



# Strengthening Our Learning Journey



## Third Progress Report

on the Implementation of the  
Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit  
Education Policy Framework



2018

Indigenous perspectives bring the curriculum to life!



support every child  
reach every student



Ontario

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# Abstract



*Strengthening Our Learning Journey* is the third progress report on the implementation of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, 2007* (the Framework). It looks at progress made since 2013, during the third phase of the Framework's implementation.

This third progress report uses both quantitative and qualitative data to assess progress, and shares perspectives and insights gained from Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, parents, communities, and education partners. The report also describes the many collaborative partnerships that have been created or deepened during this period between the Ministry of Education, Indigenous partners, and education partners. These partnerships support the shared goals of improving First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and well-being and increasing *all* Ontario students' awareness and knowledge of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions.

The report highlights continuing progress in connection with the ten performance measures set out in the Framework, focusing on the experiences shared by students, parents, communities, and educators and the impacts of the Framework's implementation in provincially funded schools. While the report acknowledges the achievements and progress made with the Framework's implementation, it also recognizes that much remains to be done to support and strengthen Indigenous student achievement and well-being and to increase our shared understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions. *Strengthening Our Learning Journey* concludes by taking a look at the journey ahead and making recommendations for next steps to help grow and deepen Ontario's Indigenous Education Strategy across the province.

# Acknowledgements



The Ministry of Education would like to recognize the many voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, parents, families, and communities, as well as of district school board staff, Indigenous partners, and education stakeholders, that helped shape *Strengthening Our Learning Journey: Third Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*.

The ministry would also like to thank the members of the Minister's Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Working Group, the Central Policy and Planning Circle of the First Nations Lifelong Learning Table, and the Third Progress Report Subcommittee for their thoughtful input and constructive feedback in the development of this report.





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# 1

## Introduction



“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 [...] 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.”

– The Honourable Justice Senator Murray Sinclair

### 1.1 Background

The Ministry of Education, Indigenous partners, and education partners are collectively committed to improving First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and well-being, and to increasing the awareness and knowledge of all students about Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions.

Investing in Indigenous education, well-being, and achievement is one of many steps in Ontario’s journey of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and part of the broader goal of ensuring that Ontario’s education system promotes the success of all students. The [Indigenous Education Strategy](#)<sup>1</sup> has been designed to help improve opportunities for Indigenous students – whether they live in remote or urban areas – and to increase the knowledge and awareness of all students about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions. This strategy sets the foundation for improving achievement among Indigenous students in provincially funded schools and supports lifelong learning as students transition to postsecondary education, training, or workplace opportunities.

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1. See <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/>.



In 2007, the ministry released the document *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (the Framework). The Framework provides the foundation for delivering high-quality education to all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. The ministry made a commitment to release a progress report on the implementation of the Framework every three years.

In 2009, the ministry released *Sound Foundations for the Road Ahead*, the progress report on the first phase of the Framework's implementation, from 2006 to 2009. In 2013, the ministry published *A Solid Foundation*, the second progress report, on deepening implementation from 2009 to 2012. Both progress reports identified the need for continued supports for Indigenous students.

The ministry, in collaboration with Indigenous partners and education stakeholders, developed an implementation plan to support the Framework. It was released in 2014 under the title *Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. The plan builds on progress made to date in implementing the Framework, and has guided the subsequent work of the ministry and school boards.<sup>2</sup>

There is much diversity within First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities in Ontario. While the term “Indigenous” is used throughout this document, it is not meant to represent a pan-Indigenous approach. Rather, it is intended to refer to all of the distinct cultures, nations, and individuals within First Nation, Métis, and Inuit populations residing in Ontario.

## 1.2 Purpose

*Strengthening Our Learning Journey* presents the progress that the Ministry of Education, Indigenous partners, and education partners have made in advancing the Framework's goals since 2013, during the third phase of the Framework's implementation. The work during this phase focused on:

- deepening and broadening initiatives launched in the first six years of implementation to integrate and embed First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions in the educational experience of Ontario students;

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2. The terms “school board” and “board” are used in this document to refer to district school boards and to those school authorities that offer elementary and/or secondary school programs.





- strengthening collaborative relationships and working in partnership with Indigenous communities, organizations, and education partners to improve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and well-being.

*Strengthening Our Learning Journey* was informed by a broad range of sources, including:

- the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, parents,<sup>3</sup> administrative school board staff, teaching and non-teaching staff in schools, community members, and organization representatives, accessed through in-person interviews, focus groups, and survey responses;<sup>4</sup>
- the Minister’s Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education; the Minister’s Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Working Group; and the Third Progress Report Subcommittee;
- the Central Planning and Policy Circle of the First Nations Lifelong Learning Table;
- programs, initiatives, and services delivered by Indigenous organizations with funding from the Ministry of Education;
- programs, initiatives, and services implemented by district school boards through Board Action Plans on Indigenous Education;
- initiatives, programs, and services led by the Ministry of Education; and
- student achievement results, including Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments,<sup>5</sup> credit accumulation rates, and graduation rates.

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3. The word *parent(s)* is used in this document to refer to parent(s) and guardian(s). It may also be taken to include caregivers or close family members who are responsible for raising the child.

4. Of the 558 participants in the focus-group engagements, the largest proportion consisted of students, and the second-largest of school staff. More than 10 per cent of participants were community partners or board staff, and about 5 per cent were parents. Fewer than 1 per cent were “expert informants”, which includes individuals from education partner organizations and school trustees. In addition, a total of 3,619 surveys were partially or entirely completed. All responses were kept, regardless of whether or not respondents completed the entire survey. Survey respondents include: 509 Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, 1,615 parents/guardians, 184 school board administrators/board Indigenous education leads, 1,159 teaching and non-teaching staff, 117 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit organizations/community members, and 38 Indigenous Education Advisory Council members.

5. EQAO assessments include: Grade 3 Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Assessments; EQAO Grade 6 Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Assessments; EQAO Grade 9 Mathematics Assessments for both the Academic and Applied courses; and EQAO Grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).



For the third progress report, a distinct engagement strategy, with a community-centred approach, was developed to ensure that many voices would be heard and included. “Engagement”, defined here as direct interaction between participants and researchers, took several forms, including in-person interviews, small group discussions, focus groups, interviews, or small group discussions via telephone or the Internet. In addition to these engagements, an online survey was conducted to facilitate province-wide input from students, families, educators, community members and partners, and the public. The opportunity to participate in the survey was publicized by school boards, by Indigenous partners, and through social media. The survey was also provided, on request, in a print version, and a small number of respondents participated in the study by mailing in their completed surveys.

The engagement strategy was designed to integrate Indigenous research methodologies, including the use of talking circles, and respect for Indigenous protocols and data governance principles, such as the First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP). The inclusion and use of Indigenous methodologies in the third progress report is noteworthy because it highlights the collaborative nature of the relationship between the Ministry of Education and Indigenous partners, which in recent years has been, and continues to be, strengthened through ongoing discussion and shared work.

### **1.3 An Evolving Context**

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities in Ontario are rich, deep, and diverse. As the original peoples of this land, Indigenous peoples preserve a deep understanding and appreciation for Ontario, and their knowledge, compassion, and generosity have enabled those who arrived later to live and prosper here.

Knowledge and understanding of the challenges endured by First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, families, and communities today can come only with acknowledgement of the realities experienced by Indigenous peoples in Ontario in the past. Indigenous peoples suffered unimaginably as a consequence of racist, abusive, and discriminatory government policies intended to assimilate, exploit, and marginalize.



The intent of these oppressive policies was nothing less than cultural genocide, and their impact continues to be painfully felt in the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities today. For generations, Indigenous students and families have been deliberately deprived of the necessities, supports, and rights essential to well-being, achievement, and growth. Intergenerational trauma and loss, distrust in institutional systems and structures, and a lack of understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions permeate the threadwork of our society. As a result, neither Indigenous peers nor non-Indigenous allies have had the opportunity to become aware of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions.

Despite all attempts to suppress, oppress, and disempower Indigenous peoples, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, families, and communities have demonstrated the strength and resilience to remain rooted in their identities.

As we all accept our shared responsibility in responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations (see below), we must also understand that reconciliation begins with a relationship. This relationship must be one that reflects a balance of power, of resources, and of decision making.

A fundamental step in recognizing our collective responsibility and commitment to Indigenous students and all students was the development and implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. As we move forward, we must continue to recognize this collective responsibility and commitment. It is through re-learning the truth that all Ontarians will have the opportunity to understand one another. And it is through a sense of shared stewardship that we will strengthen new relationships and achieve a strong circle of support for students wherever their educational journey takes them in Ontario.

Since 2007, our collective ten-year learning journey has indeed strengthened our shared commitment to relationship building. The voices of Indigenous students, families, communities, and allies will continue to lead us in making meaningful change in Indigenous education in Ontario.

Over the past ten years, as the Framework strategies were being implemented, many social, political, economic, and educational developments relating to Indigenous peoples have taken place in Ontario and across the country.

### The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 2008, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created with a mandate to educate Canadians about what happened in residential schools and to document the truths and experiences of the survivors, families, communities, and anyone personally affected by the residential school system.

In June 2015, the TRC released 94 calls to action, directed to governments, churches, institutions, organizations, and all Canadians. Some of the calls to action related to education include:

- implementing mandatory, age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties, and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada;
- building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect;
- identifying professional development for educators to support these goals.<sup>6</sup>

In December 2015, the TRC released its Final Report. In response to the report, Ontario released *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*. This document outlines the province's commitments to work in partnership with Indigenous partners to address the legacy of residential schools and to reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples.<sup>7</sup>

One of the commitments outlined in *The Journey Together* relates to the recognition, preservation, and revitalization of Indigenous languages in Ontario. Language is the foundation of culture and is intrinsically linked to identity for all Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have a strong tradition of oral histories that must be supported by a new respect for,

6. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015*. Retrieved October 22, 2017, from [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf).

7. Government of Ontario, *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, 2016*. Available at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/journey-together-ontarios-commitment-reconciliation-indigenous-peoples>.





and understanding of, Indigenous languages. In response to TRC calls to action numbers 7, 14, 15, and 16, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development co-hosted with Indigenous partners and education partners an Indigenous Languages Symposium (ILS) to review current programs, determine gaps, and identify community priorities and supports needed to promote Indigenous languages. Indigenous-language speakers played a key role in planning the symposium and directing a jurisdictional scan of Indigenous languages in Ontario. The “Gidinwewininaan, No Lang” Indigenous Languages Symposium took place from May 29 to June 1, 2017, at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Approximately three hundred Indigenous delegates attended, representing six language families: Anishinaabek, Onkwehonwe, Mushkegowuk, Lunaape, Inuktitut, and Michif. The symposium represented a first step in an ongoing multi-year strategy to engage, co-develop, and co-implement a plan to support the recognition, preservation, and revitalization of Indigenous languages in Ontario. Findings from the symposium and the jurisdictional scan will inform next steps for Indigenous partners, education partners, and the provincial government to put in place the conditions needed to effectively support the revitalization of Indigenous languages in Ontario and ensure that the Indigenous peoples represented within these language families remain the primary stewards of their own languages.

Ontario is also empowering educators to implement a revised curriculum for all students about the histories, cultures, contributions, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Education ministers from all provinces and territories, including Ontario, committed to “ensuring that curriculum in all provincial and territorial school systems will allow students to gain an understanding of how residential schools affected Aboriginal children, families, and communities, and, ultimately, the country as a whole”.<sup>8</sup>

The province is supporting teachers in delivering the new curriculum, which has been co-developed with Indigenous partners and focuses on residential schools, treaties, and Indigenous peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada. Ontario is continuing to revise

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8. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), “First CMEC Meeting in Nunavut Tackles Legacy of Residential Schools,” July 5, 2013. Retrieved October 22, 2017, from [http://cmec.ca/278/Press-Releases/Press-Releases-Detail/Ministers-Call-for-More-Innovation-and-Expanded-Opportunities-as-Education-Systems-Look-to-the-Future.html?id\\_article=626](http://cmec.ca/278/Press-Releases/Press-Releases-Detail/Ministers-Call-for-More-Innovation-and-Expanded-Opportunities-as-Education-Systems-Look-to-the-Future.html?id_article=626). [Ed. note: The term “Aboriginal” appears in the original source.]



the curriculum in all subjects and grades in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The current cycle of revisions, to the social studies and history curriculum, has been guided by residential school survivors and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners, as well as education partners. The revised curriculum includes grade-appropriate learning opportunities to support mandatory learning about the impact of colonialism and the rights and responsibilities of all people in Canada with respect to understanding the shared history and building the collective future in the spirit of reconciliation. Promoting greater awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions is one of many steps on Ontario's journey of healing and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It reflects the government's commitment to working with Indigenous partners and rebuilding relationships, based on trust and respect.

### **Ending Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls**

In 2016, the Government of Canada launched the [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls \(MMIWG\)](#). The commission is examining, and will soon report on, the systemic causes behind the violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, recommend concrete actions to help remove systemic causes of violence and increase safety, and recommend ways to honour and commemorate missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.<sup>9</sup>

The provincial government launched *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence against Indigenous Women* in 2016. Co-developed by Indigenous partners and the province, this strategy outlines the ways in which Ontario and Indigenous communities will work together to end the cycle of violence and ensure that future generations of Indigenous women can live in safety and be respected.

The Indigenous Education Knowledge Network (IEKN) is one of the initiatives supporting Walking Together. The aim of the network is twofold: to address gender violence within school environments and to utilize existing Indigenous community capacity to support self-defined student success in a culture-based framework. The Indigenous partners leading the network will connect educators, front-line workers, Indigenous partners, communities, and researchers to support the sharing and use

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9. Government of Canada Website (December 9, 2016). National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Retrieved October 22, 2017, from <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1448633299414/1448633350146>.



of existing research and evidence to further the objective and aims of the network. IEKN will be a conduit for reshaping Ontario public schools as places that promote the success and well-being of Indigenous girls and young women, through research, knowledge mobilization, and the integration of wise practices.

### **Promoting Student Well-Being**

In 2014, the Ministry of Education released *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*. The renewed vision focused on taking action with respect to four central goals: achieving excellence, promoting student well-being, ensuring equity, and enhancing public confidence in Ontario's publicly funded education system. The ministry committed to engaging with all partners, including those on the subcommittee on Indigenous Student Well-Being, to better understand what promoting student well-being means for education and how to assess progress in student well-being.

### **Ensuring Equity**

In 2017, to further support *Achieving Excellence*, the ministry created the Education Equity Secretariat and released *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan*, the province's roadmap to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers, and bias from schools and classrooms, to enable *all* students to succeed. The action plan builds on the 2009 Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and brings forward new focus and resources as a means to accelerate progress in combatting systemic barriers that are caused by embedded biases in policies, programs, practices, and processes, and that may result in differential treatment. The ministry is currently working with partners to help create safe and inclusive learning environments for all students and to build learning spaces where all students, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other factors, are valued and welcomed.

As a whole, the developments described above highlight the evolving context in which the implementation of the Framework unfolds. The information found in this progress report is best understood in the light of both the progress we have made towards enhancing Indigenous education and the challenges and systemic issues that remain in education for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario.

## 1.4 The Organization of the Report

*Strengthening Our Learning Journey* is organized by the four key priority areas that were set out in the first progress report, *Sound Foundations for the Road Ahead* (2009):

- Section 3: Supporting Students
- Section 4: Engagement and Awareness Building
- Section 5: Supporting Educators
- Section 6: Using Data to Support Student Achievement

In each of these four sections, progress is reported in connection with the performance measures identified in the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* that relate to the key priority area.

At the end of each section, the report presents a number of “practice highlights” – practices that were described in the engagement sessions as having had a positive impact in the boards where they were being implemented. The highlights are based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, including the lived experience of students, families, teaching and non-teaching staff, communities, and organizations. They are featured in the report as examples of practices that boards and community Indigenous partners may consider to support Indigenous education in Ontario.

This report is accompanied by a technical appendix – *Strengthening Our Learning Journey: Technical Appendix to the Third Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. The technical appendix provides a more comprehensive analysis of achievement and related data for self-identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.





# 2

## Realizing the Vision




### ***Vision of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, 2007***

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.

### **2.1 Telling the Story**

The third progress report uses quantitative and qualitative data and information to help tell the story of systemic and programmatic changes made in schools and classrooms across Ontario to create a safe and responsive learning environment that supports the achievement and well-being of all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. It examines student achievement results through a variety of lenses and, particularly, through the lived experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, families, teachers, and school board staff, as well as Indigenous community members and organization leaders. Qualitative and quantitative evidence enables the Ministry of Education, Indigenous partners, and education partners to better understand and assess the progress achieved and to determine the path forward. The diversity of stories heard during the engagement process, the lessons learned from emerging and promising practices, and the accumulation of student achievement data will help Indigenous and education partners across



Ontario focus on growing the successes, removing the barriers that still stand in the way of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and well-being, and increasing awareness and knowledge of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions among all students.

Like the previous two progress reports, this document reports progress in the four key priority areas identified in *Sound Foundations for the Road Ahead* (2009). However, in keeping with the perspective described above, it tells the story in a new order, bringing student experience to the fore. The report starts with the priority area of “supporting students”, telling the story of students’ experiences, and then looks at “engagement and awareness building”, describing the work that’s been done to enhance relationships among communities, schools and boards, Indigenous provincial bodies, and the ministry. Next comes “supporting educators”, with an account of the various supports that have been provided for professional development. The report concludes with the priority area “using data to support student achievement”, providing an assessment of the impact of these initiatives and investments as reflected in the academic achievement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

The highlights of relationship building over the last ten years of implementation of the Framework are depicted in the infographic on pages 18–19.

## 2.2 The Framework's Performance Measures

Progress in reaching the Framework goals is assessed in connection with ten separate, but related, performance measures. These performance measures are grouped by the four key priority areas.



Four Key Priority Areas	Ten Performance Measures in the <i>Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, 2007</i>
Supporting students	Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem
	Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools
Engagement and awareness building	Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children
	Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Indigenous communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education
	Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples
Supporting educators	Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario
	Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively
Using data to support student achievement	Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics
	Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students
	Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement

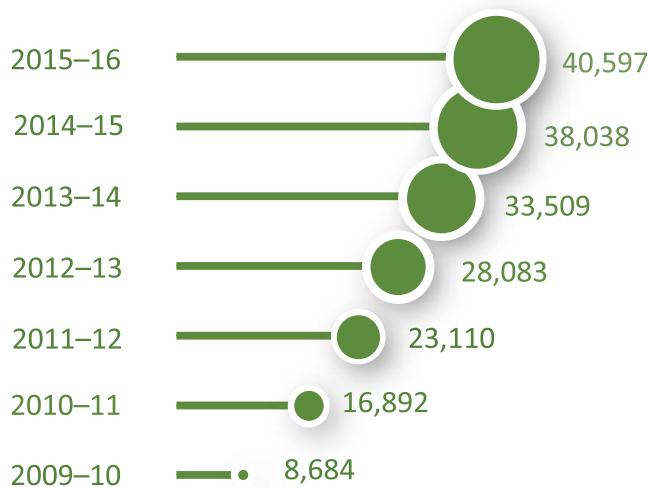
# Working Together to Support Indigenous Education in Ontario

The Ministry of Education is committed to working with our partners to continue improving Indigenous student achievement and well-being in Ontario and increasing all students' knowledge and understanding of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions.

“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 [...] 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.”

– The Honourable Justice Senator Murray Sinclair

## Year-over-Year Progress in Indigenous Student Self-identification\*

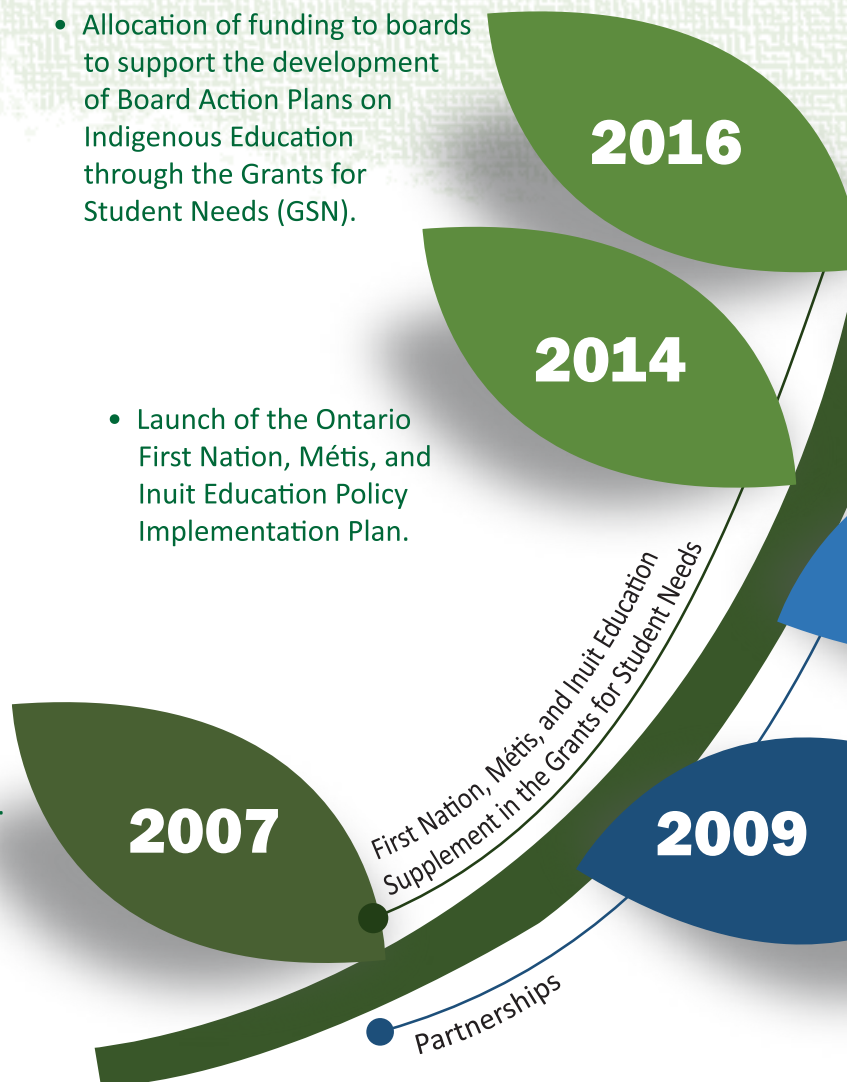


- Indigenous Education Strategy launched with the release of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. Funded through the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Supplement through the Grants for Student Needs.

- Launch of the Indigenous Education Grant (formerly the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Supplement). The projected \$66.3 million (an increase of approximately \$54 million since 2007) in targeted funding supports programs designed for Indigenous students. Indigenous Education Board Leads to work with their Indigenous Education Advisory Council and senior board administration to develop, sign off on, and implement Board Action Plans on Indigenous Education.

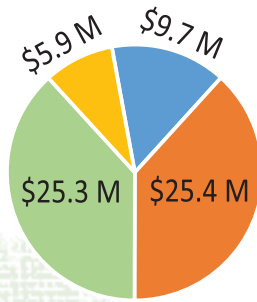
- Allocation of funding to boards to support the development of Board Action Plans on Indigenous Education through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN).

- Launch of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Implementation Plan.





## Indigenous Education Grant



- Indigenous Languages
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies
- Per-Pupil
- Board Action Plans

**Moving Forward**

**2017**

**2018**

**2017**

**2015**

**2013**

Ministry of Education, Indigenous partners, and school board delivery of programs to improve Indigenous student achievement and well-being.

- Memorandum of Understanding signed by Tungasuvvingat Inuit and Ontario.
- The First Nations Lifelong Learning Table established to support the First Nation Education Strategy.
- The Master Education Agreement signed by the Anishinabek First Nations, the Kinooomaadziwin Education Body, and Ontario.
- “Gidinwewininaan, No Lang” Indigenous Languages Symposium.
- Education Partnerships Program Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, Canada, and Ontario.

- Memorandum of Understanding re-signed by the Métis Nation of Ontario, and Ontario.

- Education Partnerships Program Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Canada, and Ontario.

\* Source: Ontario School Information System (OnSIS). Enrolment as of October 31 for each year. October 2015 data is preliminary and subject to change. There are an estimated 64,000 Indigenous students in Ontario’s school system. The other estimated 14,000 students attend First Nation schools.

# 3

## Supporting Students

When learners feel good about themselves, they are more likely to have the confidence they need to accept the learning challenges before them.

### 3.1 Supporting Students – Performance Measures

#### Performance Measures

- Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem
- Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools

#### 3.1.1 Student Self-Esteem

- *Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem*

Current pedagogical research highlights the important link between student achievement and student well-being. Self-esteem is a key to well-being and, ultimately, to student success. A safe, welcoming school environment, where students can develop a positive sense of identity and feel proud of who they are, is critical. With respect to Indigenous students, this means providing access to supports that cultivate their strong sense of identity by valuing their languages, cultures, perspectives, and contributions in everyday school life.

Survey findings from the engagement indicated that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students generally had positive self-esteem. Students'



natural sense of pride in their identity and culture contributed to positive self-esteem.

Throughout the engagement sessions, school board staff noted that when First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students saw themselves, their communities, and their cultures respected and valued at school, it contributed to building a positive sense of self for the students and enriched the school climate. Others spoke about the improvement they had seen in Indigenous student attendance because of greater integration of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions. Some educators, parents, and Elders felt that when Indigenous students saw themselves reflected in the curriculum, their self-esteem, cultural pride, and overall sense of well-being would improve. Some educators have said that this has led to an increase in student self-identification.

Indigenous parents and families credited student-mentoring opportunities for enhancing learners' self-esteem by providing role models and the sharing of traditions and cultures. Indigenous students themselves expressed appreciation for their schools' tailored leadership opportunities and gatherings. Students talked about the value of attending events such as the Indspire Youth Career Conference, University Information Sessions, and Indigenous Student Leadership Conferences. They considered opportunities that allowed them to connect with different communities and schools to be a highlight of their school year.

In addition, Indigenous students indicated that dedicated cultural spaces in schools reinforced their sense of identity, belonging, security, and cultural pride. They said that, in these spaces, they were able to connect with one another, work on homework, engage in cultural activities, or take a break from the daily routine.

However, while there has been much positive change, there is more to do.

- Through the engagement surveys, 21 per cent of all students strongly agreed/agreed with the statement that the school holds First Nation, Métis, and Inuit special events, such as art displays and cultural events, while 92 per cent of board staff strongly agreed/agreed with this statement.
- Of all students, 21 per cent strongly agreed/agreed with the statement “the school invites Elders/Knowledge Keepers/Senators to teach us about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples, cultures, and histories”, while 80 per cent of board staff strongly agreed/agreed with the statement.

These examples illustrate the divergence of student perspectives and board staff perspectives on the subject of opportunities to learn about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions at school.

The Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools, in collaboration with Indigenous partners, continue to implement targeted initiatives, programs, and services to enhance First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student self-esteem and well-being.

### **Examples of Initiatives That Support Indigenous Student Self-Esteem and Well-Being**

- The Biwaase'aa Program is administered by Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwe-doon, an agency offering a comprehensive holistic program for Indigenous children and their families living in Thunder Bay. Since 2012, funding has been provided for Indigenous Youth Workers to lead in-school and after-school programs for Indigenous students and all students who would like to attend. Biwaase'aa has been carefully designed to be culturally relevant and appropriate and to serve the needs of urban Indigenous youth. It is delivered in seven elementary schools and one secondary school, in Lakehead District School Board and Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board.
- In the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, local Indigenous role models were matched with classes in seven elementary and three secondary schools to support Indigenous learning and increase the extent to which Indigenous perspectives, histories, and values were represented in the classroom. Role models regularly visited classrooms to support students and educators, share their culture, and build relationships through storytelling, drumming, and the creation of Indigenous artefacts (e.g., medicine pouches). Feedback on the program has been positive. Students, educators, and administrators have identified a need to expand the program and increase the use of role models and Indigenous resources in schools.
- At Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, the Native Youth Advancement With Education Hamilton (NYA:WEH) Program provides students with cultural support through an Indigenous youth adviser. The adviser helps students navigate challenges and succeed in secondary school, and ensures that Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives are represented in school events, workshops, and presentations. Students participating in the program also act as role models for all students in the board through their involvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit activities and events.



- Conseil scolaire catholique du Nouvel-Ontario invites respected French-speaking Indigenous cultural trainers to work with students and provide teachings related to Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives, to help build strong Indigenous identities.
- Beginning in 2013–14, the Ministry of Education’s Indigenous Student Learning and Leadership Gatherings program offered leadership development opportunities and authentic cultural workshops to Indigenous students. More than 800 students took part in cultural and traditional learning opportunities that empowered them to develop the confidence, self-esteem, and leadership skills needed to become more engaged in their school community and their education.
- With support from the Ministry of Education, in 2014, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) initiated community-driven research to support trauma-informed practices in schools. The research examined the role of historic and race-based trauma transmission in urban Indigenous communities and the continued impact of trauma on children, parents, and caregivers in current public school systems. The OFIFC used the findings to develop the [Trauma-Informed Schools Project Tool-Kit](#).<sup>10</sup> It includes recommendations and strategies that were largely informed by student voices, and addresses how school staff and communities can play a stronger role in cultivating safe and accepting school environments for Indigenous children, youth, and families.
- The Safe and Accepting Schools Initiative, led by the Chiefs of Ontario, working with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, the Ontario Native Women’s Association, Independent First Nations, and the Métis Nation of Ontario, and supported by the Ministry of Education, works to foster and promote safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments for Indigenous students across the province. This initiative supports the development and dissemination of culturally relevant resources and tools related to bullying prevention, healthy relationships, trauma and mental health supports, and leadership development. The initiative focuses on disrupting the norms, attitudes, and behaviours that perpetuate violence against Indigenous women and girls.
- The Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program (AYEP) is offered through the Martin Family Initiative (MFI). The MFI seeks to improve elementary and secondary school education outcomes for Indigenous students through

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10. Retrieved October 24, 2017, from <http://research.offfc.org/content/trauma-informed-schools-project-tool-kit>

*(continued)*



- RESPECT
- SAFETY
- RAPPORT
- ENGAGED
- CONCERN
- CHOICE
- FAIR STANDARDS

SELF-SINCERITY  
**RESTORING CULTURE**

"WE'RE ALL STILL LEARNING"



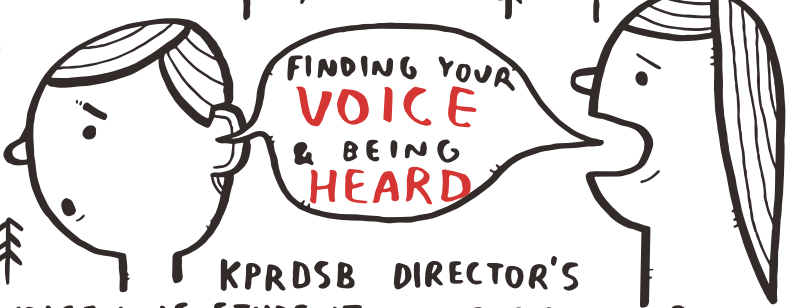
**INDIGENOUS CULTURE**  
 in **SCHOOLS**

- CURRENT EVENTS
- LITERATURE
- HISTORY
- SOCIAL EVENTS ACROSS SCHOOLS
- RESOURCE ROOMS
- SHARING WITH NON-INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

**WELL-**

helps us focus

on the path



well-being is not crying in class



KEEP AN  
**OPEN MIND**

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SIL-  
IENCE!**

**STAND  
UP  
AGAINST  
BULLYING  
& RACISM**

**STOP**

SOMETIMES  
YOU JUST  
NEED A  
**BREAK!**

**being**

IN SCHOOL  
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Quantity  
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**Quality**

"TO NOT  
WORRY ABOUT  
STUFF AT HOME."

↓ **STRESS** ↑ **ATTENDANCE**

IAN TURNER





programs and research. AYP gives Grade 11 and 12 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in ten Ontario district school boards an opportunity to earn two senior business studies credits through a program based on the Ontario business studies curriculum and supplemented by Indigenous content, hands-on activities, guest speakers and business mentors, and funding opportunities. Students develop entrepreneurial skills and learn how to create and establish their own small business. MFI worked with school boards to select school sites based on Indigenous student enrolment, a supportive local business community, and school staff with expertise in teaching Indigenous students.

- *SpeakUp* Project grants can help students get their voices heard and take action by leading projects that make a difference in schools. Thousands of students in Grades 7 to 12 have actively led or participated in more than ten thousand projects, including projects specifically focused on Indigenous issues, in hundreds of schools across Ontario.
- The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board held “Lunch and Learn” activities in schools to promote student voice, engagement, peer mentoring, and student leadership among Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The selection of topics was based on student input. One event was held per month, culminating with a learning and sharing session in May as part of a National Indigenous Awareness Week Showcase at participating schools. Anecdotal feedback from staff, parents, and partners indicated that student voice and leadership skills were more evident after the Lunch and Learn sessions and that students were experiencing a greater sense of pride.
- Students as Researchers (StaR) training is held across Ontario to provide training in collaborative inquiry research methods for student-teacher teams in Grades 7 to 12. StaR teams are taught the fundamental components of social science research (e.g., ethics, research design and methodologies, data analysis). Students work together to identify and research an issue that has an impact on the student experience (e.g., equity, student engagement, well-being, or achievement). Teams have explored research related to Indigenous students’ experience and Indigenous education topics.



Ontario curriculum courses in Indigenous languages and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies can also foster increased self-esteem among Indigenous students as they develop a stronger sense of cultural group identity and increase their knowledge about Indigenous world views, cultures, and cultural ties. These courses can build knowledge and awareness, which are keys to acceptance and the creation of a welcoming, inclusive school environment. Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who took Indigenous languages and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies courses shared with researchers that they found these courses to be highly rewarding and valuable on a personal level, as well as in their academic pursuits.

- From 2006–07 to 2015–16, Indigenous languages program and course enrolment increased from 4,302 student enrolments to 7,795 student enrolments.
- The increase is largely due to the higher number of elementary student enrolments in Indigenous languages programs since 2011–12.
- From 2006–07 to 2015–16, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies course enrolment increased from 1,134 course enrolments to 22,195 course enrolments.
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies course enrolment has increased incrementally each year since 2011–12.

The ministry provides designated funding for Indigenous languages and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies courses through the Grants for Student Needs to support boards in enhancing knowledge and awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions for all students through participation in specific courses and daily practices in schools. The funding benchmarks for the Indigenous languages and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies allocations reflect a funded average class size of twelve, allowing boards to offer these programs even if they have limited enrolment.



### Examples of Initiatives That Support Indigenous Languages

- To promote Indigenous language teaching, the Kenora Catholic District School Board's Northern Studies and Native Languages teachers collaborated to create a language app that supports users in learning, understanding, and applying Anishinaabe words, culture, and ideas to everyday life, and so contributes to language preservation. The app is widely used by Indigenous students, and also as a language resource throughout the school board. It is available for download at [Ojibway App](#).<sup>11</sup>
- The Rainy River District School Board and Seven Generations Education Institute, working in partnership, developed the Language Strategy Implementation Project, which focuses on the initial planning, design, and community outreach involved in establishing a broader Ojibwe language strategy. It includes setting up an Elders committee; hosting a professional development conference; and creating content, including multimedia school content, a conjugation tool, teacher-development content, and Indigenous language books.

### *Promoting Well-Being in Ontario Schools*

Promoting well-being is one of the four interconnected goals of *Achieving Excellence*, Ontario's renewed vision for education. This goal is based on the principle that our education system needs to help students build the knowledge and skills associated with well-being so that they can become healthy, active, and engaged citizens.

Well-being is fundamental to overall student success. Students are better able to learn when they feel safe and welcome at school, and have the tools and the motivation to make healthy, active choices whenever they can. Students who have strong relationships and a positive sense of self are most likely to reach their full potential and thrive.

Promoting student well-being is about fostering learning environments that encompass the four domains of well-being (cognitive, emotional, social, physical), including the self/spirit. First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures and perspectives are also a critical element that will shape the conversation. Respect for First Nation, Métis,

11. Retrieved October 24, 2017, from <http://ojibwayapp.com/niin/>

and Inuit knowledge and traditions is fundamental to the well-being of all. With a holistic perspective, well-being is supported through the creation of safe spaces that promote and reflect cultural identity and create a sense of belonging and connection for all.

The Ministry of Education will also continue to collaborate with and support partner ministries in developing integrated approaches to promote the well-being of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

In December 2016, the Minister's Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Working Group established a subcommittee on Indigenous student well-being. The subcommittee is working to co-develop a shared vision for Indigenous student well-being that is being validated by community-led engagements. Ontario has provided funding to seven Indigenous partner organizations<sup>12</sup> to engage their communities and stakeholders to better understand what well-being means for Indigenous students, to identify supports and strategies for promoting Indigenous student well-being, and to determine how we will know our progress. The indicators for well-being may be similar for all students or may reflect the unique needs and perspectives of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. The work of the subcommittee is connected to broader engagements taking place across the province on how to strengthen student well-being and understand progress in supporting well-being.

According to some Indigenous students, parents, families, and educators, the supports provided to learners are having a positive impact on the self-confidence and self-esteem of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

Although some First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students reported feeling included in their schools, only 26 per cent of those who participated in the survey said that their teachers really value their points of view. Indigenous students also reported that racism remains a key issue in their schools.

### ***Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan***

In 2017, the Ministry of Education released *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* to address issues related to racism and equity in Ontario's

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12. Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Métis Nation of Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Chiefs of Ontario, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, Tungasuvvingat Inuit





schools. This plan is the province’s roadmap to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers, and bias from schools and classrooms to support the potential for all students to succeed. The ministry will work together with students, parents, educators, principals, board staff, trustees, and community leaders to bring the action plan to life and create a learning environment that inspires all students to reach their full potential and become personally successful, economically productive, and actively engaged citizens.

*Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan* will complement and build on the ministry’s 2009 strategy, set out in *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*. For the better part of a decade, the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy has guided and supported the education community in identifying and working towards eliminating the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students’ prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society.

“The impact school programs have on the well-being of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students has been great, in that our students express self-confidence.”

– Indigenous parent

### **3.1.2 Transition to Provincially Funded Schools**

- *Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools*

Transitions are often critical times in a student’s educational journey. Students experience many changes during transitions, and adapting to new situations, friends, cultures, and environments can be particularly challenging. Like all students, Indigenous students make the transition to Kindergarten and then from grade to grade, through to graduation. Some Indigenous students also experience other major transitions – for example, First Nation students who transition from their community school to a provincially funded school, and Inuit students who move to Ontario from the North to attend school. Smooth transitions are important in promoting student achievement and well-being. Working in partnership, communities and educators can help facilitate this





process by understanding the strengths and needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners and ensuring that appropriate supports are in place.

Supports for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, including supports during transitions, are discussed throughout this report. The present section looks specifically at initiatives designed to support First Nation students as they make the transition from their community school to a provincially funded school – the focus of the Framework performance measure.

Engagement sessions revealed that, overall, there was increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students received the preparation and supports they needed to be successful when they transitioned to provincially funded schools. Students and staff within the school system saw this collaboration as useful.

First Nation students and First Nation education authorities spoke about supports such as:

- bussing, which allows students to take part in orientation tours;
- partnering incoming Indigenous students with an Indigenous student mentor, who provides support over the course of their first year;
- connecting students with school staff who are from their own community.

First Nation students, as well as board and school staff, identified Indigenous counsellors and Indigenous support workers as crucial in helping First Nation students make the transition to living away from their home communities while attending high school. In many cases, counsellors, support workers, and guidance counsellors were credited with retaining and re-engaging students who were at risk of leaving school before graduating, and with contributing to significant positive changes in students' academic achievement and well-being.

Although collaboration between school boards and school authorities has generally improved over the past few years, during the engagements, some staff members at First Nation education authorities highlighted the need for improved collaboration with school boards in assisting First Nation students to make smooth transitions to provincially funded schools. Some First Nation students also indicated that they found it disconcerting to receive multiple supports during their transition, but



minimal supports once they were at the new school. These students said they would have appreciated continuing support, even if it were just someone to be a sounding board. Survey results indicated that only 24 per cent of Indigenous students agreed that their school offers supports for First Nation students transitioning from schools in First Nation communities to provincially funded schools, while 41 per cent disagreed (the remainder did not answer, or said they did not know).

### Examples of Transition Support Programs

- Grand Erie District School Board hosts annual student transition events at the Six Nations of the Grand River. The board's Director of Education and Native Advisor, along with Six Nations school principals, have co-developed an Action Plan for Increased Partnership to facilitate student transitions between their schools. Activities include "Grade 8 days" at the district secondary schools and programming at Six Nations schools (e.g., "Right Fit" – an engaging activity that guides students towards the schools that best align with their interests). A High School Information Open House is held at Six Nations Community Hall.
- Renfrew County District School Board has developed a multifaceted strategy to support First Nation students at various stages of their early journey. For young children, the board works in partnership with early childhood educators at the daycare at Pikwàkanagàn to ensure successful transitions to Kindergarten. Community members come into classrooms in various grades to share cultural experiences with all students (e.g., drumming, music, language). The staff members of all Grade 8 classes meet with a secondary school student success team and share student profiles to ensure successful transitions. They review students' timetables, interests, and needs. In addition to the counselling support available at each high school, the students from Pikwàkanagàn are invited to a career fair arranged by the education manager in their community.
- Lambton Kent District School Board continues to focus on supporting successful transitions for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. A specific focus is on students transitioning into schools of the board from Indigenous communities. Students are involved in a multi-phase process. Transition plans are developed, and students participate in Indigenous-focused programming, including The Awesome Eagle program at North Lambton Secondary School and the Future Elders program at Wallaceburg District Secondary School. In order to meet the needs of students from across the entire board,

four Indigenous Youth Symposiums were held in four secondary schools across the district. Students from Grades 7 and 8 were invited to participate. Active student groups exist in all secondary schools that directly support students from First Nation communities.



Over the past four years, the ministry has signed a number of historic Memorandums of Understanding with Indigenous partners to formalize relationships. Improving student support services, in particular transition supports for students living away from home and transitioning between First Nation schools and provincially funded schools, has been identified as a key priority area for collaboration. (For a discussion of these historic partner agreements, see [section 4.1](#) of this report.)

Through partnerships and collaboration, school boards, Indigenous partners, and First Nation school authorities have worked to provide effective transition supports for First Nation students who move to provincially funded schools. Students felt that supports should be extended beyond the initial transition period. Although there have been improvements in relationship building and collaboration between school boards and First Nation education authorities, there is more work to be done. Additional work and greater collaboration are needed to develop transition supports for Inuit youth moving from Northern communities to Ontario's provincially funded schools. Improved communications and a better understanding of particular needs could lead to stronger working relationships.



### 3.2 Practice Highlights\* – Supporting Students

- Further integrate First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions into curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 12 to promote the development of a strong sense of group identity and positive self-esteem among Indigenous students.
- Further integrate First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions into curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 12 to grow non-Indigenous students' understanding of, and appreciation for, Indigenous peoples, and to help counter racism.
- Provide Indigenous students with access to Indigenous support workers, counsellors, cultural experts, and other staff who can act as role models and mentors. Also, provide staff training in trauma-informed strategies specific to historic trauma, including the intergenerational impacts of residential schools.
- Provide appropriate, dedicated Indigenous cultural spaces in schools, where students feel safe and can connect with one another to enhance their sense of well-being.
- Provide leadership opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, including mentoring programs and opportunities to share their culture, to help them develop self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Address racist attitudes in the school community through education and by creating an environment that makes it clear that racist attitudes and behaviours will not be tolerated.

\* "Practice highlights" refers to practices that were described in the engagement sessions as having had a positive impact in the boards where they were being used. The highlights are based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, including the lived experience of students, families, teaching and non-teaching staff, communities, and organizations. They are featured as examples of practices that boards can consider implementing to support Indigenous education in Ontario.

# 4

## Engagement and Awareness Building



Building collaborative, healthy, and meaningful relationships is foundational to success in building engagement and awareness.

### 4.1 Engagement and Awareness Building – Performance Measures

#### Performance Measures

- Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children
- Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Indigenous communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education
- Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples

#### 4.1.1 Parent Participation

- *Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children*

Research shows that parent or family participation in a child's education can increase student achievement and well-being. It is important for school boards and schools to form a relationship with parents and families, and to make them feel welcome in their child's school. Parents and families

can support their child in the learning journey by increasing their understanding of the programs and services offered at the school level.

During engagement sessions, parents shared that there had been some progress over the past four years in increasing the participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children. Some parents talked about offering to help in teaching culture to their children's classes. Many staff spoke about asking parents to take part in both special events and regular classroom activities. A number of students described consulting with their parents on cultural practices, such as the appropriate medicines to use for a spiritual activity, and on questions concerning Indigenous languages. Some said they had asked their parents to be involved in planning powwows and other larger events.

In general, Indigenous parents felt that there had recently been more opportunities for parents of Indigenous students to engage with the school about their children's education. Survey results suggest that a majority of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents feel welcome at their children's school.

However, participants in the engagement sessions also reported that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents need more localized and culturally relevant opportunities to engage in the school system, and that additional efforts are required to reach Indigenous parents living in remote Northern communities.

Many school boards and schools, in partnership with Indigenous Education Advisory Councils, are seeking to enhance Indigenous parent and family participation in school life by adopting more culturally relevant approaches to help engage parents.

### **Examples of Parent and Family Participation in Schools**

- The Aboriginal Family Network (AFN) Program at the Durham District School Board held ten evening sessions and one year-end Saturday excursion for Indigenous students and their parents. Teachers, community and postsecondary volunteers, mentors, Elders, and special guests provided mentorship in a warm and engaging environment, where participants were invited to experience a wide variety of culturally inspired activities. The AFN Program increased parents' participation in their children's education, provided a







support network for Indigenous parents, and helped foster a sense of community within this urban environment.

- Many school boards partner with Indigenous communities to hold community-based events. These boards make deliberate efforts to engage Indigenous families in helping increase the knowledge of all staff and students about Indigenous languages, cultures, perspectives, and histories in schools and classrooms throughout the year. Special opportunities to celebrate Indigenous peoples' contributions occur during Treaties Recognition Week, National Indigenous Peoples Day, and Louis Riel Day, as well as in connection with various local Indigenous community events.
- Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants have included supports for Indigenous parents to identify and address barriers to parent engagement in their own community and to find local solutions to involve more parents in support of student achievement and well-being. Parent workshops, forums, and the development of Indigenous language materials for parents are just a few examples of the types of projects that have been supported through this program.
- In 2015, a multimedia toolkit called "A Circle of Caring" was released as a resource for families of Indigenous students. Developed by the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) in collaboration with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit families, community leaders, and Elders, this resource comprises a suite of vignettes and discussion guides for use by educators and Indigenous communities. Topics include cultural pride, helping our children succeed, understanding bullying and discrimination, getting involved in school life, and nurturing safe and healthy schools and communities. A Circle of Caring has been promoted through social media and workshops that reach out to Indigenous families and students. It encourages family engagement and home-school collaboration to support student achievement and well-being.

"There are so many resources, teachers, Elders, and programs on [name of local community] that the school board can reach out to and build a relationship with."

– Survey respondent



#### 4.1.2 Knowledge Sharing, Collaboration, and Issue Resolution

- *Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Indigenous communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education*

The Ministry of Education continues to support school boards in the development of Board Action Plans (BAPs) on Indigenous Education. The planning and development of BAPs is meant to help boards target resources and supports in ways that will help improve the engagement, learning, achievement, and well-being of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. The BAP may include strategies and activities related to enhancing programming supports for Indigenous students (e.g., literacy intervention and experiential learning opportunities), supporting student transitions, engaging First Nation communities and Indigenous parents and families, developing communication resources to promote self-identification and awareness, and creating governance structures and positions to support Indigenous education. A Board Assessment Tool was also developed to assist with examining progress to date and identifying key priority areas moving forward. Education Officers from the ministry's Indigenous Education Office have also been available to provide support and outreach for the development of BAPs.

The ministry provided funding to district school boards through the Grants for Student Needs: Indigenous Education Grant to support a dedicated Indigenous Education Board Lead in each of Ontario's seventy-two school boards and four school authorities. The Indigenous Education Board Lead supports the school board in its engagements with Indigenous communities, partners, and organizations as it develops BAPs and implements the Framework.

In 2014, the ministry released the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan*, which indicated that all school boards would establish formalized processes, such as establishing Indigenous Education Advisory Councils (IEACs), to support local implementation of the Framework. The IEACs could help guide school boards and schools in building stronger relationships with their communities, sharing information, identifying promising practices, and enhancing collaborative work to support First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and well-being.



The ministry has set the following expectations for Indigenous Education Leads and the IEACs. The Indigenous Education Lead will:

- work to establish a board IEAC (if the board does not have one in place);
- work closely with the IEAC to develop and implement the BAP;
- collaborate with the IEAC as part of the planning process, in order to ensure that the BAP is reflective of local demographics and student/community needs;
- obtain sign-off from the IEAC on the BAP.

There is an acknowledgement and understanding that IEAC structures and processes vary across boards, and that in some boards and communities more needs to be done to increase their effectiveness. During engagement sessions, Indigenous partners expressed concerns about authentic, meaningful participation in BAP development. While some felt that their BAPs were truly collaborative and co-created, others said they had not been provided with an opportunity to participate, or had been invited to participate only after the BAP had been developed. Indigenous partners said that BAPs need to fully and deliberately include the input of community partners, and that there needs to be greater participation among community partners in the development of BAPs.

Over the past four years, particularly among those communities that have Education Service Agreements (ESAs) in place, there appears to have been an increase in collaboration between schools, school boards, and First Nation communities. Where a community has an ESA in place, participants in the engagement sessions said that there was greater collaboration, shared accountability, and participation in the development of BAPs. Schools and school boards with higher numbers of self-identified students are also working to increase knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations. However, this is not to say that all First Nation communities with ESAs or all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations are participating and collaborating with schools and school boards to the fullest possible extent in the BAP development process. Particularly in urban areas, where the school or school board may not be tied to a specific First Nation, Métis, or Inuit community, Indigenous partners felt that meaningful participation in BAP development needed to be improved.



Ontario has committed to working collaboratively with First Nation partners to co-develop policy and consider recommendations for legislative amendments that would impact First Nations in Ontario. ESAs and Reverse Education Service Agreements (RESAs) are a top priority for First Nation partners, and the ministry is committed to working collaboratively towards a solution. The ministry is engaging with First Nation partners and education partners to address their concerns about ESAs and RESAs.

During engagement sessions, some community partners expressed concern about the ability of school boards to fully meet the needs of Indigenous students and suggested that Indigenous communities and organizations would be able to provide some of this support.

Differing perspectives on the extent of knowledge sharing and collaboration were illustrated by the responses of different groups to the survey question about how much schools value First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous organizations, and about the resources and supports boards can provide. Eighty per cent of board staff agreed that these organizations are valued by the schools, compared with 36 per cent of community members. Approximately one in four community members (27 per cent) disagree with the notion that their organizations and resources are valued by the schools, compared with only 2 per cent of board staff.

The ministry continues to encourage boards to engage with Indigenous partners to strengthen relationships and explore opportunities for information sharing and collaboration. The ministry has also worked to expand and deepen relationships with Indigenous partners over the past four years by sharing information, co-developing programs or seeking feedback in the review of existing programs, and engaging in constructive dialogue on the direction of initiatives.



## Examples of Collaborative Partnerships Targeting Student Success and Well-Being

- Through the Minister's Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Working Group (MAC WG), First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners along with the ministry and education partners across Ontario have been collaborating and co-developing ideas and initiatives to advance Indigenous education in Ontario.
- The First Nation Education Strategy (FNES) strengthens the ability of First Nations in Ontario and the Ontario government to work collaboratively to identify and address common priorities, as expressed in the Political Accord with the Chiefs of Ontario and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action. The FNES is supported by the First Nations Lifelong Learning Table (FNLLT), which consists of a Steering Committee and the Central Policy and Planning Circle. The FNLLT provides a forum for First Nations in Ontario and the Ontario government and its ministry leaders to identify, prioritize, discuss, and work to address issues and opportunities related to First Nations Lifelong Learning in the provincial education and training sector.
- The Alternative Secondary School Program (ASSP) aims to address the needs of urban Indigenous students and help them complete the requirements for their secondary school diploma. The program provides students with access to culturally appropriate programs and services, relevant curriculum, and traditional healing. This program is administered by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres through a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Ministry of Education. It is delivered through a partnership between district school boards and Friendship Centres at ten sites: London, Sudbury, Fort Erie, Hamilton, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Kenora, Fort Frances, Timmins, and Red Lake. The Métis Nation of Ontario administers an eleventh ASSP site in Kingston.
- The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC) has a history of partnerships with local school boards through the Sivummut Head Start Program, which provides programming and supports for children between the ages of eighteen months and six years, including transition into Kindergarten. The partnership was first initiated through the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) and has since extended to include the other three boards in the City of Ottawa – Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB), Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE), and Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO).



- La Table provinciale francophone DU-ESFP en matière d'éducation des Premières Nations, des Métis et des Inuits (the French-language Provincial Working Table for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education) was created in 2013, and consists of representatives from French-language school boards, postsecondary bilingual institutions, education stakeholder organizations, the Métis Nation of Ontario, Chiefs of Ontario, Tungasuvvingat Inuit, and the Ministries of Education and of Advanced Education and Skills Development. The working table meets twice yearly to discuss Indigenous education in the French-language system, share promising practices, and identify strategies for building capacity among educators in order to meet the needs of Indigenous students in the French-language system as they transition from elementary to secondary and postsecondary education.

### *Indigenous Partner Agreements*

Opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution are also increased through the various historic partner agreements that have been signed over the past decade to formalize ongoing relationships or establish new ones.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the existing bilateral relationship and to work together to improve the educational outcomes of Métis students in Ontario and to support the implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. The MOU expired in 2014. A new five-year MOU was signed on December 15, 2015. Since the signing, there has been significant progress in support of the academic achievement and learning outcomes of Métis students, and an increase in the awareness and knowledge of all students about Métis histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions.

On November 27, 2017, the Ministry of Education and Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize their working relationship, which has been in place for many years. The MOU sets out how TI and the ministry will collaborate to achieve shared goals consistent with the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework to ensure that Inuit students are supported and successful across the province in the publicly funded K–12 education system.





Two tripartite agreements were also signed, through the Education Partnerships Program (EPP) process, during the third phase of the Framework implementation. The agreements commit the federal government, the province, and Indigenous organizations to work together to better support and serve Indigenous students:

- On April 9, 2013, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), Canada, and Ontario signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding on First Nation education. This was the first tripartite education agreement to be signed in Ontario. Through this agreement, Canada, Ontario, and NAN committed to work together to improve educational outcomes for First Nation students in both First Nation–operated and provincially funded schools.
- On February 27, 2017, the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI), Canada, and Ontario signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding on First Nation education. This was the second tripartite education agreement signed in Ontario. Through this agreement, Canada, Ontario, and AIAI have committed to work together to improve educational outcomes for First Nation students.

Since 1995, the Anishinabek Nation and Canada have been negotiating an Education Self-Government Agreement to establish an Anishinabek Education System (AES) under First Nation control and jurisdiction. The agreement was signed on August 16, 2017, and will come into effect on April 1, 2018. In order to support the arrangements under this sectoral self-government agreement, the Anishinabek First Nations and Ontario signed a complementary agreement. On August 16, 2017, 23 Anishinabek First Nations, the Kinooaadziwin Education Body, and Ontario signed the Master Education Agreement (MEA). The MEA establishes a formal relationship between Ontario and the 23 Anishinabek First Nations who signed the MEA. The agreement envisions a new relationship between the Anishinabek First Nations and Ontario that supports Anishinabek student success and well-being in the AES and in the provincially funded education system. The MEA supports the establishment of practical arrangements for ongoing collaboration on strategies to promote Anishinabek student success and well-being.

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Engagement findings indicate that there have been significant accomplishments with respect to knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Indigenous communities, First Nation governments,

education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education during the third phase of the Framework implementation.

However, it is clear that there is still more work to be done to help grow Indigenous student achievement and well-being. Mutually respectful, trusting relationships and deep, meaningful participation of Indigenous partners at the school, school board, and ministry levels will continue to help improve education opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Ontario as education partners work to grow awareness of and knowledge about Indigenous histories, languages, cultures, perspectives, and contributions among all students.

#### **4.1.3 Improving Knowledge about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Cultures and Histories**

- *Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples*

##### **4.1.3.1 Importance of System and School Leadership**

Research has demonstrated the significant role of school leadership in improving student success and well-being. By extension, principals play an important role in the effective implementation of the Indigenous Education Strategy. The embedding and integration of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions in the curriculum, in classroom practices, and at the school level are highly dependent on the commitment and resolve of the school leadership.

During engagement sessions, participants said that, where leadership is invested in including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions in curriculum at the school level, many ongoing Indigenous projects and initiatives are part of the school experience. These schools are also often well connected with, and supported by, the local Indigenous communities.

Principals at the in-person focus groups shared examples of their engagement, including:

- belonging to drum groups (one principal described feeling pride in being mentored by a First Nation student drummer);
- reading books by Indigenous authors in their spare time, because they were genuinely interested in these authors and in Indigenous perspectives;





- arranging to display Indigenous art on the school walls, typically in the main entrance to the school (one principal made a deliberate attempt to have art from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit artists, with each culture equally represented, on display in the hallways throughout the school);
- purchasing lanyards for students from a First Nation community to support their initiatives.

What all these examples have in common is that the principals were personally invested in raising their own awareness and in growing their knowledge about Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, contributions, and ways of knowing. They were “walking the talk” and sharing their experiences with those around them. Through their enthusiastic engagement, they provided a model for staff and students to emulate.

#### **4.1.3.2 Importance of Initial Teacher Education Related to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Histories, Cultures, Perspectives, and Contributions**

During the engagement sessions, participants noted a lack of qualified Indigenous-language speakers who were fluent in or who could teach Indigenous-language courses. Indigenous students expressed their disappointment at having enrolled in an Indigenous-language class to learn the language, only to find that the teacher did not speak an Indigenous language – and that, in many instances, a non-Indigenous teacher was teaching the class.

It is essential that teacher candidates in faculties of education grow their awareness and knowledge of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions. This content was added to the Ontario College of Teachers’ *Accreditation Resource Guide* – the guide that outlines the content requirements for teacher accreditation – following the modernization of initial teacher education programs in Ontario in 2013. Including Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions in the accreditation program is intended to ensure that all teacher candidates grow their awareness and knowledge and recognize their responsibility to engage all learners. Using culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and trauma-informed strategies will ensure that students who identify as members of Indigenous communities will see themselves reflected in the curriculum, will be able to relate to classroom practices, and will develop a sense of belonging.



The intent is also that new teachers will feel more comfortable incorporating First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions throughout their teaching practice – that is, not only in social studies and/or history but also in areas such as environmental education, arts, literacy, numeracy, mathematics, and science. The embedding of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, contributions, and ways of knowing will grow the awareness and knowledge of all students in the classroom. It is not the intent that teachers will speak for or appropriate cultural knowledge. Rather, they will come to understand how to incorporate First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, perspectives, and contributions into the curriculum respectfully, through engagement with communities, and with that understanding will gain confidence in doing so. They will also understand the value of cultivating relationships with Indigenous communities and seeking their advice, involvement, and contributions to enrich student learning.

An example of a project to support teacher candidates is the Building Futures Program. This program is designed to support teacher candidates at provincially funded faculties of education across Ontario in making the transition from the faculty to the classroom. The program reaches all teacher candidates across the province’s thirteen faculties of education, French and English, through face-to-face workshops or online learning.

Since September 2015, the Building Futures Indigenous Working Group (BFIWG) has been working on creating an online space on the [TeachOntario](#) website. The space provides curated resources to support teacher candidates and educators in developing their understanding and knowledge about Indigenous peoples in Canada and Indigenous education. The Ministry of Education is working with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners, community stakeholders, and faculties of education to identify and develop online resources to support the capacity of teacher candidates entering the profession, their instructors, and classroom teachers, including associate teachers and mentors. With the ministry’s input and guidance, TVO hosted the [Indigenous Education Resources](#) website.<sup>13</sup> The website went live in September 2017.

This initiative aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s call to action number 62(ii), to “provide the necessary funding to

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13. Available at <https://www.teachontario.ca/community/explore/buildingfutures/indigenous-education-resources/pages/main>.

post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms”.

#### 4.1.3.3 Importance of Curriculum

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) called on governments to develop mandatory, age-appropriate curriculum covering residential schools, treaties, and Indigenous peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions, to grow the awareness and knowledge of all students. In response to this call, during the third phase of Framework implementation, the Ministry of Education embarked on a new process to revise its curriculum, adopting an engaging co-planning approach in collaboration with Indigenous partners to develop culturally responsive and culturally appropriate curriculum.

It is important to note that sustained efforts at all levels are required if students and educators in Ontario are to increase understanding of, and appreciation for, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives, and contributions in Ontario.

Through the engagement sessions, Indigenous students indicated that learning about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit history broadly was not enough, because they did not see themselves directly reflected in what they were learning. They wanted to learn about current First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, traditions, and languages.

Many students felt that they took history or Indigenous history courses that were often focused on ancient history, rather than on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit contributions to Canadian society. They want to know more about their local history, the history of nearby Indigenous communities, and treaties. Students also said that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit content tends to be restricted to social studies or taught only upon request, and that Métis and Inuit content is particularly lacking. Indigenous parents also said there is a lack of local content, and that schools often provide a “pan-Indigenous” approach that portrays all Indigenous peoples, their histories, and their cultures as the same.

Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, as well as teaching staff, stated that Indigenous studies courses should be mandatory to help shape students’ perspectives, and that these courses should be promoted to all students, not just Indigenous students. When non-Indigenous students took Indigenous studies courses, their perspectives were broadened, and this improved relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.



The Ministry of Education recognizes the key role that curriculum can play in shaping social attitudes and teaching respect, acceptance of diversity, inclusion, and intercultural understanding.

As part of *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*, and as outlined in the Minister of Education's mandate letter,<sup>14</sup> the ministry is working to enhance the curriculum to support mandatory learning about residential schools, the legacy of colonialism, and the rights and responsibilities we all have to each other as treaty people. The province is working with Indigenous partners to ensure that they have a voice in curriculum-linked authentic resources to support curriculum delivery and build educator capacity.

There is a need for more practical professional development that prepares teachers to teach new curriculum content related to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions. Professional learning should include training in the use of a trauma-informed approach to teaching and communicating with families about sensitive topics such as the residential school experience (see [section 5.1](#)). Seventy-six per cent of Indigenous students say that their classmates do not understand First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions very well, or that they do not understand them at all.

In response to the TRC's calls to action numbers 62 and 63, the Ontario government has made an annual investment of \$5 million over three years (2016–17 to 2018–19) to support targeted resource development and educator capacity building to enhance age- and grade-appropriate learning and teaching about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions, including the history and legacy of residential schools, treaties, and the Indian Act. The commitment stipulates development of resources and capacity building in partnership with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners, and education stakeholders.

A Steering Committee has been set up to guide this project. Its members are residential school survivors and representatives of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI), the four First Nations Trustees' Councils, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), the Minister's Student Advisory Council, and the Ministry of Education.

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14. Available at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-education>.



Based on the Steering Committee's nominations, a joint implementation working group has been established. Its members are from a variety of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit organizations and subject associations. The working group has established protocols for reviewing and creating curriculum-linked Indigenous resources.

The curriculum revisions were undertaken in the summer of 2016 and the winter of 2017. They focused on strengthening mandatory Indigenous content, including the history of the residential school experience, in the elementary social studies and history curriculum and the secondary Canadian and world studies curriculum. Indigenous partners brought to this work not only their knowledge but also their expertise in how to present sensitive topics in a good way. Ministry staff worked in collaboration with Indigenous teachers, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Senators, community representatives, and residential school survivors to develop an age- and grade-appropriate curriculum. The ministry is conducting provincial implementation sessions with school boards and authorities, First Nation schools, Indigenous partners, and education stakeholders on the revised curriculum for social studies, Grades 4 to 6, and history, Grades 7 and 8 and Grade 10. The revised documents will be released electronically in spring 2018, for mandatory implementation in all schools in September 2018.

The next phase of curriculum revision will begin in winter 2018 and will focus on social studies, Grades 1 to 3; the Grade 9 Canadian geography course; the Grade 10 civics and citizenship course; and selected courses in the Grade 11–12 Canadian and world studies curriculum and the Grade 9–12 social sciences and humanities curriculum.







## Examples of Partnerships to Improve Knowledge about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Cultures and Histories

- As part of the Specialist High Skills Major program at Conseil scolaire Viamonde, the Indigenous Education Lead meets with students to help improve their understanding of Indigenous cultures, practices, and perspectives. Students learn about the work of Indigenous cultural centres in their region, such as Enahtig Healing Lodge and Kinomaagaye Gaamik Lodge. The Indigenous Education Lead also meets with all guidance teachers in the board's secondary schools to ensure that they have a list of available resources and services, including a list of bursaries available to students for postsecondary studies.
- A number of boards are implementing Elder-in-Residence programs. For example, Upper Grand District School Board is beginning a three-year cycle of including an Elder or traditional knowledge carrier in every Grade 5 class (140 classes in 66 schools) to support knowledge building, understanding, and appreciation of Indigenous histories and cultures. Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board has also worked with local First Nation communities to develop an Elder-in-Residence program in two elementary and two secondary schools that were identified as having significant First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student populations.
- Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board partnered with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) to provide opportunities for students to explore, make connections, and develop a relationship with their natural environment. These opportunities helped to increase students' engagement in the learning process. Through the partnership, educators learned how to embed Indigenous perspectives seamlessly into daily instruction, and students became more engaged as they learned from the land and from local natural and human resources and as they visited culturally significant sites.
- The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC) operates the Bridging the Gap Project, which is designed to increase knowledge of Indigenous culture and history and to improve student self-confidence and academic achievement. The program provides classroom and one-on-one support for students and families, offering Inuit cultural presentations in the classroom, cultural enrichment workshops for teachers and administrators, individual support for Inuit students, collaboration, and networking. The program serves elementary and secondary school students in district school boards in the Ottawa Region.

Through all these examples, it is evident that Indigenous community members, particularly residential school survivors, Elders and Senators, Knowledge Keepers, and cultural experts, are valuable in, and valued for, their role in the integration of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, ways of knowing, and ways of being within the school program. During the engagement sessions, most Elders agreed that their inclusion in the life of the school was having a positive impact on children – all children.

“All schools should offer Native Studies classes. It increases understanding and promotes acceptance.”

– Non-Indigenous student

Since the release of the second progress report, there has been a significant increase in the number of opportunities for all staff and students to learn about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. Strengthening the learning will be the next step in the reconciliation journey.

The way in which these learning opportunities are implemented and embraced by both staff and students varies depending on school and board leadership; the tailoring of content to local realities; and teacher capacity in incorporating, embedding, and integrating Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions at a classroom level.

It is important for school board leadership to stimulate and promote the integration of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions at a system level, to help build relationships with communities and ensure engagement on the part of principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders.



## 4.2 Practice Highlights\* – Engagement and Awareness Building

- Target specific efforts to engage First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in their children’s school life, and work with the Indigenous Education Advisory Councils to find new, more culturally appropriate and culturally relevant, approaches to increase parental participation.
- Engage First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents by calling on them to share their particular expertise in the classroom, in connection with school programs and events, and at the system level.
- Expand engagement beyond parents by opening invitations to include other family members (e.g., grandparents, aunts), and reach out to parents by meeting them in their own spaces.
- Work with communities and urban partners to facilitate community-based events.
- Remove barriers to parental participation in meetings by providing food, transportation, and child care.
- Make extra efforts to connect with Indigenous parents of students living away from home. This may require innovative thinking.
- Develop formal networks for collaboration with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit community partners and organizations.
- Meaningfully engage Indigenous Education Advisory Councils and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit community partners and organizations by co-developing Board Action Plans for Indigenous Education with them.
- Build the groundwork for meaningful collaboration and true partnership by establishing strong, respectful, and trusting relationships through outreach and by working together on common issues and priorities.
- Get to know Indigenous community members by visiting and showing interest in the communities.

\* “Practice highlights” refers to practices that were described in the engagement sessions as having had a positive impact in the boards where they were being used. The highlights are based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, including the lived experience of students, families, teaching and non-teaching staff, communities, and organizations. They are featured as examples of practices that boards can consider implementing to support Indigenous education in Ontario.



- Provide students, parents, and community members with opportunities to share their knowledge, without putting them on the spot.
- Embed First Nation, Métis, and Inuit content across disciplines and grade levels; integrate Indigenous contributions to Canadian society in all disciplines; and avoid approaching First Nation, Métis, and Inuit topics as add-ons or one-off events.
- Work with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners to co-develop curriculum, and include local community members, particularly Elders and Senators, Knowledge Keepers, and residential school survivors, in the delivery of the curriculum.
- Recognize the important role of all partners, particularly principals and teachers, in implementing the Indigenous Education Strategy locally.



# 5

## Supporting Educators

Educators can have a great influence in the lives of students. They can act as role models and mentors, and foster an environment where learners thrive and are inspired to develop their full potential.

### 5.1 Supporting Educators – Performance Measures

#### Performance Measures

- Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario
- Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively

It is important for students to have role models and mentors they admire and aspire to be like – and to whom they can relate culturally. Learners look to teachers, principals, and support staff in schools for advice and guidance. For this reason, it is critical for Indigenous students to have role models and mentors who can offer advice and guidance from and with an Indigenous perspective. It is equally important for all Ontario students to have an opportunity to interact with Indigenous teachers, principals, and support staff as they walk on this journey of reconciliation together.



### 5.1.1 Increasing the Number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff

- *Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario*

The Ministry of Education remains committed to enhancing the education system in a way that is responsive to and inclusive of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit staff and students. Going forward, the ministry intends to engage with education partners, including Indigenous teaching and non-teaching staff, to develop a policy guide to support voluntary, confidential staff self-identification. The ministry recognizes that a number of school boards already have staff self-identification policies in place. It will continue to support boards in developing, enhancing, and implementing voluntary staff self-identification processes and policies. Collecting voluntary, confidential self-identification data allows for a clearer understanding of the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit staff currently working within the provincial education system, and of changes in this number over time. Staff self-identification can assist school boards in cultivating supportive and open learning environments and enhancing programs and services.

To further support Indigenous staff, it is also important to identify Indigenous staff recruitment and retention strategies.

*"[The school conducted] a cultural competency training a few years ago for every single person who worked in the building – custodial staff, admin staff, educators. One person said she was only comfortable at that training, for the first time in thirty years, to say that she was First Nation. From there, more people came out and identified."*

*– School staff member*

The survey revealed a lack of clarity around the self-identification process for educators. Only a minority of teachers and non-teaching staff who responded to the survey said there were informal or formal processes in their schools or boards to self-identify. A significant proportion either did not provide an answer to the question or said that they did not know if there were such processes.

Board and school staff perceived that when First Nation, Métis, and Inuit staff members felt safe, they were more likely to self-identify

informally. One principal explained that only when a staff member was providing a workshop on residential schools and saw that other staff responded to the workshop did she self-identify to the staff.

“Our son’s teacher, who is Métis, and his librarian, who is Mi’kmaq, have made our son feel valued.”

– Indigenous parent

Some staff who self-identified saw this action as a personal responsibility – to themselves, their families, and their community. For example, one Métis principal wanted to share his pride in his heritage and Métis teachings with his staff and students. Because of his pride and enthusiasm, other Indigenous staff members self-identified.

Staff who self-identified spoke of suddenly being treated as the Indigenous cultural expert. These staff members reported feeling fatigued by their new workload, which included an informal role as Indigenous mentor, teacher, and expert. Some staff felt ill-equipped to fill all those roles, as they themselves were learning their culture and history. A few of the staff who self-identified said they feared that, as a result, they would be treated differently by other staff members.

Indigenous students, parents, and community members also said that it was important to have Indigenous staff, but that not enough was being done to make this a reality. Numerous Indigenous parents and community members questioned why there were so few Indigenous educators in the system. Indigenous educators were considered to be critical role models for Indigenous students.

It is difficult to assess whether there has been a significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario during the third phase of the Framework implementation. Without a formal staff self-identification process in place, there is little reliable data related to this performance measure. Through *Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan*, the ministry has committed to supporting school boards and labour partners in undertaking workforce data collection and analysis – for example, in the form of confidential, voluntary staff self-identification – to ensure that representative, equitable, and healthy work and learning environments can be created.







### Example of an Initiative to Increase the Number of Indigenous Educators

- Through the Building Better Futures (BBF) Bursaries and Scholarship Program, Indspire provides bursaries and/or scholarships to Indigenous students to help increase access to and participation in postsecondary education and training. An agreement between the Ministry of Education and Indspire focused on increasing the number of qualified Indigenous educators in Ontario. Funds were awarded to Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students who were enrolled in postsecondary Indigenous languages programs or education-focused programs. Increasing participation in postsecondary Indigenous languages courses not only helps to preserve Indigenous languages but also provides an opportunity to build the supply of teaching professionals qualified to teach them, as some of these students may wish to pursue teaching as a career.

#### 5.1.2 Professional Development

- *Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively*

Research shows that teachers are the most important school-related factor for improving student achievement and well-being. The second most important school-related factor is school leadership. It is therefore important for school boards to provide meaningful, continuous, and engaging professional learning opportunities to all educators. Such opportunities enable educators to build their knowledge and capacity to improve instruction and meet learner needs, increasing their effectiveness in the classroom and in the school.

Over the past four years, many professional development programs and activities have been aimed at increasing Ontario educator capacity to better meet the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. The Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools, with the support of Indigenous Education Leads, Indigenous partners, and education stakeholders, held professional learning sessions, launched research projects, and developed resources to help grow educators' knowledge of and appreciation for Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions. Many educators also participated in learning opportunities in

trauma-informed strategies, focusing specifically on historic trauma, to better understand the legacy of residential schools and their intergenerational impact.

Ontario's faculties of education are now required to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to learn about Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, contributions, ways of knowing, and topics of significance, as well as about culturally appropriate pedagogy. These learning opportunities may take the form of a dedicated course, a placement, major assignments, case studies, and/or other types of course work. Some Ontario faculties of education offer initial teacher education programs that provide the opportunity for teacher candidates to specialize in Indigenous education. Some faculties have established community partnerships to offer teacher candidates practicum placements within Indigenous communities.

Many school boards have provided staff with more professional development opportunities. To build on these opportunities, staff indicated the need for deeper learning that is practical and focused on pedagogy.

### **Examples of Professional Development Initiatives – Collaborative Inquiry**

One particularly successful professional development approach that was launched in school boards and schools during the third phase of implementation was “Collaborative Inquiry with an Indigenous Focus”.

Collaborative inquiry is a cyclical, reflective, and adaptive approach to professional learning for improving learning and teaching. Indigenous-focused collaborative inquiry engages local Indigenous community partners as full participants on the team.

Indigenous-focused collaborative inquiry has three goals:

- to support the achievement, equity, and well-being of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners and all learners;
- to increase knowledge and understanding of all staff and students with regard to Indigenous perspectives, histories, current realities, and ways of knowing;
- to strengthen partnerships with Indigenous community members and parents.





While some collaborative inquiries were school-based, others were regional, involving several schools across a board – often with the support of community partners. Collaborative inquiry topics included:

- exploring the impacts of engaging in Indigenous activities, such as growing medicine gardens, painting an Indigenous art mural about residential schools, and engaging in land-based education, including visits to a Métis trapline;
- providing professional learning opportunities through a traditional learning lodge or by using the Kairos blanket exercise;
- integrating First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives across disciplines – for example, by using beadwork, wampum belts, and Indigenous music in math class and by incorporating Indigenous stories in English class;
- incorporating Indigenous pedagogies, such as sharing circles and feather teachings.

Collaborative inquiries have influenced school cultures and are expanding their reach across schools. As a result of the inquiries, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education has become embedded in the practices of many schools, and, in many instances, the committees that were established continue to meet. Because of their engaging, experiential nature, collaborative inquiries appear to be a promising approach, with positive impacts for staff, students, and community members.

Through the engagement sessions, it was revealed that First Nation-, Métis-, and Inuit-focused collaborative inquiries are having a significant positive impact in school boards and schools across Ontario.



## Examples of Professional Development Opportunities

School boards have provided both teaching and non-teaching staff with professional development opportunities. Conferences, workshops, and research projects related to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, languages, cultures, perspectives, and contributions were generally well-received by staff. Some examples include:

- Thames Valley District School Board identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit “teacher champions” from ten elementary and secondary schools with a higher proportion of Indigenous students. The board invited forty teacher champions to attend two full-day training sessions to help build capacity.
- Moosonee District School Area Board made professional development offerings that focused on mathematics and Indigenous knowledge available to teachers. Teacher feedback after the sessions indicated that the teachers had a better understanding of Indigenous perspectives. Educators reported an increased capacity to support First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners through integration of Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. A survey completed by educators at the end of the session indicated that most would like more professional development on math for Indigenous learners and that there was a need for more resources to support the learning.
- For the past two years, the Aboriginal Education Centre at Toronto District School Board has offered half-day professional learning sessions, delivered in partnership with the Social, World Studies, and Humanities Department, for social studies and history teachers in the primary, junior, and intermediate divisions. Participants explore the history of colonization in Canada and the legacy of residential schools, and examine strategies and resources to support delivery of the curriculum in the classroom. The sessions, entitled “Truth and Reconciliation: Implications for the Social Studies Curriculum”, address the shared history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, and explore how treaties and the residential school experience can be embedded in an age-appropriate way within the curriculum.
- Nipissing–Parry Sound Catholic District School Board pairs new principals and Indigenous studies teachers with experienced staff, who provide mentorship and leadership opportunities to build sustainable practices in Indigenous education.
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has a dedicated First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Instructional Coach. The Instructional Coach supports educator professional development and provides system-level support in working

with Indigenous communities, bolstering awareness and understanding of Indigenous histories, values, and perspectives among educators, and sharing information and resources. Educators reported increased understanding of Indigenous cultures, values, and perspectives, and greater awareness of community programs and supports, which enhanced their capacity to integrate Indigenous learning into their lessons.

- The Native Counsellor Training Program (NCTP), coordinated by the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA), was established to address a need for Indigenous counsellors who would provide counselling services to Indigenous students attending elementary and secondary schools both on- and off-reserve. The main objective of the program is to provide culturally relevant training in the field of education counselling to counsellors supporting Indigenous students.

As a result of meaningful professional development opportunities, educators are putting culturally responsive and culturally appropriate pedagogy into practice to support Indigenous students. As stated in Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes that all students learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity. Schools and classroom practices must be reflective of and responsive to the diversity of students and staff.

*"It can't just be an information session. We need resources we can use in the classroom tomorrow."*

– School staff member



## 5.2 Practice Highlights\* – Supporting Educators

- Support voluntary, confidential staff self-identification by co-developing a policy guide with education partners, including Indigenous teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Provide a variety of experiential, engaging First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learning opportunities for educators (teachers, principals, and other non-teaching staff) to increase their knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive and culturally appropriate practices.
- Collaborate with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations to develop and deliver effective professional development opportunities related to Indigenous histories, cultures, languages, perspectives, and contributions.
- Provide practical, curriculum-focused learning strategies and materials that can be applied in the classroom.
- Make First Nation-, Métis-, and Inuit-specific professional development mandatory, and incorporate learning into teaching approaches, interactions with students, families, and communities, and the preparation of school events, to ensure a greater reach.
- Support the development of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit knowledge networks in schools and school boards.

\* “Practice highlights” refers to practices that were described in the engagement sessions as having had a positive impact in the boards where they were being used. The highlights are based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, including the lived experience of students, families, teaching and non-teaching staff, communities, and organizations. They are featured as examples of practices that boards can consider implementing to support Indigenous education in Ontario.

# 6

## Using Data to Support Student Achievement



### **6.1 Voluntary, Confidential Indigenous Student Self-Identification**

In the past, the absence of reliable, student-specific data created a significant challenge for the Ministry of Education in assessing progress towards meeting the goal of improving Indigenous student achievement and well-being. As part of the Indigenous Education Strategy, the ministry supported school boards and Indigenous partners in working collaboratively to develop voluntary, confidential Indigenous student self-identification policies. The implementation of these policies would help expand data collection and analysis capacity and provide a basis for gathering relevant information. Data would be collected for the purpose of supporting improvement planning and accountability. This data would inform the development of effective programs and services, policy and funding decisions, measurement, and reporting.

As of April 2013, all seventy-two Ontario district school boards and four school authorities had implemented voluntary, confidential Indigenous student self-identification policies. By October 2015, all were reporting First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student self-identification data to the ministry. This significant achievement in data collection and analysis enabled the creation of Ontario's first baseline data for self-identified Indigenous student achievement.

The ministry continues to encourage district school boards to review and analyse their Indigenous student self-identification data during the Board Action Planning process with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit





parents/families and communities and Indigenous Education Advisory Councils (IEACs) to:

- build understanding of Indigenous student self-identification;
- increase the number of students/families that choose to self-identify; and
- inform targeted strategies for improving Indigenous student achievement and well-being.

In addition to self-identification data, the ministry also encourages school boards to continue to use data and evidence from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to, feedback from and results of programs and initiatives, internal and external research, and evaluation studies, to inform their planning and programming. Partnerships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents, communities, and organizations continue to be essential to supporting Indigenous students.

**Figure 1. Year-over-Year Increase in the Number and Percentage of School-Aged Indigenous Students<sup>15</sup> in Ontario’s Provincially Funded Schools Who Self-Identified**

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
Number of students who self-identified	23,110	28,083	33,509	38,038	40,597
Estimated percentage of school-aged Indigenous students who self-identified	36%	44%	52%	59%	63%

- Figure 1 shows that the number of students who self-identified as Indigenous (as of October 31 of each academic year) has increased every year since the 2011–12 baseline year.

15. As reported in *A Solid Foundation: Second Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (second progress report), an estimated 64,000 Indigenous students attend provincially funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario. (*A Solid Foundation* is available at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/>.)



- Indigenous student self-identification has grown substantially since the ministry first began collecting self-identification data from school boards in 2009–10.
- While the total number of students enrolled in Ontario’s provincially funded elementary and secondary schools has slightly decreased between 2011–12 and 2015–16, the number and percentage of students identifying as First Nation, Métis, and Inuit have increased over the same period. (See the [Education Facts](#) page on the ministry website for information on student enrolment.)<sup>16</sup>

*Strengthening Our Learning Journey: Technical Appendix* (the technical appendix)<sup>17</sup> provides additional information about Indigenous student self-identification data, including the number of self-identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

## 6.2 Student Achievement – Performance Measures


### Performance Measures

- Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics
- Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students
- Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement

These performance measures relate to specific measurable indicators of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement. The ministry reports on each group – First Nation, Métis, and Inuit – separately, rather than as a single Indigenous group, in recognition of the diversity of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. This approach to reporting emphasizes the unique needs of different groups of students, and provides an opportunity to build on areas of strength to support the success of all Indigenous students.

16. Available at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/educationFacts.html>.

17. Available at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/indigenous/appendix.html>.



Performance measurement data is aggregated only at the provincial level, with one exception: Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results are reported separately for English-language and French-language education systems. This is consistent with current EQAO reporting practice.<sup>18</sup>

The [technical appendix](#) provides additional information about self-identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement data, including:

- EQAO Assessment Results for Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)
- EQAO Cohort Study
- Graduation Rates
- Credit Accumulation Rates for Grades 9, 10, and 11
- Credit Accumulation Cohort Study

### 6.2.1 Student Achievement Results in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics

- *Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics*

In this third progress report, the ministry is reporting the results of the following EQAO assessments for the years 2011–12 to 2015–16:

- Grade 3 – Reading, Writing, and Mathematics
- Grade 6 – Reading, Writing, and Mathematics
- Grade 9 – Academic and Applied Mathematics
- Grade 10 – Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

The [technical appendix](#) has the results for each grade and subject.

18. Please note: To protect individual privacy and ensure indicator reliability, the ministry applied its standard data-suppression rules. Any value representing fewer than ten students or a value that can be used to derive another cell with fewer than ten students – for example, a total or percentage – is suppressed (indicated by “SP”). Where a cell in a table is blank, no student results were reported for the self-identified student group for the given indicator/category.



### English-Language System

Overall, there have been notable increases in the achievement results for self-identified Indigenous students between 2011–12 (or earliest year with results available)<sup>19</sup> and 2015–16:

- Self-identified First Nation students: for 5 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, results have improved.
- Self-identified Métis students: for 3 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, results have improved.
- Self-identified Inuit students: for 3 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, results have improved.

In addition, the achievement gap has narrowed between self-identified Indigenous students and all students:

- Self-identified First Nation students: for 6 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, the gap has narrowed.
- Self-identified Métis students: for 1 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, the gap has narrowed.
- Self-identified Inuit students: for 2 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, the gap has narrowed.

### French-Language System

There have been notable increases in the achievement results for self-identified First Nation and Métis students between 2011–12 (or earliest year with results available)<sup>20</sup> and 2015–16:

- Self-identified First Nation students: for 4 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, results have improved.
- Self-identified Métis students: for 3 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, results have improved.

Regarding achievement results for self-identified Inuit students, in all assessment indicators, results for Inuit students were suppressed, or no students self-identified in French boards.

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19. For Inuit students in the English-language system and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in the French-language system, many assessment results were not available in 2011–12 and some subsequent years (e.g., because of suppression or the absence of student results; see footnote 18). To summarize change in assessment results over time, the earliest year with results available for each assessment was used for comparison.

20. See footnote 19.



In addition, the achievement gap has narrowed between self-identified First Nation and Métis students and all students:

- Self-identified First Nation students: for 4 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, the gap has narrowed.
- Self-identified Métis students: for 2 of the 9 EQAO assessment indicators, the gap has narrowed.

### Overall

Through our engagements, Indigenous students reported that they felt that there was an improvement in their achievement levels. In addition to better-integrated First Nation, Métis, and Inuit content in the curriculum, Indigenous students viewed the presence of and access to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education and graduation counsellors and coaches and to cultural experts in the school system as a positive step – one that made them feel more supported.

*“My Native education counsellor always helps me through personal issues. She encouraged me, and even showed up to graduation and honour-roll lunch.”*

– Indigenous student

However, it is clear from both the data and what we heard from teachers, board staff, advisory council members, and Indigenous community members that there is still room for improvement. Through their planning processes, boards and schools should work in partnership with local Indigenous community partners, including Indigenous Education Advisory Councils. Boards and schools, along with their Board Indigenous Education Leads, will continue to identify resources and supports that will help improve the engagement, learning, achievement, and well-being of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. Analysing achievement results provides insight into the impact of targeted strategies and enhances the ability of the ministry, boards, and Indigenous partners to design initiatives that increase the success of Indigenous students.

## 6.2.2 Graduation Rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Students

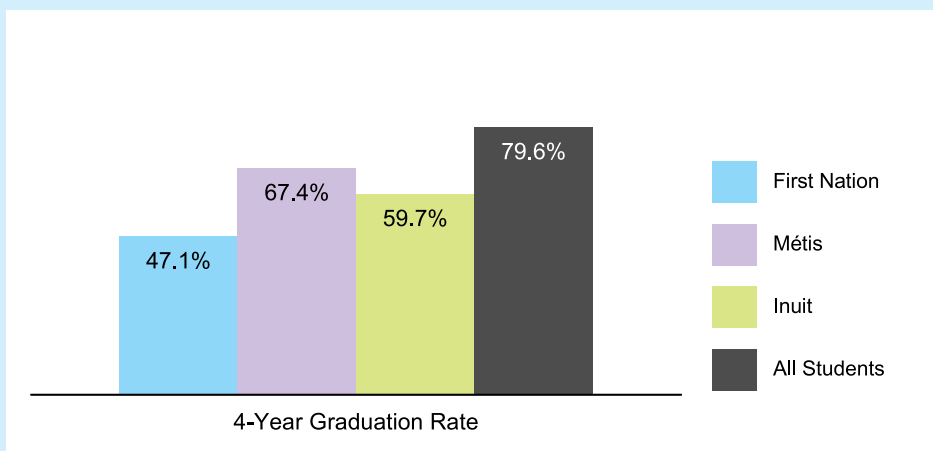
- Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students

Fulfilling the commitment made in the second progress report, the Ministry of Education is releasing the graduation rates for self-identified Indigenous students for the first time in this report.

Ontario calculates the graduation rate based on each group of students (or cohort) that enters Grade 9 in Ontario in a given year. The percentage of the original Grade 9 cohort that receives a diploma within four years is the reported four-year graduation rate. The percentage of the original Grade 9 cohort that receives a diploma within five years is the reported five-year graduation rate.

For the 2011–12 baseline cohort, five-year graduation rates for self-identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students are lower than provincial rates for all students. However, the achievement gaps<sup>21</sup> for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students are narrower after five years (five-year graduation rate) than after four years (four-year graduation rate). See Figures 2 and 3.

**Figure 2. Four-Year Graduation Rate – Percentage of Students Who Earned a Diploma within Four Years**

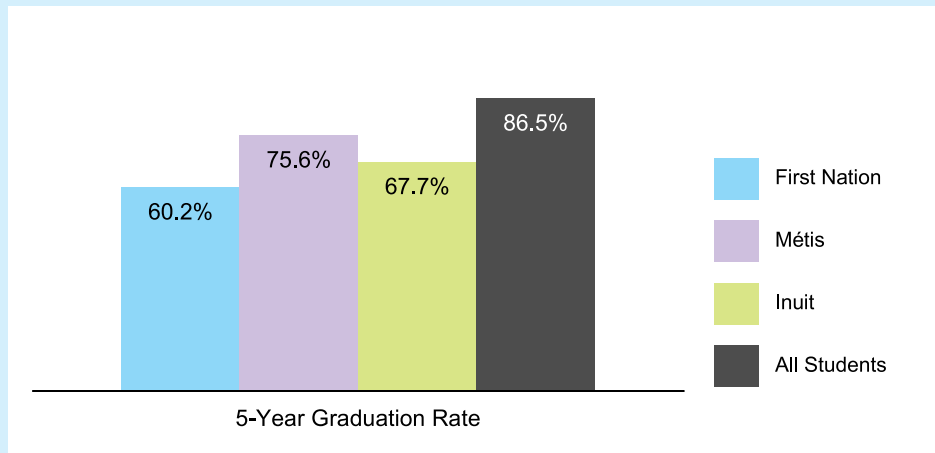


21. The achievement gap is calculated as the difference between the graduation rate for self-identified First Nation, Métis, or Inuit students and the rate for all students.





**Figure 3. Five-Year Graduation Rate: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Diploma within Five Years**



The four-year (47.1 per cent) and five-year (60.2 per cent) graduation rates for First Nation students have the widest achievement gap in comparison to the provincial four-year (79.6 per cent) and five-year (86.5 per cent) rates for all students. The four-year graduation rate achievement gap for First Nation students is 32.5 per cent, while the five-year graduation rate achievement gap is 26.3 per cent.

The four-year (67.4 per cent) and five-year (75.6 per cent) graduation rates for Métis students have the narrowest achievement gap in comparison to the provincial four-year (79.6 per cent) and five-year (86.5 per cent) rates for all students. The four-year graduation rate achievement gap for Métis students is 12.2 per cent, while the five-year graduation rate achievement gap is 10.9 per cent.

The four-year (59.7 per cent) and five-year (67.7 per cent) graduation rates for Inuit students also represent an achievement gap in comparison to the provincial four-year (79.6 per cent) and five-year (86.5 per cent) rates for all students. The four-year graduation rate achievement gap for Inuit students is 19.9 per cent, while the five-year graduation rate achievement gap is 18.8 per cent. As for all student achievement indicators, the self-identified Inuit student population within the graduation cohort is very small. For the 2011–12 baseline graduation-rate cohort, a total of 62 students self-identified as Inuit. It is important to use caution in interpreting results that represent small groups of students.



The [technical appendix](#) has more details and information about the data and methodology for calculating the graduation rates.

### 6.2.2.1 Six- and Seven-Year Graduation Rates

Indigenous partners have indicated that four- and five-year graduation rates do not always take into consideration the unique social, cultural, and historical contexts that lead many Indigenous students to leave school temporarily, prioritizing the needs of their families, other forms of learning, employment, and/or health and well-being. Student success can look different for different student populations, including Indigenous students. Six-year and seven-year graduation rates may better acknowledge the variety of transitions (e.g., moving from a First Nation school to a provincially funded school) and pathways (e.g., attending an Alternative Secondary School Program in an Indigenous Friendship Centre) that Indigenous students may pursue before they graduate.

The ministry is exploring the options for reporting a six-year and seven-year graduation rate for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in the future.

### 6.2.2.2 Supporting First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Student Graduation

“Students are coming to school more regularly and are engaged in classes. They have a caring adult in school, who they are now connected with, to support them when needed.”

– Survey respondent

Boards have implemented several targeted strategies and supports to help improve the achievement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and support them towards graduation. For example, the Four Directions First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Graduation Coach Approach (Four Directions Approach) provides intensive supports to Indigenous students, with the goal of seeing each learner through to graduation and to their own chosen pathway. The Four Directions Approach involves having a graduation coach whose life experiences are deeply rooted in the Indigenous community (or communities), and who holds deep experiential connections to the culture. The coach, as a professional member of the school, plays an essential role as an advocate for each learner with teachers, other school staff, family, and the community.





The Keewatin-Patricia District School Board introduced the program in Ontario four years ago, determined to address the long-standing gap in graduation rates between their self-identified Indigenous students and all students. The approach is designed to support both students and staff in learning and implementing effective practices, as well as to identify and build on the strengths of communities by engaging parents, families, and community members.

Students who are enrolled in the Four Directions Approach have demonstrated a marked increase in credit accumulation, along with better results. These students have also been more engaged in school and have reported increased self-esteem.

Another example is the Indigenous Support and Engagement Initiative (ISEI). Focusing on Indigenous students in applied courses, ISEI is designed to re-engage Indigenous students who have withdrawn from school before accumulating enough credits to graduate. It also supports professional learning for educators working with these students. The initiative allows school boards to offer intensive and focused support to secondary schools where Indigenous students' achievement in Grade 9 and 10 applied courses is below the provincial average, and where, consequently, these students may not be on track to graduate. The program extends to contacting and mentoring Indigenous students who have withdrawn from school to support their re-entry and help them get back on track to graduate.

Boards also work with community partners and organizations to support student transitions after graduation. For example, French-language Indigenous students enrolled in any of the six French-language boards in the Sudbury–North Bay region have an opportunity to participate in a summer transition program, Mining Essentials, offered in collaboration with Mining Industry Human Resources Council, the Métis Nation of Ontario, and Collège Boréal. The program targets students who are at least seventeen years of age or entering the workplace, are French-speaking, and are from Indigenous communities. Students enrolled in the program receive, among other things, the core curriculum, key skills and work habits aligned with occupational health and safety, as well as various types of workplace training. In addition, this program offers several certifications to prepare students for job opportunities in the mining sector: Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), Common Core, and training with heavy equipment.



The School-College-Work Initiative (SCWI) is a collaboration of the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), the Committee of College Presidents (COP) of Colleges Ontario, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development with a mandate to assist in creating a seamless transition for students from secondary school to college. In addition to a wide array of learning and awareness opportunities for students, teachers, parents, and the broader community, SCWI has developed dual-credit programs that allow students to participate in apprenticeship training and college courses while they are enrolled in secondary school. Dual-credit courses can count towards students' high school diploma as well as towards a postsecondary certificate, diploma, degree, or apprenticeship certification.

As an example of a SCWI project, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board partnered with Humber College to offer Camp-Choice, a three-day (overnight) college education experience that combines Indigenous culture and technical career exploration for sixty-three Grade 7 and 8 students. This project educates youth, parents, and teachers about college programs, apprenticeships, and career opportunities through hands-on learning in an urban college environment. It integrates Indigenous culture and access to nature, in conjunction with specialized labs focusing on math, language, science, and technology, to demonstrate where these skills can lead. Another example is The First Peoples' Centre of Canadore College, which hosts 200 students in North Bay to participate in workshops and cultural activities that encourage them to think about college as an option. Students are invited from Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board, Nipissing Secondary School, Conseil scolaire public du Nord Est de l'Ontario, Near North District School Board, and Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord.

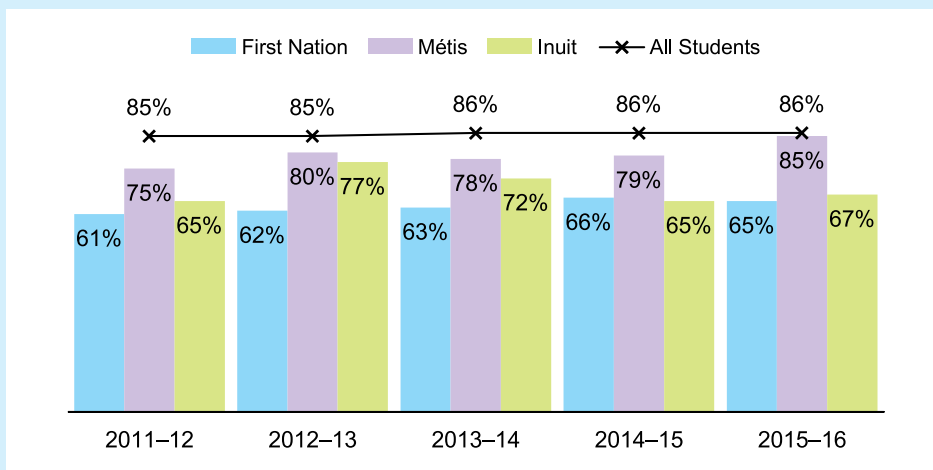
During the engagement sessions, some community partners and First Nation education authorities referred to increasing graduation rates among students from their communities as a clear indicator of the success of the various wraparound services that they were providing for students at provincially funded schools. They considered graduation rates to be a very useful indicator that their approach was effective.

### 6.2.3 Credit Accumulation as an Indicator of Student Achievement

- Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement

Earning eight or more credits by the end of Grade 9, sixteen or more by the end of Grade 10, and twenty-three or more by the end of Grade 11 are indicators that a student is on track to graduate with her or his peers. In 2013, the second progress report established baseline data, using the 2011–12 cohort year for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. The results included Grade 9 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and all Grade 9 students who earned eight credits or more by the end of Grade 9. In this report, the results include Grade 9, 10, and 11 credit accumulation rates for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and all students who began Grade 9 since the 2011–12 baseline year.

**Figure 4. Grade 9 Credit Accumulation Rates: Percentage of Students with Eight or More Credits at the End of Grade 9**



First Nation students in 2015–16 had a 4-per-cent-higher Grade 9 credit accumulation rate than First Nation students in 2011–12. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the achievement gap between First Nation students and all students has narrowed by 3 per cent as of 2015–16.

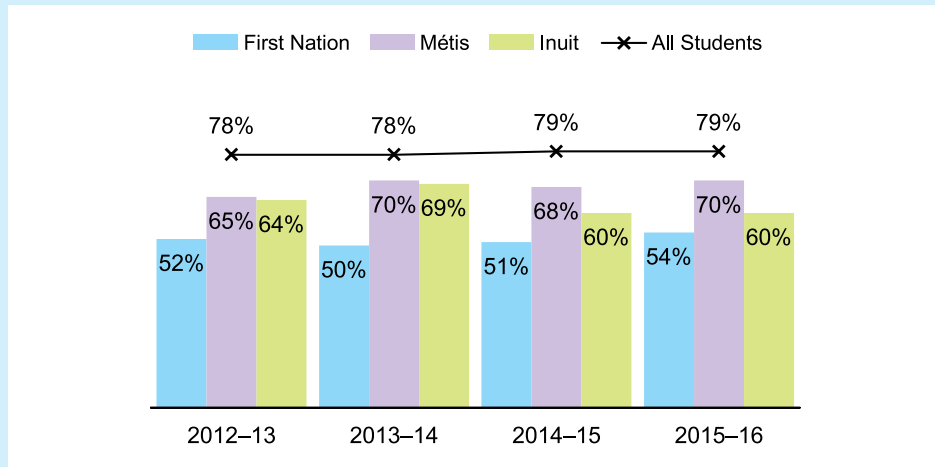
Métis students in 2015–16 had a 10-per-cent-higher Grade 9 credit accumulation rate than Métis students in 2011–12. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the



achievement gap between Métis students and all students has narrowed by 9 per cent as of 2015–16.

Inuit students in 2015–16 had a 2-per-cent-higher Grade 9 credit accumulation rate than Inuit students in 2011–12. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the achievement gap between Inuit students and all students has narrowed by 1 per cent as of 2015–16.

**Figure 5. Grade 10 Credit Accumulation Rates: Percentage of Students with 16 or More Credits at the End of Grade 10**



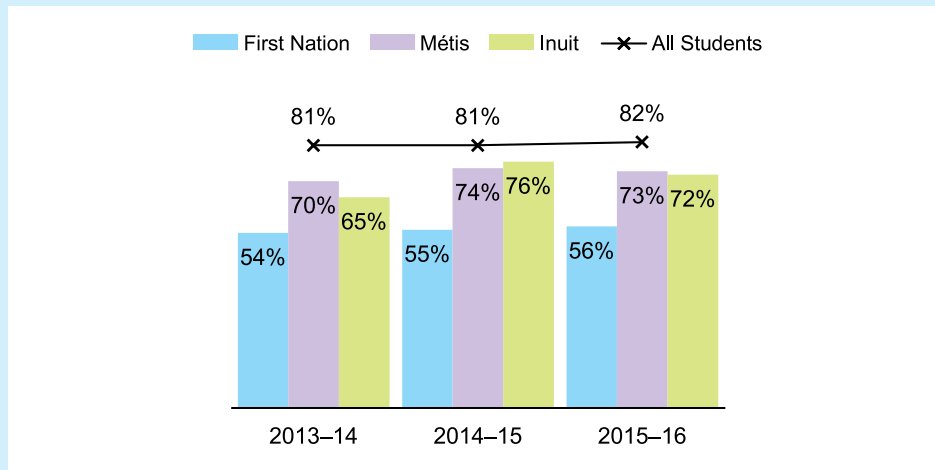
First Nation students in 2015–16 had a 2-per-cent-higher Grade 10 credit accumulation rate than First Nation students in 2012–13. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the achievement gap between First Nation students and all students has narrowed by 1 per cent as of 2015–16.

Métis students in 2015–16 had a 5-per-cent-higher Grade 10 credit accumulation rate than Métis students in 2012–13. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the achievement gap between Métis students and all students has narrowed by 4 per cent as of 2015–16.

Inuit students in 2015–16 had a 4-per-cent-lower Grade 10 credit accumulation rate than Inuit students in 2012–13. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result, the achievement gap between Inuit students and all students has widened by 5 per cent as of 2015–16.



**Figure 6. Grade 11 Credit Accumulation Rates: Percentage of Students with 23 or More Credits at the End of Grade 11**



First Nation students in 2015–16 had a 2-per-cent-higher Grade 11 credit accumulation rate than First Nation students in 2013–14. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the achievement gap between First Nation students and all students has narrowed by 1 per cent as of 2015–16.

Métis students in 2015–16 had a 3-per-cent-higher Grade 11 credit accumulation rate than Métis students in 2013–14. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the achievement gap between Métis students and all students has narrowed by 2 per cent as of 2015–16.

Inuit students in 2015–16 had a 7-per-cent-higher Grade 11 credit accumulation rate than Inuit students in 2013–14. For all students, the change was an increase of 1 per cent. As a result of these gains, the achievement gap between Inuit students and all students has narrowed by 6 per cent as of 2015–16.

Credit accumulation rates have increased for self-identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in all cases, with the exception of Grade 10 credit accumulation rates for Inuit students.

These gains also outpace the gains made by all students, so achievement gaps have narrowed between self-identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and all students.



The credit accumulation results are encouraging. They may indicate that the initiatives and programs that the Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools have launched to enhance the engagement of partners and stakeholders, and the improved support for students and educators, are having a positive impact on closing the student achievement gap in secondary school credit accumulation.

The [technical appendix](#) has more details and information about the credit accumulation data and the methodology for calculations.

### 6.3 Practice Highlights\* – Using Data to Support Student Achievement

- Continue to use accurate, reliable, and timely data on a regular basis for measuring, monitoring, and tracking First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement, to allow education partners and stakeholders to deepen their understanding of the strengths and specific needs of Indigenous students. This will allow for the continued co-development of increasingly effective strategies, initiatives, and programs.
- Continue to grow the numbers of voluntary, confidential self-identified Indigenous students at provincial, school board, and school levels to offer educators and Indigenous partners an increasingly complete picture of Indigenous student achievement.
- Continue to grow the data-analysis capacity around First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement across the province to allow Indigenous and education partners and stakeholders to engage in more-meaningful dialogue about Indigenous student achievement results from an evidence-based perspective.

\* “Practice highlights” refers to practices that were described in the engagement sessions as having had a positive impact in the boards where they were being used. The highlights are based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, including the lived experience of students, families, teaching and non-teaching staff, communities, and organizations. They are featured as examples of practices that boards can consider implementing to support Indigenous education in Ontario.



# 7

## Looking at the Journey Ahead – Next Steps

Over the past ten years, the Ministry of Education, Indigenous partners, and education stakeholders have strengthened and developed more collaborative relationships to better support the work going forward to reach the goals, strategies, and performance measures of the Framework. This collaborative relationship, based on respect and trust, is demonstrated through the co-planning and co-development of approaches, programs, and resources to improve Indigenous student success and well-being, while providing opportunities for all students in Ontario to explore, understand, and appreciate the diversity of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions.

The Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools, in partnership with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, parents, community members, and organization representatives, have worked together at both the provincial and local levels to improve Indigenous student achievement and well-being and to increase awareness and knowledge of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, languages, cultures, perspectives, and contributions among all staff and students. Together, the partners have grown in their understanding of one another, and established stronger, more-meaningful relationships.

The year 2017 marked ten years of working together to reach the goals and implement the strategies outlined in the Framework and the Implementation Plan, as well as to assess the progress achieved in relation to the ten performance measures.

Though the achievements have been significant, the Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools acknowledge that there is still much more that needs to be done to ensure the success and well-being of every

Indigenous learner. As educators and Indigenous partners continue to strengthen their relationships and work together to improve the success and well-being of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, all students' understanding of the troubling historic context and present-day barriers deepens. All of us become more aware of how much still needs to be done.

### **Co-planning and Co-developing a Renewed Framework**

As a result of the changing context and landscape, it will be important to refresh the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. In the spirit of partnership and collaboration, the Ministry of Education and Indigenous partners will work together to co-develop the refreshed Framework, including mobilizing existing research, evaluating initiatives, and reviewing the performance measures and areas of focus, all while continuing to support the goals of the Framework as we journey towards reconciliation.

Through continued commitments and in recognition of all that has changed, the time is right to co-create a renewed Framework and implementation plan to continue our education journey. Together, as partners, we can make positive changes to improve Indigenous student achievement and well-being and grow the awareness and knowledge of all with respect to Indigenous histories, languages, cultures, perspectives, and contributions.





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