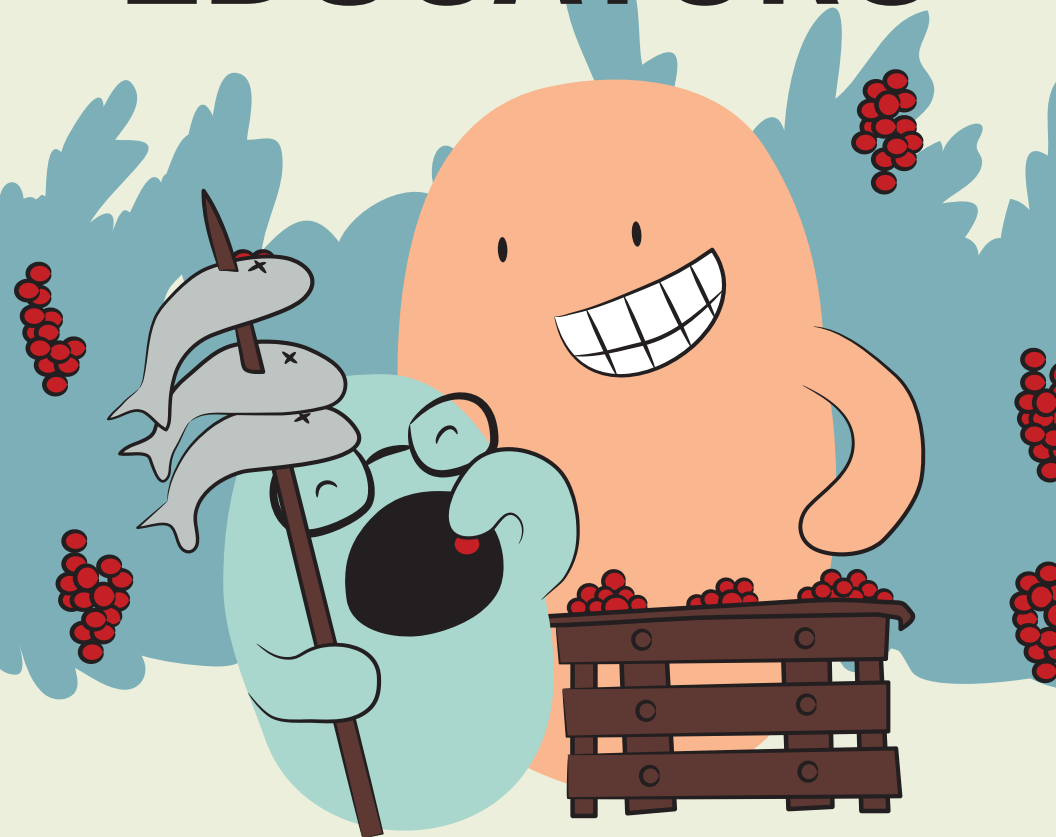


JOINING THE CIRCLE

GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS





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JOINING THE CIRCLE

GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

COPA

COPA is a Francophone not-for-profit organization, offering services in both French and English. Founded in 1995, we are a recognized centre of excellence in the field of violence and bullying prevention by advocating for equity and inclusion.

COPA provides schools and communities with unique multimedia educational resources, as well as training, professional development and opportunities for capacity-building and consultation.

COPA works with provincial and local organizations and institutions across Ontario, such as parent groups, schools, boards, teachers' unions, women's groups, cultural, health and community centres and settlement agencies.

COPA's unique approach is based on individual and collective empowerment, founded on principles of social justice to bring about positive change.

COPA cares deeply about human rights, especially those of children and all marginalized groups. We all belong.

To learn more about COPA, visit our website at **infocopa.com** and explore our related educational sites:

- **safeatschool.ca** (COPA/OTF site for educators)
- **copahabitat.ca** (COPA site for caregivers and families)
- **changeourworld.ca** (COPA site for youth)

OTF

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) is the professional organization representing teachers in Ontario, comprised of four affiliated groups: l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

OTF's responsibilities include promoting and advancing the cause of public education, raising the status of the teaching profession and promoting and advancing the interests of teachers. OTF also represents teachers and all other members of the Teachers' Pension Plan in the administration of the Plan and management of the pension fund, and acts as the link between teachers and the Ontario Ministry of Education. OTF's affiliates are responsible for negotiating teachers' salaries and benefits, protecting teachers' working rights and ensuring that all demands on teachers are made fairly.

Visit otffeo.on.ca to learn more.

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Perhaps the most prominent symbol of the Métis Nation is the brightly coloured, woven sash. During the Fur Trade, Métis voyageurs paddled 16-18 hours a day and carried 180-pound packs at a trot across long, rugged portages. This back-breaking work created a risk of strangulated hernias, the leading cause of death during the Fur Trade. The sash offered important protection as a pressure dressing for hernias, and provided some back support. In the days of the voyageur, the sash was also a colourful and festive belt, a rope when needed, a key holder, first aid kit, washcloth, towel, emergency bridle or saddle blanket. Its fringed ends could become a sewing kit. The sash has acquired new significance symbolizing pride and identification for Métis peoples.



OUR JOURNEY

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is one part of our collective effort on the journey of reconciliation. This is a journey that involves what COPA terms the cycle of positive change that features learning, reflecting, growing and changing. Joining the Circle is designed to help ensure Indigenous students and their families feel that they belong and are able to realize their greatest potential.

This resource is designed...

- for all educators regardless of grade level or student ability, whether in the classroom, at school, at the board or in the community;
- to increase confidence and sensitivity in education practices in order to facilitate the flourishing of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students;
- to embed the histories, languages, cultures and perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit into all aspects of school and community life regardless of whether there are Indigenous students present or not. Reconciliation involves us all;
- to support our individual capacity and help create systemic change for *safe, strong and free* school communities with and for Indigenous students and families.

Joining the Circle is not in any way intended to be a textbook or an exhaustive list of histories and information about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. It has been created as one of many rich resources developed for the above purposes. COPA's goal is to share ideas, inspiration, knowledge, strategies and guidance for enhancing educational practices.

This project emerged out of COPA's A Circle of Caring project for First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents, families, caregivers and schools. Joining the Circle is a partnership with the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and is intended for all education staff in schools, boards and communities. Joining the Circle and A Circle of Caring are both funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

WISDOM AND GUIDANCE

Joining the Circle was designed by COPA in keeping with the Ministry's commitment to supporting equity and inclusive education. COPA's goal is to share our particular vision, while being sensitive and respectful of the different people who have an interest in sharing it. With this vision in mind, the wisdom and guidance of people and groups from Indigenous communities all over Ontario are at the heart of this project.

Many people generously shared their time, knowledge and thoughts. COPA met with hundreds of educators, family and community members, leaders and Elders, Senators and Knowledge Holders. Together we have created a resource to help all of us nurture classrooms, schools and boards where Indigenous students and their families will be *safe, strong and free*.

COPA was also closely advised by members of our working groups (Anglophone and Francophone), as well as the Ontario Teachers' Federation. COPA sought and received excellent feedback with regard to planning, creating and disseminating this new resource.

Anglophone Working Group

Deb St. Amant // Wanda Botsford // Chantal Côté // Jeanne Hebert
// Christine Lund // Zipporah Nochasak // Shirley Ida Williams // COPA

Francophone Working Group

Deb St. Amant // Chantal Côté // COPA

Creating Joining the Circle allowed COPA and partners the precious opportunity to listen and explore common and distinct experiences. We hope that these are shared here in a way that is truly meaningful, respectful and practical, too.

Gchi Miigwech, Yaw^ko, Nya:weh, Kinanâskomitinâwâw, Marsi, Qujannamiik and Nakumek to everyone who shaped, guided and shared their thoughts, ideas, caring and wisdom to bring this resource to life.

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in 2008 by the federal government. Its mandate was to promote a national reconciliation and foster healing between First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians. Its primary focus has been to record and expose the truth to all Canadians about residential schools and related policies that negatively affected Indigenous peoples.

The TRC spent over six years travelling around the country listening to impact statements from residential school Survivors who courageously shared their stories, often for the first time. Based on their findings and under the guidance of Justice Murray Sinclair, they published a report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, along with 94 Calls to Action. Visit trc.ca to read the report and learn more about reconciliation.

TIP

Each one of us plays a part in our national reconciliation process, as articulated by the Commission. The Calls to Action that relate to education can serve as a useful guide for educators striving to provide inclusive environments where each and every student and their families, feel valued, appreciated, respected and safe.

THE INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STRATEGY

The Indigenous Education Strategy was launched with the release of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* in 2007. The Framework is the foundation for delivering quality education to all First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in Ontario's publicly funded school system.

The Framework provides the strategic policy context within which the Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools are working together to improve the academic achievement of Indigenous students. Joining the Circle is consistent with the Ministry's vision and policy framework.¹

Educators wishing to include more Indigenous perspectives can make use of the Teachers' Toolkit, a collection of professionally developed electronic resources with practical teaching strategies including themes, topics, and perspectives for students of all ages.² Visit edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal.

OUR ROLE AS EDUCATORS

All Canadians have an important role to play in the reconciliation process. We can begin by acknowledging the legacy of residential schools and becoming better informed about the various and complicated effects of intergenerational trauma still affecting us all today.

Call to Action #62 of the TRC Final Report focuses on the role of education in the process of reconciliation, urging educators, government and Indigenous peoples, including Survivors, to join together to...

- make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for K–Grade 12;
- provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers as to how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms;
- provide the necessary funding to Indigenous schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.

We can think of this journey as a step toward decolonizing and *indigenizing* schools. Educators, students and families can be involved by...

- learning about and from the history of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, including the legacies of oppression and their continuing impact;
- understanding how the oppression of Indigenous peoples continues today;
- prioritizing Indigenous ways of knowing, being, concerns and worldviews;
- understanding Indigenous peoples' activism as one of human rights and Indigenous rights;
- knowing, understanding and experiencing Indigenous-informed teaching and learning practices;
- working collectively to change the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples from one of oppression to one of equity and justice.

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT PEOPLES

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples share a history of living on the land, based on hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering food, often in a community setting. These three separate Indigenous peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. They live in communities all across Canada, including First Nations reserves, Métis communities and settlements, regional communities of the Canadian Arctic and Subarctic, rural areas, towns and cities.

There are over 133 **First Nations** communities in Ontario and there are 13 First Nations languages in this province alone. These First Nations communities are widely varied across Canada, with unique histories, cultures, practices and languages. Their languages emerged out of two groups, the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe.

The **Métis** are a distinct Indigenous people with a unique history, culture, language and territory that varies across the country. The Métis Nation is comprised of descendants of people born of relations between First Nations women and European men. The Métis historically learned First Nations beliefs and ceremonies from their First Nations ancestors, and Christian beliefs from their European ancestors.

The initial offspring of these unions were of mixed ancestry. The genesis of a new Indigenous people called the Métis resulted from the subsequent intermarriage of these mixed-ancestry individuals. In Ontario, distinct Métis settlements emerged as an outgrowth of the fur trade, along freighting waterways and watersheds. The language of the Métis is Michif and much like First Nations and Inuit languages, there are different dialects.³

Inuit literally means “the people” and their language is Inuktitut. Inuit language, culture and history vary from region to region and from within. The Inuit have historically lived in four regions in the Far North of Canada, none of these in Ontario. Different dialects of Inuktitut are spoken in each region. Over 3,000 Inuit live in Ottawa and this number is growing. Many come from these four regions, speak Inuktitut and still maintain traditional practices.⁴

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

The Indigenous student population is growing. 2011 Census results show that Ontario's population of Indigenous school-aged children (aged 5–19) has grown to nearly 79,000 from 69,000 in 2006. This includes over 55,000 First Nations, close to 20,000 Métis, over 1,000 Inuit and close to 3,000 children with multiple or other identities. It is estimated that 82% of these children attend provincially funded elementary and secondary schools.⁵

Statistics Canada revealed in 2011 that of the Canadian population aged 25 to 64, 67% of First Nations, 79% of Métis, and 51% of Inuit had matriculated compared to 88% of non-Indigenous people. Of that same population, 29% of Indigenous people had “no certificate, diploma or degree,” compared to only 12% on non-indigenous people.⁶

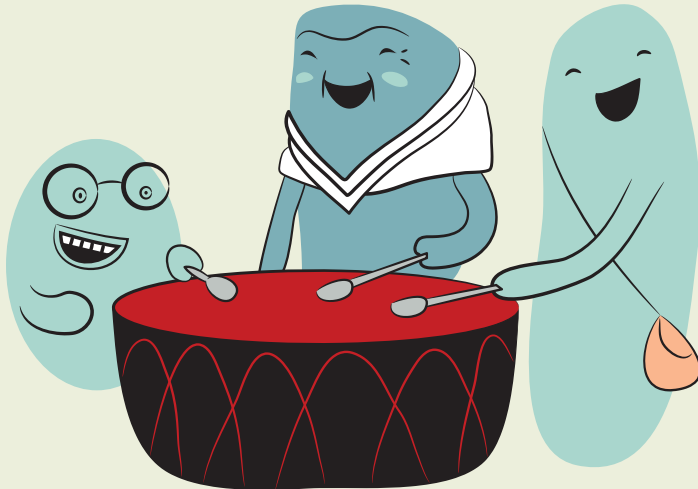
In fact, increasing numbers of Indigenous students are thriving at school, and indeed the drop out rate for Indigenous students in Canada has declined significantly since 2007.⁷ Nevertheless there are many who are not flourishing or even staying in school, due to the impact of informal and systemic barriers that can be eliminated if we put our minds and hearts to it.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

In this guide, we share information and tools for becoming aware of creative strategies to ensure the full inclusion of Indigenous students. It reflects the wisdom and values of Indigenous peoples who shared with COPA and helped create this new tool. The information and tools provided here are designed to help educators strengthen our understanding and respect for Indigenous histories and cultures.

Indigenous community members and leaders advised COPA to include cultural teachings. Some of these have been chosen to highlight ways of being, learning and sharing, while recognizing that it would be impossible to include all teachings from all Indigenous communities in Ontario.

This guide is designed for use with the *Joining the Circle* short animated films, created to nurture welcoming schools and communities. Additional resources are included in the kit to support this initiative.



LISTENING AND LEARNING

There are many efforts by Indigenous peoples and their allies to reclaim, revitalize and celebrate oral traditions, writing systems, languages, literatures, arts, values and ways of understanding the world. The heritage of Indigenous peoples in Canada emerges out of the rich and long histories of many civilizations and cultures.

By listening carefully and being open-hearted, those who have coordinated this project have had precious opportunities to learn more about this rich heritage, and the diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and teachings. They were guided and grounded, and learned a great deal about how to support young people—in schools and out in the bigger world. This learning is at the very heart of this guide and the other parts of this resource.

A wholistic perspective central to Indigenous peoples has been the inspiration for this project, linking physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health, and the precious values of sharing, respect, kindness and kinship bonds—the basis of forming healthy, equal relationships.

TERMINOLOGY

The following words and terms are used in our guide to help us share our ideas:

- The word “colonization” is used here to describe a form of invasion and oppression of a people, their land and their culture.
- The word “decolonization” is used here to describe efforts to restore justice and equity for Indigenous peoples.
- The word “discrimination” is used here to describe the unjust treatment of people, perceiving their differences as something negative.
- The word “educator” is used here to describe all adults who work directly or indirectly to support student education and wellbeing.
- The word “Elder” is used here to describe respected members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, determined not by age, but by wisdom and cultural and spiritual knowledge. Different nations and communities use different words for Elders (including Senators and Knowledge Keepers). In order to be most respectful, educators may ask how people prefer to be introduced or referred to.
- The word “empowerment” is used here to describe the process of gaining control over our own lives, taking charge and sharing power.
- The word “equity” is used here to describe a condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people.
- The word “inclusion” is used here to describe efforts to ensure meaningful participation of all people in society, specifically those who are left out because they lack social status and power.
- The word “Indigenous” is used here to describe the first peoples of Canada—First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples,⁹ also often called Aboriginal people. They have lived in North America since long before Canada became a country. Terms to describe First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have evolved over time. Preferences may vary and it’s important to take direction from individuals or communities as to how they identify themselves. The word “Indigenous” is used in Canada and around the world.

- The term “intergenerational trauma” is used here to describe pain and suffering that has been passed on to successive generations stemming from the injustice experienced by their ancestors.⁹
- The word “racism” is used here to describe beliefs, actions and laws based on the idea that the dominant racial group is superior to all others. These have resulted in discrimination and injustice for Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world.
- The word “reconciliation” is used here to describe the act of repairing relations between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada.
- The word “sexism” is used here to describe beliefs, actions and laws that perceive women as inferior to men.
- The term “teachings” refers to the transfer of cultural knowledge, shared orally and not written down. To receive teachings, we must learn from traditional knowledge holders, which is why building a relationship with these respected people is essential. Teachings are often individual in nature and can vary from person to person and nation to nation.
- The term “two-spirited” is used to refer to an Indigenous person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit.

The words “we” and “us” are used here to include educators.

The words “family” or “family member” are used here to include everyone who cares for our children, as it is not unusual for Indigenous students to either be raised by grandparents or other relatives or be in foster care. Whenever the word “caregivers” is used here, it includes parents and all guardians.

And finally, any time we use the word “student” or “students” this means students of all ages.

Wampum belts symbolize partnership and ways of living side by side. The Two-Row Wampum belt symbolized the agreement and conditions concerning the Haudenosaunee's relationship with the Dutch whom they welcomed to the land. The two-coloured beaded rows of the belt symbolize two paths or two vessels (First Nations and European) travelling down the same white bead river together, side by side, but each in their own boat, neither trying to steer the other. It portrays what it means to coexist with nature and with each other. These wampum agreements are as valid today as they were all those years ago.



FACING BARRIERS

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada often encounter many challenges with their health and social wellbeing, and Indigenous students may thus face many barriers to succeeding at school.¹⁰ This situation can be linked to the history of discriminatory policies and negative ways they have been treated by those representing the religious and government bodies assigned to work and live among them.

Racism, sexism and other forms of injustice often work hand-in-hand and unfortunately are still part of our world—sometimes taking the form of bullying and abuse. Abuse has a negative effect on our young people, at home, at school and in the community.

Discrimination and abuse make participating in school life hard or even impossible. It may also trigger difficult and painful memories.

In recent years, many efforts by Indigenous community and government leaders have been undertaken to help change attitudes and practices, such as ensuring Indigenous students' right to an education and a learning environment free from discrimination—allowing each child to reach their full potential. As educators we have an important role to play in this and a responsibility to create a safe, healthy and welcoming atmosphere that makes room for all of us.

As we think about the problem of bullying and discrimination experienced by Indigenous students, we will explore the many ways that schools can support them. COPA believes that together we can create cultures in schools where bullying and discrimination become a thing of the past: where everyone has a chance to work together and to be the best they can be, individually and as a whole; where each and every person's rights are respected, and all people are seen, heard and welcomed. COPA hopes that this guide will be helpful in overcoming barriers and nurturing a cycle of positive change for ourselves, for our students, and for generations to come.

TIP

A positive step is to discover whose traditional territory our school community is physically located on and learn more about that community(ies) with our students.

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Culture is passed down from one generation to the next and is what distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is also linked to land and to time and to a way of life. It encompasses attitudes, beliefs, languages, art forms, rituals, ceremonies, stories, histories, foods, customs, institutions, clothing, ways of knowing, and much more. Cultural identity can be an immense source of pride, for example when participating in ceremonies, drumming, singing, hunting or dancing. Cultural identity can also be a source of confusion and shame, when an individual faces bullying, discrimination, or feelings of invisibility in relation to it.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have their own unique cultures. Even within a distinct group such as the Métis, culture is linked to land and where people live. For example, Métis from the West have different ways of being and therefore a different culture than Métis from Ontario. It is important as educators to be aware of the cultural diversity within and between First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and to avoid categorizing all Indigenous people as homogeneous or “Pan-Indigenous”.

Still, it is not possible to overstate the centrality of the land to all First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, since ways of being and knowing are fundamentally tied to it and all aspects of the Universe. For example, First Nations peoples see the land as a gift from creation, sustaining all of life, and requiring that those who benefit from it take great care of it. Within their world views it is inconceivable to “own” or exploit the land. It is not only seen as the Earth’s surface, but as a whole ecosystem of living/non-living beings and the elements of earth, fire, air and water. There is an emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual relationship with the land.

It is important that we get to know who is in our classrooms and schools. Are there students who self-identify as Indigenous, and if so, what is their heritage? The self-identification forms that caregivers may be given as they enroll their children are often left incomplete, as some caregivers have had negative experiences with schools and therefore mistrust the motives in asking about heritage. As a result, our records do not always paint an accurate picture of the Indigenous make-up of the school community. When students see that their cultures and heritages are valued and that they are reflected in the curriculum and in school life, they may be more likely to self-identify.

TIP

We should not assume self-identifying Indigenous students will want to speak openly about their heritage in order to educate others. Some students may know that they have Indigenous roots, but may not know much about their history as there is often a legacy of shame, secrecy and trauma. They may simply feel uncomfortable sharing their knowledge and perspectives, while others might not wish to be viewed as “experts” in all things Indigenous.

We can avoid further stigmatizing and shaming by not asking students to “prove” their Indigenous heritage or judging students by whether we think they “look” Indigenous enough.

We can respect what students reveal about their identity and how they do so by following their lead as to how much and what it is that they want to share. Also, keep in mind that they may identify differently than others in their family.

LANGUAGE

The 2011 census reports that over 60 Indigenous languages are spoken across Canada.¹¹ It is impossible to overstate the importance of language, since culture is fundamentally tied to it. The process of colonization ensured the systematic destruction of Indigenous languages. This has resulted in not only the loss of entire languages, but also the prioritizing of the written word over various Indigenous methods of knowledge sharing, including oral teachings, traditions, and other Indigenous methods of recording information.

Today, there is an active movement to reclaim and revitalize Indigenous languages across the country. There are specific Calls to Action in the TRC’s Final Report designed to support these efforts.¹²

TIP

Share the online Language Tool to help students become aware of common languages spoken throughout Ontario. By learning some simple words, we communicate the existence and the value of these living languages. Use the short animated films in Cree, Inuktitut, Michif, Mohawk, Ojibwe and Oji-Cree to further expose students. Inviting Indigenous community members from your area to speak about this issue and model the value of this heritage can be a practical strategy for nurturing greater awareness.

In Canada and especially outside of Quebec, Francophone identity, culture and language are hard fought rights that continue to be advocated for in a dominantly Anglophone world.

Language rights have been an especially important part of this struggle and the history of oppression of Francophones can create a greater sensitivity to the efforts of other minority and lost language speakers, and to Michif speakers in particular.

Michif is the traditional language of the Métis people in Ontario. There are many different dialects of Michif depending on the different First Nations and European languages spoken in a given area. Ontario Michif is very different from Western Michif. Due to colonization and the oppression of Indigenous languages, peoples and cultures, Michif and other Indigenous languages were lost to many Métis. Speaking Michif can cause deep shame for speakers, especially students in Francophone schools, where they are understood to be speaking “bad French”.

We can work together to change this by acknowledging and affirming that Michif is a distinct language and celebrating Métis culture and contributions in our schools.

SPIRITUALITY

Prior to contact with Europeans, spirituality was a way of life and source of strength and unity for Indigenous communities. Enduring today, spiritual beliefs and practices are based on a relationship with nature, where physical and spiritual worlds are interconnected and sacred—where everything has a spirit. A spiritual connection supports physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health, caring for self, family and community. As a result of colonization and racist policies, many cultural and spiritual practices were outlawed with devastating effects.¹³

There are various traditional and religious practices among First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Many are seeking to learn about these original ways of life in order to create balance, nurture wellness and pride, and reclaim their culture and identity.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANADA

Significant contributions have been made and continue to be made by Indigenous peoples in areas such as medicine, science, ecology, wholistic practices, arts, culture and language. Recognizing these contributions can form a strong basis for learning from each other and relationship building.

Many things taken for granted today were first introduced by Indigenous peoples. For example, they invented different means of transportation commonly used today, such as the kayak, canoe, dog sled, toboggan and snowshoes. They helped settlers survive harsh Canadian winter conditions by sharing ways to heal sickness with medicinal plants and how to collect and preserve food. They introduced settlers to foods we consume often, such as corn, popcorn, maple syrup and wild rice.

Indigenous clothing that we are familiar with includes parkas, moccasins and goggles. Games with Indigenous origins such as shinny and lacrosse are still popular today and played in many countries. Lacrosse is the national summer sport of Canada. Other contributions include the igloo, bunk beds, sleeping bags and ice fishing.

TIP

One of the most significant contributions Indigenous peoples have made are the names of the places around us—including the name Canada which is from the Saint-Lawrence Iroquoian word kanata (or canada) for “settlement”, “village”, or “land”. We can discover the names of places in our communities and their histories with our students.

As educators we can study the Indigenous names for local sites and landmarks and their history and meanings, and share these with our students. For example, the Eastern Cree name for Hudson Bay and James Bay is Wīnipekw (southern dialect) or Wīnipâkw (northern dialect), meaning muddy or brackish water. Petawawa is from the Algonquin language and means “where one hears the noise of the waters”. Or, Penetanguishene, which is an Algonquin name meaning “place of the white rolling sands.”

LAND, TREATIES AND RELOCATION

Canada’s many First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities have unique histories and distinct characteristics, with complex and developed systems of governance, and profound connections with the land. These connections were—and still are—of vital importance, intertwined with livelihood, culture, language, diet, customs, spiritual teachings, and all aspects of life. Forming a colony entailed the active disruption of these structures and connections so as to promote European settlement.

Many formal treaties were signed between the British government and First Nations and they are still valid today. Many First Nations who signed the treaties did not read English and were not informed of the implications of the agreements.¹⁴ No treaties exist between the government and the Inuit, and the Métis were subjected to the Scrip system, as described below.

Many of these treaties, which are still valid to this day, have been ignored or broken and long-standing court cases are ongoing. Indigenous peoples in Canada have never ceded their right to autonomy and are still seeking self-determination and nationhood as promised in original proclamations and treaties.¹⁵

TIP

Becoming informed about treaties is central to reconciliation efforts in Canada. We are all treaty people as treaties affect all Canadians and we are legally and morally required to respect them. Together with our students, we can learn about and explore the treaties and land claims that affect the people of the area where our school is located. We can find out which treaty and First Nations, Métis or Inuit communities are local to us by visiting ontario.ca/page/treaties or by asking local Indigenous groups and leaders.

The Scrip System was in effect from 1870–1921 and its purpose was to extinguish Métis Indigenous title to land before settlement could occur on the prairies. A “Scrip” was a government-sponsored certificate that entitled the Métis head of household to either money or land. Originally a Scrip was worth either \$160 or 160 acres. The Métis who wanted land for their Scrip were often offered land far from their family, community, waterways, and forest and not where they had built their home, or had been living and farming and working.

Most Métis were illiterate and did not understand the Scrip System. The majority were duped out of land altogether by speculators. The Scrip System meant a massive loss of land for the Métis.¹⁶

TIP

The history of Indigenous peoples is often told from a European point of view. Seeking knowledge from Indigenous peoples to learn about history means we will have more accurate perspectives. Additionally, it is important to ensure that Inuit share information about Inuit history and culture, and the Métis do so for Métis culture. Given the distinctions and complexity, it is important that we not lump all Indigenous peoples together, and assume one person can speak for all peoples.

THE INDIAN ACT

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 established a nation-to-nation relationship between First Nations peoples and Europeans. However, the British North America Act of 1867 and the Indian Act of 1876 profoundly altered and codified the new Canadian government’s relationship to First Nations peoples, turning them into wards of the Crown. They were considered dependents and not citizens, and even denied the vote. (Quebec was the last province to award the vote to Indigenous peoples, in 1969.) The Indian Act is understood to be highly discriminatory, and gave the Canadian government the latitude to enforce policy aimed at ensuring European settlement on the land and waterways that Indigenous people lived on. It allowed government agents to interpret legislation and even decide who was a “real Indian”.

Creating laws to legitimize these actions, the British Crown and the Canadian government strategically forced entire First Nations communities to relinquish their hunting, trapping and fishing grounds, along with the waterways at the core of the Métis people’s existence. Treaties were ignored and sustainability was undermined.¹⁷

Many people were relocated to “reserves”—designated tracks of land often lacking adequate water sources or fertile ground. Homes were lost and traditional ways of life were forcibly and dramatically altered. Dependence on government-provided dry goods and foodstuffs became imperative, and had a deleterious effect on the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional health of people ruptured from their homes and the means of self-sufficiency.¹⁸

TIP

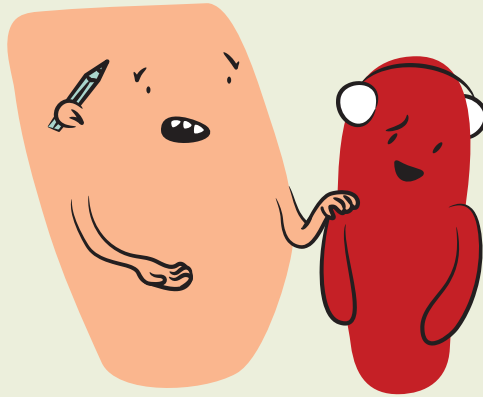
Some students, quite often from northern communities and reserves, have to move to another community to attend school. This can mean real culture shock for these students, possibly their first time away from home and their community. Many of these young people feel alone and adrift, without adult care and support. As educators, we can keep the communication flowing and be a voice of caring for these students. Weekly check-ins with the student as well as weekly or bi-monthly progress calls to caregivers can be the emotional boost students and caregivers need.

Entire Inuit communities were forcibly relocated to more southerly regions or to the High Arctic, thousands of kilometres from their homes, in order to assert Canada's sovereignty there.

When Indigenous people became politically active in the 1920s, and attempts to enforce treaties and make land claims grew, Section 141 was added to the Act, outlawing them from hiring legal counsel and eventually barring them from forming public gatherings.¹⁹ (This was repealed in 1951.) Gender discrimination was an integral part of the Act; according to the law, a woman's status was entirely dependent on that of her husband.²⁰ For example, an Indigenous woman who married a non-Indigenous man lost her status, while a non-Indigenous woman who married an Indigenous man, gained status even though she had no Indigenous bloodline.

These Acts did not formally apply to Métis and Inuit peoples, although they have often been subjected to the discrimination inherent in these laws, and denied benefits. Today however, as a result of what is called the Daniels Decision, the British North America Act and Royal Proclamation now apply to Métis and non-status Indigenous people.²¹

The Indian Act has been revised and amended over the centuries, and is currently under review by the federal government.



RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The history of residential schools is a shocking and shameful part of Canada's past. From the 1830s to the 1990s, 150,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and sent to live in government-funded, church-run residential schools. In establishing them, the government essentially declared Indigenous culture to be harmful and Indigenous people to be unfit parents and role models. Indigenous families continue to live with the terrible consequences today.

Children in these schools experienced wide-ranging and institutionalized physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse. They were made to live in extremely poor conditions and subjected to harsh discipline. They were forbidden from speaking their mother tongue and learning their traditions and values, which were denigrated and suppressed. Children were trained for menial jobs and not academic or vocational success. Children died of cruelty, neglect and disease. Many tried to run away and others took their own lives in desperation.²²

Parents were no longer allowed to be in charge of their children's care and education. Cut off from their families and communities, children were denied the experience of a loving home. They were forced to reject their heritage and language and to assimilate. The goal of these schools was to "kill the Indian in the child."²³

The church and government dominated their private adult lives as well, even arranging marriages for students after they completed their “education”. Predictably, Indigenous families experienced grief and loss, causing multigenerational trauma. Many families were so desperate that they lived in hiding to protect their children from these institutions.

Although Indigenous peoples and cultures have been deeply damaged, there is a refusal to surrender their pride and identity. The Survivors of Canada’s residential schools have acted with tremendous courage and determination to ensure that Canadians are aware of this damaging legacy and that reconciliation be front and centre on the national agenda. Their efforts led to the negotiation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in 2006 that mandated compensation for the harm caused to children and families and led to the formation of the TRC.²⁴

In 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada issued a public apology to over 150,000 Indigenous people who were students of the residential school system, acknowledging the disastrous and lasting impact on children, families and communities. Mr. Harper stated that the legacy of this policy “has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today”. The forcible removal of children from their families and the subsequent failure to protect them from the abuse and neglect that they were subjected to at school was further compounded by the profound undermining of parents’ ability to provide appropriate care to their own, while utterly transforming the landscape of community life for generations to come. The apology acknowledged the “extraordinary courage” of thousands of Survivors that have come forward to speak about their experiences. The Prime Minister stated that the government and all Canadians are part of the recovery process—“and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey”.²⁵

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Intergenerational trauma occurs when there is trauma due to the loss of family, culture and language, which with continuing oppression and lack of intervention, gets transferred from generation to generation. It is understood to affect individuals, families, and whole communities and manifests in personal and cultural shame and hopelessness. Substance abuse, abuse and violence, self-harm and suicide are some of the more common coping mechanisms.

Among Indigenous peoples this persistent trauma has caused high rates of internalized racism and lateral violence. In Canada, this trauma has affected many generations of Indigenous communities, impacting the health and well-being of their descendants.

TIP

An important consequence of intergenerational trauma is that multiple generations of families have been afraid of the school system. As educators, we can be aware that this trauma, continued racism and social marginalization mean that Indigenous student graduation rates are lower than that of other students, despite inroads made. We can disrupt this trend by believing in Indigenous students and their families, understanding this legacy and working closely with all involved to make positive social and individual change.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN STUDENTS' LIVES

We know that many individuals and groups of people in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities lack power. They are seen as outsiders and therefore less deserving. This leads to various forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia and ableism. Within Indigenous communities, student experiences of injustice are often a blending of all of these.²⁶

Racism against Indigenous peoples is related to the history of colonization and is part of a system of ideas, attitudes, practices and policies that discriminate against Indigenous peoples. Sometimes this is easy to see and other times it can be more subtle—hidden in everyday activities and ways of thinking and being. Exploring how racism shows up in our daily lives can help us to name such injustice and strive to put an end to it. Residential schools are a striking example of colonization—one that continues to affect families and communities to this day.

Even now, Indigenous peoples' histories, cultures and languages can be ignored, made invisible or thought of as unimportant by school systems and other institutions. This is another form of injustice. Students may not feel welcome in classrooms and their caregivers may not feel welcome in schools. It may feel like no one understands them or wants them to participate. Non-Indigenous people are beginning to better understand the injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples and are taking different steps to address it.

TIP

A real change can take place when educators think about experiences of racism and inequity from the point of view of Indigenous families. We can reach out for guidance, wisdom and help from Indigenous students, families, Elders and community leaders, to promote the belief that all students are an important part of the school and the wider community.

BULLYING AND RACISM

Bullying and racism are different, but they can overlap. Racism can be an extra source of power for those who are bullying others. Anyone can be bullied, but only social groups that are targets of discrimination live with this particular form of bullying, sometimes called racialized bullying.

When someone is bullied because they belong to a marginalized group, it can be even more difficult to handle, as these discriminatory messages may be further underlined in society at large.

Indigenous gay youth are especially vulnerable to bullying, as homophobia and racism can combine in a toxic mix. Indigenous students who are living away from their families because they are in care or attending school are also particularly vulnerable.

For many Indigenous students, this combination of abuse can make the world feel unsafe and lead them to believe that cruelty is a normal part of life.

TIP

As school staff working with Indigenous students and family members, we need to be aware of the ways prejudice and bullying can feed off of each other. We need to pay greater attention to their safety and wellbeing and we can only do this if we work together, listen to their stories, concerns and wisdom and model authentic positive attitudes and behavior. Given the high numbers of Indigenous students who have experienced bullying and injustice, all educators are encouraged to pay special attention to Indigenous students who are bullying others. These students are often themselves being bullied and we can understand it as part of a cycle of violence.

BULLYING AND SUICIDE

We now know more about the direct connection between bullying and suicide. Students who are bullied can feel alone, helpless and ashamed, afraid to reach out or draw attention to themselves. Hopelessness can drive them to extreme behaviour, such as thinking about or even attempting to take their own life.

This is yet another reason to take bullying seriously and create safe places for all students—whether they are the ones who are being bullied, encouraging it, witnessing it or leading it.

Perhaps it is no surprise that suicide rates among Indigenous youth are five to six times higher than among other young people in Canada. Importantly, Indigenous peoples are 4% of the Canadian population, but Indigenous youth represented 10% of the calls to Kids Help Phone.²⁷

Multiple suicide attempts of young people in the remote Attawapiskat community of northern Ontario awoke many to what is now called the suicide pandemic among Indigenous youth in Canada. A state of emergency has been declared by a number of Indigenous leaders.²⁸

Many efforts have been taken to understand and address this growing problem. Documentaries such as the Eskasoni First Nation's *The Art of Resilience* and Alanis Obomsawin's *Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Métis Child* explore how suicide is affecting Indigenous communities.

TIP

Knowing about the high risk of suicide among Indigenous youth, as well as actions being taken by Indigenous communities, can be a great motivator for all of us. We can strengthen our efforts to ensure students feel connected, surrounded and supported so that they are less at risk to harm themselves in any way.

*Becoming fully aware of the dynamics of bullying and learning positive techniques for intervention can be a lifesaving endeavor. Explore COPA's comprehensive and wholistic approach to understanding and preventing bullying in our resource for Indigenous caregivers: *A Circle of Caring* (copahabitat.ca) and *Safe@School* (safeatschool.ca).*

LATERAL VIOLENCE

People who have experienced violence and abuse commonly repress their feelings of anger, shame and rage. They may in turn abuse those around them who have even less power than they, feeling that this is a safer way to deal with these painful memories and feelings.

This is part of a cycle of abuse and is called *lateral violence*. For Indigenous peoples, it started with colonization and continues to this day. It can include attempts to control, exclude and hurt others with words and/or actions. This kind of abuse is usually directed against people within their own circle, such as family members, friends, neighbours and people at work. In schools, lateral violence may show up as bullying.²⁹

While lateral violence is understandable, it goes without saying that it is nevertheless unacceptable; no one deserves to be the target of someone else's negative feelings—no matter the reason. Each one of us has the right to be safe, strong and free.

INTERNALIZED RACISM

Stories of racism and injustice against Indigenous peoples are all around us. Sadly, they are so common that some Indigenous peoples have come to perceive them as normal and hold negative beliefs about themselves, their origins and their heritage.

This is known as *internalized racism* and can lead to self-hatred and harmful, even disastrous life choices. For young people, this can include substance abuse, leaving school, being violent (to themselves and to others), prostitution or suicidal thoughts and attempts.³⁰

For Indigenous caregivers, this can affect their self-confidence and limit their ability to support their children's education. Even having a little bit of contact with their children's school can create feelings of anxiety, making it difficult to speak up for their children's needs. Because of this, many families don't want to have anything to do with their children's school, even though they might know how valuable it would be.

TIP

Internalized racism can deeply affect the willingness of Indigenous students and families to self-identify. We can ensure that we neither push students to do so, nor question their identity nor single them out to speak about their heritage unless they or their family choose to do so. At the same time, we can learn about First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, contributions and cultures in our schools so as to create a welcoming environment on the journey to reconciliation.

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada is disproportionately high. Native Women's Association of Canada research indicates that between 2000 and 2008, these deaths represented approximately 10% of all female homicides in Canada, even though they make up only 3% of the female population. More shockingly, 17% of those were girls age 18 or younger.³¹ Following strong public pressure from Canadians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, the Canadian government has formally established a national inquiry into this national tragedy.³² Five Indigenous leaders have been appointed as commissioners to lead this independent inquiry.

The complicated mix of violence against girls and women and anti-Indigenous discrimination is causing alarming rates of trauma, which affects all of us. As educators, we can be aware of, sensitive to and work towards addressing sexism, racism, colonialism and violence and its many tragic consequences.

We can ensure that sexist, racist and classist perceptions of Indigenous women are examined, disrupted and challenged at every turn.

MARGINALIZATION

The legacy of oppression for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples has created social marginalization. The consequences may include fractured families, displacement, disproportionate rates of physical and mental illness, violence, addiction and poverty, along with other social barriers.

Not all Indigenous students and families live with these experiences; they are as just as varied as non-Indigenous families and there is much that is positive to report too. For example, increasing numbers of Indigenous youth are training as professionals. We can be sensitive to the various facets of marginalization and inequity students and families live with so as to challenge these barriers. We can also understand that these are not the result of individual failures, but the result of hundreds of years of social, political and economic oppression that can affect whole communities.

INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE

The federal and provincial governments of Canada have a historically fraught relationship with Indigenous peoples, creating and implementing public policy and laws that have effectively disrupted healthy family and community life. Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop, as it is now called, are poignant examples of this.

The Sixties Scoop was a dark era in our history; from the 1960's to the 1980's government agencies forcibly removed Indigenous children from their homes and offered them up for adoption without the consent of their parents. It is estimated that approximately 20,000 Indigenous children were adopted out during this period.³³ A campaign to seek redress from the Canadian government for this injustice is underway as COPA completes this guide.

Even today, Indigenous children are more likely to be placed in foster care or a group home and become a Society or Crown ward—wherein the government takes permanent guardianship. In 2005, there were about 27,500 Indigenous children in foster care across Canada.³⁴ At that time, Indigenous children made up only 7% of the child population in Canada and yet almost half of those in foster care were Indigenous.³⁵ One quarter were Crown wards. Historically, the number of children in care increased as residential schools were closed.

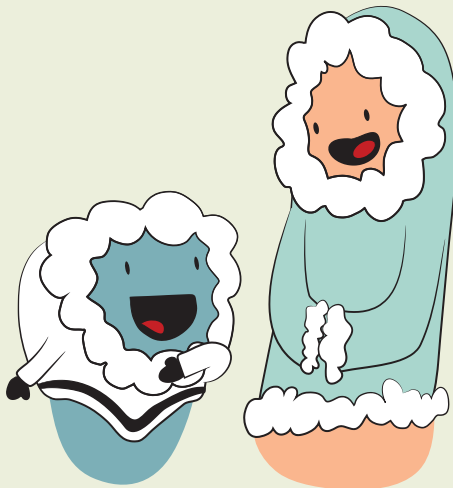
TIP

As educators, we can offer additional wellbeing and academic support to these students, and work alongside community helpers and care-givers. Together, we can help address barriers and strengthen these students' abilities, self-confidence and success while at school.

Children in care are more vulnerable than others, as their families are less involved in their education and wellbeing. As we know, this has a real impact on their chances of success at school and later in life. In the last decade, there has been an increase of Crown wards completing high school and attending a post-secondary institution. Still, only 46% are doing so, compared with 83% of other Ontario students.³⁶

Reports continue to show that when child abuse in Indigenous families is reported, the situation is 2.5 times more likely to be investigated and the child is 9 times more likely to be placed in foster care, than a non-Indigenous child. Furthermore, once in care, Indigenous children stay there longer and are more likely to become Society or Crown wards.³⁷

In response, many Indigenous groups have taken a more active role in managing child welfare, working with government to improve policies and practices. The standards for child welfare agencies are being changed to take into account the importance of Indigenous history, heritage and cultural ties.³⁸ In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the government to cease discriminatory practices and to take measures to right this wrong and prevent further discrimination.³⁹



STUDYING AWAY FROM HOME

Many Indigenous students have to leave home if there is no school in their community. This is a particularly prevalent occurrence during the years of secondary schooling. It can be difficult for students to be far from their loved ones while adjusting to a new life removed from all that they know. Many experience culture shock, often never having lived in a town or a city.

This presents an extra challenge for many students, and feeling lonely and afraid can make it even harder. Experiencing discrimination because they are newcomers puts them at even greater risk. They might also experience racism and bullying that can leave them feeling more isolated. Because of this they may make harmful life decisions, lashing out or harming themselves. Many drop out and decide not to continue their education.

TIP

Students living and studying away from home have unique needs. They and their families require more support from all of us. Being there, listening, supporting and providing nurturing environments for them is all-important—whether we are educators, host families or community helpers. Making sure that students who are away at school are tended to goes a long way. Reaching out to their caregivers who may be far away, as well as host families, more frequently than usual, can also make a positive difference.

WORKING IN RESERVE COMMUNITIES

Some educators may choose to teach in on-reserve communities and that can pose challenges. It is important to be open and learn as much as we can about the community from a wide variety of people living there. We can learn about the cultures, traditions, strengths and role models in the community as well as being open to ways of being and doing things that are different from our known ways.

We can examine and reflect on any bias or preconceived ideas we may have going into the community. We can also learn about the various socio-economic realities, different types of families, and cultural shifts affecting our students. We may need to understand lateral violence much more deeply in small communities since so many more people will be interconnected.

PARENTS IN PRISON

For reasons discussed earlier, many residential school Survivors and those living with intergenerational trauma have come into conflict with the law and spend much of their life in and out of prison. Ironically, some of these prisons have been built directly on the old sites of residential schools.

In fact, Indigenous youth and adults are greatly over-represented in Canadian prisons and their rate of incarceration is growing. Indigenous peoples represent just over 4% of the whole Canadian population and yet, a 2012 study showed that 21% of prisoners in Canadian prisons have Indigenous origins. Indigenous women make up 33% of all female prisoners and their rate of incarceration has increased by 80% in the past decade.⁴⁰

There is more information now than ever before about the negative effect on young people whose parents or caregivers are in prison. Researcher Carol Shedd calls them the “invisible children”.⁴¹ They live with stress at home and at school, feeling ashamed, secretive and disconnected from others, compounded by the absence of their caregiver.

They also can experience *secondary prisonation*—trauma induced by both their parent’s arrest and then their repeated exposure to the harsh environment of prison if they visit. Children with caregivers in prison are also more likely to be put in care and separated from their loved ones.

We know, too, that internalized racism and lateral violence have a real impact on those in prison and their families. It affects how adults act as caregivers, believing less in their ability to support and educate their children. It can also affect a family’s ability to ask the school for help. They may fear being judged and excluded. Sensitivity to the needs of these students is all-important.

Family is the foundation of Inuit culture. The family is surrounded by a larger social network that includes the rest of the community extending across the region. Inuit families are large and interconnected, with intricate bonds that are formed through childbirth, marriage and adoption.



CARING AND SHARING TOGETHER

Joining the Circle presents a positive vision of schools where the teachings and values of Indigenous cultures are all-important, especially kindness and respect. Discrimination, bullying and all forms of abuse and cruelty have no place here. It is a world where students, their families, educators and all people feel safe, accepted and included, where students can learn freely and become who they choose to be. It is a world in which everyone has a role to play and precious gifts to share and receive. It is a world in which people of all ages are *safe, strong and free*.

Because Indigenous students and their families experience so much injustice, it can be difficult for them to imagine that this vision can become a reality. And yet, the contributors to Joining the Circle believe that we can make positive change and that we can all be a part of bringing this goal to life. In so doing, we become part of reconciliation efforts in Canada.

NURTURING WELCOMING CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOLS

Striving to ensure a welcoming and inclusive classroom and school community will have a positive effect on Indigenous students, and on all children. Young people will note these efforts. Even the simplest act of encouraging Indigenous students and believing in them can have a tremendously positive impact on their success and wellbeing.

Having a respectful, caring presence in our students' lives means that there is a greater possibility they will feel tended to and be able to manage barriers that might otherwise impede their success. It can build important life skills and a strong foundation for reflecting, learning and taking positive action.

Students will see us as a resource to turn to when they face challenges. This in and of itself offers educators precious opportunities to be supportive and help build problem-solving skills and decision-making capacity.

When educators develop a positive relationship with their students' caregivers, a crucial bridge is built between home and school. Students are positively affected when they see that learning is important to their family and that their school is a safe place where their families' wisdom and knowledge is welcomed, valued and respected.

TIP

As educators, we can do this in very simple ways. We can show interest in our students—in who they are, in their challenges, their concerns and their successes. We can encourage our students to study and offer resources for homework help. We can believe in our students' academic abilities and celebrate their accomplishments. We can model positive behavior that we hope students will emulate. We can seek wisdom and support from their caregivers. We can reach out to Indigenous people at school or in the community.

HOW FAMILIES CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Family and community are at the very heart of Indigenous ways of being and learning. Family involvement, both at home and at school, has a positive impact on students. When families are involved in their children's education, young people tend to be more successful at school and stay in school longer.⁴²

When we have positive relationships with our students and their families, we can contribute to addressing difficulties in their lives, and help prevent bullying and other forms of cruelty and injustice. In these ways, Indigenous students and families develop more trust, as we demonstrate that we are there for them.

By joining Indigenous peoples' ways of being and learning with those of non-Indigenous people, we can enrich our practice while supporting students' growth at all stages of development.

The creators of this resource believe strongly that Indigenous families have a great deal to offer to their own children, to their schools and to their communities, when it comes to learning and living. Indigenous families can help schools become more safe and welcoming—places where every child's well-being is important and everyone's rights are respected.

As educators, there are simple ways for us to encourage family members and community supports to nurture our students' learning within and beyond the classroom. While many caregivers are already involved in this way, some Indigenous family members may feel less drawn by this as a result of their traumatic history with the education system.

Unfortunately, the history of residential schools and ongoing experiences with discrimination have coloured the view of many families and reduced interest in participating in school activities. Internalized racism, colonization and intergenerational trauma have deeply affected Indigenous peoples and their attitudes toward education and school life. Generations later, family members may feel as though they have little of value to contribute to their children's education, to the school or simply not know how they might pitch in. For some, it can be difficult and even painful to have any contact with the school system.

And yet we know that every family member has strengths, talents, and teachings to share with each other, with their children and with us. Caregivers know their children well and care for them more than anyone else. Nurturing a *safe, strong and free* culture in schools, at home, and in our communities can be imagined as braiding many strands of string together to make one strong rope. From a Métis perspective, it is like the strands of wool in the sash: individually they can be easily broken, but together they are united and strong.

It is important that educators build trust, and we can do so in these simple ways:

- by making the first phone call of the year to home positive and perhaps a simple introduction and welcome.
- by encouraging caregivers and family members to join in school activities or feel welcome to ask questions or raise concerns;
- by reaching out in a friendly manner to a family member at a school or community event and by starting a conversation;
- by introducing ourselves to caregivers when we meet them in the community.

TIP

Next steps might include encouraging caregivers to attend parent-teacher meetings or sharing something in the classroom, finding ways for them to volunteer for school outings or asking them to join School Council. These ideas can help family members feel more comfortable at school. We should keep in mind that Indigenous caregivers may feel particularly anxious about attending these meetings, and may assume that the meeting is for communicating problems only.

One of the Cree teachings of the Medicine Wheel is about responsibility and relationships between the stages of life. This comes from the teaching of the drum—the circle. When we criss-cross the directions of the ties of the drum, it shows the connections between students, caregivers and Elders. Our lives and our journeys are like the Medicine Wheel.



MOVING FORWARD

In this guide, COPA and our partners have shared our vision of classrooms and schools where Indigenous students and families, and indeed all people feel safe, accepted and welcomed. This means ensuring students have the information and tools they need to learn and be the best that they can be as we nurture a *safe, strong and free* world.

We all know there is no simple recipe for real change. And yet, the importance of establishing and strengthening relationships and rebuilding trust with First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, families and leaders cannot be overstated. Educators becoming aware and engaged in nurturing safe and inclusive places to learn and grow is a crucial step toward a profound change of heart. By being present in our students' lives, at home and at school, we will demonstrate that we believe in them and that we do truly care. We can be important, positive role models for our students, valuing and modelling healthy, loving relationships. By aligning ourselves with Indigenous values, teachings and ways of life, we will enhance all of our students' education and personal development—plus our own.

We all have a role to play in refusing to participate in the cycle of shame, blame and violence, as we embrace a new cycle—with concrete ways to learn, reflect, grow and change. We can all contribute to building a school culture based on compassion and kindness, where everyone feels a part of the whole. When Indigenous families feel seen, heard and valued in our schools they will be more likely to share their wisdom and teachings.

Joining the Circle is intended to support all of us in school communities. We hope that you have found guidance and inspiration here, enabling all of us to breathe more life into welcoming spaces for Indigenous students and family members.

Everyone has the right to be *safe, strong and free*. We all belong. *Gchi Miigwech, Yaw^ko, Nya:weh, Kinanâskomitinâwâw, Marsi, Nakumek* and *Qujannamiik* to each person that took the time to contribute to this project.

Historically, two-spirited people were highly respected in many Indigenous cultures and looked up to as leaders, visionaries and healers. Because of this, they were given important spiritual responsibilities. Gender roles and the masculine and feminine were believed to flow together before European people arrived. Words to describe up to six different gender roles (beyond that of just male and female) have been found in 155 Indigenous languages in North America.



FAQS

Q. Do Indigenous students speak Indigenous languages?

- A. Yes, many do! And in fact, their first language may not be English, and instead Indigenous. Students may therefore need additional support with their English language skills. This may also explain why some students will be quieter in class or less comfortable with curriculum.

Q. Does being Métis mean that one has mixed Indigenous and European heritage?

- A. There is often an assumption that if one is of mixed ancestry, with Indigenous heritage, that one is Métis. While that might satisfy the generic definition of Métis, it does not necessarily meet the definition of Métis as a people.

In Canada, the Métis are recognized as a distinct nation. “Métis” means 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.

Q. What terminology is appropriate to use?

- A. It is always best to allow people to choose their own terms of identification as they vary. For example, many people identify themselves by the nation to which they belong, such as Anishinaabek, Cree, Mohawk, Odawa, Oneida, Métis, Inuit or a combination of identities.

Today, “Indigenous” may be used in speaking about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples collectively, while recognizing that First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and peoples are varied and distinct. The term “Indigenous” is used currently in Canada.

“Indian” was the term used by the Europeans who first made contact with the First Nations peoples in North America. “Indian” and “Eskimo” (to refer to the Inuit) have a long history of negative connotations and are considered offensive. The terms “Native” and “Aboriginal” are still in use by some groups and government bodies. The term Indigenous is often misused to represent First Nations only; while in fact, it includes three distinct groups: First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

Q. How can I avoid language that stereotypes Indigenous peoples?

- A. Discriminatory stereotypes portray Indigenous peoples as being “savage” or “uncivilized”. They were called “Eskimos”, which means “eaters of raw meat”. Other stereotypes, such as the “noble savage” or the “Indian living in harmony with nature,” may seem less harmful, but still distort identities by promoting unrealistic and dated generalizations of people.

Q. What is the correct way to speak of the Inuit people in Canada?

- A. 1 person: Inuk (e-nook)
2 people: Inuit (e-new-e)
3+ people: Inuit (e-new-eet)

Q. What are some of the differences of the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe?

- A. There are many differences; for example, at their own ceremonies, the Haudenosaunee go around a circle or pass things within a circle moon-wise (counter-clockwise). The Anishinaabe go around a circle or pass items within the circle sun-wise (clockwise) during their ceremonies.

First Nations languages emerged out of these groups, the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe. The Haudenosaunee’s languages are Iroquois-based and include the Six Nations languages: Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca and Tuscarora. The Anishinaabe’s languages are Algonquian-based and include all other First Nations languages: Algonquin, Cree, Dene, Odawa, Ojibwe and Oji-Cree.

Q. What is smudging?

- A. First Nations open an event, meeting or gathering with a smudge and a welcome by an Elder. This entails purifying oneself by using sacred medicines (various herbs) and blessings. Smudging is believed to be a time of grounding and preparing for the work, teachings or ceremony that will follow.

Q. Q: What is the importance of fiddling and jigging for the Métis?

- A. The Métis use fiddling and jigging to bring people together. The fiddle is an important part of Métis culture. It is the primary instrument for accompanying the Métis jig. It plays a prominent role in celebrations. The Red River Jig, a unique dance developed by the Métis peoples, combines the intricate footwork of First Nations dancing with the instruments and form of European music. Traditionally, dancing started early in the evening and would last until dawn. Some Métis peoples continue this tradition today.

Q. Were there treaties between the Indigenous peoples of Canada before European contact?

- A. Treaty agreements, both formal and informal, were created and respected by the First Nations peoples themselves, with each other, long before European contact, ensuring stability as well as peace and cooperation between the nations.

Q. When was the last treaty between the government and Indigenous peoples signed?

- A. New treaties are still being developed. The Algonquin land claim is an example of a current treaty negotiation and will result in Ontario's "first modern-day constitutionally protected treaty". The Algonquin have unceded rights to parts of both the Ottawa and Mattawa rivers that run through Ontario.

Q. What is Bannock?

- A. Bannock is a simple bread that could be made from the rations of flour and sugar that were given to replace traditional foods. Bannock can be baked or cooked on a stick over an open fire. It is also called fry bread when it is fried. It is a staple of many First Nations' diets.

Many Indigenous peoples consider it a traditional food, and it is consumed at many celebrations. In fact, bannock was introduced as a result of colonialism. When people were forcibly relocated and sent to reserves without good hunting or other traditional food sources, Indigenous people were taught to make bannock to help tide their hunger.