



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**First Nations,
Métis, & Inuit**
EDUCATION

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT EDUCATION

Guiding Document

Revised: 09-18-2015

VISION

Transforming the learners of today into the leaders of tomorrow

MISSION

We inspire student success through high quality learning opportunities, supported by meaningfully engaged students, parents, staff and community.

VALUES

Supporting the Vision, Mission and Priorities are the District's cornerstone values of accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity.

DISTRICT PRIORITIES 2014-2018

1. Foster growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond.
 2. Provide welcoming, high quality learning and working environments.
 3. Enhance public education through communication, engagement and partnerships.
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INTRODUCTION

Edmonton Public Schools, located on Treaty 6 territory, welcomes and embraces the rich cultural diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. “To a large extent, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit share some similarities in cultural values, beliefs and languages; however, each culture is unique and has evolved over time. There are different ceremonies, traditions, dance, stories, song, languages, sacred objects and seasonal food gathering practices from the north to the woodlands, mountains and plains in Alberta.”¹ Thereby, fostering relationships to learn about each student’s culture enriches the school community.

The Goal

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students will succeed within a supportive and inclusive learning environment that is respectful and responsive of individual narratives where learning ultimately supports the well-being of self, family and community² to become engaged thinkers, and ethical citizens with entrepreneurial spirits³ in an interconnected world.

Purpose of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Guiding Document

This comprehensive, foundational Guiding Document is intended to provide strategic direction and guidance for stakeholders: district staff; parents and guardians; Elders; Knowledge Keepers; Cultural Advisors; community agencies and organizations, who work together to support The Goal.



bit.ly/15xV1Ka | Alberta Teachers Association Magazine, Vol. 93, June 2013

“At Edmonton Public Schools, inclusive education means ensuring every one of our students, no matter their cultural background, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, gender, ability or disability has access to the supports they need, feels a sense of belonging and receives a high quality education. It’s about our efforts to build environments that are truly welcoming of all kids.”

— Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools (Sept 2013)

Shared Beliefs and Understandings

To achieve The Goal, all stakeholders collaborate to improve the educational outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and develop strategies, resources, supports, and initiatives to engage in and foster the following shared beliefs and understandings.

We believe student success is achieved by validating, honouring and respecting Indigenous epistemologies; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of teaching, learning, and doing.

We believe the diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives that guide educational programming and planning engages and empowers students for success.

We believe reconciliation and healing can be achieved by acknowledging the impacts of intergenerational loss of language and culture as a result of colonization efforts by fostering respectful, supportive, inclusive, and welcoming learning environments.

We believe the achievement and success of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders.



Core Principles

To achieve The Goal the following core principles of Leadership; Quality Teaching; and Family, Community and Government Partnerships guide the work of each school community in supporting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. These core principles align with our shared beliefs and understandings to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.



“Educators facilitate student personal growth by creating a learning environment that is meaningful and respectful of the needs of the whole child and that acknowledges his or her worldview.”

— *Our Way is a Valid Way:*
Professional Educators Resource.

LEADERSHIP

The Goal of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students is achieved when educational practice fosters, nurtures and honours First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students' physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth.

A. Central leaders affirm the District's cornerstone values; accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity in their support of school communities to achieve The Goal for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. All leaders have the responsibility to:

- Utilize First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education central services to work collaboratively with the school community in fostering the shared beliefs and understandings to support the core principles and The Goal identified in this guiding document. (Refer to: Edmonton Public Schools' webpage on Aboriginal Education, <https://sites.google.com/a/epsb.ca/fnmi-education/home>).
- Foster and strengthen alliances with post-secondary institutions to support effective transitions for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.
- Collect, analyze, report, and act on district demographic data, student achievement results and research-based instructional strategies to guide continuous refinement of district First Nations, Métis, and Inuit programming and allocation of resources.
- Collaborate and support the development of district First Nations, Métis, and Inuit strategic and annual school plans to determine the effectiveness of programs, supports and achievement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. (Refer to: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit School Plan Resource, FNMI and Alberta Education, Field Services – Moving Forward: Implementing FNMI Collaborative Frameworks, <http://education.alberta.ca/media/6664478/movingforwardbooklet.pdf>; and <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/fnmi/collaborativeframework.aspx>).
- Collaborate with stakeholders to provide recommendations related to the review and revision of Aboriginal Board Policies and Administrative Regulations, as required. (Refer to: Aboriginal Education Board Policy, HAA.BP – <http://www.epsb.ca/ourdistrict/policy/h/haa-bp>; and Aboriginal Education Administrative Regulation, HAA.AR – <http://www.epsb.ca/ourdistrict/policy/h/haa-ar>).
- Identify and collaborate with community organizations and agencies to support early learning, stay in school programs, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit language and culture programs, post-secondary scholarships and endowment funds.
- Target annual differential First Nations, Métis, and Inuit funding allocation from Alberta Education for resources, services, supports and programming to increase the educational achievement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. (Refer to: Aboriginal Learners Data Connection Initiative (ALDCI) – Information for School Authorities, <http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/896090/aldci%20information%20for%20school%20authorities%20july%204%202012%20final.pdf>).

B. Principals engage the school community in fostering the District's cornerstone values; accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity to achieve The Goal for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. All principals have the responsibility to:

- Develop a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit strategic annual school plan to determine the effectiveness of programs, supports and achievement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. (Refer to: the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit School Plan Resource, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LAgiHRgoBGGdR2upf6KWTZ0Kc_5JK0bEcqUZvmSUKW0/edit?usp=sharing).

- Support the creation of an open and collaborative atmosphere in the school so halls, walls and resources welcome and reflect the diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students (Refer to: Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium; Professional Development Resource, http://www.erc.ca/resources/resources/fnmi_cultural_awareness_for_administrators).
- Engage in job embedded learning activities for teacher collaboration and reflection in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education that shapes and supports programming, literacy development and assessment practices. (Refer to: Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) – Our Way is a Valid Way: Professional Educator Resource, http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/pdf/12-13/ourway_educator.pdf; and Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) – Our Way is a Valid Way: Professional Educator Reflections, http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/pdf/12-13/ourway_reflections.pdf).
- Engage staff in accessing and using research to build capacity in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education that informs instruction, assessment practices and promotes educational achievement of each First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student.
- Foster a dialogue with stakeholders to identify and develop comprehensive strategies to eliminate challenges and data gaps between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and non-First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.
- Promote, engage and collaborate with parents and guardians, community agencies and organizations to foster supportive relationships, and provide safe, caring and inclusive learning experiences that engage First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. (Refer to: Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium; Professional Development Resource, http://www.erc.ca/resources/resources/working_collaboratively).
- Utilize First Nations, Métis, and Inuit protocols in meetings with parents and guardians. (Refer to: Alberta Education – Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learners, <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/resources/cross/ourwordsourways.aspx>, pages 22, 75, 76, and 77).
- Facilitate transition supports for students that are strength-based and intentional from elementary to high school and beyond. (Refer to: Learn Alberta – Successful Transitions for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students, <http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/6397158/successful%20transitions%20fnmi.pdf>; and Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium; Professional Development Resource, http://www.erc.ca/resources/resources/supporting_successful_transitions).
- Invite Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors into the school community and permit the use of smudging. (Refer to: Elder Protocol and Guidelines, <http://www.provost.ualberta.ca/en/~media/provost/Documents/CAI/Elders.pdf>).
- Support efforts to maintain local cultures, traditional histories and languages through offering courses in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies taught by First Nations, Métis, or Inuit teachers.
- Collaborate with community organizations and agencies to develop programs that are designed to offer support, mentoring and tutoring for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.



QUALITY TEACHING

A. Teacher education and professional learning/ capacity building:

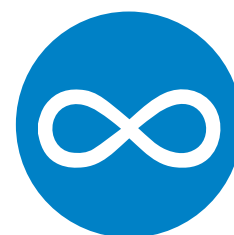
- Foster safe and respectful classroom learning environments where First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students feel welcomed, supported and positively represented in the general school culture.⁴ (Refer to: Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium; Professional Development Resource, http://www.erc.ca/resources/resources/engaging_fnmi_students).
- Deepen understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories and current issues.⁵
- Examine own personal beliefs and opinions about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and education.⁶ (Refer to: Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) – Our Way is a Valid Way: Professional Educator Reflections, http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/pdf/12-13/ourway_reflections.pdf).
- Engage in quality professional learning to enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews. (Refer to: Learn Alberta – Walking Together: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives in the Curriculum, <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt>).
- Invite Elders, parents and guardians, Knowledge Keepers/Cultural Advisors and community members into the school community to share Indigenous epistemologies; traditional ways of teaching, learning and doing to provide multiple perspectives that link to curricular outcomes (Refer to page 9).
- Engage in culturally responsive practice: understanding of the balance and interconnectedness of relationships among all things, within the classroom (i.e., oral conversation and project based learning). (Refer to: <https://ideas.education.alberta.ca/hsc/current-projects/collaborative-practices/videos/culturally-responsive>).

B. Assessment “for,” “of” and “as” learning to inform instruction:

- Design and use assessments to accurately reflect the learning needs of students through a strength based, holistic and culturally responsive approach.
- Acknowledge and connect Indigenous epistemologies; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews and ways of teaching, learning and doing to assessment practice (i.e., oral conversation and project-based learning). (Refer to: <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning.html>).

C. Research-based First Nations, Métis, and Inuit effective practices form the basis of instruction:

- Utilize qualitative and quantitative research to inform and shape the effectiveness of programming, resources and supports.
- Seek opportunities to participate in new research projects.
- Utilize culturally authentic, valid and approved resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. (Refer to: WNCP Common Tool for Assessing and Validating Teaching and Learning Resources for Cultural Appropriateness and Historical Accuracy of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Content, http://wncp.ca/media/49329/wncptool_%20assessing_validating.pdf).
- Utilize the District’s First Nations, Métis, and Inuit literacy resource review website (Refer to: <https://reviews.epsb.ca/reviews>) and share with parents and guardians.



D. Appropriate use of technologies:

- Provide access to appropriate technology supports and resources for each First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student.
- Identify and participate in digital learning innovations with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews/themes (i.e., digital storytelling).

E. Whole school approach to support programming for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students:

- Welcome students, parents and guardians to enhance a holistic, strength based, student-centered perspective that affirms individual narratives and cultures.
- Utilize Universal Design for Learning principles to meet the needs of all students and to foster mastery of the learning process (i.e., representation of knowledge through dance, art, song and stories). (Refer to: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Universal Design for Learning, <https://sites.google.com/a/epsb.ca/fnmi-universal-design-for-learning>; and Edmonton Public Schools Universal Design for Learning, <https://sites.google.com/a/share.epsb.ca/universal-designed-learning>).
- Foster and maintain meaningful and effective communication with parents and guardians to overcome barriers such as residential school legacies and the 60's scoop. (Refer to: Legacy of Hope Foundation, One Hundred Years of Loss – The Residential School System in Canada, <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/projects/100-years-of-loss-edu-kit-and-teacher-bundle>).
- Engage in a collaborative, whole-school approach to capacity building in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education. (Refer to: Alberta Education – Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Learners, <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/resources/cross/ourwordsourways.aspx>; Alberta Education's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education resource webpage, <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/fnmi.aspx>; and Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) – Education is Our Buffalo: A Teachers' Resource for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education in Alberta, [http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20\(PD-80-7\).pdf](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20(PD-80-7).pdf)).

- Utilize approved resources and develop initiatives to support and enhance First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students' literacy attainment. (Refer to: Edmonton Public Schools – Literacy Guiding Document, http://staffroom.epsb.ca/datafiles/District_Literacy_Guiding_Document.pdf; Canadian Council on Learning, Lessons in Learning – Improving Literacy Levels Among Aboriginal Canadians, <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/Sep-04-08-Improving-literacy-levels.pdf>; and Council of Ministers of Education, Canada Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum – Literacy More Than Words: Literacy for Aboriginal Populations, <http://www.forum2008.cmec.ca/en/presentations-aboriginal-literacy.html>).
- Support individual narratives by including cultural literacies (see page 13) across the curriculum from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews,⁷ and ways of knowing (see page 12).
- Foster authentic learning opportunities for all students to be engaged in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education that weave culture and curriculum (i.e., place based, storytelling, appropriate and approved resources). (Refer to: Edmonton Public Schools, Aboriginal Education: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Edukits, <https://sites.google.com/a/epsb.ca/fnmi-education/edukits>).

Students have the opportunity to discover the rich heritage, language and traditions of the First Nations and Métis culture through the Cree Language and Culture programs offered at the following schools:

- amiskwaciy Academy
- Prince Charles School
– Awasis (Cree)

FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student success is achieved through the collective responsibility of stakeholders who convey the importance of weaving First Nation, Métis, and Inuit worldviews with the District's mission, vision and cornerstone values; accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity. Stakeholders collaborate to:

- Endorse the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Guiding Document as a resource that reflects current research as well as stakeholders' priorities, needs and contexts.
- Review and revise the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Guiding Document as required to align with and support the District's Vision, Mission, Priorities and Aboriginal Education Board Policies and Administrative Regulations.
- Foster a welcoming, supportive, informed and culturally safe learning environment for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.
- Cultivate programs that support student achievement and literacy development (i.e., early learning, language and culture, mentoring, and tutoring).
- Recognize barriers and develop strategies to address the effects of poverty and mobility impacting student success and academic achievement. (Refer to Canadian Council on Learning, Lessons in Learning – Students on the move: Ways to Address the Impact of Mobility Among Aboriginal Students, <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/May-15-08-Students-on-the-m.pdf>).

SELF-IDENTIFYING AS FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, OR INUIT

Aboriginal Learner Data Collection Initiative (ALDCI) was introduced in Alberta to identify First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners in the province and improve programming and education outcomes aimed at eliminating the educational achievement gap between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and non-First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners. To collect this data, Edmonton Public Schools registration form includes a voluntary self-identification question. Parents and guardians can choose to self-identify their child as *First Nations/Status Indian, *First Nations/Non-status Indian, Métis, or Inuit when registering for the first time or when updating their child's information annually. The information from the self-identification question is collected for the purpose of developing policies, programs and services to improve First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student success and to determine the provincial First Nations, Métis, and Inuit funding allocation to Alberta school authorities. All school authorities in Alberta receive a funding allocation for each self-identified student in their district.⁸

Edmonton Public Schools allocates a majority of the differential funding to schools on a per pupil basis, based on the number of self-identified First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students registered at each school. These targeted funds are for additional services specific to the collective, identified educational needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, and to support understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history, peoples and cultures for all students at each school. The District also retains a portion of these funds centrally to support programming, including innovative programs, such as the District's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit unit, amiskwaciy Academy, Awasis Program at Prince Charles School and the Cree Language and Culture program.

Each year, approximately 7600 students self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in the District.

A WORD ON FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT TERMINOLOGY

Over time, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit have been defined and referred to by many names such as Native, Indian, or Eskimo. Several of these names have changed as they were either erroneous, politically incorrect, or did not capture the distinct place First Nations, Métis, and Inuit hold in Canadian society.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures interpret their experiences and express them in distinct ways. Together, these interpretations, beliefs, values, languages, spirituality and traditional laws form a group's culture. This is also known as a *worldview*. As an educator, it is important to understand that the world does not exist in one absolute sense for everyone, but that each one of us views the world from a particular culture, as well as from a particular point in time and from a particular place in the world. Each interpretation of reality is one among many different interpretations of reality based on each individual person and their culture's stories, philosophy, history, family, lineage, language and relationship with the land and ways of knowing.⁹

“I believe we all have a purpose for being on Earth. I believe that life is our classroom. It allows us to learn what we need to learn to fulfill that purpose with understanding, compassion and love. The twenty-first century is destined to bring us back to why we are here and who we really are.”

— Adele Arcand, *Former Director of Education, Treaty 6 (as quoted in Education is Our Buffalo).*



First Nations is the preferred term used by the Assembly of First Nations and by many Aboriginal peoples; it also refers to the 652 distinct governments of the First Peoples of Canada representing 53 Aboriginal languages. The term First Nations refers to a distinct nation or group of First Nations people. Each nation has its own rich and distinct culture, language, traditions and protocols. Each group also has their own traditional government with hereditary leaders or leaders chosen by the people of the group. These leaders are usually group members that have many skills and have earned the respect of the people. Traditional Elders, spiritual and medicine people and Knowledge Keepers support leaders and provide council and guidance. Traditional Elders play an invaluable role in teaching children and others their community's history, traditions and ceremonies.

First Nations groups often form friendships and alliances with one another in ways that are beneficial for both groups, helping to maintain peaceful relationships. Extended families continue to be important to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, with the responsibility of raising children shared among parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and great grandparents. Traditional Elders are, highly respected and occupy a distinct place in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities as the keepers of wisdom and knowledge.¹⁰

First Nation cultural groups within Alberta include:

- Blackfoot
- Cree
- Dene
- Sioux

Métis people are of mixed First Nations, European or other ancestry and identify themselves as Métis, which is *distinct from First Nations and Inuit and are accepted by the Métis Nation. Métis have a proud history and exciting traditions with their own language, flag, songs and stories.¹¹ The Métis have various heritage languages, such as Michif-Cree, Cree, Michif-French, French, Saulteaux and Bungee.

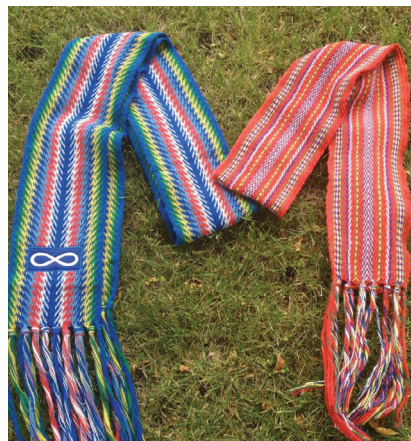
Alberta is home to the only recognized Métis land base in Canada. There are eight Métis Settlements in Alberta, comprising 512,121 hectares (1.25 million acres). The Settlements are located primarily in the east-central and northern areas of the province. As of 2009, there were approximately 8,000 residents on Métis Settlements.¹²

** Distinct from other Aboriginal peoples means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.*

Inuit means ‘the people’ in Inuktitut. Inuit living in the western Arctic are Inuvialuk (singular) or Inuvialuit (plural) and speak Inuvialuktun. Inuit living in the central and eastern Arctic are Inuk (singular) or Inuit (plural) and speak Inuktitut. Most Inuit live in Nunavut, the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Labrador, northern Quebec, Greenland, Russia and Alaska.¹³ Inuit have a rich oral history with distinct traditions, language, beliefs, song, art and culture.

** Inuit do not practice the traditional or ceremonial use of the pipe ceremony, smudging, tobacco or the sweatlodge.*

Inuit Nunangat refers to the four Inuit regions in Canada: Northwest Territories; Nunavut; Nunatsiavut - Labrador; and Nunavik - Quebec. Each region has land claim agreements with the Government of Canada—assigning rights, land ownership, money, wildlife harvesting rights, participation in land, resource, water, wildlife and environmental management as well as measures to promote economic development and protect the Inuit culture.¹⁴



Traditional First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Ways of Knowing

‘Traditional ways of knowing’ refers to the various worldviews, cultural beliefs, languages, values and behaviours that are held and practiced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit today. These worldviews developed long before European settlers arrived in Canada and can be described as a holistic and relational understanding of existence that has been continually shaped by each nation’s relationship with the particular land they occupied¹⁵ (i.e., Seven Sacred Teachings, Traditional Laws, Tipi Teachings, All My Relations, Seven Generations, Medicine Wheel Teachings and Circle of Life Teachings - see glossary).



GLOSSARY

Aboriginal: A collective name for all of the original people of Canada and their descendants. Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, defines Aboriginal peoples in Canada as “the Indian, Inuit, and Métis, peoples of Canada.” They have diverse heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.¹⁶

Aboriginal Learner Data Collection Initiative

(ALDCI): An initiative that supports the goals of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. ALDCI helps to identify Aboriginal learners in the province through voluntary self-identification during the student registration process. Collecting this data is an important step to improving the assessment of the educational attainment of Aboriginal learners.¹⁷

All My Relations: Thomas King, 1990, describes the All My Relations teachings as the understanding of the interconnectivity of individuals and all living things, including the spirit world. This represents the kinship within the immediate community between family, relatives and clan members and radiates through all interactions and social organizations. King states that All My Relations is “an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have in this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner.” With this sense of kinship comes a sense of responsibility to be in respectful right relationships with all of existence because we are related to everything.¹⁸

Circle of Life Teachings: The circle is a universal symbol of connection, unity, harmony, wholeness and eternity. In a circle, all parts are equal. Everything in life is viewed as being circular and necessary. For example, the stages in a person’s life are circular: a person is born, grows into childhood, matures, and becomes old. Just as all seasons are necessary in the natural world, all human experiences of grief and happiness, for example, must be welcomed and are necessary for overall balance.¹⁹

Cree Language and Culture: Edmonton Public Schools offers Cree language and culture programs at selected schools across Edmonton. The Plains Cree Y dialect has two distinct variations: Northern Plains Cree (NPC), also known as Bush (Sakâw Nehiyawewin) – Cree spoken north of Edmonton; and Southern Plains Cree (SPC), commonly referred to as Prairie/Plains (Paskwâw Nehiyewewin) Cree. Cree is one of the core languages in Canada, listed in translation services. Cree is also now accepted at several Canadian universities and colleges for second language entrance requirements in certain faculties.²⁰

Culture: The customs, history, values and languages that make up the heritage of a person or people and contribute to that person’s or people’s identity.²¹

Cultural Literacy: The in-depth knowledge an individual holds of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of teaching, learning and doing. This includes their history, languages, cultures, protocols, lifestyles, kinship, traditions, values, relationships, pride and identity.

Culturally Responsive: Educators who learn about students’ individual narratives and cultures, and incorporate students’ personal and cultural strengths into the context of teaching and learning.

Differential Funding: The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit funding, provided by Alberta Education to each school authority, based on the number of self-identified First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in each jurisdiction. This funding is provided in addition to the base funding and is based on the unique characteristics and circumstances of each school authority.²²

Elder: A First Nations, Métis, or Inuit individual who has acquired in-depth knowledge about their culture and traditions. This knowledge and responsibility is associated with their community and shared through teachings; story, song, and/or in ceremony. An Elder is given the title and recognition as Elder by his/her respective community or nation. One does not have to be a senior citizen to be considered an Elder.

Engaged Thinker: A student who thinks critically and makes discoveries; works with multiple perspectives and disciplines to identify problems and find the best solutions; communicates these ideas to others; and as a life-long learner, adapts to change with an attitude of optimism and hope for the future.²³

Ethical Citizen: A student who builds relationships based on humility, fairness and open-mindedness; demonstrates respect, empathy and compassion; and through team work, collaboration and communication contributes fully to the community and the world.²⁴

Entrepreneurial Spirit: A student who creates opportunities and achieves goals through hard work, perseverance and discipline; strives for excellence and earns success; explores ideas and challenges the status quo; is competitive, adaptable and resilient; and has the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity.²⁵

Historic Métis Nation: Aboriginal people who were known as Métis or Half-breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland.²⁶

Historic Métis Nation Homeland: The area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis.²⁷

Indian: Refers to Indigenous peoples under Canada's Indian Act. In the 1970s, the term Indian was replaced with the preferred term, First Nations. The term Indian, however, is still used in the Constitution of Canada and includes the three legal definitions of Indians in Canada:

- **Status Indians:** First Nations people registered under the Indian Act;
- **Non-Status Indians:** First Nations people who were never registered under the Indian Act or who lost their status under the former Indian Act; and
- **Treaty Indians:** First Nations people whose ancestors signed a treaty with the Crown and are, therefore, entitled to treaty benefits.²⁸

Indian Act: The Canadian federal legislation that was first passed in 1876 and has been amended several times since. The act sets out certain federal government obligations and regulates the management of reserve lands, First Nations' financial and other resources. Among its many provisions, the Indian Act currently requires the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to manage certain monies belonging to First Nations and Indian lands and to approve or disallow First Nations by-laws.²⁹

Indigenous: A term widely used to refer to the descendants of the original inhabitants of an area and is often used on a global scale.³⁰ First Nations, Metis, and Inuit are Indigenous peoples.

Knowledge Keeper/Cultural Advisor: A person designated or acknowledged by Elders and/or members of a cultural community as being knowledgeable about their culture, its perspectives, practices and products. Each knowledge keeper/cultural advisor has a special way of teaching, which is learned over a lifetime.³¹

Métis Historical Proof: Evidence of an ancestor who received a land grant or a scrip grant under the Manitoba Act or the Dominion Lands Act, or who was recognized as a Métis in other government, church or community records.³²

Métis Nation: Aboriginal people who descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which is now comprised of all Métis Nation peoples and is one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" as defined in s.35 of the Constitution Act 1982.³³

Medicine Wheel Teachings: Castellano, 2000, identifies the medicine wheel as the "holistic character of Aboriginal knowledge and experience." The Circle of Life is represented in the medicine wheel and the two lines that intersect represent a sacred balance between all living things and natural forces. The colours in the wheel are the stages of life and the movement of the natural world. The medicine wheel is a part of the Blackfoot, Cree and Dakota culture, but has been adopted by many Aboriginal cultures because of the relevance of the representations to various ways of knowing.³⁴

Narrative: Personal life experiences.

Pipe Ceremony: The Pipe Ceremony is led by a Pipe Carrier, Pipe Leader, or Pipe Holder who, after years of being an Oskâpewis (Helper), has received the teachings to lead a Pipe Ceremony. It is a sacred ritual for connecting physical and spiritual worlds through prayer. The Pipe, through the cleansing smoke, is prayer in physical form, which becomes our words and carries the prayers high above. There are different kinds of pipes for women and men, and they are unique to a person's teachings or a mentor's teachings, as to what it can be used for. Some examples of events where a Pipe Ceremony might be performed, include a graduation, death of a loved one, or at the beginning of a daily conference.

Protocol: Practices one must follow when requesting cultural assistance, (i.e., Elder or Pow Wow Dancers).

Residential School: From the 1890s until the 1990s, the Canadian government operated a residential school system developed for First Nations and Inuit children in partnership with a number of Christian churches. The intention of the government in setting up these schools and residences was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into mainstream Canadian society.³⁵

Self-identified: The parameters in which the Aboriginal self-identification question was formed and relates directly to the Constitution Act, 1982, section 35(2), in that "Aboriginal peoples" include "Indian, Inuit and Métis."

Seven Generations: The teachings of the Seven Generations remind us to consider the implications of decisions on others. The "others" identified in the teachings moves beyond those in the community and region to include the entirety of the planet and the subsequent seven generations that will have to deal with the consequences of their actions. Long-term thinking, critical thinking and altruism are the defining characteristics of the Seven Generations teachings.³⁶

Seven Sacred Teachings: The Seven Sacred Teachings are character education courses based on the Anishinabek way of knowing and being. Toulouse, 2007, strongly believes that character traits within the teachings need to be embodied in the communities they intend to serve. The seven teachings specific to the Anishinabe are: love, respect, wisdom, humility, bravery, honesty and truth. These traits are imbedded into programs and curriculum within the school and traced back to traditional ways of knowing to emphasize the importance of Anishinabek culture.³⁷

60's Scoop: The adoption of First Nations and Métis children in Canada between the years of 1960 and the mid 1980's. This period of time, coined the "60's Scoop," is so named due to the highest numbers of adoptions that took place in the decade of the 1960s and, in many instances, children were literally scooped from their homes and communities without the knowledge or consent of families and bands.³⁸

Smudging: Some First Nations and Métis people use smudging as a way to enable people to start anew in a conscious, mindful way. Smudging is often performed by an Elder or Knowledge Keeper/Cultural Advisor who has received the teachings needed to perform the ceremony.

The Elder or Knowledge Keeper/Cultural Advisor will place one or more of the sacred medicines, such as sweetgrass, sage or diamond willow fungus in a natural material receptacle and burn it to create a cleansing smoke. This smoke symbolically cleanses the mind, body, and spirit.

Stakeholders: People, groups, organizations, members or systems who affect or can be affected by an organization's actions (i.e., principals, parents and community members).

Sweatlodge (Matotîsân – Cree): The sweatlodge ceremony involves a physical and spiritual purification. There are many types of lodges and they can be used for different purposes like purification, healing and prayer. Some First Nations and Métis communities follow various protocols for construction of a lodge and its ceremony.



Tipi Teachings: Tipi Teachings embrace the values held in the community by the female members. The hearth of the fire at the center of the tipi has the same name in Cree as the collective for women. The shawl worn by the women shares the same name as the hide that wraps the tipi and symbolizes the woman embracing everyone in the community.³⁹

Tobacco: For many First Nations and Métis people, tobacco is a sacred medicine offered to thank Mother Earth when harvesting natural materials, such as sage, sweetgrass, cedar or wihkemakasikan – willow tree medicine. A gift of tobacco may be presented in gratitude of cultural teachings an Elder or Knowledge Keeper/Cultural Advisor may share. The act of offering tobacco shows respect; when/if the tobacco is accepted there is a sense of commitment between the person giving the gift, the Elder or Knowledge Keeper/Cultural Advisor and the Creator. Tobacco is used in ceremonies, rituals and prayer.

Traditional Laws: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures share a belief that people must live in respectful, harmonious relationships with nature, with one another and with themselves. The laws are fundamentally spiritual, imbuing all aspects of life. As fundamental as this perspective may be, each First Nations, Métis, and Inuit culture expresses it in unique ways with its own practices, products and knowledge.⁴⁰

Treaties: Legal documents between the federal government and First Nations that confer rights and obligations on both parties. The Treaties are sacred documents made by the parties.⁴¹

Treaty 6: The historical document that was signed on August 23, 1876 at Fort Carlton in Saskatchewan. The total area of the Treaty stretches from western Alberta, through Saskatchewan and into Manitoba and includes 50 First Nations. Provisions in the Treaty recognize the notion of the medicine chest (healthcare) as well as the right to education.⁴²



“In First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors are the key transmitter of traditional wisdom and historical knowledge. Respected for their life experience, they hold specific types of knowledge, valuable to people and leaders in their communities. It has been said that a group of Elders is similar to a library or online encyclopedia.”

— Taken from *Walking Together: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum*
(http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/#/elders/beginning_together)

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