacity and understanding with all areas within the organization about the role they play in moving forward in Reconciliation.

TB/PS/DS

We Walk the Path Together

An Update on Indigenous Education

To ensure understanding and provide learning about days/seasons of significance to Indigenous People

- Truth and Reconciliation Day- September 30, 2022
- National Indigenous Veterans Day- November 8, 2022
- Metis Flag Raising Ceremony- November 14, 2022



To build understanding of authentic reconciliation

- PD day with focus on Reconciliation
- Training for Religious chairs to embed in course
- Indigenous Team attended provincial leads meeting in Toronto on November 16 and 17, 2022
- Land Acknowledgement is now in Anishinaabemowin on Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) in the Scugog Island dialect.

To continue to enhance community collaboration through authentic partnership



- Have held two Indigenous Education Circle meetings (October 19 and December 13, 2022)
- Have held two Indigenous Students Education Circle meetings working on Mural
- Nationalist vs Activist project (educators and community partners)
- Continuing to have community partners share knowledge with staff and students. E.g.) Beedahbin Peltier, Mary Kelly, and Sydney Maracle

To successfully implement the Grade 12 Indigenous studies course in all secondary schools

- New secondary consultant started in September supporting the implementation of Grade 12 course
- Providing training/resources to support educators
- Bringing authentic voice into classrooms. e.g.) Drew Hayden Taylor and David Robertson
- Continue to support our Grade 11 course- training/resources to support educators
- NBE-1553 students, NDW-93 students

To incorporate Indigenous voice within the K-12 curriculum

- Two new elementary consultants started in September to support learning at elementary panel
- Bringing into authentic voice. E.g.) Chad Solomon, community partners
- Timely as the Ministry of Education is moving Indigenous perspective in Grade 1-3 in September