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## PURPOSE

- To affirm the Board of Trustees' (the Board) responsibility for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students to thrive within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment that is respectful and responsive of individual life experiences.
- To support a District culture that fosters the process of reconciliation through the acknowledgement of the impact of colonization and intergenerational loss of language, culture and relationships on children, families and communities.
- To strengthen the learning and academic achievement of students, acknowledging the importance of fostering and sustaining collaborative relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit parents/guardians, grandparents and other family members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Advisors, and community members.

## DEFINITIONS

**Colonization** usually refers to the period of European colonization from Columbus (1492) onwards in the Americas, Oceania, Asia and Africa. Colonizers imposed their institutions and belief systems in the colonized territories and negatively impacted the social, cultural, spiritual and political structures and practices of the Aboriginal peoples of the land, resulting in today's intergenerational loss of language, culture and relationships on children, families and communities.

**Cultural Advisors** are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals who have specific knowledge and wisdom related to their cultural practices, customs, history, values and language. They facilitate, support, promote and coordinate cultural practices.

**Elder** is a person regarded or chosen by an Aboriginal nation to be the keeper and teacher of its oral tradition and knowledge. This is a person who is recognized for his or her wisdom about spirituality, culture and life. An Aboriginal community and/or individuals will typically seek the advice and assistance of Elders in various areas of traditional as well as contemporary issues.

**First Nations** refers to a distinct nation or group of First Nations people. Each nation has its own rich and distinct culture, language, traditions and protocols. Each group also has their own traditional government with hereditary leaders or leaders chosen by the people of the group.

**First Nations, Métis, and Inuit** is generally used to refer to the diversity of Aboriginal peoples in Alberta. Examples of languages, communities and groups include Cree, Dene Tha, Kainai, Tsuu T'ina, Nakota, Mikisew Cree First Nation and Blood Tribe.

**Intergenerational Loss** happens when the exchange of knowledge, language, culture and values from one generation to the next is interrupted, for example, by individuals having a familial history of Indian Residential School attendance. Multigenerational, cumulative and chronic trauma, injustices and oppression can reverberate through individuals, families and communities resulting in a legacy of loss that can persist across generations. A holistic learning environment that includes culturally appropriate curriculum, the role of culture and the incorporation of ceremony can empower students and disrupt intergenerational trauma and loss.

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

**Knowledge Keeper** refers to a person designated or acknowledged by other Elders of a cultural community as being knowledgeable about the culture, its perspectives, practices and products.

**Métis** refers to 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. Métis have a unique history and traditions with their own language, flag, songs and stories.

**Reconciliation** is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. Education for Reconciliation is the collective work of ensuring curriculum and the education system support the process of reconciliation.

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

## **POLICY**

The intent of this policy is to strengthen First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student academic achievement, in learning environments that are equitable, culturally responsive and meaningful. This policy also supports the belief that the inclusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives and knowledge is of benefit to all students.

The Board acknowledges and respects Treaty 6 territory on which the Edmonton Public School District resides and recognizes and celebrates the history and significance of this land and the people who came before us. The Board acknowledges that we are all Treaty people and that Treaty 6 signifies the agreement and relationship among Treaty people living together.

The Board confirms its commitment and role in actively supporting the process of reconciliation and recognizes that working towards this vision is for the benefit of all students, staff and the broader society.

The Board welcomes and embraces the rich cultural diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. The Board recognizes that respect for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge, cultures, languages and traditional practices contributes to welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning and working environments for everyone.

The Board respects the potential and learning aspirations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and supports the establishment of conditions under which the full capacity of students is realized and fostered.

The Board recognizes that creating learning and working environments where First Nations, Métis and Inuit students thrive is a shared responsibility reflecting the collaborative efforts of students, District staff, parents/guardians, grandparents and other family members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Advisors, and community members. The Board values building and nurturing these positive relationships.

#### A. WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The Board understands that developing relationships to learn about each student's life experiences enriches the school community and strengthens student success and achievement. We commit to nurturing such relationships through:

1. fostering each student's sense of belonging and nurturing a positive sense of self through a holistic approach
2. supporting actions that acknowledge and promote intentional understanding, respect and recognition of the diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, cultural beliefs, traditions, languages and values
3. supporting culturally responsive learning and working environments that weave First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing.

#### B. RECONCILIATION

The Board commits to the process of reconciliation and recognizes the importance of pursuing opportunities that foster reconciliation within school communities. The Board acknowledges the harmful impact of systemic racism on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, including our students. We are working towards reconciliation through:

1. aligning resources and building organizational capacity to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student success and achievement
2. supporting professional learning and capacity building of District staff to meet the learning needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and all other students
3. supporting students, staff and District leaders to build and apply foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, cultural beliefs, traditions, languages and values
4. using culturally responsive resources that reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and communities
5. supporting education of the historical, social, economic and political implications of treaties and agreements with First Nations, agreements with Métis, the legacy of residential schools, and the impacts of intergenerational trauma
6. practicing community responsive protocols to foster and develop mutually respectful relationships

7. providing opportunities for all students to participate in language and cultural learning experiences related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and communities

### C. STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

The Board commits to nurturing the academic achievement of all First Nations, Metis, and Inuit students. The Board confirms this work is realized through a focus on the strengths and potential of students. We are working towards this through:

1. collaborating with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit parents/guardians, grandparents and other family members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Advisors and local community members to support students' learning and participation in the school community
2. supporting staff to identify and use culturally responsive resources and instructional and assessment strategies to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student achievement
3. identifying and implementing research-based practices that strengthen First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student engagement and learning
4. using a range of data to support evidence-based decisions to appropriately identify students' needs in the learning environment.

### EXPECTATIONS

The Superintendent of Schools will implement this policy by assigning roles and responsibilities, and developing administrative regulations, processes and best practices aligned with recognized standards of practice for public bodies.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

The Superintendent will provide an annual update to the Board around progress made in support of reconciliation, student success and achievement, within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy environment.

The District will provide an update on progress and priority strategies that support for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in relation to the District's strategic plan through the Annual Education Results Report to Alberta Education and the District's annual results review process.

### REFERENCES

AE.BP – Welcoming Inclusive, Safe and Healthy Learning and Working Environments

GGAB.BP – Multicultural Education

HAA.AR – Aboriginal Education

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

*School Act* s. 45.1(1)