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An Exploration of Racism in Education

By

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I**ntroduction**

Throughout my Master’s degree, my focus has been on Indigenous Peoples Education. Everything I have learned has been an asset to my position as an Indigenous Student Support Teacher, as well as my growth as a human being. During a course in Indigenous Research Methodology I had the opportunity to develop a research project on how Indigenous Students Learn Best, (Scott, 2019). The original purpose of the research was to address the Teaching Quality Standards (TQS) that directly affects Indigenous students’ experience in schools. The TQS, which was mandated September 2019, includes relationship capacity building for and with Aboriginal students, parents, Elders and communities. (Alberta Education, 2018). This critical mandate was the impetus behind my focus on learning how Indigenous students learn best. I interviewed three Alberta Indigenous high school students. My hope was to use the research participants feedback to help teachers meet the TQS mandates successfully and therefore improve students’ experience in school. The results of that research were humbling. Each participant pointed to a much bigger issue in education for Indigenous students – it was racism. Racism within the curriculum, the teaching staff, and the Western approach to education which engulfs all aspects of students experience in school.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the roots of racism in the education system with a focus on how we can do better and be better for Indigenous students’ school experience while meeting the TQS, (Appendix A), and Truth and Reconciliation, (Appendix B), calls to action.

**Historic Role of Racism in Canadian Schools**

The implementation of residential schools is now a well-known part of Canadian history since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission initiated a process to expose the once hidden history of an assimilation process which continues to affect Indigenous Peoples today. “

Residential schooling was intended to root out and destroy Indigenous knowledge, languages, and relationships with the natural family to replace them with Eurocentric values, identities, and beliefs that ultimately were aimed at destroying children’s self-esteem, self-concept, and healthy relationships with each other and their families.” (Battiste, 2013, p. 156).

The federal residential school system began around 1883, although its origins can be traced to as early as the 1830’s (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2022). The last Residential School closed in 1996. Indigenous Peoples of Canada suffered over 150 years of assimilation practices within the education system. The result has created devastating effects for individuals, families, and communities, which continues to disadvantage Aboriginal Peoples today. The damage created by residential schools is far reaching because of generations of assimilative practices by the Government of Canada. The damaging effects extend to chronic health issues, economic barriers, poverty, alcohol and drug addiction, and intergenerational trauma. This paper focuses on the educational effects of assimilative and racist practices in education.

“Because intergenerational transmission of knowledge has been disrupted and Native children are no longer privy to the traditional ways of doing, knowing, and being, they are now struggling to achieve even those recognized minimum standards of success in current school systems. (Steinhauer, 2007, p. 42)”

Canada’s education system is based on the Western tradition of pedagogy. “Canadian schools teach a silent curriculum of Eurocentric knowledge that is not accommodating to other ways of knowing and learning.” (Battiste, 2013, p. 66). The racism inherent in the education system directly impacts students’ struggle to navigate the school system successfully. Educators have little understanding of "the damaging affect Western teaching practices have on Indigenous students psyche.” (Scott, 2019). What counts as knowledge and truth belongs to the dominant culture and excludes all others. “The mandatory education system, with its Eurocentric curriculum and teaching style, becomes a system of control and imposed superiority when it is forced on Aboriginal students and their lives.” (Battiste, 2002, p. 17). This results in Aboriginal people seeing themselves as separate and excluded**.** Students do not see themselves represented in the curriculum, nor does the curriculum include Indigenous ways of navigating the world.

“Racism is not merely a matter of failing to recognize other standpoints, or perspectives, but refers to the stigmatizing of outsider groups as inherently inferior, whether such groups are depicted as threatening, unworthy, or unreliable, on the one hand, or as benevolent and “childlike,” on the other.” (Thompson, 1997, p. 10).

Indigenous People have been labelled these ways since the first Europeans arrived. These labels were then translated into laws such as the Indian Act, where Indigenous Peoples are labelled as wards of the government. The stigma has persisted and permeated into the unconscious biases held by many today.

**Systemic and Cultural Racism**

“Racism is a system of privilege and oppression, a network of traditions, legitimating standards, material and institutional arrangements, and ideological apparatuses that, together, serve to perpetuate hierarchical social relations based on race.” (Thompson, 1997, p. 9). Systemic racism against Indigenous people is ubiquitous in Canada. It is inscribed in law within the Indian Act and disseminated throughout Canadian culture and institutions. Being white in Canada affords privileges that are neither earned nor acknowledged. The system of racism is based on an ideology that humans are divided into a hierarchy of power based on racial differences. This ideology is reinforced throughout society within the systems which we are ruled by. Diangelo, who has written extensively on this subject observes

“There is nothing I have heard to this point in my work that has convinced me that someone can exist outside the social forces of race and be untouched by the racist conditioning, practices, and outcomes infused in the society in which they live.” (Diangelo, 2021, p. 36).

Systemic racism naturally spills into personal views that create the ideology by which we live. The direction of power between white people and Indigenous Peoples is historic, and normalized in ideology.

Upon contact, Europeans assumed Indigenous Peoples lived without systems, including political, economic, religious and family. Seventeenth and eighteenth century academics and anthropologists studied Indigenous Peoples from a Western perspective. When many differences between Western and Indigenous beliefs and practices were discovered, Indigenous Peoples were deemed savage, disorganized and without epistemology. In fact, “Indigenous ways of knowing (is) rooted in complex philosophical systems native to North America.” (Belanger, 2014, p. 2). Much has been written detailing the rich culture and systems that maintained Indigenous civilization for thousands of years. The education system maintains Western worldviews as the authority over all other ways of knowing and being. The Western worldview has become the “norm” that Indigenous students are expected to adopt and succeed within. The Alberta curriculum heavily focuses on producing responsible citizens that will fulfill the Western expectations based on the dominant race without regard for consideration of another way of knowing. Battiste (2002, p. 9) writes that “it is clear, however, that the exclusive use of Eurocentric knowledge in education has failed First Nations children.” Issues regarding absenteeism, retention and graduation in public schools are an ongoing concern in schools.

“They (Western educators) wrongly assume that the Eurocentric idea of “culture” is the same as the concept of Indigenous knowledge, and they apply cultural corrections to address problems that will inevitably arise in a system that teaches from within an exclusively western context.” (Battiste, 2002, p. 16).

Most schools attempt to include Indigenous students culture by offering one-off cultural events that often include the stereotypical bannock and dance. Often students are called upon to represent all Indigenous Peoples, making no distinction between other nations in Canada. The dominant narration of Canadian history does not include Indigenous Peoples, thereby erasing student’s identity within their educational experience. To compound the issue of identity erasure, Zine (2013) noted that “not seeing anyone in the school administration who looks like you is a constant reminder of the glass ceilings that limits your chances to achieve positions of power and authority because of your race.” (p. 37).

“I belong when I look at my teachers, counselors, and classmates. I belong when I learn about the history of my country throughout the year and when I am shown its heroes and heroines.” (Diangello, 2018, p. 52).

Students are expected to find meaning within written text using prior knowledge. Many Indigenous students lack the life experience akin to the Western context of experience, creating a divide that too often leads to lower academic strands stemming from a lack of connection with curriculum. Racism is pervasive. “It has condemned entire nations and countless generations of people to untold suffering. Whether subtle or overt, racism commits assault on the minds, spirits and even the bodies of those racialized.” (Reading, 1982, p. 9).

As mentioned earlier, my research project was an effort to understand how Indigenous students learn best. (Scott, 2019). Students assumed that lower level streaming and lack of success “was their own lack of ability that prevented them from achieving success in the classroom.” Students voiced frustration based on teacher relations and delivery. The following are excerpts of student comments from my research project:

“I guess white people come from white schools so they teach white education. So I guess it would make sense for them to relate and learn better from that.”. (p.14).

They should “put more culture into schools, since schools are meant for everyone.” (p. 15).

“We’re not adding to education the things that we do know.” (p. 15).

“It always has to be them first. Not our culture.” (p. 15).

“They need to realize, the people who are racist, we’re not going to leave so they might as well accept us. Especially with education in Canada.” (p. 15-16).

“Even though they (teachers) don’t know our way, they should take their own time to teach themselves or go to Elders.” (p. 17).

“If I’m recommended to be in -2 (lower strand) then I might be dumb.” (p. 18).

“The school belongs to the white kids.” (p. 19).

One student was approached by two administrators and was told falsely that she could not take more than one -1 (higher strand) course. This was done in front of other students. When asked what the administrators inferred, she replied, “I didn’t think I was smart enough.” (p. 21). Being one or even a few of the minority leaves students vulnerable and often creates imposed shame.

The information shared with me during the research became a valued resource that I, as an Indigenous Student Support Teacher use to educate teachers and staff with workshops addressing issues relating to Indigenous worldviews, white privilege, and awareness of how Western teaching methods affect Indigenous students. To date there has been little or no evidence of change in the Western thinking, delivery or assessment of education in our school.

There are many factors that prevent people who belong to the privileged race, from understanding their role in continuing racism. “Despite its ubiquity, white superiority is also unnamed and denied by most whites.” (Diangelo, 2018, p.108). Even if we vehemently oppose racism, our privileges continue to disadvantage others. (Battiste, 2013, p. 126) notes that teachers “did not realize was how they themselves sustained the dominant discourses of difference and reproduced a sense of superiority embodied in whiteness that marginalized, diminished, and reproduced inequities among students who were different.” Teachers struggle to consider how their privileges are a result of their unquestioned values and beliefs they have been fed since birth. When white people morally object to racism it increases their resistance to acknowledging their complicity with it. (Diangelo, 2018). This is not an assault on whiteness, nor am I addressing individuals who consciously and intentionally hate races considered “other”. The issue lies with the ways which our society has constructed and reinforced the power of white identity and interests. (Ladson-Billings & Tate). Without conscious knowledge, white educators, as with all people of a dominant race, are raised with a discourse that seems irrefutable. Addressing racism requires an investment in considering how we understand the educational needs of Indigenous students. Asking educators to interpret the world from an alternative perspective is a challenging and disagreeable prospect. This requires moving outside our comfort zone. History shows us that overcoming educational obstacles is the responsibility of those considered “other”, while we unquestioningly continue teaching from the Western perspective as though it is the only one of value. The current system of education is a reproduction of the racial inequalities they were originally designed for. Many educators struggle with attaching stereotypes they unintentionally learned while growing up. There will always be “nice” teachers and administrators that believe they are leveling the educational playing field, however, being nice does not interrupt racism and stereotyping. To be supportive, many schools offer accommodations for struggling students. In my experience these accommodations tend to be lower strand courses, modifications or adaptions to school work and educational assistant support. In some cases, this is appropriate support. In many cases these types of accommodations confirms for students that they lack the ability to succeed along with their non-Indigenous peers. This targeted universal approach applied to addressing the achievement gap among white and students of color “

will be helping the white kids but only partially helping the kids of color. This is because the kids of color will have an additional set of barriers not faced by the white kids, barriers that are the result of structural racism.” (Diangelo, 2021, p. 158).

**Issues Regarding the TQS**

The TQS requires teachers to honour cultural diversity and promote intercultural understanding. The first competency of the TQS requires providing culturally appropriate partnerships with students, their families and communities to support student learning. This requires inviting knowledge keepers and community members into the school to enhance students experience within the Western formal education system. All students benefit from learning another worldview while working toward reconciliation. Many teachers and administrators are not comfortable in this role and have limited, if any, relationship with the Indigenous community they serve. There has been some effort in many districts to hire staff that can access the community and support students; however, if the partnership becomes the responsibility of one person the opportunity for community-school and staff relationship is diminished.

On one occasion an Elder was brought into a science class at the school I teach. One student noted “I connected with the Elder and understood everything he said. Because that’s the background I come from.” (Scott, 2019 p. 14). The student could relate to his words and jokes, and was familiar with the style of humor the Elder used. The student absorbed the lesson and was confidant she would pass any test on the material. This example of how a meaningful cultural and educational relationship with an Elder positively impacted the student and made clear the importance of providing consistent opportunities for Indigenous and non-indigenous students alike.

Bringing knowledge systems together, “reaching beyond the two distinct systems of knowledge to create fair and just educational systems and experiences so that all students can benefit from their education in multiple ways.” (Battiste, 2013, p. 103). The work ahead for teachers will be difficult on multiple levels however; the benefit for Indigenous students is enormous and can change the dismal outcome of school graduation rates.

The responsibility to honor intercultural understanding, as mandated by the TQS, is within teachers’ and administrators power as leaders within the classroom and school. We, as educators, must understand our own culture and the role we play as part of dominant society before we can honor the culture of Indigenous students and their communities. (Diangelo, 2019, p. 51), reminds us that “we need to understand the underlying foundation of how being white shapes our perspectives, experiences, and responses.” As white individuals, we rarely need to identify as white because “other” is how we describe those that are not “us”. Therefore, the arduous task of understanding who we are in relation to others requires us to do the antiracist work of introspection and education.

Honoring another culture in school is often done using traditional food, dance or music, none of which really represent a cultural belief system or the history of a people. In an effort to be inclusive, many schools use Indigenous students as a resource to be exploited on “culture” days. Those who dance or drum are expected to represent their people by performing as a source of entertainment, minimizing the culture and omitting the history Indigenous Peoples have endured since colonization.

The final TQS mandate requires teachers to develop and apply foundational knowledge about First Nations, Metis and Inuit for the benefit of all students. This mandate includes understanding the historical, social, economic, and political implications of treaties and agreements, legislation and negotiated agreements. This TQS competency asks that teachers engage in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning. The University of Alberta offers a free on line course that helps meet this requirement. The issue is that teachers need never meet a community member or Elder face to face to engage in a relationship for learning. As educators, we know that learning in a vacuum does not constitute the kind of learning for change that is required to meet this standard. Educators must have an understanding of residential school and the resulting legacy along with knowledge and understanding and respect for the history and culture. Then teachers need to include this knowledge, understanding and respect in the classes they teach. I have witnessed teachers struggle to incorporate Indigenous culture and/or history into their lessons. Instead of developing a foundational knowledge, teachers are looking for a check list or a lesson plan to follow.

Learning the historical component of the TQS is just a beginning. The progress already made in the attempt for inclusion requires us to recognize how far we must yet travel. The challenge remains: are we achieving the results intended for inclusion and who will decide? Every administrator in Alberta also has a set of mandates called the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS). Superintendents follow the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS). All three quality standards reference reconciliation mandates 1, 2 and 5. Alberta Education does not return calls for clarification on the questions of accountability. How do we know we are achieving success? Although the purpose is to improve attendance, academics and graduation rates for Indigenous students, no reporting is required. The mandates we are required to follow by Alberta Education intend much more than the requirements set by schools. My school only requires staff to include something from the TQS in our Professional Growth Plan. Teachers have a choice to focus on any part of the standards, meaning that they might exclude any mandates that directly focus on Indigenous issues in education.

To truly reconcile with Indigenous Peoples, we must consider our current system of education. “The default of the current system is the reproduction of racial inequality; our institutions were designed to reproduce racial inequality and they do so with efficiency.” (Diangelo, 2018, p. 153). It is Indigenous communities, including; leaders, families, and students who should appraise the result of the mandates that directly affect them. This will require community-school relationships that are embedded in the TQS, LQS, and SLQS. Parents and families are often excluded from district and school based decisions that directly affect their children.

Educational institutions have a unique opportunity to access meaningful knowledge from the Indigenous communities they serve. Educators often oppose new ideas that challenge accepted beliefs. Attempts to understand Indigenous knowledge often has left us incomplete foundations. Western philosophy dominates education due to the exclusive window used for examining how we know what we know. “Indigenous philosophies developed in response to ecologically specific rhythms, patterns, and events, just as Western ways of knowing developed in Europe.” (Belanger, 2014, p. 3). The differences in philosophies has never been fully understood by colonists. Now is the time for educators to learn and understand local Indigenous ways of knowing and become better equipped to provide an inclusive education to students they serve.

**Where Do We Go From Here**

Most educators oppose racism and do not identify as racist. “We often organize our identity around a denial of our racially based privileges. White people’s moral objection to racism increases their resistance to acknowledging their complicity with it.” (Diangelo, p. 108). Understanding our stereotypes and our privileged place in society is a very good place to start deconstructing the Western world view from which we function. “Racism must be understood as something that is lived; it is experienced by individuals, families, communities, and nations through interactions and structures of the everyday world.” (Loppie, Reading & de Leeuw, 1982, p. 1).

Racism in schools is an unintentional act that negatively affects individuals and institutions, and impacts the lives of our Indigenous students and families within our school systems. Discrimination in schools is rarely an aggressive act. It is the colonial power inequalities that place one group over another that contributes to the negative impact for racialized groups. “Within the racialized hierarchy of Canadian society, Aboriginal peoples continue to be “othered” by settler groups to rationalize colonial actions that disadvantage, oppress, and ultimately harm them.” (de Leeuw, Kobayashi, & Cameron, 2011, p. 9). Over the generations, the affect often becomes self-actualizing as demeaning stereotypes become internalized. “Internalized racial oppression is a multigenerational disempowerment process that begins by the time children are 18 months of age… {(It)} manifests itself in tolerance of being mistreated, shame, anger, and mimicking values of the dominant society.” (Young, n.d., p. 14). Our stereotypes become so entrenched that we do not see the damage we effect on our Indigenous students and communities. We may ask ourselves why parents don’t get their children up and on time for school? After all, that is how school in our society functions. We wonder why students don’t raise a hand and contribute to class discussions? We are frustrated by the lack of interest in the lessons that are taught. We offer assistance on the assumption that these students are less capable and in need of help. If they would just buy in and behave like a real student there wouldn’t be any academic issues. What more can we possibly do to engage our Indigenous students? These are questions worthy of researching, but first we must look within our own psyche to understand what perspective we use to ask these questions. Using a colonial perspective has not given educators answers to any of the above-mentioned concerns to date.

White people rarely, if ever, experience racial discomfort in the society we dominate. “We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people.” (Diangelo, 2018, p. 2). The work I have done through professional development workshops always begins by looking at white privilege. This is where we must begin to understand the values we hold as the dominant group in Canadian society. The responses are predictable, ranging from feelings of guilt, withdrawal, silence, and general discomfort. These are the normal reactions of people who have never confronted the idea of their privilege, nor made a connection to their part in it. It is critical for white people to understand they have been fed dominant race values and ideas since birth, and society confirms it. We make sense of our world through a Western lens of the white experience. We, as white people, are sheltered from racism, therefore any suggestion we are complicit in racism creates denial, or we become defensive of our character and values. These observations are generalizations; however, they are based on recurring patterns of predictable behavior.

Diangelo reminds us that “racism occurs when a racial group’s prejudice is backed by legal authority and institutional control. This transforms into a far-reaching system that no longer depends on the good intention of individual actors; it becomes the default of the society.” (2018, p. 21). If our ideologies are unchallenged, we do not question the validity of our beliefs. To see through another’s lens we must do the hard work of looking inward and acknowledge the lens from which we see the world. The process is challenging but produces change that helps us grow as effective educators of Indigenous students. “Changing our practice as educators often requires changes in the way we think about the world, that is, changes in our often-unexamined assumptions about what is reality.” (Oberg, n.d., p. 1). This process requires educators to engage in personal discovery so social and educational change can be affected with equity, access and social justice. “It is imperative that teachers investigate their “situatedness” within this context, helping to reveal some of the inherent biases and assumptions that play themselves out in classroom practice.” (Breunig, 2005, p. 116). We must understand the system of White dominance and how it works in our society, institutions and ourselves. Teachers represent a potentially powerful force the type of change that can transcend the negative effect of the dominant culture in schools.

We, as educators, must locate ourselves within Canada’s colonial history. The TQS requires we develop and apply foundational knowledge of Canadian history that includes the laws and experiences of Indigenous Peoples. “Decolonization needs to be a shared endeavour. (It) can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across historic divides, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that their present and future is similarly tied together.” (Donald, 2009, p. 5). Canadian history was recorded and transmitted through a Eurocentric lens, omitting the devastating experience of colonization for Indigenous Peoples. We have been heavily influenced by the Hollywood version of Indigenous people. There are two versions portrayed; the savage and the mystical. Both versions are an exaggeration that limits the depth of lived cultures. We need to acknowledge our biases so we can move forward with knowledge and intelligence. We cannot fix racism but we can become more efficient at understanding our own complicity within it and adjusting our practice. There are numerous educational resources available in this era of social media and the internet, to explore the inclusive history of Canada. Problematic racial dynamics will always be part of our journey toward racial equality and inclusion. As professional, educators are charged with the commitment to lifelong learning. Historical knowledge will bring us closer to understanding

“the “silent curriculum of Eurocentric knowledge by the way teachers behave and the manner in which they transmit information. Educators need to make a conscious decision to nurture Indigenous knowledge, dignity, identity, and integrity by making a direct change in school philosophy, pedagogy, and practice.” (Battiste, 2002, p.30).

The Indian Control of Indian Education policy paper was written in 1973. It was submitted to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) and the Assembly of First Nations. The education portion of this paper very clearly states the need for informed teachers to successfully teach Indigenous students in public school. “If progress is going to be made in improving educational opportunity for native children, it is basic that teacher training programs be redesigned to meet the needs; the need; the need for specially trained non-Indian teachers is also very great.” (1973, p. 18). The following recommendations are included in the 1973 policy paper: training programs must be developed in collaboration with the Indian people, there should be compulsory courses in inter-cultural education, orientation courses and in-service training are needed, assistance should be available for teachers in adapting curriculum and teaching techniques, teachers should be given the opportunity to improve themselves through specialized summer courses in acculturation problems, anthropology, Indian history, language and culture. This policy paper was written nearly 50 years ago and very little has changed over the course of time. Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 calls to action were published in 2015, there has been some forward movement through the mandates of the TQS.

Accountability remains a challenge: who will monitor the TQS progress and success, if any. With no clear answers to these accountability questions, I suggest we, as professionals, be accountable to ourselves, our Indigenous students and the community. In our actions, we must be answerable to Indigenous Peoples. We need relationships with the students and the community we serve, to determine if we are achieving success. Diangelo states “accountability requires trust, transparency, and action. As a white person seeking to be accountable I must continually check my certitude and ask myself, “How do I know how I am doing?”” (2021, p. 177). This is deeply personal work and requires time for researching, reflecting, feeling and sharing. There is no finish line. It cannot be done by the end of the school day.

(Diangello,) shares a powerful analogy by a man of color. “

You know what it’s like being around white people? It’s like you’re sitting at this elaborate banquet table with all of this amazing food and you’re acting like you’re not sitting there and the food isn’t any good. We know you are sitting there. We see you. We know what you have. Why can’t you just be honest about enjoying the food? We don’t want you to not enjoy the food. What we want is a place at the table!” (2021, pp. 73-74

**Conclusion**

I have my Professors and Mentors to thank for the vast amount of teachings I received throughout my Masters journey. My gratitude is abundant for these people. My learning journey began many years ago and has grown over time. The purpose of this paper was to explore the roots of racism in the education system with a focus on how we can do better and be better for Indigenous students’ school experience. The journey must begin with ourselves. I have made many cultural mistakes and will continue to be in err. What is most important is that I am aware of the errors and can do my best to correct the situation as quickly as possible and remain open to learning from the Indigenous community. This is important for all educators and administrators to know; you will make mistakes along the way to an enlightened awareness. Mistakes are made every day, without awareness of the impact our words and actions have on Indigenous students and families.

**Appendix A**

**Teaching Quality Standard**

1. A teacher builds positive and productive relationships with students, parents/guardians, peers and others in the school and local community to support student learning. Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: …(c) providing culturally appropriate and meaningful opportunities for students and for parents/guardians, as partners in education, to support student learning; (d) inviting First Nations, Metis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders/knowledge keepers, cultural advisors and local community members into the school and classroom; …(f) honouring cultural diversity and promoting intercultural understanding.
2. A teacher engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning. Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: …(e) enhancing understanding of Frist Nations, Metis and Inuit worldviews, cultural beliefs, languages and values.

5. A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Metis and

Inuit for the benefit of all students. Achievement of this competency is demonstrated

by indicators such as (a) understanding the historical, social, economic, and political

implications of: treaties and agreements with First Nations; legislation and agreements

negotiated with Metis; and residential school and their legacy; (b) supporting student

achievement by engaging in collaborative, whole school approaches to capacity building

in First Nation, Metis and Inuit education; (c) using the programs of study to provide

opportunities for all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and

respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences

and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Metis and Inuit; and (d) supporting the

learning experiences of all students using resources that accurately reflect and

demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Metis and Inuit.

**Appendix B**

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action for EDUCATION**

6. We call upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

8. We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.

9. We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.

10. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:

i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.

ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.

iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.

iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.

v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.

vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.

vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.

11. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.

12. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.

https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/public/download/documents/40899 page 5, 6

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