

Ontario To Strengthen Mandatory Indigenous Learning in School Curriculum

New Funding and Curriculum Reaffirms Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation

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[Education](#)

TORONTO — Working with Indigenous partners, Elders, Knowledge Holders and education stakeholders, the Ontario government announced a plan to expand First Nation, Métis and Inuit content and learning in the elementary curriculum. The province announced that these changes will further strengthen mandatory learning on residential schools and foster greater understanding within the province's education system of the intergenerational legacy borne by Indigenous families. This work builds on Ontario's first phase of curriculum revisions in response to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#), which were implemented in 2018. In addition, in 2021-22, the ministry is providing \$23.96 million in Indigenous Education funding to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit students as part of a broader government commitment to reconciliation. The Ontario government built on this commitment with the announcement this week to continue expanding multi-year funding to support sustainability in partner organizations.

Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, and Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs, made the announcement at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto joined by Traditional Knowledge Keeper Vivian Roy, James Marsden, Chiefs of Ontario Education Portfolio Holder and Anishinabek Nation Southeast Regional Deputy Grand Council Chief, and Joanne Meyer, Chief Operating Officer of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

The Ontario government's work will ensure that First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives are reflected throughout the province's curriculum. Currently, the province's curriculum includes mandatory learning in Social Studies, Grades 4-6, and History in Grades 7, 8, and 10, including mandatory learning on residential schools in Grades 8 and 10, introduced in 2018.

The Ministry of Education announced a commitment to complete the full spectrum of learning across this elementary curriculum, addressing the current gap in Grades 1 and 3 by September 2023. This timeline and the curriculum development process is being co-developed with Indigenous partners to reflect meaningful collaboration while recognizing the urgency of this content in learning.

Ministers Lecce and Rickford outlined Ontario's education plan to strengthen Indigenous learning through a meaningful co-development process with Indigenous partners, Elders and Knowledge Holders, including:

- Mandatory Indigenous-focused learning added to the Social Studies, Grades 1-3 curriculum, including exploring opportunities for new learning on:
 - The role of family and resilience in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and nations
 - First Nations, Métis and Inuit historical and contemporary realities
 - Indigenous peoples' interrelationship and connection with the land
 - The residential school system and the reclamation and revitalization of identity, language, culture and community connections.

This commitment ensures that all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are enriched by learning about the histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions of First Nation, Métis and Inuit individuals and communities in Canada. These efforts further Ontario's commitment to work with Indigenous partners to advance reconciliation and to implement the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action](#).

"We are committed to recognizing the contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, communities and nations to our province and country while learning their histories and cultures," said Minister Lecce. "Including Indigenous content and voices in Ontario's curriculum – along with mandatory learning on residential schools – is a meaningful way that we can address issues of racism, Indigenous student well-being and advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. We are also investing more to support Indigenous students, with the aim of boosting graduation rates and enabling economic opportunity for the next generation of Indigenous students."

To this end, the ministry is investing \$23.96 million from the [Priorities and Partnerships Funding](#) in targeted supports for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, in addition to the existing funding for school boards in the 2021-22 school year. These investments will allow Indigenous partners, school boards and other education stakeholders to produce high-impact supports that provide supportive, culturally appropriate and safe education opportunities for Indigenous students, while strengthening Ontario's education system and well-being for all learners in the province. In addition, the province is supporting Indigenous language revitalization and reconciliation by offering Inuktitut as a language of instruction within Ontario's Indigenous languages curricula.

In addition, the Ministry of Education recently approved sustainable, multi-year funding agreements for an investment of \$3.19 million over three years to strengthen existing partnerships with the Chiefs of Ontario and First Nation Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTOs) and provide stable funding for the length of the agreement. This investment will support reconciliation and student success with the goal of promoting higher graduation rates and transitions into post-secondary and employment opportunities for First Nation students.

The Métis Nation of Ontario is also receiving \$850,000 in 2021-22 towards collaborating with school board administrators and educators in the learning of Métis knowledge and the integration of this knowledge into Indigenous education programs and initiatives, as well as multi-year funding for three years starting in 2020-21 for a total of \$406,000 for the River Program, an alternative secondary school program that provides academic and cultural supports to Métis students.

"We are investing in culturally appropriate learning for Indigenous students and enhancing opportunities for all learners to increase their knowledge of First Nation, Inuit and Métis histories and cultures to help all Ontarians gain a better understanding and respect for Indigenous perspectives," said Minister Rickford. "Our government continues to work in collaboration with Indigenous partners to co-develop this curriculum to ensure Indigenous voices are at the centre of this important work."

The Ontario government is committed to ensuring every Indigenous student across the province is supported with access to culturally safe learning opportunities. The government will continue to support targeted initiatives to improve outcomes for Indigenous students and to build the knowledge of all students and educators regarding Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions.

Quick Facts

- The implementation of a mandatory curriculum on the residential school system, treaties and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada is in response to Nos. 62 and 63 of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#).
- Since 2019, the Ontario government has met with Indigenous partners, including PTOs, individual First Nations, the Métis Nation of Ontario, education groups and service providers, like the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and Tungasuvvingat Inuit, to co-develop an approach for additional curriculum revisions to strengthen Indigenous content and learning.
- Social Studies, Grades 4-6, and History, Grades 7, 8 and 10, underwent Indigenous-focused curriculum revisions in 2018. These revisions were made in collaboration with Indigenous and education partners.
- The revised First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies, Grades 9-12 curriculum was implemented in 2019 to provide opportunities for students to learn about Indigenous perspectives, cultures and contributions in areas such as art, literature, law, humanities, politics and history. This curriculum was revised in collaboration with Indigenous partners and education stakeholders.
- In 2021-22, the Indigenous Education Grant in the Grant for Student Needs is \$96.7 million, with the following allocations:
 - Indigenous Languages Allocation (\$14.7 million): Supports elementary and secondary Indigenous language programs from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12.
 - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies Allocation (\$59.6 million): Supports secondary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies courses.
 - Board Action Plans Allocation (\$22.4 million): Funds the implementation of programs and initiatives that support the academic success and well-being of Indigenous students, as well as build the knowledge of all students and educators on Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions.
- In May 2021, the Ontario government, Grand Council Treaty #3 and Canada signed a memorandum of understanding on First Nation education. In 2020-21, the ministry provided \$299,042 to Grand Council Treaty #3 to ensure access to meaningful supports, improve overall outcomes and increase graduation rates for Grand Council Treaty #3 students.
- The Reciprocal Education Agreement, which came into effect in September 2019, was designed in collaboration with First Nation partners and education stakeholders to improve access to education, strengthen parent and guardian

choice and improve First Nation student transitions between provincially funded and First Nation-operated or federally funded schools in Ontario.

Quotes

"We are very pleased with the announcement that our request for multi-year funding agreements has been approved by the Ministry of Education. This will assist us in retaining the expertise required to ensure the educational priorities of First Nation communities are addressed in the provincial education system in a timely manner. We also look forward to establishing a robust and meaningful collaborative process with the Ministry of Education to ensure the experience and knowledge of First Nations in Ontario is accurately reflected throughout the province's curriculum. While we welcome additional funding for school boards to produce supports that better meet the needs of First Nation learners, we ask for continued efforts to ensure school boards co-develop these supports with their local First Nation partners through all phases of development – from concept to implementation and ongoing evaluation"

- Glen Hare
Ontario Regional Chief

"Education is a critical component to reconciliation, and we look forward to a collaborative partnership with Ontario that will allow us to develop, strengthen and prioritize Indigenous content and learning within Ontario schools. Curricula that feature Métis-specific content benefits both Métis students and their peers, and we commend the Ontario Ministry of Education for their continued commitment to reconciliation through impactful and meaningful partnerships."

- Joanne Meyer
Chief Operating Officer, Métis Nation of Ontario

"Tungasuvvingat Inuit is extremely grateful to be an active contributor to the Inuit content and learning for the elementary curriculum. As a mom of school-aged children, it is important for any Inuk child in Ontario to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Through the important work of the Uqausilirijiit Circle and support from the province, we are extremely proud to include Inuktitut as an available option under the Native Languages curriculum."

- Amanda Kilabuk
Executive Director, Tungasuvvingat Inuit

"This is a step forward toward greater reconciliation in Ontario. It is important to ensure that all students are learning about the histories and contributions of Indigenous people throughout Ontario's K-12 curriculum. What we will need to see is true collaboration with Indigenous leaders, at every stage of the process, to ensure our cultures and perspectives are properly reflected. There is much work to be done, but I'm hopeful the progress announced today will become a catalyst towards an ongoing conversation that leads to real action in the years ahead."

- Elaine Johnston
Chair, Indigenous Trustees' Council, Ontario Public School Boards' Association

Additional Resources

- [Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students in Ontario](#)
- [Historic Level of Public Education Funding With Additional Supports to Keep Students and Staff Safe](#)
- [Ontario Supporting the Identification and Commemoration of Indian Residential School Burial Sites](#)
- [Ontario Provides Additional Support to Help Indigenous Students Succeed](#)
- [Ontario Takes Action to Improve Access to Education for First Nation Students](#)
- [Ontario's Indigenous Education Strategy](#)
- [Social Studies, History and Geography elementary curriculum](#)

- [First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies secondary curriculum](#)
 - [Native Languages elementary curriculum](#)
 - [Native Languages secondary curriculum](#)
 - [Treaties Teaching and Learning Resources](#)
 - [Indigenous Canada Massive Open Online Course](#)
 - [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)
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