

Inspiring Success

First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework



Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework
replaces the *Inspiring Success – Building Towards Student Achievement:
First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework* (2009).

June 2018

First Nations and Métis Education...

is holistic, lifelong, culturally responsive and affirming learning that allows students to reflect on their relationships with themselves, one another and the natural world.

First Nations and Métis Education...

is a commitment to improving achievement for all learners by providing equitable opportunities for all to succeed and contribute to society in a meaningful manner.

First Nations and Métis Education...

comes from the teachings of Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers who reveal First Nations and Métis worldviews as valid ways of knowing and understanding the world.

First Nations and Métis Education...

incorporates First Nations and Métis ways of knowing as historical and contemporary cultures that are rooted in First Nations and Métis languages, and require the protection, revitalization and retention of languages in order to flourish and thrive.

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Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Education gratefully acknowledges the following organizations for contributing to the renewal of this policy framework. This renewal process was made possible through dialogue and input from representatives of Métis and First Nations organizations, Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, provincial Prekindergarten to Grade 12 (PreK-12) education stakeholders, and post-secondary institutions, including:

- College of Education, University of Saskatchewan;
- Faculty of Education, University of Regina;
- Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations;
- First Nations University of Canada;
- Gabriel Dumont Institute;
- Indian Teacher Education Program, University of Saskatchewan;
- League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents;
- Métis Nation – Saskatchewan;
- Provincial and First Nations Directors of Education;
- Saskatchewan Association for Community Education;
- Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre;
- Saskatchewan School Boards Association;
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; and,
- Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program, University of Regina.

The prayers and wisdom shared by Elder Mary Lee, Elder Norman Fleury and Traditional Knowledge Keeper Albert Scott were vital throughout the renewal of Inspiring Success. Their guidance strengthened the collective effort to design a framework that offers a comprehensive approach to First Nations and Métis education and to improve learning opportunities for all students.

Introduction

The *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond* provides specific targets to be achieved by the province in education. The plan commits the education sector to reduce the disparity in graduation rates between First Nations and Métis and non-First Nations and Métis students by 50 per cent by 2020; and to lead the country in Grade 12 graduation rates by 2020. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)¹ is the education sector's approach to achieving the targets set out in the *Plan for Growth*. It is within this context that *Inspiring Success – Building Towards Student Achievement: First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework* (2009) was identified for renewal and reintroduction to the PreK-12 education sector.

Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework (Inspiring Success) replaces and builds upon the accomplishments of the 2009 framework. It continues to guide the development of First Nations and Métis education plans at the provincial, school division and school levels, and to ensure that Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing continue to shape the learning experience for all students. *Inspiring Success* also guides strategic actions at all levels of the provincial education sector to improve outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners.

Inspiring Success is the umbrella for all actions related to First Nations and Métis education. It offers a comprehensive approach to improving student engagement and achievement through policy, programs, curriculum, building partnerships, shared decision-making and accountability, and helps ensure alignment of ministry and sector actions with the goals of the ESSP. *Inspiring Success* supports the infusion of Indigenous content, perspectives and ways of knowing into renewed curricula to benefit all learners; teaching Indigenous cultures, languages and histories in the classroom; building positive relationships; reconciliation; and mandatory treaty education.

Métis and First Nations organizations, Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, provincial PreK-12 education stakeholders and teacher education programs worked with the Ministry of Education to renew this policy framework. It is also informed by key learnings from the Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People (2013), the province-wide Student First engagement (2014), the *Following Their Voices* initiative and other education sector initiatives.

¹ <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/student-first>

Context

First Nations Control of First Nations Education

The philosophy of First Nations control of First Nations education has its roots in Saskatchewan. In 1969, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians [now the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN)], undertook an Education Task Force, which provided a comprehensive report in 1973 of the state of Indian education in Saskatchewan. The two volume report became the turning point for *Indian control of Indian education*.

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) Education Committee developed a statement on Indian control of Indian education. In 1973, the statement was endorsed by the Government of Canada and First Nations across the country began taking control of their schools. In 2010, the Assembly of First Nations released *First Nations Control of First Nations Education*, which is intended to “assist governments and First Nations communities in building the requisite policies, programs, services and systems to ensure the future prosperity of First Nations peoples in Canada.”²

In 2011, the Government of Saskatchewan and the FSIN signed an agreement to launch a Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People. In response to the task force, the Ministry of Education, the FSIN and First Nations education organizations committed to a new era of relationship building to improve outcomes for all students in the PreK-12 education sector. As such, the FSIN and the Minister of Education issued the following joint statement on August 26, 2015:

The FSIN respects and recognizes that the Ministry of Education has jurisdictional responsibilities over the provincial school system. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education respects and recognizes that First Nations through the Chief and Council exercise control/jurisdiction over their own schools on reserve land. Furthermore, the ministry respects the position of the Chiefs of Saskatchewan regarding the Inherent and Treaty Right to education position of the Chiefs of Saskatchewan. Both sides recognize that any Treaty Right to education is a federal responsibility and so shall remain.

The ministry also recognizes that when it comes to First Nation education that the provincial school system is not the sole expert in how to educate First Nation students. In the spirit of building a truly collaborative partnership and reciprocal relationship between the education systems in our province, the provincial education system will be looking to First Nation education organizations for their expert opinion when it comes to educating First Nation students and that by working together in a respectful partnership, we will improve the outcomes for all students in Saskatchewan.

Inspiring Success respects First Nations jurisdiction for education on-reserve and the provincial education system recognizes there are many successes to learn from in First Nations schools. The Ministry of Education will continue to work to respond to the needs of all students, no matter where they live, through partnerships between the provincial education sector and First Nations education systems.

² Assembly of First Nations. 2010. “First Nations Control of First Nations Education.” Accessed April 2017.

http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/3_2010_july_afn_first_nations_control_of_first_nations_education_final_eng.pdf

Métis Education

Métis educators and community members have said, “a positive Métis identity is the foundation to student success... In order to develop a positive Métis identity it is essential that students are exposed to Métis Elders and Knowledge Keepers, traditions, the Michif language, spirituality and history. It is also important to recognize the diversity of Métis experience as well as contemporary issues and contributions.”³

The advent of the fur trade in west central North America during the 18th century was accompanied by a growing number of people born of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. As this population established distinct communities, a new Aboriginal people emerged, the Métis, with their own unique culture, traditions, Michif language, way of life, collective consciousness and nationhood.⁴

The Métis Nation continues to advance the reconciliation of the rights, interests and aspirations of Métis people. In recent years, the Métis Nation has won landmark cases in provincial and federal courts including the Daniels decision in 2015,⁵ and the Métis National Council signed the Canada-Métis Nation Accord with the federal government in 2017. The Métis Nation works to promote recognition of Métis rights, improve socioeconomic conditions of Métis, and to access social and economic programs to meet their needs.

Today, Métis seek to participate fully in all aspects of the education system as students, teachers, Elders, board members and decision-makers. All students should have opportunities to learn about Métis cultural, historical and linguistic distinctiveness, and many contributions to Canada. Integrating Métis cultural content and perspectives into the classroom is important in order to help Métis students form positive identities and to educate non-Métis students on the special relationship that exists between the Métis Nation and Canada.

Teaching and Learning Our Shared History

The Ministry of Education respects the federal government’s legal, constitutional and fiscal obligations to First Nations and the Métis Nation. The provincial education system has a responsibility to teach all students about the rich history of the Métis and First Nations and their unique relationships to Canada.

First Nations have a historical and contemporary relationship with Canada that is reflected through treaty numbers 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10, which encompass the whole territory of Saskatchewan.⁶ Mandatory treaty education continues in Saskatchewan schools. “We are all Treaty People.”⁷

Learning about our shared history by building understanding within students helps reduce misconceptions that contribute to racism. Providing all students with opportunities to learn about the historical and contemporary relationships between Canada, Métis and First Nations is an increasingly important component of citizenship education which helps reduce conflict, foster trust and improve relationships.

³ Métis Nation – Saskatchewan. 2013. “Submission to the Joint Task Force on Improving First Nations and Métis Education and Employment Outcomes.”

⁴ Métis National Council. “The Métis Nation.” Accessed April 2017. <http://www.Métisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-Métis>

⁵ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. “Métis Rights.” Accessed July 2017. <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014413/1100100014414>

⁶ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. “First Nations in Saskatchewan.” Accessed April 2017. <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100020593/1100100020597>

⁷ Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. 2013. “Treaty Education Outcomes and Indicators.” Accessed April 2017. <http://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca>

Working Together

In recent years, a great deal of work has focused on direct engagement with stakeholders to gain a renewed understanding of the needs and aspirations of all Saskatchewan students and to gather input from leadership across the sector. This approach provided opportunities for the Métis Nation and First Nations education authorities to engage directly with the Ministry of Education and provincial directors of education in the development and deployment of sector planning and to partner with school divisions. The collaboration of all parties is critical to develop and implement educational programs and initiatives that support better outcomes for all students.

The Ministry of Education will continue to engage directly with Métis and First Nations education organizations in sector strategic planning and deployment. There is a cycle of annual review and course corrections built into the planning process in order to stay focused on achieving goals and targets. First Nations directors of education and Métis representatives are invited to lead development and deployment of the sector plan alongside provincial directors of education.

First Nations and Métis education outcomes and the engagement of First Nations and Métis students, parents/caregivers and organizations are foundational to sector strategic planning.

This means that First Nations and Métis education goals and outcomes are not an “add-on” but are integral to the planning and focus of the education sector as a whole.

First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing are always foundational and infused within renewed curricula. As such, the Ministry of Education will continue to engage First Nations and Métis education organizations in curriculum development and renewal. Early engagement is critical.

Reconciliation Through Education

Saskatchewan is home to a large number of residential school survivors and their families. Twenty schools that were recognized in the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* were located in Saskatchewan, second only to Alberta.⁸ Many Métis children also attended religious mission schools, boarding schools and residential schools in western and northern Canada.⁹

The legacy of residential schools has had a profound impact on outcomes for First Nations and Métis peoples in terms of education, employment, rates of offending and victimization, health, suicide and the number of children in care. Racism and misinformation about our shared history has a divisive effect on society, which can permeate communities and schools and contribute to conflict, mental illness, self-harm or violent incidents.

Saskatchewan's PreK-12 education sector values the groundbreaking work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and recognizes the courage of the residential school survivors who shared their experiences. While most of the Commission's Calls to Action are directed towards the federal government, many are applicable at the provincial level, including:

- elimination of gaps in educational achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians;
- development of curricula that are culturally appropriate; and,
- development of culturally appropriate early childhood education programs, specifically for First Nations and Métis families.¹⁰

⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. “Residential School Locations.” Accessed April 2017. <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=12>

⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2016. “Canada's Residential Schools: The Métis Experience.” Accessed April 2017. http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Volume_3_M%C3%A9tis_English_Web.pdf

¹⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. “Calls to Action.” Accessed April 2017. <http://nctr.ca/reports.php>

Across Canada, jurisdictions have responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action through teacher professional development, curriculum renewal, developing partnerships with First Nations and Métis organizations, and by examining issues of power and privilege. Saskatchewan's approach will continue to be consistent with these approaches.

The education sector is called to recognize the truth about the past and to honour the contributions of Métis and First Nations in building this province economically, socially, and its cultural and linguistic diversity. The opportunity for the education sector in this new era is to respond in meaningful and systematic ways while also building on past achievements. This includes educating the next generation of citizens with factual information about history and inspiring them to create greater social harmony today and into the future.

Advancing reconciliation also aligns with the intent of *Inspiring Success* to:

- provide strategic direction;
- improve achievement for all learners;
- address systemic barriers and racism that impede student success; and,
- better address the educational needs of Métis and First Nations learners.

While there are many reconciliation activities and learning opportunities underway, led by teachers and post-secondary institutions, there is more work to do. School divisions, teachers, students and school community councils can work together to increase understanding and improve outcomes for all students. Indeed all Saskatchewan citizens are called to the opportunity of reconciling our shared history and building a brighter future. Creating an attitudinal shift and new understanding means that, "everyone has a role to play in reconciliation and a responsibility to seek inclusivity."¹¹

Inspiring Success supports reconciliation in education through:

- meaningful inclusion of Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers;
- direct engagement with Métis and First Nations education organizations in the development and deployment of the Education Sector Strategic Plan;
- development of culturally responsive and affirming curricula, relevant instruction and assessment;
- emphasis on the value and importance of teaching Métis and First Nations history, languages, cultures, traditional and contemporary ways of knowing in the classroom; and,
- focus on partnerships with Métis and First Nations Elders and education authorities to achieve improved student outcomes.

This is not an exhaustive list; however, *Inspiring Success* is intended to advance reconciliation in all areas through authentic engagement at all levels of the education system and shared decision-making at the Provincial Leadership table. Authentic inclusion of Indigenous people in education is foundational to the provincial system. This includes meaningful Indigenous involvement in the education community through engaging Elders and building positive working relationships with local Métis and First Nations communities. Achieving the goals of *Inspiring Success* will take Saskatchewan's PreK-12 education sector down the path of reconciliation. *Inspiring Success* will transform how all parties work together in governance, partnerships, policy improvement, and in the

"Reconciliation is not an Indigenous problem, it is for all of Canada. We have all been taught to believe in Aboriginal inferiority and European superiority and that's wrong... But in addition to that, the way that schools treat Indigenous history also needs to be reevaluated and rethought and recast... Reconciliation is about our responsibility to the future."

– Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
(CBC Interview, 2015)

¹¹ Conference Board of Canada. 2016. "We. Us. Our. A Reconciling Narrative." Accessed April 2017. <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=8191>

design and implementation of education programming to achieve improved student learning outcomes.

In keeping with Saskatchewan's *Plan for Growth*, the PreK-12 education sector will continue to engage and collaborate directly with First Nations and Métis education organizations, stakeholders and the federal government in reconciliation, working towards the common goal of improved outcomes for First Nations and Métis in Saskatchewan.

First Nations and Métis Perspectives and Ways of Knowing

The Ministry of Education supports the foundational infusion of First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and mandatory treaty education at all grade levels and in all curricula. The belief systems and worldviews of First Nations and Métis peoples are based on recognizing and respecting the delicate balance of interdependence within oneself and with all living things in the environment, both tangible and intangible. Within this balance are elements of the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental, as well as teachings that have been passed down through generations. Coming to know, understand and practice these teachings represents an individual's lifelong learning journey, and sets a goal for a lifelong pursuit to live life in balance.

Infusion of First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing in provincial curricula and Indigenous pedagogy into the classroom benefits both students and teachers by engaging participants in a relational understanding about the similarities and differences between First Nations and Métis and non-Indigenous worldviews. Learners will gain from experience with both Indigenous and western methodologies within the educational setting in order to deepen their understanding that worldviews are integral to the ways all people experience, engage, participate in and contribute to society.

Indigenous knowledge systems are adaptable, dynamic systems based on skills, abilities and problem-solving techniques that change over time depending on environmental conditions. Indigenous knowledge is inherently tied to land, not land in general but to particular landscapes, landforms and biomes where ceremonies are properly held, stories properly recited, medicines properly gathered and transfers of knowledge properly authenticated.¹²

Indigenous knowledge has established customs with respect to acquiring and sharing of knowledge. Métis and First Nations educators, Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers can help to navigate these systems and provide localized content and meaning, which is often found outside the classroom setting.

¹² Battiste, Marie. 2005. "Indigenous knowledge: Foundations for First Nations." *WINHEC Journal*. 1-17.

Policy Imperatives

Since 2009, when Inspiring Success was released, there has been growing focus on working together and engaging directly with First Nations and Métis people and education organizations. As well, the ESSP has strengthened the focus on improved education outcomes for First Nations and Métis students. Nonetheless, there remains a significant need to continue to focus on First Nations and Métis education in Saskatchewan. The rationale for this policy framework is articulated in the historical, cultural, ecological, moral, economic and Student First imperatives.

Historical Imperative

Respecting Treaty and Constitutional obligations

Saskatchewan is situated on the traditional territories of First Nations and Métis, whose languages, cultures, traditions and knowledge are derived from the relationship and connectedness to this land. The provincial education sector has a responsibility to reflect and affirm these relationships in all aspects of education so that First Nations and Métis students feel they belong and all Saskatchewan learners understand the significance of where they live.

The Constitution of Canada defines aboriginal peoples as “the Indian, Inuit and Métis people of Canada” and recognizes “existing aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples of Canada”.¹³ These rights reflect a responsibility for all levels of government to work in partnership with First Nations and Métis to foster understanding of cultures, languages and traditions, and to support better outcomes for all students.

Cultural Imperative

Affirming cultural identity and transforming teacher practice

Learning from and with First Nations and Métis is a respectful and positive step towards healing within the process of truth and reconciliation. The inclusion of First Nations and Métis perspectives and traditional, historical and contemporary ways of knowing is necessary to achieve a renewed Saskatchewan PreK-12 curricula and a renewed education sector.

First Nations and Métis cultural practices in the education sector and school communities are to be encouraged and supported so that the learning environment is a welcoming and culturally responsive and affirming place. Authentic inclusion of Indigenous people in education is foundational to the provincial system. This includes meaningful participation of Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers and meaningful Indigenous engagement in the education community.

Land-based education with First Nations and Métis, and using First Nations and Métis instructional resources and pedagogies, are essential practices for helping make a system and curriculum come to life in culturally responsive and affirming ways that help all students succeed.

There are eight First Nations language groups in Saskatchewan and can be seen on a map produced by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre: <http://www.otc.ca/resource/category/maps.html>

¹³ Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/>

Teaching with First Nations and Métis ways of knowing has the potential to re-engage First Nations and Métis students in their learning and is culturally responsive and affirming. This will support improved education outcomes and higher graduation rates. Efforts for reconciliation between students, teachers, families and communities can also be fostered through teaching curriculum with First Nations and Métis worldviews.

To affect positive change, the responsibility exists for all teachers and administrators to transform teaching practices, individually and collectively, through continuous learning and professional development. Goulet and Goulet have asserted that “it is incumbent upon teachers to find and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and understandings (epistemologies) and to use Indigenous practices and methods to support learning and fully develop students’ potential.”¹⁴ The goal is to integrate and share the teaching of First Nations and Métis languages, cultures and histories in ways that affirm cultural identity, value diversity and build positive relationships between and amongst teachers and students.

Ecological Imperative

Land as a resource, a relative and a teacher

First Nations and Métis live in close relationship with the natural world. The land is valued as a source of food, shelter, medicine and knowledge, and is therefore also regarded as a relative, Mother Earth and a teacher.¹⁵

Experiential land-based learning provides students with opportunities to connect with the natural world, including physical and spiritual connections. Teaching with Indigenous worldviews will help motivate students to address the ongoing environmental degradation of air, soil, water and habitats; climate change; and associated biodiversity loss. Land-based learning is also beneficial for a variety of health issues (e.g., obesity, attention disorders, depression)¹⁶ and can be employed to meet outcomes across the curriculum.

According to Elder Peter Waskahat, “we were given the uses of everything on the land and Creation [and] children were taught how to view, to respect the land and everything in Creation.”¹⁷ Indigenous knowledge regarding the land as resource, relative and teacher provides a holistic lens that can help all citizens of Saskatchewan value the natural world and to live in ecological balance.

Student First Imperative

Listening to and responding to student voice

The Ministry of Education introduced the Student First approach in 2013 to unify, reorient and re-engage the provincial education system on what matters most – the student. Student First is an approach that is helping the education sector in meeting the targets identified in the Plan for Growth. In putting students first, it is important to ask “*What difference does it make for the student?*” and “*How can we work together to achieve this?*”

A province-wide engagement process gave voice to what students, parents/caregivers and teachers need from the education system.¹⁸ As well, First Nations and Métis students were involved in *Seeking Their Voices*, a research

¹⁴ “Teaching Each Other: Nehinuw Concepts and Indigenous Pedagogies.” Goulet and Goulet. p. 5.

¹⁵ Macdougall, B. (2006). Wahkootowin: Family and cultural identity in northwestern Saskatchewan Métis communities. *Canadian Historical Review*; Michell, H. (2005). Nēhīthāwāk of Reindeer Lake, Canada: Worldview, epistemology and relationships with the natural world. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 34, 33-43.

¹⁶ Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*.

¹⁷ Cardinal, Harold, and Walter Hildebrandt. 2000. *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*. University of Calgary Press.

¹⁸ See “Student First Engagement Discussion Guide” for background and findings of the engagement process:

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/student-first/student-first-engagements>

dialogue that informed the development of the *Following Their Voices* student achievement initiative. The findings of the Student First engagement and *Seeking Their Voices* provide insight into the obligation to consider and respond to the needs and interests of students in all aspects of the education system including First Nations and Métis education policies, plans and strategies.

Key themes from the Student First engagement process were:

- the importance of strong relationships between students and teachers;
- student engagement in their learning;
- having a quality learning environment; and,
- shared responsibility for education amongst all students, parents/caregivers, teachers and the broader community.

First Nations students, parents and teachers on-reserve reiterated these themes and spoke about the additional complexities of lack of funding for education programs and inadequate access to public services in their communities.

The *Seeking Their Voices* research dialogue with Métis and First Nations students further echoed these themes, as follows:

- Non-engaged students reported more negative experiences than engaged students. Negative experiences for non-engaged students revolved around stereotyping, racism and/or classism, bullying and intimidation among a large school population. Engaged students spoke positively about their general school experiences.
- What helped non-engaged students with their learning was an understanding of the “relevance” of what they are learning to their life. Engaged students perceived that “good” teachers were genuinely concerned that students not only understood the material, but had opportunities to use their skills. Personal connections with teachers were a positive factor supporting student learning.
- Non-engaged students believed that being treated poorly by teachers and teacher favoritism detracted from their learning. Both engaged and non-engaged students referenced family circumstances and home influences as factors that impacted their learning. Students also identified teachers who were disengaged and not adequately prepared to provide the supports students required.

The voices of students, parents/caregivers and teachers, throughout Student First and the research supporting *Following Their Voices*, have all emphasized the critically important role that strong relationships between teachers and students play in supporting improved student learning.¹⁹

Findings from the Student First engagement and *Following Their Voices* helped inform the Education Sector Strategic Plan and continue to inform the work of the sector. It is vitally important for the education sector to continue placing the needs and interests of students first in order to respond effectively and improve learning outcomes.

Following Their Voices is designed to raise the educational achievement and participation of Saskatchewan's First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
<http://www.followingtheirvoices.ca>

¹⁹ University of Regina, Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit. 2014. “Seeking Their Voices: Improving Indigenous Student Learning Outcomes.” https://www.followingtheirvoices.ca/cms/doc/Seeking_Their_Voices_Final.pdf

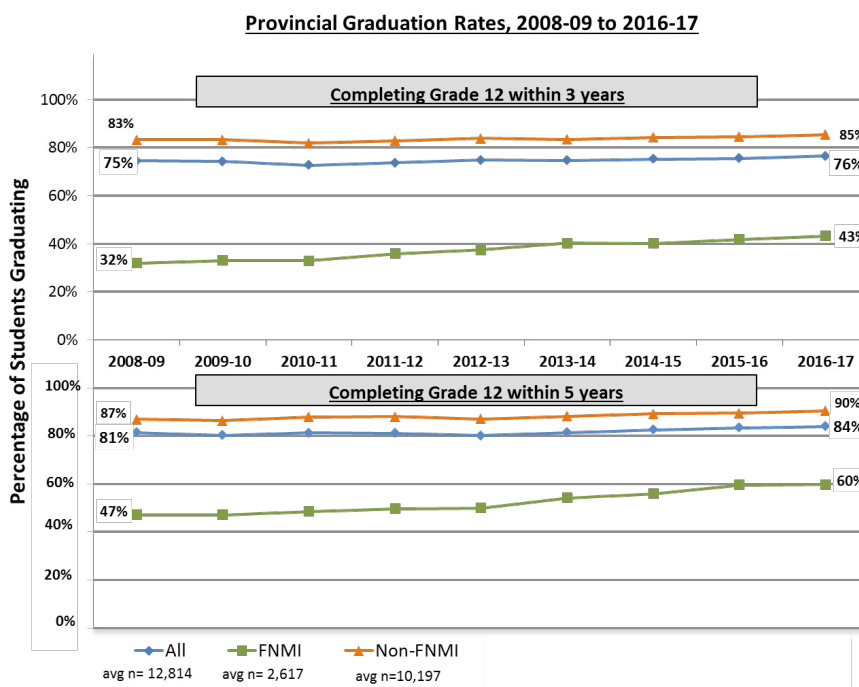
Moral Imperative

Improving quality of life²⁰

Although educational attainment continues to improve, First Nations and Métis do not share the same quality of life as the general population. In 2006, 50.6 per cent of self-identified Aboriginal²¹ people in Saskatchewan age 15 and over had at least a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 72.4 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.²² By 2011, these numbers had increased to 55.5 per cent of Aboriginal people having at least a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 78.2 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.²³

Saskatchewan’s three-year graduation rate of self-identified First Nations and Métis students has improved from 31.8 per cent in the 2008-09 school year, to 43.2 per cent in 2016-17. The five-year graduation rate of self-identified First Nations and Métis students shows greater improvement, rising from 47.1 per cent in 2008-09 to 59.8 per cent in 2016-17.²⁴

The high school graduation rate of Métis and First Nations students has improved since 2009; however, more needs to be done in order to improve education outcomes. Graduation is a key step in helping young people realize healthy and fulfilling lives.



²⁰ This section contains 2006 and 2011 Census data. 2016 Census data will be available beginning in 2018.

²¹ The terms *Aboriginal* and *non-Aboriginal* appear when used in the source material.

²² Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census). <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-data/bureau-of-statistics/population-and-census>

²³ Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics (Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey).

²⁴ Notes: Three-year (on-time) graduation rates are calculated as the percentage of students who complete Grade 12 within three years of ‘starting’ Grade 10. Five-year (extended-time) graduation rates are calculated as the percentage of students who complete Grade 12 within five years of ‘starting’ Grade 10 (for example, the group of students who ‘started’ Grade 10 in 2012-13 and completed Grade 12 any time on or before the end of the 2016-17 school year). Data includes self-identified students in provincially funded, independent and First Nations schools. Grade 12 completions include graduation in a Saskatchewan school through the 24 credit, Adult Secondary or Alternative Education programs. Numbers may differ slightly from those previously reported due to broader inclusion of students in the Student Data System, and due to ongoing maintenance and updating of the Student Data System. Source: Ministry of Education Student Data System.

Economic Imperative

First Nations and Métis Labour Market Attachment²⁵

Improving the education outcomes of Métis and First Nations students not only benefits the students but also benefits the province as a whole. Strengthening Saskatchewan's education outcomes will expand the education and skills of the labour force, leading to decreased expenditures in areas of justice and corrections, child and family services and social assistance. Improving education outcomes is particularly significant as the population continues to grow. They include:

- collaboration between First Nations and Métis and non-First Nations and Métis partners will result in significant improvement in First Nations and Métis student engagement and will increase the three-year graduation rate from 35 per cent in June 2012 to at least 65 per cent and the five-year graduation rate to at least 75 per cent; and,
- achieve an 85 per cent three-year graduation rate and a 90 per cent five-year graduation rate.

Living without a high school education can be a significant obstacle to employment. Although outcomes are improving, First Nations and Métis populations continue to have higher rates of unemployment than non-Aboriginal populations. The unemployment rate for self-identified First Nations and Métis showed improvement moving from 18.2 per cent in 2006 to 16.9 per cent in 2011. Nevertheless when compared to the non-Aboriginal unemployment rate of 4.6 per cent, there is still much work to achieve equity. Looking at First Nations and Métis separately, the unemployment rate for First Nations moved from 24.9 per cent in 2006 to 21.8 per cent in 2011. For Métis, the unemployment rate moved from 10.6 per cent in 2006 to 11.0 per cent in 2011.²⁶

Access to post-secondary education and skills training is increasingly important to finding and sustaining long-term employment or running a successful business. One foundation of realizing these milestones is achieving a high school education.

Population Increase

- In 2006, 14.9 per cent of the population in Saskatchewan self-identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. This figure rose to 15.6 per cent in 2011 and to 16 per cent in 2012.²⁷ Among provinces, Saskatchewan continues to have the second highest Indigenous population as a percentage of the total population, second only to Manitoba. Indigenous people represent a growing segment of the population. It has been estimated (based on the 2006 Census) that Saskatchewan's Indigenous population could reach 240,000 people, or 24 per cent of the total population, by 2031.²⁸
- The First Nations and Métis population is, on average, ten years younger than the non-Aboriginal population in Saskatchewan. In 2011, over half (54 per cent) of First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan were under the age of 25, compared with 30 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.

Student Population

- In the 2009-10 school year, approximately 18.7 per cent of 161,159 Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) students in provincial schools (22.9 per cent of 178,563 K-12 students in all Saskatchewan schools) self-identified as First Nations and Métis. This figure has held steady at 18.6 per cent of 179,707 K-12 students in 2016-17 in

²⁵ This section contains 2006 and 2011 Census data. 2016 Census data will be available beginning in 2018.

²⁶ Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics (Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey). <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-data/bureau-of-statistics/population-and-census>

²⁷ Statistics Canada: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-656-x/89-656-x2016009-eng.htm>

²⁸ Statistics Canada: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-552-x/2011001/tbl/tbl07-eng.htm>

provincial schools, (22.6 per cent of 197,969 K-12 students in all Saskatchewan schools). In some provincial schools, the percentage of students who self-identified as First Nations and Métis ranges from 50 per cent to almost 100 per cent. In 2016-17, approximately 21.6 per cent of these students attended schools on-reserve while the remaining students attended provincially funded schools (74.8 per cent) or other schools in Saskatchewan (3.6 per cent).

- The percentage of self-identified First Nations and Métis students enrolled in Kindergarten in 2016-17 was 14.4 per cent (1,972 of 13,716 students in provincial schools).²⁹

As the Métis and First Nations population continues to grow and achieves economic independence and prosperity, all Saskatchewan people will benefit from greater social harmony as individuals and communities reach their full potential.

Saskgraduates.ca provides a forum for school divisions and First Nations education authorities to share ideas, best practices, research and data on what is working to increase graduation rates across the province. Additional resources are posted to inform and support graduation improvement plans in the sector.

²⁹ Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Student Data System.

Policy and Conceptual Framework

Policy Framework

Vision

A provincial Prekindergarten to Grade 12 education system that foundationally places Indigenous knowledge systems, cultures and languages within the structures, policies and curricula to ensure an equitable and inclusive system that benefits all learners.

Policy Statement

The Ministry of Education commits to work collaboratively with all educational partners to strengthen relationships and achieve an equitable and inclusive system that benefits all learners.

Policy Goals

1. First Nations and Métis languages and cultures are valued and supported.
2. Equitable opportunities and outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners.
3. Shared management of the provincial education system by ensuring respectful relationships and equitable partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples at the provincial and local level.
4. Culturally appropriate and authentic assessment measures that foster improved educational opportunities and outcomes.
5. All learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the worldviews and historical impact of First Nations and the Métis Nation.

Framework Principles

Saskatchewan's education sector...

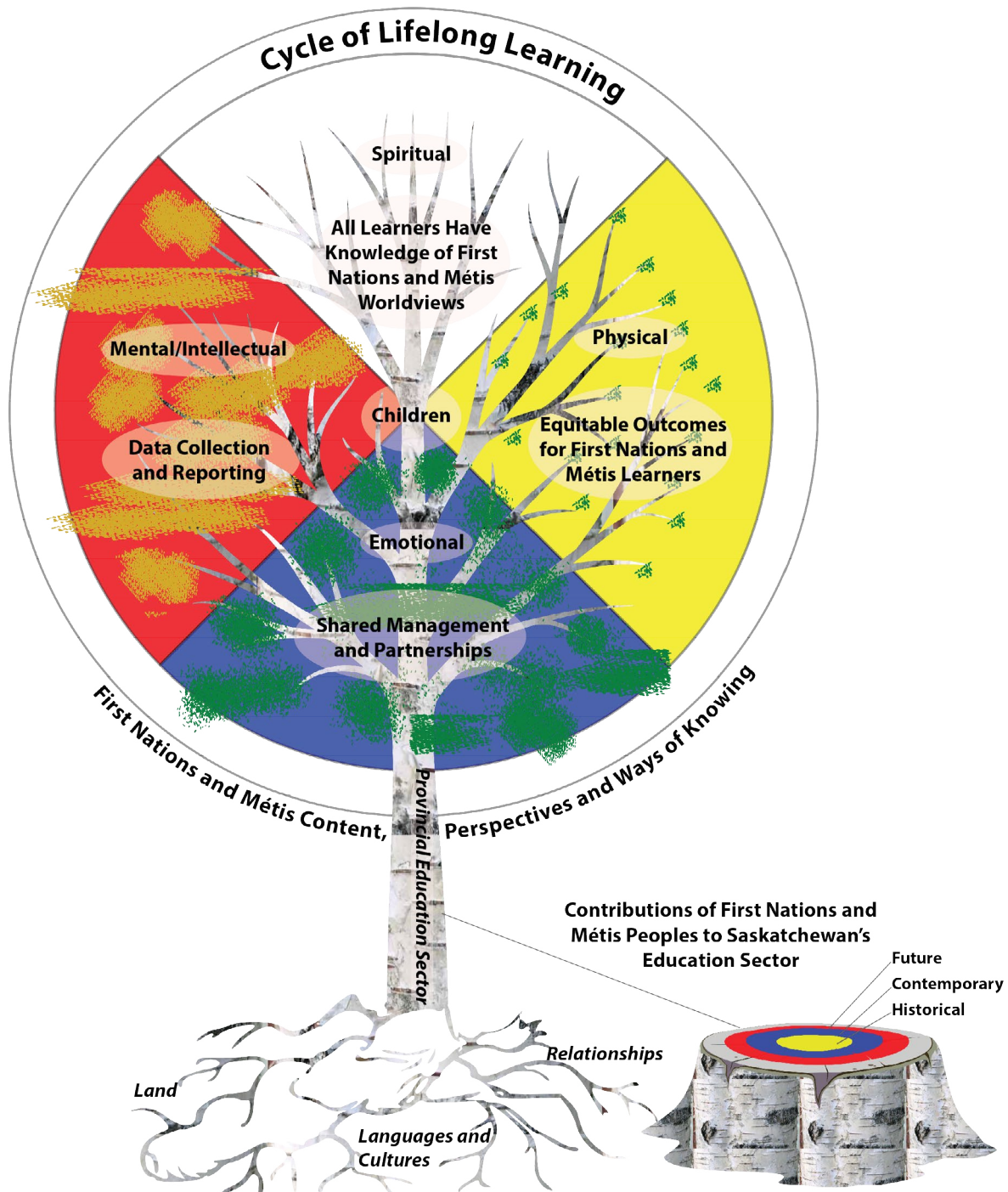
- is committed to creating a provincial education system that affirms and develops the identity of First Nations and Métis students, and respects and reflects diverse cultures in teaching and learning practices.
- values First Nations and Métis peoples' authentic engagement in all aspects of the education system.
- values education as a tool for reconciliation, which is an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships,³⁰ and of understanding the history and intergenerational effects of the residential schools experience through learning opportunities for students and staff at all levels of the education system.
- values First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and is committed to ensuring that curricula, content and teaching pedagogies reflect First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and accurately depict the historical and contemporary realities and contributions of First Nations and Métis peoples.
- values the teaching and revitalization of Métis and First Nations cultures and languages.

³⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Summary Report. 2015 (p. 16).

- values relationships and authentic engagement and is committed to engaging children, youth, families, Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and communities in holistic, culturally responsive education practices and partnerships that reflect shared leadership, shared responsibility and shared decision-making in the education system.
- is committed to ensuring opportunities exist for all students to learn about sustainability through land-based education and other learning programs that teach respect and ongoing care for the environment.
- values shared accountability and the responsible management of public resources. This includes commitments to increasing student engagement, learning and achievement through continuous improvement and alignment of system initiatives to this policy framework, and to working collaboratively with First Nations and Métis peoples to strengthen relationships within the provincial and First Nations education systems.
- acknowledges the federal government's legal, constitutional, fiscal and moral obligations to First Nations and Métis peoples, and recognize as foundational treaty education and the teaching of First Nations and Métis histories to all students.
- is committed to equity, social justice and addressing barriers to successful education for all students.

Conceptual Framework – White Birch Tree

First Nations and Métis have a diversity of worldviews, values and belief systems within and among their nations. This illustration is a starting point for understanding the importance of Indigenous knowledge to education in Saskatchewan. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to work with local First Nations and Métis Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers to learn about their worldviews and ways of knowing.



The Ministry of Education gratefully acknowledges the guidance of Elder Alma Kytwayhat in the development of the policy and conceptual frameworks in 2009, as well as Traditional Knowledge Keeper Albert Scott for his assistance with its renewal in 2016-2017.

White Birch Tree

The illustration on the previous page provides a conceptual framework for the components of *Inspiring Success*, its relationship to First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and the importance of those relationships and knowledge in the provincial education sector. First developed in 2009, the four directions of this conceptual framework form the broad goals that Inspiring Success is working towards. The White Birch Tree³¹ is combined with an overlay of the Medicine Wheel as a visual representation of the components of the First Nations and Métis education policy.

First Nations and Métis communities have a diversity of worldviews, values and belief systems, within and among their nations. The effort here is to not prescribe one Indigenous worldview upon the education sector but to provide a starting point for teachers and administrators to understand the importance of Indigenous knowledge to education in Saskatchewan. Indigenous knowledge resides within First Nations and Métis people and communities. As such, building relationships with Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, local communities and Métis and First Nations organizations to learn with and from Indigenous people is encouraged.

Land, Languages and Cultures, and Relationships are shown as part of the root system of the tree representing the first goal of the framework, as foundational components of education and how we are all connected as a sector, contributing to the growth of the tree. A slice of the trunk shows the rings of the tree which have been used to represent the historical, contemporary and future contributions of First Nations and Métis.

The Cycle of Lifelong Learning encircles the tree to show that learning begins at birth and continues into old age. First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing are displayed as a second circle to show that they encompass all aspects of the learning program. Children are at the centre of both the tree and the wheel as a focus for education.

The remaining four goals of the policy framework are placed within the four quadrants of the wheel. Each quadrant has a season, from spring in the east to winter in the north, which approximates its place in the education sector's annual cycle. *Equitable Outcomes for First Nations and Métis Learners* is situated in the physical quadrant as planning for achieving this goal requires the exertion of physical energy. *Shared Management and Partnerships* is situated in the emotional quadrant. As positive relationships are developed, empathy and understanding are necessary for shared management and building partnerships in education. *Data Collection and Reporting* are located in the mental/intellectual quadrant as these are cognitive processes in measuring and sharing progress towards improved education outcomes. *All Learners Have Knowledge of First Nations and Métis Worldviews* is located in the spiritual quadrant as the development of this knowledge requires openness to new ideas and is aided by respect for others.

³¹ The White Birch Tree (*Betula papyrifera*) was adopted as the official tree of Saskatchewan in 1988.

Alignment and Implementation

The *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* provides specific targets to be achieved by the province in education. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) is the education sector's approach to achieving the targets set by the *Plan for Growth*.³²

By June 2020, the following ESSP outcomes will be achieved:

- Eighty per cent of students will be at grade level or above in reading, writing and math.
- Collaboration between First Nations, Métis and Inuit and non-First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners will result in significant improvement in First Nations, Métis and Inuit student engagement and will increase three-year graduation rates from 35 per cent in June 2012 to at least 65 per cent and the five-year graduation rate to at least 75 per cent.
- Saskatchewan will achieve an 85 per cent three-year graduation rate and a 90 per cent five-year graduation rate.
- Children aged 0-6 years will be supported in their development to ensure that 90 per cent of students exiting Kindergarten are ready for learning in the primary grades.

Within the ESSP are Enduring Strategies. These strategies are high-level statements which serve as the guideposts for how the education sector can achieve its goals. The goals of Inspiring Success align with several of the Enduring Strategies and support the many First Nations and Métis education initiatives underway in the sector to improve outcomes.³³ The Enduring Strategies are:

- culturally relevant and engaging curriculum;
- differentiated, high quality instruction;
- culturally appropriate and authentic assessment;
- experiencing First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing;
- targeted and relevant professional learning;
- strong family, school and community partnerships; and,
- alignment of human, physical and fiscal resources.

In planning to implement this policy framework, schools, school divisions and organizations can employ the Enduring Strategies to guide actions and ensure alignment with the ESSP. The chart on the next page helps visualize what alignment could look like and how this framework can be applied as a lens. Additionally, the reflective questions that follow the chart can inform the dialogue that goes into planning and implementation.

³² The ESSP is the first ever province-wide plan developed in co-operation with education sector partners, approved by the 28 school boards and accepted by the Government of Saskatchewan. <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/student-first>

³³ <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/first-nations-and-Métis-education>

Alignment of Actions with the ESSP and Inspiring Success

Enduring Strategies of the ESSP	First Nations and Métis Languages and Cultures are Valued and Supported	Equitable Opportunities and Outcomes for First Nations and Métis Learners	Shared Management of the Provincial Education System	Culturally Appropriate and Authentic Assessment Measures	All Learners Have Knowledge of First Nations and Métis Worldviews
Culturally relevant and engaging curriculum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Differentiated, high quality instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Culturally appropriate and authentic assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Experiencing First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Targeted and relevant professional learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strong family, school and community partnerships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alignment of human, physical and fiscal resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Reflective Questions for Use in Planning

- Does this action align with one or more Enduring Strategy as well as align with one or more policy goal of *Inspiring Success*?
- What steps are being taken in this action to ensure it is authentic to First Nations and Métis perspective and ways of knowing?
- How can First Nations and Métis communities, Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and education organizations be directly engaged and involved in the design and implementation of this action?
- Before we take the first step, who can be engaged within the school community or school division who has authentic knowledge and experience in First Nations and Métis education?

The Ministry of Education has created an online educational toolkit entitled Supporting Reconciliation in Saskatchewan Schools that contains a wide range of resources for professional development and classrooms.
www.reconciliation.edonline.sk.ca

Moving Forward Together

Inspiring Success will continue to guide strategic actions across all levels of the provincial education sector to support significant improvement in student achievement for all learners. As the umbrella for all First Nations and Métis education initiatives in Saskatchewan, this policy framework ensures a strong focus on First Nations and Métis student engagement and achievement as the sector works towards meeting the goals in the Education Sector Strategic Plan.

The Ministry of Education will continue to work closely with school divisions, provincial education organizations and teacher education programs to implement this policy framework and pursue reconciliation. The ministry, school divisions and schools have a responsibility to engage directly with Métis and First Nations communities and organizations, Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers to guide the education system and strengthen learning opportunities and outcomes for all students.

The provincial education system has a major role to play to ensure social harmony and economic viability now and in the future. Not only does its mandate include the learning success of all children and young people, but it also strives to promote understanding and respect among diverse worldviews and balances the development of the individual with a commitment to good citizenship.

Reducing the disparity in education and employment outcomes between First Nations and Métis and non-Indigenous people remains one of Saskatchewan's most important social and economic objectives. Achieving it means creating a stronger, more vibrant province and a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people.

Inspiring Success continues to guide all actions related to First Nations and Métis education. It honours First Nations and Métis ways of knowing along with the historical, contemporary and future contributions of First Nations and Métis. *Inspiring Success* supports improvements in student engagement and achievement through policy, renewed curricula, reconciliation and alignment of ministry and sector actions with the goals of the Education Sector Strategic Plan.

Glossary

These definitions are provided to inform the education sector of the ongoing evolution of terminology in addressing First Nations and Métis peoples in Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal:

- Section 35 (2) of Canada's *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes the Aboriginal peoples of Canada: Indians, Inuit and Métis.

First Nation(s):

- The term "First Nation" came into common usage in the 1970s to replace "band" or "Indian," e.g., Cowessess First Nation. The term "First Nation" is **not** used as a synonym for Aboriginal peoples as it does not include Métis or Inuit.

Indigenous:

- This term means "native to the area" and it is important to note that it is not a legal term in Canada. In this sense, Aboriginal people are indeed indigenous to North America. As a proper name for a people, the term is capitalized to form "Indigenous peoples." Its meaning is similar to "Aboriginal peoples," "Native peoples" or "First Peoples." This term has gained popularity in Canada in recent years, with more public institutions using it, such as Indigenous Services Canada.
- The Council of Ministers of Education Canada has discussed the use of the term "Indigenous" vs. "Aboriginal" and concluded that provinces and territories should continue to use protocols currently in place reflecting the preferences of Indigenous peoples and organizations in their respective jurisdictions. Of note in Saskatchewan, Métis organizations consulted in the development of this policy framework have stated a preference for a distinct recognition of the Métis in the education sector rather than blanket use of the term "Indigenous," which is often used mistakenly to address only First Nations' concerns and does not include the Métis community.

Métis:

- One of the three Aboriginal peoples recognized in the Constitution of Canada, the Métis are a distinct people "...with their own unique culture, traditions, language (Michif), way of life, collective consciousness and nationhood."³⁴ The definition of "Métis," in the constitution of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, is a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

³⁴ Métis National Council. "The Métis Nation." Accessed April 2017. <http://www.Métisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-Métis>

Appendix – Resource List

This list is to aid in the search for teaching resources and further reading. The Government of Saskatchewan does not universally endorse the content of these websites.

Following Their Voices – A made-in-Saskatchewan initiative designed to raise the educational achievement and participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. <http://www.followingtheirvoices.ca>

Four Directions Teachings – Online resource for learning about Indigenous knowledge from five diverse First Nations in Canada. <http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com>

Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture (<http://www.Métismuseum.ca>) and the GDI Publishing Department (<http://gdins.org/Métis-culture/publishing>) house numerous books and other resources for the teaching of Métis culture, history and Michif language.

Office of the Treaty Commissioner – Resources on reconciliation, treaty education, Speaker’s Bureau, publications, maps and more. <http://www.otc.ca>

Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre – Resources on First Nations languages, cultures, arts and history, as well as programming for educators and students. <http://www.sicc.sk.ca>

Saskatchewan School Boards Association – First Nations and Métis Education Publications:
<http://saskschoolboards.ca/services/first-nations-and-Métis-education-services/>

Saskatoon Public School Division – Teacher blogs on cultural responsiveness, First Nations and Métis content and perspectives, and more. <http://schools.spsd.sk.ca/curriculum>

Student First Engagement Discussion Guide – Highlights the key themes of conversations with students, parents/caregivers, and teachers across the province and includes a toolkit to facilitate ongoing dialogue around Student First.
<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/student-first/student-first-engagements>

Supporting Reconciliation in Saskatchewan Schools – The Ministry of Education created this online educational toolkit that contains a wide range of resources for professional development and classrooms. The toolkit can be accessed online at www.reconciliation.edonline.sk.ca.