Cowichan Valley School District
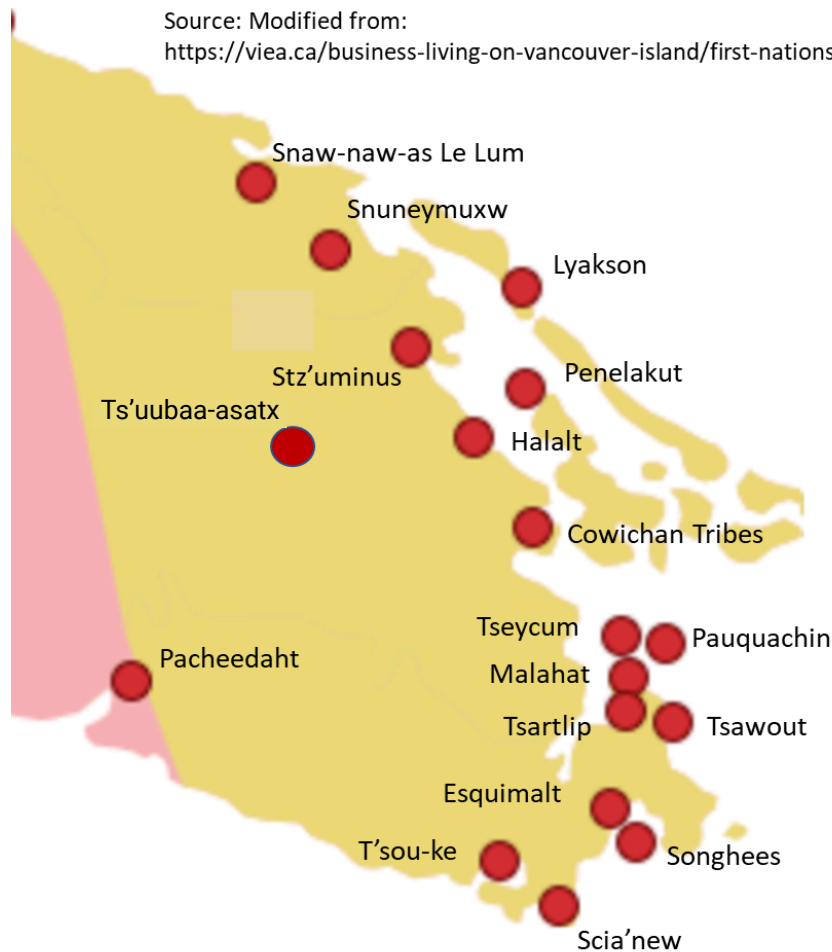
# Cultural Competency Guide

COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Land Acknowledgement

The Cowichan Valley School District acknowledges that we are located on the on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Quw'utsun, Malahat, Ts'uubaa- asatx, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, & Lyackson Peoples. We are committed to decolonizing our instruction and assessment of all students through work based in honour and respect. We value and foster our relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit neighbours, as we continue on our reconciliation journey.

Source: Modified from:
https://viea.ca/business-living-on-vancouver-island/first-nations/

Snaw-naw-as Le Lum

Snuneymuxw

Lyakson

Stz'uminus

Ts'uubaa-asatx

Penelakut

Halalt

Cowichan Tribes

Tseycum

Pauquachin

Malahat

Pacheedaht

Tsartlip

Tsawout

Esquimalt

T'sou-ke

Songhees

Scia'new

Cowichan Tribes

Halalt First Nation

Lyackson First Nation

Malahat Nation

Penelakut Tribe

Stz'uminus First Nation

Ts'uubaa-asatx Nation

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to School District No. 73 (Kamloops-Thompson), who reside on the traditional territories of the Secwépemc people, for sharing their guide with us and inspiring us to create a localized document for our School District.

We would like to thank the education departments of the local First Nations and Cowichan Valley Métis association, members of the Indigenous Education Council, community members and staff who have provided valuable feedback in the creation of this document.

We acknowledge that this is a living document that will change over time to best reflect current information and understanding.

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# Table of Contents

# Paddling Together



Purpose → Shared Beliefs → Guiding Principles → Professional Standards → Key Definitions

COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Purpose

This guide helps those working in the K-12 education system increase their ability to provide culturally safe and respectful learning environments.

Cowichan Valley School district recognizes and works collaboratively to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of Indigenous peoples are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented. The school district recognizes First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation, as the Indigenous peoples of Canada. The work of forming relationships based on the recognition of rights, respect, and partnership must reflect the unique interests, priorities, and circumstances of each people.*

**While this journey is individual, it is our collective responsibility to They't tu yu'ewu skweyul (fix the days ahead).**

The purpose of this guide is to:

- ensure a common understanding of the historical context of what has happened to Indigenous People
- understand the impacts of systemic barriers and personal biases in present day
- understand and recognize the rights holders, and
- support everyone in moving forward with their growth and development to better support the students (especially Indigenous students) and the communities the district serves.

## WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

All who work in the K-12 education system.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide contains educational information and resources to develop cultural competency. While information can be explored individually, learning is enhanced when people can learn and grow together.

While the guide includes resources that may be used by staff, it is not an endorsement of specific resources. As professionals, it is up to each individual educator, to determine which resource works best for them. These are only suggestions and are not exhaustive.

# Shared Beliefs

Key documents on Indigenous Worldviews, Reconciliation and Rights-Holder governance serve as essential learning tools throughout the cultural competency journey. These resources deepen understanding across global, national, provincial, and local contexts.
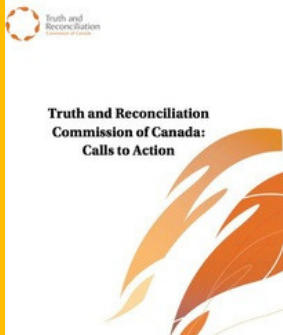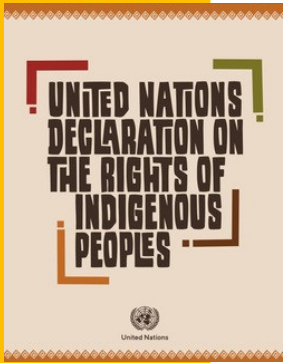
Global Context:
*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*

National Context:
*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*
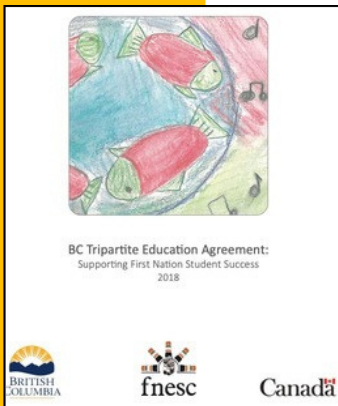
Local Context:
Local Education Agreements (LEA) Memoradums Understanding (MOU)

Provincial Context:
*BC Tripartite Ed. Agreement, DRIPA, Legislation - Bill 40*
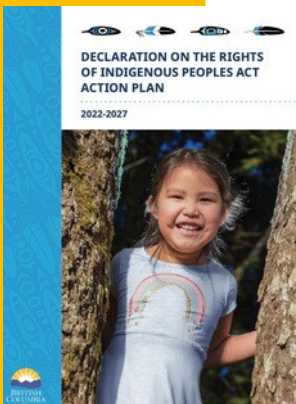
# Guiding Principles

When we are learning about a culture different than our own, we begin asking questions and being curious. Culture is defined as "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group, also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time".

Understanding the diverse characteristics of cultural worldviews can help us be responsive and respectful to the needs of people from different cultural backgrounds. We acknowledge that each nation may have guiding principles. Two guiding documents, shared here, support an understanding of Indigenous worldviews. The document on the left was created by Cowichan Tribes. The document on the right was created by the First Nations Education Steering Committee. Both documents provide information to support building cultural competency. We look forward to being able to add additional examples in the future.



Quw'utsun Snuw'uy'ulh
COWICHAN TEACHINGS FOR EDUCATION

**Mukw' tu s'a'luqw'a' 'o' tth'ele's tu s-huli**
All the (relatives) families are the heart of life.

**Ts'iiyulh ch 'u tuni' s-aamusthamut**
Give thanks for what you have been given.

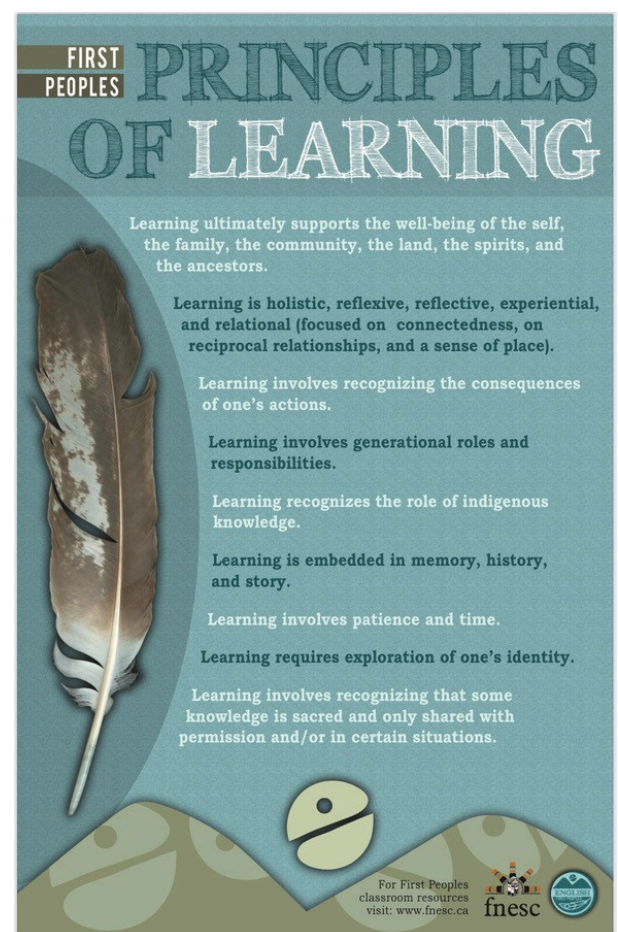**Stsielhstuhw tu Sul-hween̓ 'i' to' mukw' lhwe̓t**
Honour the Elders and every person.

**'Iyusstuhw tun' a skweyul.**
Enjoy today.

**Hwialasmut tu tumuhw**
Take care of the earth.

**Hiiye'yutul tst 'u to' mukw' stem 'i' 'u tun'a tumuhw**
Everything in nature is a part of our family – we are all relatives.

**Hwiiw' tsus tul'**
Teach one another.

**Su-hiim'stuhw tun hi'wa'qw 'i' tu xutsmins**
Hold your leaders and their decisions in high respect.

**Thuthu̓'uqtul' ch 'u kwthu ni' 'aluxut 'uhw.**
Share what you have harvested.

**'Tl'i' to' mukw' mustimuhw**
Each person is important.

**Hwiaɬ'asmut ch tun' s-ye̓ɬ**
Take care of your health.

**Yath ch 'o' lhq'il'**
Always be positive.

**'Tl'im' ch 'o' lhq'il̓, 'i' yelh'us qwal**
Be certain before you speak.

**Nem̓ ch thay'thut, 'uso' hwu stsuwet.**
Go prepare yourself so you can become knowledgeable.

**Mukw' stem, 'i' mukw' lhwet, 'o' slhilhukw'tul'**
Everyone and everything is connected.

**'Ts'i'ts'uwatul' tseep', 'u tun syaays, 'i' mukw' lhwet tse' 'uw', tslhuw'nus**
Help one another with your work, and all will benefit.

**T yetul' ch**
Treat each other respectfully.

Cowichan Tribes
Quw'utsun Syuw'entst Lelum

Shared with permission from Cowichan Tribes



FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Learning involves patience and time.

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

For First Peoples classroom resources visit: www.fnesc.ca

fnesc

COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Professional Standards

## TEACHING STANDARD 9

In 2019, Standard 9 was added to the Professional Standards for BC Educators which apply to all individuals holding a Certificate of Qualification to teach in British Columbia. Standard 9 states:
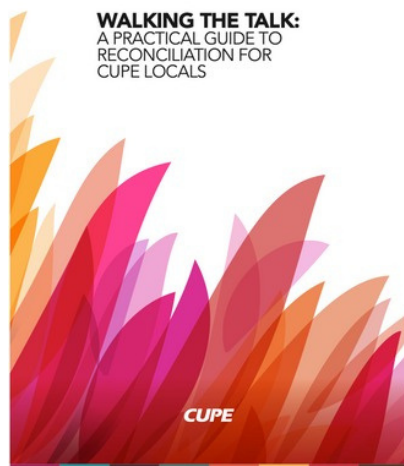


Professional Standard 9

Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future.

"Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices to facilitate change. Educators value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing and being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Educators understand the power of focusing on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community, and the natural world. Educators integrate First Nations, Inuit, and Métis worldviews and perspectives into learning environments."*

CUPE and USW have similar documents to build allyship and reconciliation for members.

## CUPE

https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/reconciliation_guide_eng_final.pdf



WALKING THE TALK:
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RECONCILIATION FOR CUPE LOCALS

## USW

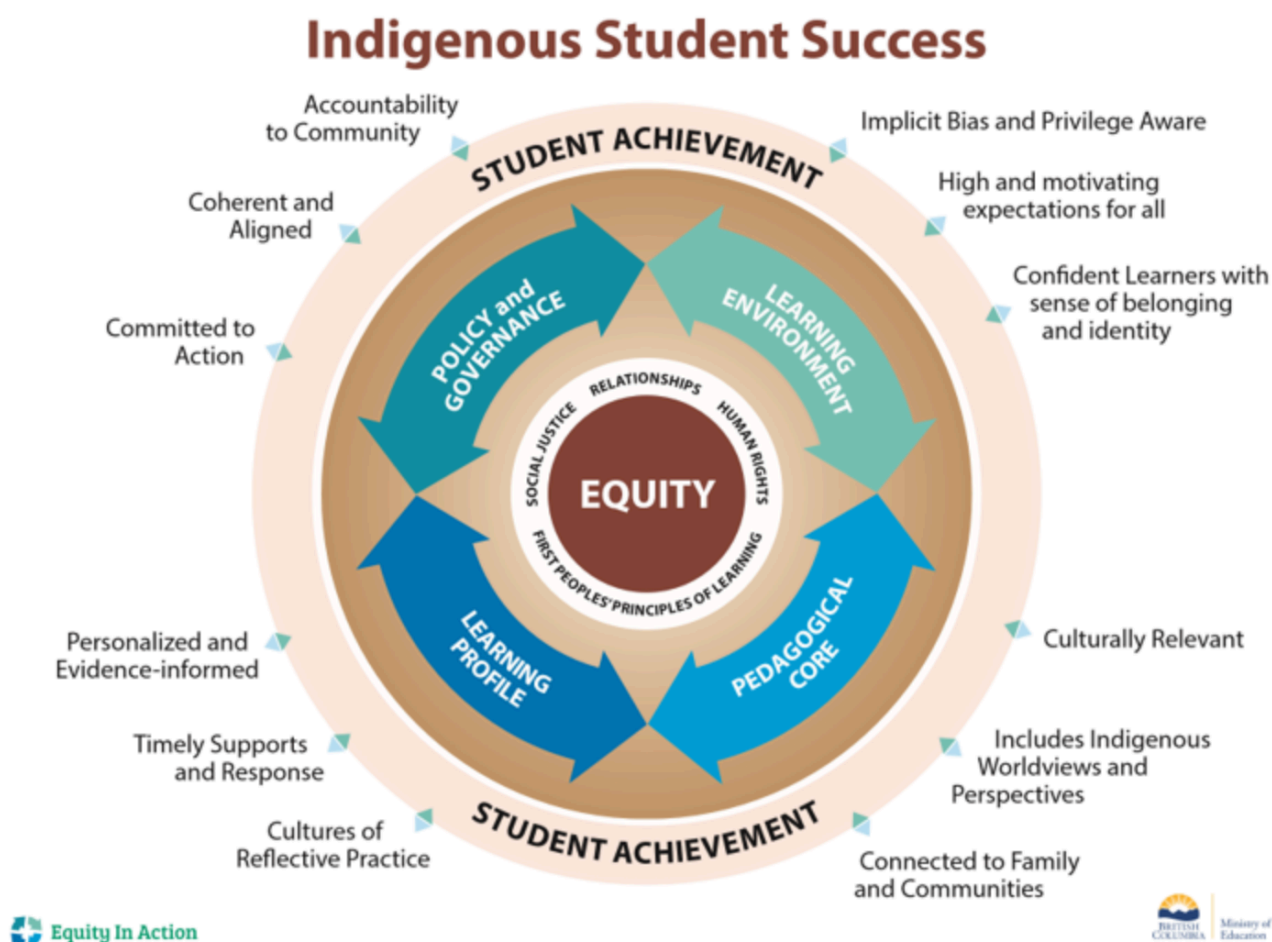https://usw.ca/trc-action-2/



COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Equity in Action

The Cowichan Valley School District actively participates in a process that acknowledges and supports the need for systemic changes in practices and policies that harm some cultural groups of people. Using the Equity in Action framework from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, we are consistently monitoring Indigenous student success through the following four pillars: *Policy & Governance, Learning Environments, Learning Profiles, and Pedagogical Core*.

Equity in Action policies are a value to the employer, and we are working on recruitment strategies that support a diverse workforce. We value employees who practice and provide Indigenous Worldviews in our workplaces, learning spaces and the greater community.



## Indigenous Student Success

Accountability to Community
Coherent and Aligned
Committed to Action
Personalized and Evidence-informed
Timely Supports and Response
Cultures of Reflective Practice

Implicit Bias and Privilege Aware
High and motivating expectations for all
Confident Learners with sense of belonging and identity
Culturally Relevant
Includes Indigenous Worldviews and Perspectives
Connected to Family and Communities

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

POLICY and GOVERNANCE · LEARNING ENVIRONMENT · LEARNING PROFILE · PEDAGOGICAL CORE

EQUITY

RELATIONSHIPS · HUMAN RIGHTS · FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING · SOCIAL JUSTICE

Equity In Action

British Columbia | Ministry of Education

COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Self-Identification and Legal Definitions

**WHAT DOES INDIGENOUS MEAN?**

Indigenous refers to a person who is native to an area. It is the term currently utilized by the United Nations, as well as the Canadian and British Columbia governments. There is no common definition, rather the basis is on self-identification with pre-colonial societies, traditional territory, and cultural systems. Currently, the term used to self-identify within the Cowichan Valley school district is Indigenous. It is best to be specific to the Nation when you know it.

*CBC Kids: What does Indigenous Mean?*

**ABORIGINAL PEOPLES***

Aboriginal peoples, as defined in the 1982 Constitution, refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. Aboriginal is a legal concept.

- A Band is a legal term used to refer to a group of Indigenous peoples. Most prefer to use the terms Nation, First Nation, or Community.
- A person who has Status meets the definition of an Indian under the Indian Act and has certain rights and restrictions.
- A reserve is a track of land set aside by the Indian Act for the use of a specific Band.
- A person who is Non-Status does not meet the definition of an Indian or chooses not to register yet still identifies as First Nations.

NOTE: Indian is a legal term, and in most other contexts is considered offensive.

Image location: xwaaqwum (Settler name: Burgoyne Bay)

*Adapted from: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303

# Self Identification & Legal Definitions*

**FIRST NATIONS**

There is no legal definition of First Nations, but it can refer to both a collective (ie Cowichan) or an individual. In the Cowichan Valley School District there are seven First Nations: Cowichan, Halalt, Lyackson, Malahat, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, and Tsuubaa-asatx.

- As of 2016 there are over 172,000 people who identify as First Nations in BC, which makes up 64% of all Indigenous people in BC.
- There are 203 First Nations in BC that speak 34 unique languages.

For more information on local First Nations, please visit the individual websites for each nation.  Please find links on Land Acknowledgment page.

**INUIT**

Inuit refers to Indigenous peoples of Northern Canada, the word means 'people' in Inuktitut. Inuit people have a distinct language and culture.

- There are over 1,600 Inuit living in BC, making up just under 1% of all Indigenous people in BC.

- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national representative organization for Inuit in Canada.

Image retrieved from: https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/inuit-nunangat/

# Self Identification & Legal Definitions

**MÉTIS**

Members of the Métis Nation trace their origins to the fur trade in the Red River Valley and across Rupert's Land. Métis people are distinct from other Indigenous people, and share a common culture, language, shared history, and homeland.

Métis people share collective cultural practices, kinship ties, and history as a Nation. The term Métis does not encompass all individuals with mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage, rather Métis refers to a distinct people who have their own customs, ways of life, and recognizable group identity separate from those of their First Nations and European ancestors. Although the Métis people are one Nation, they have diverse expressions of Métis culture. The Métis National Council defines Métis as… "a person who self identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, and who is accepted by the Métis Nation."

Locally, there is the Cowichan Valley Metis Association.

# Paddling Together



Student Outcomes → Nation Partnerships → Cultural Safety-Becoming Anti-rascist → Student Identity, Systemic Barriers → Structural Interventions
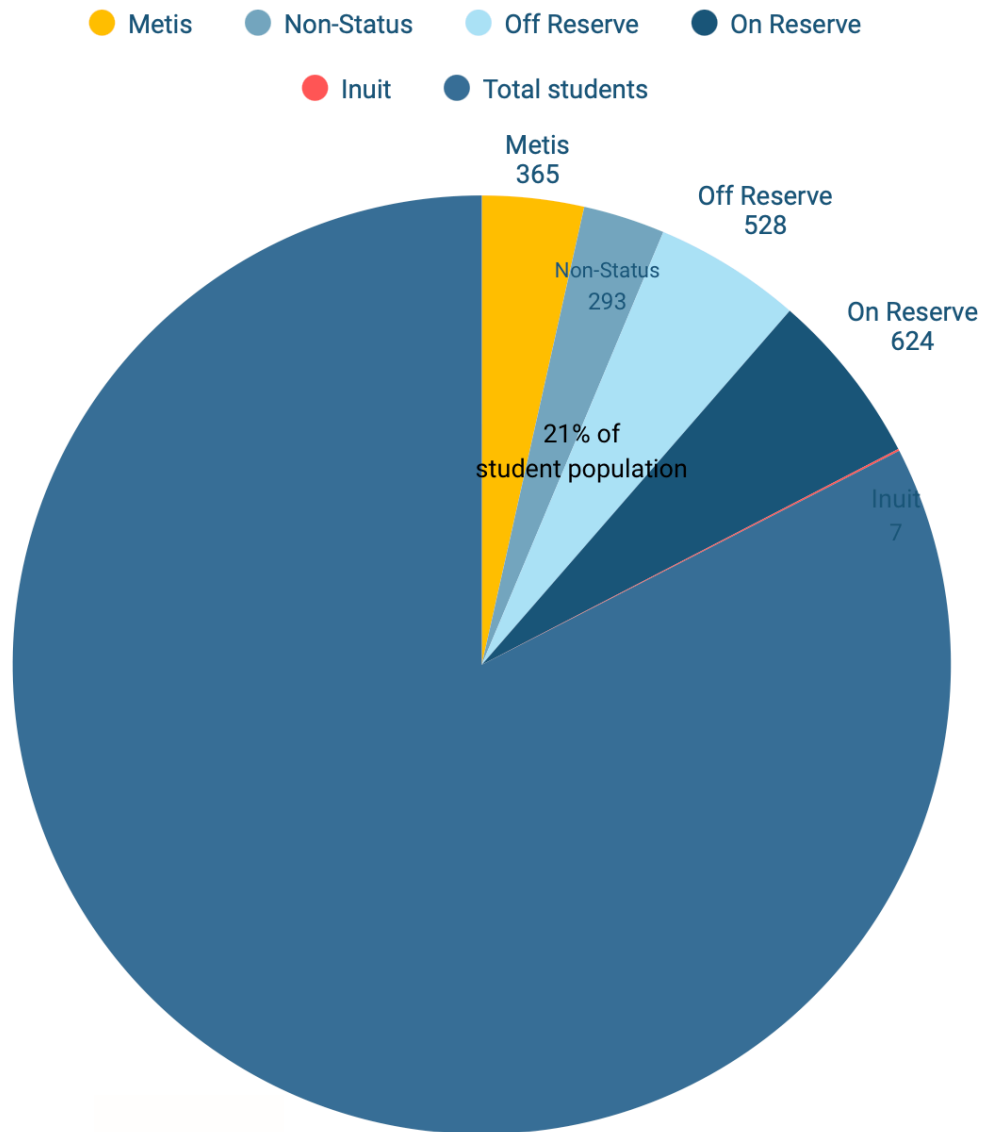
COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Student Outcomes

The Cowichan Valley School District serves approximately 8600 learners with 1800+ learners who have self-identified as having Indigenous ancestry. This is approximately 21% of the student population. There are 23 schools located within the traditional and shared territories of the Cowichan, Malahat, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, and Lyackson First Nations.

## Indigenous Ancestry in District- 1817 Students
## 8599 Total Students in District

- Metis
- Non-Status
- Off Reserve
- On Reserve
- Inuit
- Total students

Metis
365

Non-Status
293

Off Reserve
528

On Reserve
624

21% of
student population

Inuit
7

*Student data is based on the 2024/25 school year

# Student Outcomes

In 2015, a **Progress Audit: The Education of Aboriginal Students in the BC Public School System** reported significant inequities of outcomes for Indigenous learners in the BC public school system. According to the provincial Aboriginal *How Are We Doing Report (2023-2024)*, this continues to be true in almost every school district in the province today.

Historically, in the Cowichan Valley School District, the five-year completion rate for Indigenous students is less than 50% compared to non-Indigenous students who have a completion rate of above 80%. The average six-year completion rate for Indigenous students is approximately 60% compared to non-Indigenous students who have an average completion rate of approximately 90%.
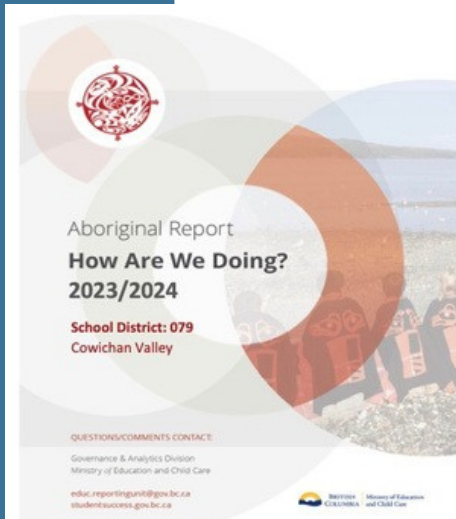
## FIVE-YEAR COMPLETION RATE, 2019/20 - 2023/24

**BC Residents**

The five-year completion rate is the percent of Grade 8 students who graduate with a BC Certificate of Graduation ("Dogwood") or a BC Adult Graduation Diploma ("Adult Dogwood"), within five years from the first time they enrol in Grade 8, adjusted for migration in and out of BC It is not the inverse of a "dropout rate" as students may graduate after the five-year period.

### FIVE-YEAR COMPLETION RATE

| School Year | Aboriginal | | | Non-Aboriginal | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total % | Female % | Male % | Total % | Female % | Male % |
| 2019/20 | 42 | 43 | 41 | 85 | 88 | 82 |
| 2020/21 | 44 | 51 | 35 | 81 | 79 | 83 |
| 2021/22 | 44 | 46 | 42 | 80 | 83 | 76 |
| 2022/23 | 46 | 49 | 44 | 85 | 88 | 81 |
| 2023/24 | 42 | 45 | 40 | 87 | 91 | 84 |

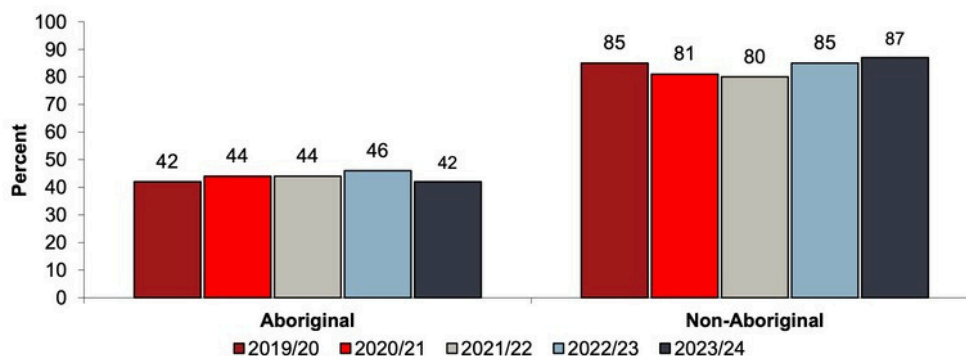**Five-year Completion Rate: Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal**



Chart retrieved from: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade- 12/reports/ab-hawd/ab-hawd-school-district-079.pdf

**COWICHAN VALLEY**
School District

# Partnerships

**Local Education Agreements (LEA)**

FNESC states "A Local Education Agreement (LEA) is an agreement that sets the terms and conditions for the purchase of education programs and services for First Nation students living on reserve by a First Nation. LEAs are a key mechanism for accountability and effective working relationship between a First Nation and school board or, a First Nation and an independent school authority. LEAs also include terms and conditions related to improving First Nation student outcomes and developing the relationships necessary to accomplish that mutual goal."*

The Cowichan Valley School District has LEAs with the following Nations: Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, Malahat, Penelakut and Stz'uminus.

**Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)**

MOUs are a collaborative agreement between two parties, yet are not legally binding. They demonstrate a willingness to work together to support student success, including the cultural practices and protocols of the nation they represent.

Currently, the Cowichan Valley School District has MOUs with the Lyackson First Nation, Ts'uubaa-asatx and the Cowichan Valley Métis Association.

**The district works collaboratively with Rights Holders and the Métis Nation using the Local Education Agreements and Memorandums of Understandings in place. These documents can be found on our district website, and they are updated every 4-5 years.**

**LEAs & MOUs in Cowichan Valley School District**

# Nation Partnerships

## Student Life Plans

During the 2024-2025 school year, the District required Student Life Plans, as part of the LEA & MOU agreements. The intention of the Student Life Plans is to support student success, goal setting, build capacity in self identity, strength and cultural awareness. Student voice, through the Student Life Plans, provides essential insights into what matters most for the learners in our schools.

These Student Life Plan templates were created in partnership with members of the District LEA/MOU working group. With the assistance of staff, students with Indigenous ancestry will complete a life plan each year. The Student Life Plans will be saved from year to year allowing for goal setting and reflecting. Student Life Plans can be found in the documents section of MYED (My Education BC).
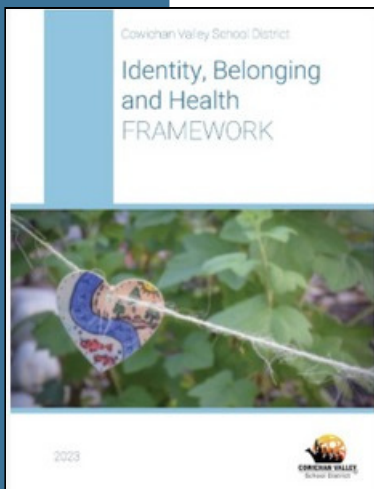
## Identity, Belonging and Health

School District 79 implemented Administrative Procedure 169 (AP169): Identity, Belonging and Connection Policy in 2023. This policy was created with support from the District Anti-Racism committee. The Identity, Belonging and Health Framework was created to action AP169. The document outlines resources and supports to address marginalization, hate speech and racism in our community, and provide resources for creating culturally safe and accountable spaces in our district.

**Take a moment to read through the Identity, Belonging and Health Framework. What sections or ideas resonate with you?**

COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Why is Cultural Safety Important?

When we develop an awareness about the role cultural safety can have in our schools, it helps build healthy relationships built on listening, trust, respect and value among diverse groups of people. **This creates "an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together."** * Focusing on cultural safety aligns with and supports the School District's strategic plan, specifically individual and collective well-being.

The graphic below shows a continuum of cultural competency.  The arrow goes back and forth representing that context can make a difference as to where we might locate ourselves at any given time.  Humility often drives ones ability to develop cultural competence as it requires self-reflection and the awareness of the system barriers of marginalized groups of people. As each person moves up the continuum towards culturally responsive teaching and learning, the education system will become more culturally proficient and sustainable which leads to cultural safety.  It's important to remember that cultural safety is determined by the recipients of the service (students, families and staff).

## Continuum of Cultural Competency

| Cultural Destructiveness, Incapacity and Blindness | Cultural Awareness and movement towards Cultural Humility | Cultural Competence | Cultural Responsiveness, Proficiency and Sustainability |
|---|---|---|---|

**Cultural Safety**

**What part of the continuum are you curious about? Where might you place yourself today?**

*Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety – what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2), 213-214.

COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

# Understanding the Cultural Competency Continuum

Cultural safety is achieved through a journey of growth, learning, and reflection.  The continuum outlines the progression that individuals may move through on their learning journey.

| Cultural Destructiveness, Incapacity, and Blindness | Cultural Awareness and movement towards Cultural Humility | Cultural Competence | Cultural Responsiveness, Proficiency, and Sustainability |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Cultural differences are ignored, minimized, or actively devalued.<br>• There may be intentional or unintentional beliefs that certain cultures are superior to others.<br>• Cultural blindness assumes all people have the same needs and values, encouraging assimilation while disregarding the impacts of power, privilege, and colonization.<br>• This stage often fails to recognize or include the cultural experiences of others. | • This stage marks the beginning of recognizing that cultural differences and similarities exist.<br>• There is a growing awareness that students from diverse backgrounds may need different approaches.<br>• Individuals begin to reflect on their own beliefs and biases. While intentions may be positive, actions often remain superficial (e.g., symbolic gestures like wearing orange shirts) without deep understanding or structural change. | • Cultural competence involves acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effectively engage with people from diverse backgrounds.<br>• It means recognizing the value of diverse cultural identities, traditions, and connections to land, family, and community. Individuals begin to respect differences, engage in self-assessment, and make more informed, sensitive decisions in their interactions. | • At the highest levels, cultural responsiveness reflects a deep, sustained commitment to equity and relationship-building.<br>• Individuals and organizations engage in ongoing critical reflection and actively respect and prioritize diversity in all practices.<br>• Relationships with local Indigenous communities are mutually respectful and collaborative.<br>• Cultural sustainability means that these practices are embedded systemically—supported by policies, partnerships, and structures that ensure continued growth, responsiveness, and shared leadership in decision-making. |

**Personal Reflection: Review the chart above and note which areas you currently are working on.**

**How does your lived experience shape your worldview?**

COWICHAN VALLEY
School District
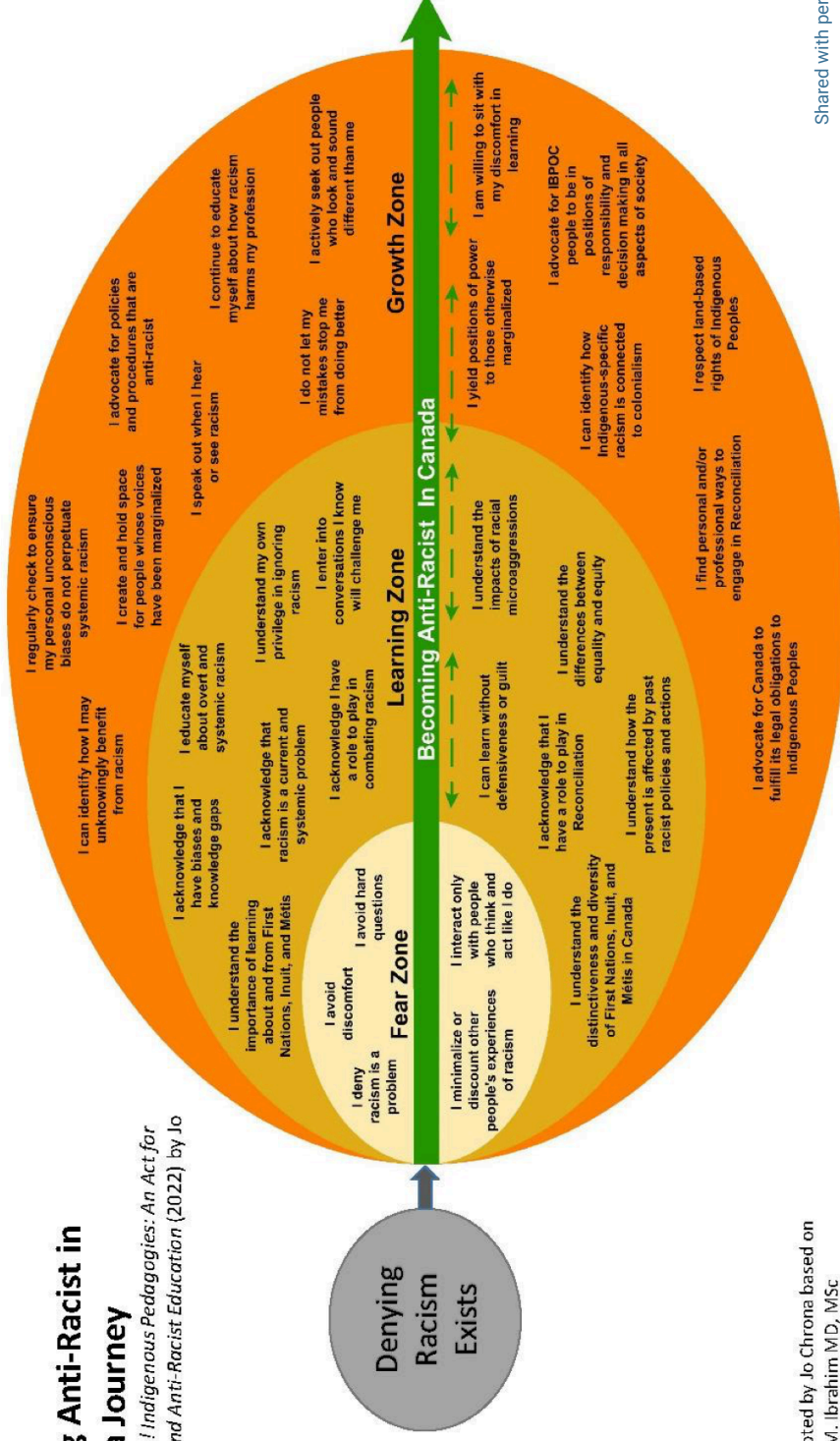
# Becoming Anti-Racist

The Cultural Competency Continuum aligns closely with Jo Chrona's Becoming Anti-Racist, which emphasizes that anti-racism is an active, ongoing process rather than a fixed identity. Just as the continuum moves from cultural destructiveness to cultural sustainability, Jo Chrona's *Becoming Anti-Racist in Canada: a Journey*, urges individuals and systems to move from the Fear Zone to the Growth Zone disrupting inequity and fostering meaningful inclusion.

Cultural responsiveness and sustainability reflect the highest levels of anti-racist practice—where relationships with Indigenous communities are grounded in mutual respect, systems are critically examined, and efforts to decolonize education are sustained through policy, practice, and personal reflection. Both frameworks call for continuous learning, critical self-reflection, and a commitment to transformative change.

**Personal Reflection: Refer to the following graphic and note which statements resonate with you currently. Note the three zones. What is surprising to you?**

## Becoming Anti-Racist in Canada: a Journey

From *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies: An Act for Reconciliation and Anti-Racist Education* (2022) by Jo Chrona



**Becoming Anti-Racist In Canada**

Denying Racism Exists

**Fear Zone**
- I deny racism is a problem
- I avoid discomfort
- I avoid hard questions
- I minimalize or discount other people's experiences of racism
- I interact only with people who think and act like I do
- I understand the importance of learning about and from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis
- I understand the distinctiveness and diversity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada

**Learning Zone**
- I can identify how I may unknowingly benefit from racism
- I acknowledge that I have biases and knowledge gaps
- I educate myself about overt and systemic racism
- I acknowledge that racism is a current and systemic problem
- I understand my own privilege in ignoring racism
- I acknowledge I have a role to play in combating racism
- I enter into conversations I know will challenge me
- I can learn without defensiveness or guilt
- I acknowledge that I have a role to play in Reconciliation
- I understand the differences between equality and equity
- I understand how the present is affected by past racist policies and actions
- I advocate for Canada to fulfil its legal obligations to Indigenous Peoples

**Growth Zone**
- I regularly check to ensure my personal unconscious biases do not perpetuate systemic racism
- I create and hold space for people whose voices have been marginalized
- I advocate for policies and procedures that are anti-racist
- I speak out when I hear or see racism
- I continue to educate myself about how racism harms my profession
- I do not let my mistakes stop me from doing better
- I actively seek out people who look and sound different than me
- I understand the impacts of racial microaggressions
- I yield positions of power to those otherwise marginalized
- I am willing to sit with my discomfort in learning
- I can identify how Indigenous-specific racism is connected to colonialism
- I advocate for IBPOC people to be in positions of responsibility and decision making in all aspects of society
- I find personal and/or professional ways to engage in Reconciliation
- I respect land-based rights of Indigenous Peoples

Idea/graphic adapted by Jo Chrona based on work of Andrew M. Ibrahim MD, MSc

Shared with permission.

# Connecting Student Identity to Cultural Safety

In Indigenous Knowledge Systems, education is not just about transferring knowledge through curriculum, but also about exploring identity. It engages with four fundamental questions that help shape a student's sense of self and their place in the world. These questions are crucial for students to reflect upon and understand their role within their community and the broader world.*

**Who am I?**
This question encourages self-discovery and personal reflection, helping students understand their own background, values, and beliefs.

**Why am I here?**
This question connects students to their purpose and the significance of their presence within their community and the educational setting.

**Who can help me?**
This focuses on recognizing the support systems available—family, elders, community members—and how they contribute to one's growth and learning.

**Where am I going?**
This question looks forward, helping students set goals and envision their future path while staying grounded in their identity.

One of the first steps in creating an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their voice is to emphasize identity. When students have a strong sense of who they are, they are more likely to engage confidently and meaningfully in their learning experiences.
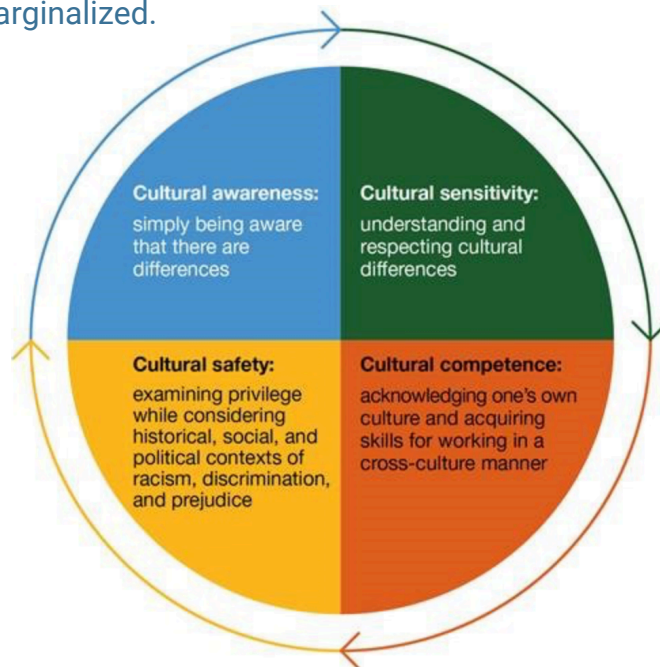
By focusing on these questions and the concept of identity, we can foster a supportive space that values each student's unique perspective, encouraging them to participate more actively and openly.

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# Addressing Racism and Systemic Barriers

Racism and other systemic barriers continue to impact the success and well-being of many students in our district. These barriers are often embedded in the attitudes, policies, practices, and structures of institutions—including schools—and can result in the exclusion or unequal treatment of individuals based on race, gender identity, ability, or other aspects of their identity. While these impacts may be unintended or invisible to some, they are deeply felt by those who experience them.

Indigenous students are disproportionately affected by these systemic inequities. Due to the ongoing impacts of colonialism, oppression, and marginalization, Indigenous learners are under-represented in many areas of academic success. Often, they do not see their cultures, histories, or communities reflected in learning environments in meaningful or authentic ways. When inclusion does occur, it may feel like an afterthought rather than an integrated and respectful part of the educational experience.

By fostering culturally safe and responsive learning environments, and by building a shared understanding and common language, we take important steps toward creating equitable outcomes for all students—especially those who have been historically marginalized.



**Cultural awareness:** simply being aware that there are differences

**Cultural sensitivity:** understanding and respecting cultural differences

**Cultural safety:** examining privilege while considering historical, social, and political contexts of racism, discrimination, and prejudice

**Cultural competence:** acknowledging one's own culture and acquiring skills for working in a cross-culture manner

**Cultural Safety represents a journey into wisdom, where wisdom is to know that culturally significant knowledge, shared histories, and experiences are relevant and must guide decisions and actions (MCFD, Aboriginal Recruitment and Cultural Safety).**

# Structural Interventions

**BACKGROUND**

Systemic barriers limit access to services, goods, programs, and facilities. A structural risk is an issue that results from systemic problems beyond the control of any individual (ie poverty, housing, transportation, discrimination, etc).

Because of systemic barriers, Indigenous children are over-represented in alternate education programs, suspensions, non-attendance and underrepresented in learning outcomes evidenced in school completion rates, learning assessments, as well as sports, enhanced educational programs, and extracurricular activities, to name a few.

**STRUCTURAL INTERVENTIONS**

A structural intervention allows the service provider to adapt programs and services to reduce the presence of structural risks.

- This type of intervention requires recognizing the existing social order and acknowledging that the cause of Indigenous peoples over-representation across the social sector is because of the ongoing discrimination and systemic barriers that they face.

**GOVERNMENT ACTION**

- 2005 The creation of a New Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia.
- 2006 The development and signing of the *Transformative Change Accord and the Métis Nation Relationship Accord*.
- 2010 Supporting the release of the *Healthy Minds, Healthy People: A Ten-Year Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance use in BC*.
- 2017 The provincial government endorses the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action.*
- 2017 The BC Ministry of Education introduces the *Equity in Action Project* which defines a collective and collaborative decision-making process for school districts to enter in to a genuine and meaningful self-assessment dialogue about the experience of education for Indigenous Learners and to respond in strategic ways to create conditions for success.
- 2018 The provinces releases the Draft Principles that guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples.
- 2019 The provincial government passed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples UNDRIP* (Declaration Act) into law.

**Review the list of government action above. What structural interventions did you know already and what was new information?**

# Structural Interventions

NOTE:
- Structural interventions promote a holistic service delivery by treating the source of the problem, not the symptoms.
- The cycle of trauma will continue if systemic barriers and the source of problems are not addressed.
- Structural interventions help build strength-based, collaborative relationships with children, youth, families, and communities in British Columbia.

**JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE \***

Jordan's Principle only applies to Status First Nations children or children of Status First Nations, and is an example of structural intervention. Non-status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children do not qualify unless their parents are Status First Nations.

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson, a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba.

Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the Province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his at-home care. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of five years.

Jordan's Principle aims to make sure First Nations children can access all public services in a way that is reflective of their distinct cultural needs. It takes full account of the historical disadvantage linked to colonization, and with experiencing and service denials, delays, or disruptions because they are First Nations.

First Nations Health Authority is leading the implementation of the Jordan's Principle in BC.
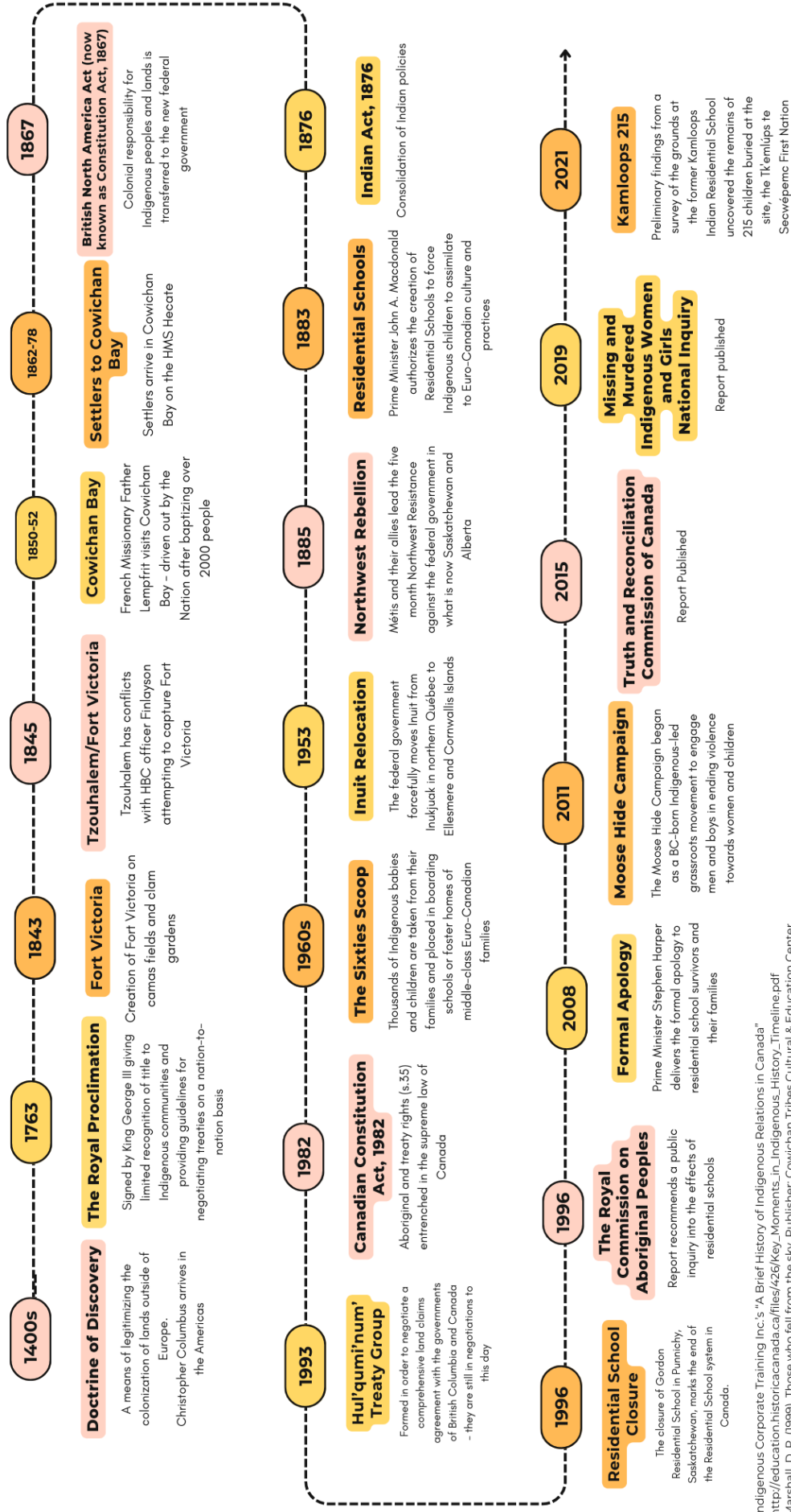


Link to Jordan's Principle in BC

# Understanding the Past

CONTENT WARNING: The content in the following resources and references addresses topics that include information on residential schools, day schools, Indian hospitals, trauma, including intergenerational trauma that may be triggering for some people.

Individuals who may need emotional support and resources can contact the Crisis Line Association of BC Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 (no area code needed). Indigenous peoples who may require emotional support can also contact the 24-Hour KUU-US Crisis Line at 1-800-588-8717. Some may contact their health centre with their Nation or reference VIHA approved counselling services.

Timeline of events in Canada

The Indian Act, Residential Schools

The 60's Scoop, Orange Shirt Day

Intergenerational Trauma

Resilience

**COWICHAN VALLEY**
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# Local and Federal Events in Canadian History

## Significant Impacts

**1400s — Doctrine of Discovery**
A means of legitimizing the colonization of lands outside of Europe. Christopher Columbus arrives in the Americas

**1763 — The Royal Proclimation**
Signed by King George III giving limited recognition of title to Indigenous communities and providing guidelines for negotiating treaties on a nation-to-nation basis

**1843 — Fort Victoria**
Creation of Fort Victoria on camas fields and clam gardens

**1845 — Tzouhalem/Fort Victoria**
Tzouhalem has conflicts with HBC officer Finlayson attempting to capture Fort Victoria

**1850-52 — Cowichan Bay**
French Missionary Father Lempfrit visits Cowichan Bay – driven out by the Nation after baptizing over 2000 people

**1862-78 — Settlers to Cowichan Bay**
Settlers arrive in Cowichan Bay on the HMS Hecate

**1867 — British North America Act (now known as Constitution Act, 1867)**
Colonial responsibility for Indigenous peoples and lands is transferred to the new federal government

**1876 — Indian Act, 1876**
Consolidation of Indian policies

**1883 — Residential Schools**
Prime Minister John A. Macdonald authorizes the creation of Residential Schools to force Indigenous children to assimilate to Euro-Canadian culture and practices

**1885 — Northwest Rebellion**
Métis and their allies lead the five month Northwest Resistance against the federal government in what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta

**1953 — Inuit Relocation**
The federal government forcefully moves Inuit from Inukjuak in northern Québec to Ellesmere and Cornwallis Islands

**1960s — The Sixties Scoop**
Thousands of Indigenous babies and children are taken from their families and placed in boarding schools or foster homes of middle-class Euro-Canadian families

**1982 — Canadian Constitution Act, 1982**
Aboriginal and treaty rights (s.35) entrenched in the supreme law of Canada

**1993 — Hul'qumi'num' Treaty Group**
Formed in order to negotiate a comprehensive land claims agreement with the governments of British Columbia and Canada – they are still in negotiations to this day

**1996 — The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**
Report recommends a public inquiry into the effects of residential schools

**1996 — Residential School Closure**
The closure of Gordon Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan, marks the end of the Residential School system in Canada.

**2008 — Formal Apology**
Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivers the formal apology to residential school survivors and their families

**2011 — Moose Hide Campaign**
The Moose Hide Campaign began as a BC-born Indigenous-led grassroots movement to engage men and boys in ending violence towards women and children

**2015 — Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada**
Report Published

**2019 — Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry**
Report published

**2021 — Kamloops 215**
Preliminary findings from a survey of the grounds at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School uncovered the remains of 215 children buried at the site, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.'s "A Brief History of Indigenous Relations in Canada"
http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/426/Key_Moments_in_Indigenous_History_Timeline.pdf
Marshall, D. P. (1999). Those who fell from the sky. Publisher: Cowichan Tribes Cultural & Education Center.

**Review the timeline, what notable dates and events are new learning for you? What dates or events did you already know?**

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# The Indian Act

## BACKGROUND

Prior to coming into effect in 1867, and still in effect today, the Indian Act (the Act) is the principal statute which governs the federal government's administration of Indian status, local First Nations governments, and the management of reserve land and communal funds.

The Act does not apply to Métis, Inuit, and non-status First Nations peoples. However, since the Daniels decision in 2016, Métis and non- status First Nations are considered 'Indians' under s.91 (24) of the Constitution, which places them under federal jurisdiction.

The Act was amended significantly in 1951, which removed many political, cultural and religious restrictions; yet introduced new restrictions on status that discriminated against First Nations women. The Act was amended in 1985 following the passage of Bill C-31, which called for the reinstatement of status to those who had been discriminated against and giving Bands control over their membership list.

Despite amendments, the Act continues to be heavily criticized, and its historical impacts are felt to this day. The Act is administered by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

## PRESENT DAY

Jurisdiction
- Provincial laws that do not contradict the Indian Act apply to 'Indians' in that province.

Finances
- Personal property and income is tax exempt only when an 'Indian' is living and/or generating income on reserve.

Healthcare
- Essentials are provided by Non-Insured Health Benefits in BC. This is administered by the Fist Nations Health Authority.

Land and Housing
- Reserve lands are held in trust by the Crown. Individuals cannot own reserve land unless they are granted a certificate. Housing on reserve is typically owned collectively.

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Image retrieved from: https://bcfosterparents.ca/project/indian-act/
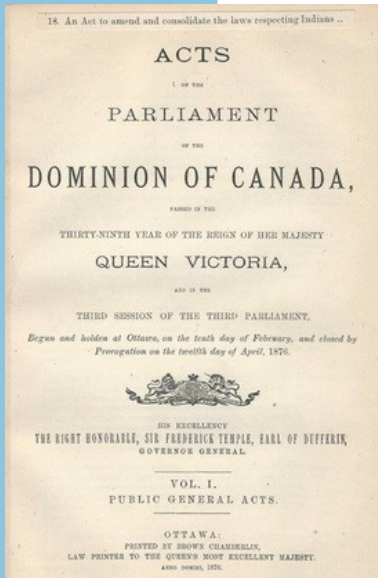
# Residential Schools



## BACKGROUND
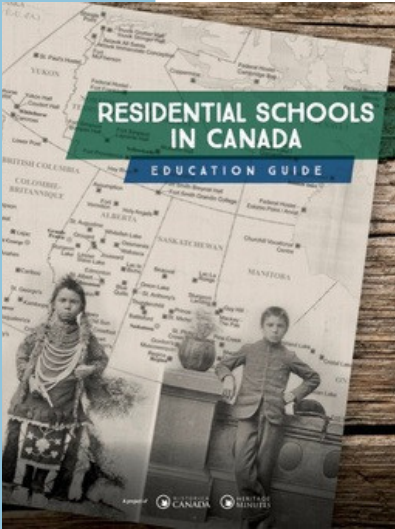
The Canadian state funded church-run schools to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian society. The schools operated from the 1860s to the 1990s, and over 150,000 children attended.

Children were often sent to residential schools far away from home and separated from their siblings in an effort to destroy connections to community and culture. Other children were compelled to attend Indian Day School each day, where they experienced the same types of abuse as Residential School Survivors.

Daily activities included religious worship, physical labour, and colonial education. Children were malnourished and exposed to the elements due to improper clothing and housing. They were punished with physical force and confinement for using their traditional languages or demonstrating ties to their culture. Children experienced physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, and psychological abuse. Many died while trying to return home, or from serious illness with inadequate medical care. Some residential schools had a death rate as high as 50%.

There were residential schools open in Canada until 1997.

## GOVERNMENT ACTION

- 1951 Mandatory attendance is removed from the Indian Act
- 1969 The federal government takes control of the residential schools from the churches
- 1980s Lawsuits are filed by survivors
- 1990s Churches begin to issue formal apologies
- 1996 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples conducts mass research on residential schools
- 2008 Stephen Harper formally apologizes
- 2015 Final report on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is released, including the 95 Calls to Action
- 2018 A new statutory holiday to memorialize residential schools is proposed by the federal government
- 2021 A new statutory holiday is established on September 30:  National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

# Legacy of Residential Schools

**LEGACY \***

- The trauma experienced in residential schools have affected every aspect of Indigenous life, and has intergenerational effects on language, culture, and family and community structure.

- Cycle of abuse began with those who attended residential schools and has been passed on through generations. Many survivors feel feelings of guilt, shame, depression, hopelessness, and mistrust and anxiety around government institutions.

- The Métis experience had been underemphasized in the telling of residential school history. Métis people attended and survived residential schools, and many Elders are beginning to share their stories.

NOTE: Orange Shirt Day (September 30) is a commemorative event inspired by Phyllis Webstad's Story when she arrived at St. Joseph Mission Residential School in Williams Lake. This has now become the same day as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

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# 60's Scoop

## BACKGROUND

In 1951, amendments to the Indian Act gave provinces jurisdiction over Indigenous child welfare. Discriminatory child welfare practices led to a surge of Indigenous children in provincial care.

The Sixties Scoop refers to the large-scale removal of Indigenous children who were placed in provincial care. The scoop took place from 1950s through to the 1980s; although many have pointed out that over-representation of Indigenous children has remained high since (the Millennial Scoop), despite shifts and policy and practice.



(Newspaper advertisements for the Adopt Indian and Métis Program, late1960s, Saskatchewan.)

Due to colonial policies and intergenerational trauma, Indigenous children and families struggle with many social and economic barriers. It was provincial policy during this era to remove Indigenous children, often without consent of the family or community.

In BC, the percentage of Indigenous children in care rose 33% in 13 years – from 1% in 1951 to 34% in 1964. 70% of children removed were placed in non-Indigenous homes.

Approximately 11,000 children where removed, but many believed it to be closer to 20,000 due to the erasure of non-status and Métis identity in the gathering of data, even though these groups experienced the Scoop.

Children were separated from their families and siblings, many even being adopted out of the country, losing all ties to their culture and identity.

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# 60's Scoop

**ACTION**

- **1970** Indigenous communities begin lobbying for control over child and family services. 1985 Justice Edwin Kimelman releases a report concluding that 'cultural genocide has taken place in a systematic, routine manner.'
- **1980s** Many legislative changes take place, including requiring Band notification and prioritizing placements with extended family members.
- **1992** A moratorium is placed on non-Indigenous families adopting Indigenous children in BC, which was later replaced by an Exceptions committee to determine care plans.
- **1996** BC passes the Child, Family and Community Services Act and the Adoption Act, both requiring greater inclusion of a child's community and culture in decision making.
- **2019** Government of Canada introduces Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

**LEGACY \***

- The removal/displacement of Indigenous children continues to be a widespread issue; as of March 2018, 63% of children in care in BC are Indigenous. Indigenous children are often removed due to poverty, which is linked to systemic barriers and intergenerational trauma.

- The federal government has reached an agreement to commit $800 million to Sixty Scoop survivors for loss of cultural identity. This agreement has received criticism because it does not account for abuses suffered and excludes non- status and Métis survivors.

- There are currently 18 active lawsuits throughout Canada. The federal settlement is expected to settle many of them.

Link to the 60s Scoop History Website

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# Intergenerational Trauma

## BACKGROUND

Through colonial assimilation policies such as mandatory attendance at residential schools, forced hospitalizations at Indian hospitals, and removals during the Sixties Scoop, Indigenous peoples have been subject to traumatic experiences that have affected their well-being.

Intergenerational trauma occurs when an older member of a community unknowingly transfers the effects of trauma onto younger members, affecting their ability to lead healthy lives mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Trauma can result in but is not limited to the loss of language, culture, and connection to community and family, low sense of self esteem, internalized racism, disconnection from Indigenous and Western society, abuse, addiction, drug abuse, and suicide.

Different communities and Indigenous groups experienced colonization and trauma in different ways, resulting in different effects. For this reason, each Indigenous person's story and history should be treated as unique and valid.

## IMPACTS

Self Harm
- Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading cause of death for Indigenous youth. Suicide is respectively 6.5, 3.7, and 2.7 times higher for Inuit, First Nations, and Métis than for non-Indigenous people.

Children
- 63% of children in care in BC are Indigenous (2018). Indigenous children are 16 times more likely to be taken into care.

Violence Against Women
- Indigenous women in Canada are 2.7 times more likely to face violence, and these women made up 24% of homicides nationally in 2015.

Prison
- In 2022/2023, Indigenous adults made up 30% of admissions to provincial/territorial correctional services despite only accounting for 4% of the adult population in Canada in 2021.*

Community Health
- First Nations communities have reported (2008-2010) that alcohol and drug abuse, housing, and employment are the top three challenges to community well-being.

Mental Health
- Indigenous people struggle with mental illness at much higher rates, yet few programs or strategies exist especially for Métis, urban, and non-status people.

# Resilience*

Indigenous communities continue to demonstrate deep resilience in the face of both historical and ongoing colonial impacts. The intergenerational effects of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the continued realities of systemic inequities—such as inadequate housing, underfunded services, and the constraints of the Indian Act—make healing a complex and ongoing journey.
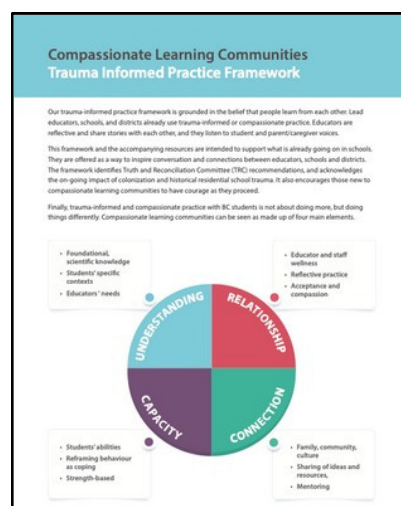
While there is often external pressure to "move on" from the past, true recovery requires recognition, justice, and sustained support. Despite these challenges, Indigenous peoples continue to uphold their cultures, languages, and ways of knowing—strengths that are central to community wellness and the path forward.

Indigenous communities are actively revitalizing and reclaiming traditional practices and fighting against ongoing colonial policies and attitudes.

Indigenous communities are actively healing from trauma. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has identified three pillars to healing:

- Legacy Education - connecting past to present
- Cultural Interventions - re-centering Indigenous experiences, traditional teachings, and culture
- Therapeutic Interventions - individual, family, and community healing events.

## TRAUMA INFORMED RESOURCES



Compassionate Learning Communities Training Guide
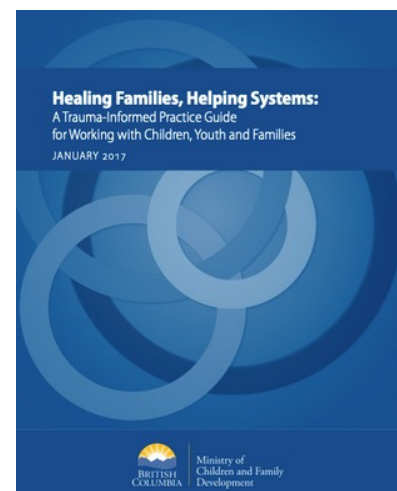


Trauma Informed Practice Guide

*Adapted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.

# Paddling Forward



| Culturally Responsive Learning | Understanding Local Protocols | Incorporating Indigenous Content | Resources | Self-Reflection Next Steps |

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# Culturally Responsive Learning

To be culturally competent, it is necessary to be aware of, and understand, the cultural beliefs that are allowed to be shared of the communities where you work as well as reflecting on your own beliefs and identity and how they might create biases. Cultural competency is a necessary step towards building a culturally safe experience for learners. Developing cultural competency will help you work towards providing cultural safety.*

The best resources are human resources. Indigenous people have time-tested knowledge systems, education, governance, and ways of raising children that are sophisticated and beautiful. Opportunities to have conversations with Indigenous people in community and learning firsthand is valuable. Also, consider that BC has 203 different Indigenous communities, and each one has a unique cultural identity, please don't assume that the cultural identity of one Indigenous group represents all Indigenous groups.



**Please know that there are parts of First Nations culture that are sacred and should not be shared or taught within the school community.**

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*Adapted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.

# Culturally Responsive Learning

Some teachers may be afraid of teaching Indigenous material poorly, perpetuating stereotypes or overstepping their bounds and engaging in cultural appropriation.

As an educator, investing time preparing to teach Indigenous content is crucial to success and helps to build confidence. There are many opportunities available, including completing online courses, listening to podcasts, reading texts by Indigenous authors, attending Indigenous events, participating in professional development activities, and engaging with Elders or knowledge keepers where appropriate.

In some places, having conversations with Indigenous people in community is not always possible. There are many local resources including the Hiiye'yu Lelum House of Friendship Centre, Indigenous student services at universities, local First Nations' websites, and the Indigenous education experts that the school district employs, that can offer information and support.



Pi'paam

I saw beautiful camas blossoming in the wild.

I heard adorable birds soaring in the sky.

I felt pointy rocks poking by my seat.

I smelled scented grass growing by the field.

I tasted a nutritous banana waiting in the peel

Photo locations: Pi'paam (Settler name: Mt. Tzouhalem) & Tl'ulpalus (Village in Cowichan Bay)

# Learning About Protocols

## CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Cultural appropriation can take on many forms.

Cultural appropriation is taking and using important cultural elements that do not belong to you without learning about them first. It is setting yourself up as an expert on a culture you are not a part of, or not respecting the living existence of Indigenous people, the sophistication of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality, or the capability of Indigenous experts, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers.

Cultural appropriation can look like:

- the adoption of elements of one culture into another without fully understanding or acknowledging their meaning.

- making use of sacred objects, without learning about why they are sacred or important, in ways that may be harmful. Examples include: the use of headdresses at Halloween or wearing Métis sashes for a drama production as a costume instead of recognizing the cultural significance.

- presenting Indigenous peoples as caricatures or as existing only in the past.

- speaking on behalf of Indigenous people or taking on elements of Indigenous spirituality without getting permission from qualified Indigenous Knowledge Keepers.



Image location: Theik village site (Settler name: Hecate Park)

# Incorporating Indigenous Content

## STEPS TO AVOID CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND STILL INCORPORATE AUTHENTIC INDIGENOUS CONTENT

- Ask yourself: "If I were a member of the group in question, could I be offended?" Take history into account and show empathy.

- Never appropriate someone else's culture as your own – not even as a demonstration for students.

- Never dress, act, or do activities that reduce a group into a caricature or stereotype.

- Don't use other people's stories shared with you unless you have permission. If you have permission to share, acknowledge the storyteller.

- Don't misuse anything of religious significance or cultural meaning. If you're not sure if something is sacred, it is important to ask or do your research.

- It's important to understand local culture and protocols before introducing or teaching Indigenous culture or information from another region.

- Do teach about culture in your classroom as set out in the BC Curriculum. Where possible, consider including Knowledge Keepers, Hul'q'umi'num' Language and Culture Advisors (HLCAs), and cultural presenters.

- Do, whenever possible, allow Indigenous people to speak for themselves. Inviting local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers into your classroom is an opportunity to forge new and ongoing relationships. If an Indigenous person cannot be present, there are excellent and well-vetted videos available.
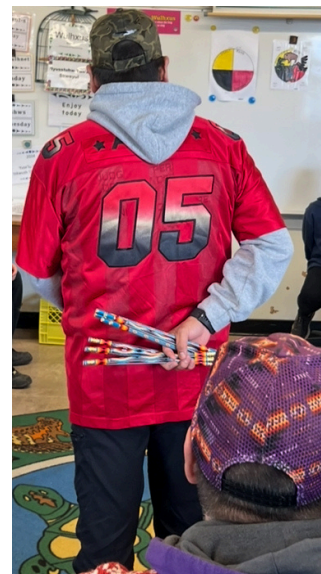
# Incorporating Indigenous Content & Resources

VETTING RESOURCES

As a general guide, look for these four things:

1.Content and accuracy: Make sure that the content makes sense and portrays Indigenous people in a whole-person, fair way.

2. Authorship: Try to privilege Indigenous authors. There are also many non- Indigenous people with expertise in Indigenous studies, but it is important to make sure that they do have authentic expertise. Do Internet searches to check authors' biographies and credentials.

3. Approachability: Choose resources that reflect where you are and who your students are. You can also connect students' interests to Indigenous content. Choose a subject of interest and go from there. Avoid resources or content that might 'exclude' or 'marginalize' Indigenous learners.

4. Diversity: Indigenous people have knowledge of content that touches on all subject areas, so teachers can integrate Indigenous content into any classroom. Including Indigenous content in every subject underlines the sophistication of Indigenous knowledge. You can also use Indigenous content to share diverse perspectives and compare mainstream and Indigenous views on historical and current events. *

**In situations where you have permission to share, respectfully acknowledge who gave you permission and honour where they are from.**

# Resources & Self-Assessment Tools

## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS
### An Educator's Self-Assessment

Unconscious Bias: An educator's self-assessment

msea

## CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE & RACISM

EMPOWER

BEST PRACTICES

Challenging Conversations about Race & Racism

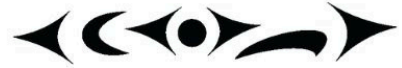## Indigenous Cultural Safety, Cultural Humility and Anti-Racism

PRACTICE STANDARD COMPA

BC CN & M
British Columbia College of Nurses & Midwives

900 - 200 Granville Street
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6C 1S4

T: 604.7
Toll-fre

Indigenous Cultural Safety

Commemorating Ye'Yumnuts
https://www.yeyumnuts.ca
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University of Alberta
https://www.ualberta.ca/admissions-programs/online-courses/indigenous-canada/index.html
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UBC
https://pdce.educ.ubc.ca/reconciliation-2/
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Land Rights in Canada
https://raventrust.com/home-on-native-land/
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RAVEN Debriefs - Podcasts
https://raventrust.com/podcast/
--------------------------------

4 Seasons of Indigenous Learning
https://outdoorlearning.com/4-seasons/
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UNDRIP -
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf
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Truth and Reconcilation Calls to Action -
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf
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