

**CODE:** HAA.BP**EFFECTIVE DATE:** (28-01-2020)**TOPIC:** First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education**ISSUE DATE:** (29-01-2020)**REVIEW YEAR:** (2026)

## PURPOSE

- To affirm the Board of Trustees' (the Board) responsibility in supporting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students to thrive within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment that is respectful of and responsive to students' life experiences.
- To support a Division culture that promotes truth and reconciliation through the acknowledgement of the impact of colonization and intergenerational loss of language, culture, identity and relationships on children, families and communities.
- To strengthen the learning and academic achievement of students through collaborative relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit parents/guardians, grandparents and other family members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members.

## DEFINITIONS

**Aboriginal** is used in the context of the Indigenous peoples of a particular country. Section 35(2) of Canada's *Constitution Act, 1982* states "Aboriginal peoples of Canada includes the Indian (status and non-status), Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada." The word "Indigenous" is often used instead of "Aboriginal".

**Colonization** refers to the period of European colonization from Columbus (1492) to present day in the Americas, Oceania, Asia and Africa. Colonizers impose their institutions and belief systems in the already inhabited lands, which negatively impacts the social, cultural, spiritual and political structures and practices of the Indigenous peoples. This results in the intergenerational loss of language, culture and relationships on children, families and communities.

**Elder** is a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit individual recognized by their community for their wisdom that has been passed down through the generations pertaining to traditions, knowledge, spirituality, culture and language.

**First Nations** refers to a distinct nation or group of Indigenous people with their own languages, traditions, protocols, spiritual and cultural practices. Each group has their own traditional government with hereditary leaders or leaders chosen by the people of the group.

**First Nations, Métis, and Inuit** is used to refer to the diversity of Indigenous peoples. This diversity is represented in part through the different languages, communities and groups of the Indigenous peoples in Alberta.

**Indigenous** is used internationally to refer to the descendants of the original inhabitants of an area.

**Intergenerational Trauma** happens when the transfer of knowledge, language, culture and values from one generation to the next is broken; for example, the impact of Indian Residential Schools. Intergenerational trauma

reverberates through individuals, families and communities resulting in a legacy of loss that persists across multiple generations.

**Inuit** means “the people” in the Inuktitut language. Inuit communities are spread across the vast region of Canada referred to as “Inuit Nunangat”, an Inuit term that includes land, water, and ice. Inuit have an oral history with distinct traditions, languages, beliefs, songs, art and culture.

**Knowledge Keepers** are individuals recognized by Elders and their community as having knowledge and wisdom related to First Nations, Métis, or Inuit cultural practices, customs, history, values and language. Knowledge Keepers are sometimes referred to as “cultural advisors”.

**Métis** means a person who self identifies as Métis and is recognized by a Métis community. Métis are distinct from other Indigenous peoples, and have their own history, culture, language, flag, songs, dance and stories.

**Reconciliation** is the process and goal of creating societal change through a fundamental shift in thinking and attitudes. Reconciliation involves learning about historical and contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives and experiences that are grounded in experiential truth, including legislation, treaties and residential schools. Fundamental to reconciliation are mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

**Traditional Protocol** is the presentation of tobacco or a gift to an Elder or Knowledge Keeper. Protocol represents a verbal contract between two parties, as the Elder or Knowledge Keeper is agreeing to the request and the person offering protocol is committing to respect the process. The use of protocol is dependent on the cultural practices of the Elder, Knowledge Keeper and the community.

**Treaty 6** is an agreement signed in 1876 between Crown representatives and First Nations leaders that outlines the rights, obligations and benefits of the signing parties to each other. This commitment was acknowledged through a ceremonial and sacred agreement that incorporated the spirit and intent for treaties to last “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and rivers flow.” According to the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, the total area of the Treaty stretches from western Alberta, through Saskatchewan and into Manitoba; and includes 50 First Nations. Provisions in Treaty 6 recognize the medicine chest as well as the right to education. Edmonton Public Schools is located on Treaty 6 territory.

## **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 will benefit all students.

The Board acknowledges and respects Treaty 6 territory on which the Edmonton Public School Division 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 ongoing agreement and relationship among Treaty people living together on this land.

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

The Board welcomes and embraces the rich cultural diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. The Board recognizes that respect for historical and contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge, perspectives, contributions, cultural beliefs, traditions, languages and values contributes to welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning and working environments for everyone.

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

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, Division staff, parents/guardians, grandparents and other family members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers 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 such relationships through:

1. nurturing a positive sense of self and promoting a sense of belonging within the school community
2. strengthening intentional understanding, respect and recognition of historical and contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge, perspectives, contributions, cultural beliefs, traditions, languages and values
3. supporting culturally responsive learning and working environments that weave in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing.

#### B. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The Board commits to the ongoing process of truth and reconciliation and recognizes the importance of truth and opportunities that support reconciliation within school communities. The Board acknowledges the harmful impacts of systemic racism on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, families and communities. We are working towards truth and reconciliation through:

1. committing resources and building organizational capacity to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student success and academic achievement
2. supporting professional learning and capacity building of Division staff to meet the learning needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and all other students
3. supporting education that reflects historical and contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives and experiences, including but not limited to: treaties and agreements with First Nations, Métis legislation and agreements, the legacy of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and Eskimo Identification tags
4. supporting students, staff and Division leaders to build and apply knowledge and understanding about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, contributions, cultural beliefs, traditions, languages and values
5. using culturally responsive resources that reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and communities
6. acknowledging the impacts of intergenerational trauma
7. practicing culturally responsive protocols to develop mutually respectful relationships
8. supporting opportunities for students to participate in language and cultural learning experiences related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and communities.

## C. STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The Board commits to strategic efforts that support the success and academic achievement of First Nations, Métis, 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. building and nurturing relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit parents/guardians, grandparents and other family members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members to support student success within the school community
2. identifying and using instructional and assessment strategies that strengthen First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student engagement and learning
3. identifying and using culturally relevant resources
4. analyzing a range of data to support evidence-based decisions relevant to student success
5. identifying culturally relevant research and implementing research-based practices that strengthen First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student engagement and learning.

## EXPECTATIONS

The Superintendent of Schools will implement this policy by assigning roles and responsibilities, and developing administrative regulations, processes and best practices.

## 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 Division will provide an annual update on progress and priority strategies that support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students through the Annual Education Results Report to Alberta Education.

## 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

Teaching Quality Standard

Leadership Quality Standard

Superintendent Quality Standard

*Education Act* Section 33(1)(d)