



GRADE 12 CURRENT TOPICS
IN FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS,
AND INUIT STUDIES

Introduction

PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

Guiding Principles

Education for and about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples

- builds bridges of understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians
- promotes personal and social responsibility
- connects the learner to family and to local, national, and global communities

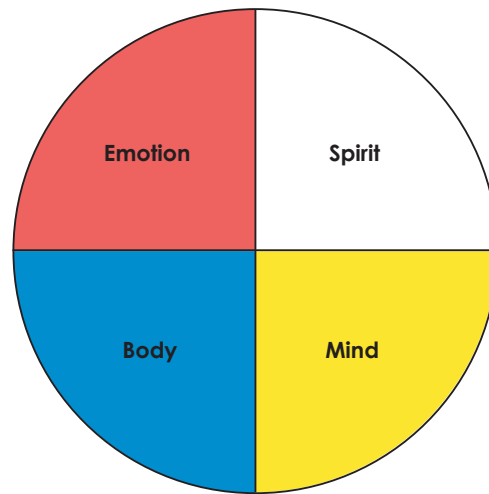
Purpose

Grade 12 Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies: A Foundation for Implementation supports the empowerment of students through the exploration of the histories, traditions, cultures, worldviews, and contemporary issues of Indigenous peoples in Canada and worldwide. Students gain knowledge and develop the values, as well as the critical thinking, communication, analytical, and inquiry skills, that will enable them to better understand past and present realities of Indigenous peoples. Additionally, exploration of topics such as self-determination, self-government, and language and cultural reclamation allows students to understand and work towards the post-colonial future envisioned by Indigenous peoples.

Personal Growth

Learning experiences in *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* facilitate personal growth through a balanced and holistic approach to learning. All aspects of self are addressed through the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions of the learner. Through the use of learning logs, reflection journals, talking circles, graphic expressions such as winter counts, and other strategies, learners are encouraged to examine, record, and share their convictions, thoughts, understandings, and behaviours.

Medicine Wheel Illustrating the Four Aspects of an Individual



This diagram is based on the Anishinaabe medicine wheel. It represents a holistic model of the four interconnected aspects of an individual. Learning strategies in *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* support a balanced approach to learning by addressing all four aspects.

The following passage, taken from the Manitoba Education document *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula*, explains some of the history and significance of the medicine wheel in Indigenous cultures.

Medicine Wheel

Traditionally, Aboriginal peoples have seen the connected and interdependent nature of the many aspects of the world around them. The medicine wheel is an ancient symbol that reflects values, world views, and practices, and is used by many Aboriginal peoples today (Bopp et al).

In Cree, the medicine wheel is referred to by the word *pimatisiwin*, which means life. The medicine wheel is based upon a circle and the number four, both of which are of special significance to many Aboriginal peoples. The medicine wheel is used to represent the interconnected relationships among aspects of life and to provide direction and meaning to an individual.

The medicine wheel that is presented here is an example. While there are commonalities to all medicine wheels, each person's is unique to the teachings he or she has received, his or her personal experiences, and his or her understandings of the interconnectedness of the aspects of life he or she represents with the medicine wheel.

The medicine wheel is divided into four parts or quadrants, each representing one of the four directions. One of the lessons that can be learned from the medicine wheel is balance. For example, on the medicine wheel the four aspects of an individual (spiritual, emotional, physical, mental) are represented. In order for an individual to be healthy, he or she must have a balance of the four aspects within him or herself. If one of these aspects or areas is suffering, then the other three will also suffer some ill effects. For example, if a person is suffering from an illness such as a bad cold (physical), he or she may be more short-tempered than usual (emotional), be less able to think clearly (mental), and may also feel less well spiritually. (Manitoba Education and Youth. 2003, 9-10)

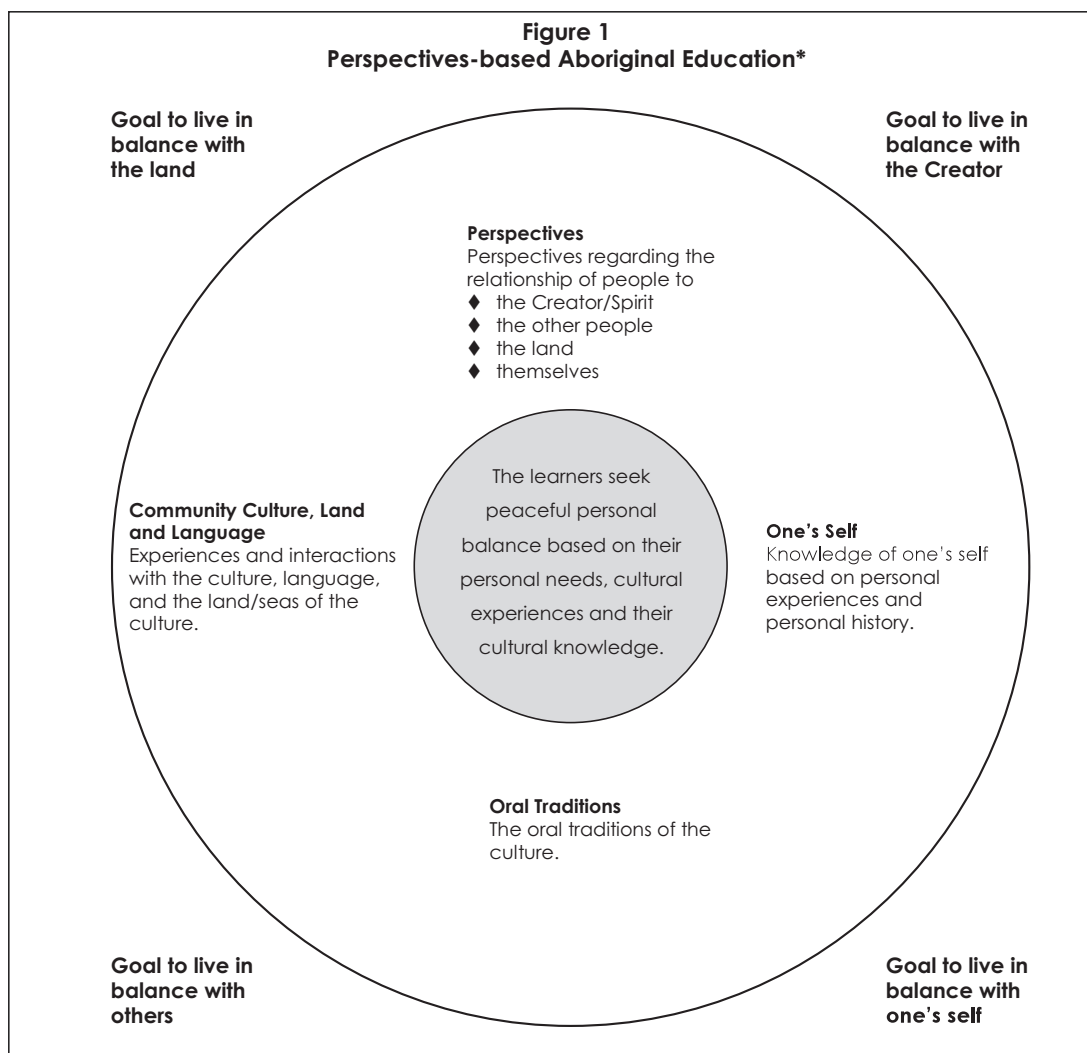
Building Relationships

Relationality, a key concept in Indigenous worldviews, is a recurring theme in *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies*. Indigenous teachings stress the interrelationship and interdependence of all life on earth, including humankind. Learning strategies in *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* encourage students to explore and to nurture relationships not only between themselves and others, but also between themselves and the natural world. Students examine the dynamics of the relationship between Indigenous and other Canadians, how that relationship has affected and continues to affect all Canadians, and the necessity to restore the relationship on the basis of mutual respect and understanding.

Laws of Relationships

Aboriginal cultures share a belief that people must live in respectful, harmonious relationships with nature, with one another, and with one's self. The relationships are governed by what are understood as laws, which are gifts from the Creator. The laws are fundamentally spiritual, imbuing all aspects of life. As fundamental as this perspective may be, each Aboriginal culture expresses itself in unique ways, with its own practices, products, and knowledge.

As real life circumstances shift over time, a challenge for Aboriginal people has been to interpret the laws to enable their continuing survival, not just physically but as spiritually strong people. This challenge extends to Aboriginal education as well. (Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education 5)



* Adapted from the work of Garry Robson, Dan Thomas, and Juliette Sabot, Native Education Directorate, Manitoba Education and Training, and from *Dene Kede Education: a Dene Perspective*. Yellowknife: NT.

Indigenous Perspectives

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies promotes a diversity of perspectives and encourages teachers and learners to further their understanding of Indigenous ways of seeing and relating to the world.

It is important for us, as Aboriginal peoples, to advocate the value of looking at things from a variety of perspectives, rather than just through the eyes of the majority. Different types of knowledge can come together ... to inform society and to promote the healing of our communities. (*Knowledge Translation: A Quest for Understanding*, 41)

Citizenship

Democratic Citizenship

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies supports the elements of the core concept of citizenship:

1. Informed engagement in civic discourse and the democratic process
2. Commitment to the principles and ideals of democracy and human rights
3. Acquisition of an informed sense of Canadian identity within a global context
4. Commitment to the future of Canada

(Adapted from Manitoba Education. *Grade 11 History of Canada: A Foundation for Implementation* (unpublished), 2011.)

Citizenship and Indigenous Canadians

For Indigenous students, the concept of national citizenship may be contentious due to the long history of colonialism that has repressed and marginalized Indigenous peoples in Canada and the world. Until 1985, the *Indian Act* required First Nations to relinquish their status and treaty rights in order to enjoy full participation as citizens in Canadian society. Status women who married a non-status partner automatically had their status revoked. The Métis have resisted the imposition of economic, social, and political change by the Canadian government, twice taking up arms to defend their rights: in 1869-70 in Red River and again in 1885 in the territory that would become the province of Saskatchewan. In common with First Nations and Métis, the Inuit have experienced colonialist assaults on their cultures and communities, including enforced relocation of communities, economic exploitation of resources by southern interests with little benefit to themselves, and residential schools. The following excerpt details other challenges to Indigenous citizenship in Canada.

Citizenship issues are complex for Aboriginal peoples. For example, the original Indian Act defined and legislated the term persons as “anyone other than an Indian.” Although this language has unofficially been dropped from usage, the legislation has never been repealed. In addition, First Nations peoples were not enfranchised to vote in federal elections until 1962. [In fact First Nations were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1960.] This right to vote was conditional on being enfranchised by the province or territory of residence.

The Aboriginal group known as the Métis combined their First Nations and European cultures to form their own unique cultures. They do not have First Nations or Inuit status with the federal government. The cultures of the Métis people today are varied, with individuals who are highly acculturated, those who are very traditional, and others who are in-between.

In the recent past, certain events such as isolating Aboriginal children from their communities led to their loss of traditional skills, values, language, and culture. This created a people who could no longer identify their place in Canadian society. What had been important to Aboriginal peoples in the past no longer had validity or importance, either within their communities or within Canada. Education has contributed to this erosion.

(Western Canadian Protocol, February 2000)

Goals

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies offers all Grade 12 students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, an opportunity to

- enhance their understanding and appreciation of the cultures and traditions, as well as the contemporary realities and aspirations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures in Manitoba, Canada, and the world
- develop a knowledge of the history of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada in order to better understand the present
- develop a sense of comfort and confidence in interactions with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people
- develop an understanding that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and cultures are an integral part of Canadian society
- recognize the ongoing role of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in shaping Canadian history and identity

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies offers First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students an opportunity to explore fundamental questions (e.g., Who am I? Where have I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?). By doing so, they are better able to

- further their understanding of the issues facing their communities and cultures
- build upon and extend knowledge of their cultures and traditions
- develop pride in the contributions of their cultures to Canadian society and the world
- build upon and enhance positive self-identity
- function effectively as members of their local, national, and global communities
- envision their place in the future of their community and country

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Objectives

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies: A Foundation for Implementation is a full-credit course intended for Grade 12 students, which examines Indigenous realities within contemporary and historic Canadian and global settings. The course is inclusive of the traditional values and worldviews of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. The objective of *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* is to provide both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students with knowledge of Indigenous cultures and traditions, and to encourage Indigenous students to take pride in the accomplishments of their peoples. This knowledge will enable Indigenous students to participate meaningfully as citizens of their cultural community, of contemporary Canadian society, and as active and engaged global citizens. Non-Indigenous students will become knowledgeable of the worldviews, histories, cultures, and accomplishments of Indigenous peoples, and thus be able to engage in an informed and empathetic manner in debates concerning Indigenous issues at local, national, and global levels.

Rationale

According to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey by Statistics Canada, in Manitoba the majority of Indigenous people live in an urban setting, including 44 percent of the more than 90,000 First Nations inhabitants, 70 percent of the almost 60,000 Métis, and the majority of the small (300 plus) Manitoba Inuit population. The clear implication of these statistics is the increasing engagement of Indigenous people within the larger Canadian society. The combined knowledge of both mainstream and Indigenous cultures will enable Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians alike to live and work together harmoniously to create an equitable society for the betterment of all Canadians.

...education is fundamentally about how we transmit our values to the next generation with regard to what it means to live as human beings. Because many cultures have distinct perspectives about what it means to live as a human being, educators have an opportunity—and responsibility—to expose students and communities to these different perspectives. (Villegas)

Decolonizing Education

.... decolonized education is not just for Indigenous students, not just about Indigenous students, but for all students.

Education can either maintain domination or it can liberate. It can sustain colonization in neocolonial ways or it can decolonize. Every school is either a site of reproduction or a site of change. (Battiste)

This document supports decolonization in education. Decolonized education benefits all students, not just First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. Historically, public education in Canada has played a significant role in the colonization of Indigenous people by its failure to meaningfully include Indigenous knowledge, history, and worldviews in curricula. Manitoba Education, in partnership with parents, communities, educators, Aboriginal organizations, and government departments, has made significant progress in redressing this omission through the development of policies and strategic initiatives, curricula, and resources to support teaching and learning. *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* contributes to the decolonization process by making available to all students the worldviews, histories, traditions, cultures, contributions, and ways of knowing of Indigenous Canadians.

This document was produced by Manitoba Education in collaboration with Manitoba educators. It includes the core concept of citizenship, and identifies Enduring Understandings, which may be understood as broadly stated learning outcomes. It provides ideas and strategies to support the implementation of the curriculum.

Curriculum Design

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies employs Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions from *Understanding by Design*, an approach to curriculum development by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe.

Enduring Understandings

- represent big ideas having enduring value beyond the classroom
- reside at the heart of the discipline (involve “doing” the subject)
- require un-coverage (of abstract or often misunderstood ideas)
- offer potential for engaging students

Enduring Understandings in *Current Topics in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Studies*

- Traditionally, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples share a worldview of harmony and balance with nature, one another, and oneself.
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples represent a diversity of cultures, each expressed in a unique way.
- Understanding of and respect for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples begin with knowledge of their pasts.
- Many current First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues are in reality unresolved historical issues.
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples should be recognized for their contributions to Canadian society and share in its successes.

Essential Questions

- are open-ended and resist a simple or single right answer
- are thought-provoking
- require students to draw upon content knowledge and personal experience
- can be revisited throughout the learning experience to engage students in evolving dialogue and debate
- lead to other essential questions posed by students

The Learning Process

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies supports citizenship as a core concept and engages students in inquiry learning. Guided by Essential Questions, students explore topics that are significant to the study of the histories, cultures, and traditions of Indigenous peoples. By examining contemporary issues and their historical roots as well as the life ways, cultures, traditions, contributions, and worldviews of Indigenous peoples, teachers and students are better able to understand the evolving nature of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Through this process, teachers and students acquire knowledge and understanding of the contemporary and historic realities, as well as the vision of a post-colonial future based on respect, understanding, and equity.

Structure and Time Allotments in *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies*

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies is structured around the following five thematic clusters:

- I. Image and Identity (10%)
- II. Relations with Government (40%)
- III. Social Justice Issues (30%)
- IV. Indigenous Peoples and the World (10%)
- V. Celebrations of Learning (10%)

Organization of the Document

Overview of Clusters and Learning Experiences

This curriculum is organized into five clusters. Each cluster includes from one to five learning experiences (LEs), which allow students and teachers to explore particular aspects of the cluster theme. LEs include the following:

- Targeted enduring understandings
- Essential questions to guide student inquiry
- A background essay featuring information on the theme of the LE
- Teaching and learning strategies for activating, acquiring, and applying student learning, including long-term, recurring Acquiring and Applying Strategies
- Glossary terms relevant to the LE
- Suggested resources to support teaching and learning strategies

Cluster 1: Image and Identity

In Cluster 1, students begin to explore contemporary Indigenous issues, their roots in the colonialist history of Canada, and their significance to all Canadians. Cluster 1 consists of three LEs:

LE 1.1: The Ghosts of History

This LE focuses on the colonialist history of Canada and the impact of colonization on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada. Content includes colonialism, terminology used to describe Indigenous peoples, and the significance of Indigenous issues in contemporary Canada.

LE 1.2: From Time Immemorial

This LE allows students to explore Indigenous identity from the viewpoint of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Content includes worldviews, diversity, and identity.

LE 1.3: Worlds Colliding

Students examine contemporary mainstream Canadian society's perception of Indigenous people as "the other." Content includes racism, stereotypes, a comparison of Western and Indigenous worldviews, and the role of media in creating, perpetuating, and combating stereotypical images of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.

Cluster 2: A Profound Ambivalence: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Relations with Government

In Cluster 2, students examine the historic and contemporary relationship between Canadian (and later provincial and territorial) governments and Indigenous peoples. Students examine how the relationship, which began on a nation-to-nation basis, changed over time to reflect colonialist ideals and aims, and how, in the modern era, Indigenous Canadians are attempting to move from colonialism to a post-colonial future through recognition of their Aboriginal and treaty rights.

LE 2.1: Setting the Stage: Economics and Politics

Students investigate the historic, political, and economic practices of Indigenous peoples in Canada, before and after the arrival of Europeans. Students learn that Indigenous peoples were organized in self-governing societies of varying degrees of sophistication and complexity that interacted on a nation-to-nation basis in various ways, including political, military, and trade alliances. In the early stages of the post-European contact era, the relationship between European traders and settlers and Indigenous peoples was characterized by similar nation-to-nation interaction.

LE 2.2: As Long as the Rivers Flow: The Numbered Treaties

Students explore treaty-making between western First Nations and Canada beginning in 1871. Inquiry should yield the following understandings:

- There were significant differences between First Nations' and the Canadian government's understandings of the treaties
- The treaties were not honoured by Canada after their signing
- The wealth of Canada is derived from the lands and resources acquired from First Nations through the treaties
- Treaties are living documents that must be honoured and renewed in the context of the present
- The preferred relationship between First Nations and Canada is based on the terms and spirit of the treaties

LE 2.3: Legislated Discrimination: *The Indian Act*

Students examine the historic and contemporary significance of the act, including the paradox that it is at once discriminatory and racist while it also preserves the sanctity of reserve lands. Inquiry should yield the understanding that the *Indian Act* signaled a fundamental shift away from the nation-to-nation relationship that had hitherto existed between First Nations and Canada. It marked the beginning of a paternal relationship that characterized First Nations as wards of the government, and replaced First Nations traditional governance with an imposed system of elected chiefs and councils with severely limited powers while reserving real power for Ottawa.

LE 2.4: *O-Tee-Paym-Soo-Wuk* (the Métis): The People Who Own Themselves

Students explore the history of the Métis from their origins in the fur trade, to the birth of the Métis Nation in Red River and the conflicts that characterized Métis resistance to threats against their economic, cultural, and political traditions, ending with the defeat of the Métis at Batoche in 1885. Students should understand that the Métis were a self-determining Indigenous nation, culturally distinct from their First Nations and European ancestors, and that by 1885 they had become economically, socially, and politically marginalized by the colonialist policies and practices of the Canadian government.

LE 2.5: Defining Our Place: Modern Treaties and Rights

Students explore the struggle by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada to regain the self-determination that was stripped from them by colonialist policies and practices. Students examine the legislative and legal processes by which Aboriginal and treaty rights have been denied or confirmed, and explore modern treaties and land claims since the 1970s and especially since the recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights in the *Constitution Act* of 1982. Students explore the various means, including resistance and protest, by which Indigenous peoples have sought recognition of their rights, including self-government. Students also examine various models of self-government and examples of modern land claim agreements. Inquiry focus includes the following:

- the meaning of treaty rights and Aboriginal rights
- the various types of land claims and the mechanisms by which they are negotiated
- the roles of governments and courts, both provincial/territorial and federal
- the importance of land to Indigenous peoples
- that Aboriginal nations are attempting to forge an equitable relationship with Canada, wherein their rights, including the right of self-determination, are recognized and respected

Cluster 3: Toward a Just Society

In Cluster 3, students examine historical and contemporary features of social justice and Indigenous people in the areas of education, health, justice, and economics. Students explore the historic roots of issues in each of these areas and explore their contemporary manifestations.

LE 3.1: Education

Students research traditional and contemporary Indigenous education and the impact of colonization. Students learn how treaty promises of reserve schools that would provide a bicultural education for First Nations students were never honoured, and how, instead, a system of residential schools was instituted to assimilate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, with devastating consequences for Indigenous people and communities (as well as negative impacts on Canadian society) that persist today. Students study schools that, in contrast to the continued failure of the education system in general, have proven successful in meeting the needs of Indigenous learners and communities. Students propose models of education that would fulfill the needs of modern Indigenous learners to succeed in contemporary Canadian society while honouring and affirming their cultures and traditions. In common with all LEs in this cluster, students may choose to complete a practicum experience that involves working with a cooperating teacher in an elementary school setting or conducting action research in a post-secondary institution.

LE 3.2: Health: Living in Balance

Students examine traditional and contemporary Indigenous health and the impact of colonization. Students learn how the treaty promise of a medicine chest on each reserve has evolved into the provision of health services for contemporary First Nations by the federal government. Students explore the traditional Indigenous, holistic conception of health that addressed all aspects of an individual: spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. They also explore the persistence of traditional practices among contemporary Indigenous people. Students look at the impacts of colonization on the health of Indigenous Canadians using a model of health that includes a healthy physical and social environment. Students research approaches to health care that have proven successful in meeting the needs of Indigenous people and communities. Students propose models of health care, combining aspects of traditional and western medicine to meet the needs of modern Indigenous people and communities. In common with all LEs in this cluster, students may choose to complete a practicum experience that involves working with a health care practitioner or conducting action research in a post-secondary institution.

LE 3.3: Justice

Students examine traditional Indigenous concepts and practices of justice, as well as the impact of colonization and the imposition of a western judicial model on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Students explore traditional concepts of communal harmony that depended on commonly understood and accepted behaviour and diverse practices of maintaining harmony within Indigenous communities. Student examine the imposition of western worldviews and practices on Indigenous peoples through colonization, the resultant alienation and loss of identity, and the social dysfunction and destructive behaviours that plague many Indigenous communities and individuals, which are manifestations of the alienation and confusion brought about by colonization. Students research attempts to reform justice for Indigenous Canadians, including the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (1999). In common with all LEs in this cluster, students may choose to complete a practicum experience that involves working within the justice system, whether at a community or provincial level, or conducting action research in a post-secondary institution.

LE 3.4: Economic and Resource Development

Students explore traditional and contemporary Indigenous economies and the impact of colonization. Students research the changes to traditional economies brought about by the fur trade, non-Indigenous settlement, the onset of colonization, and the introduction of economies based on agriculture and resource exploitation in which Indigenous people played, at best, marginal roles. In addition to studying promising practices and success stories, students examine the current economic challenges facing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Canadians, including those facing future generations. They examine economic models that balance economic success with traditional Indigenous values, including respect for the environment and community well-being. In common with all LEs in this cluster, students may choose to complete a practicum experience in Indigenous economy or conduct action research in a post-secondary institution.

Cluster 4: Indigenous Peoples and the World

In Cluster 4, students explore the histories and contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples and cultures beyond Canada. Students explore the commonalities shared by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Canadians and Indigenous peoples worldwide. Students examine the effects of colonization on Indigenous populations as well as efforts to meet the challenges imposed by colonization and globalization.

LE 4.1: One World

By exploring the traditions, cultures, histories, achievements, and contributions of global Indigenous cultures, students address the question, “Why is the preservation of Indigenous cultures vital?” Students examine the experience of colonization and its effects on contemporary Indigenous peoples. Students compare Canadian and global Indigenous cultures to discover commonalities and differences in worldview, histories, and contemporary challenges. Students research the threats of globalization against Indigenous cultures, as well as efforts to combat these threats and to realize an equitable and sustainable future for Indigenous peoples.

Cluster 5: A Festival of Learning

Cluster 5 offers students an opportunity to share their learning with classmates, teachers, and others by creating and presenting a project that addresses a vision for the future of Indigenous peoples.

LE 5.1: Looking Forward, Looking Back

Students work independently as individuals or with a partner or small group to create a project focusing on a theme relevant to contemporary Indigenous cultures. BLM 5.1.1 offers a range of suggestions for projects, but this list is not intended to be prescriptive. Students should be encouraged to develop original projects or to adapt suggestions based on their interests and abilities. Projects should include research and presentation.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY EDUCATION

Cultural competency is an essential aspect of building a more inclusive and appropriate school and classroom environment for all learners, including students of Aboriginal and other cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is important that all educators are responsive to the needs of diverse learners and can communicate and interact appropriately with Aboriginal learners and their families. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners benefit from school environments and programs that welcome diversity and provide opportunities for students and educators to learn about the cultural, linguistic, and religious aspects of historical and contemporary communities.

(Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, March 2007)

In order to be effective, teachers who teach about Indigenous topics as well as those who teach Indigenous students need to be knowledgeable about Indigenous worldviews and cultural practices. Furthermore, they need to be aware of their own cultural worldviews. Such knowledge is a starting point in a developmental process that occurs over time and requires personal commitment to the ideals of diversity, equity, and social justice.

Developing cultural competence requires self-reflection in order to examine one's own values and attitudes to cultural differences. It can be difficult to see beyond the parameters of one's own culture, especially that of mainstream, Eurocentric Canadian society. Because of its pervasiveness, this western worldview is very often regarded as the natural order by its practitioners. Western values and practices, including individual rights, domination over nature, and scientific method, are upheld as universal. Such values and practices are in contrast to the traditional worldviews of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Commitment to diversity, equity, and social justice requires that teachers evaluate and, if necessary, adapt or modify their beliefs, values, and behaviour in order to increase their capacity to understand and to teach appropriately and effectively about Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to the world, and to interact capably with Indigenous students, parents, and community members.

Cultural competence means that a teacher develops values and principles, demonstrates behaviours and attitudes, and sets in place classroom policies and practices that enable effective teaching for and about Indigenous people.

Cultural competence should be reflected in every aspect of the school, including leadership, administration, policy, and service delivery, and include the systematic involvement of students, families, and communities, as well all staff, including teachers, educational assistants, counsellors, administrators, and caretakers.

The Aboriginal Education Directorate offers a professional development workshop for educators called *A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency*, which is intended to facilitate the process of acquiring cultural competence. Contact information regarding the workshop is available at <http://web16.gov.mb.ca/contacts/ContactsController?action=ViewAllResponsibilities>.

For additional resources on cultural competency, see *Cultural Competency Summit Proceedings* by the Oregon Department of Education at www.ode.state.or.us/news/ccfullrprt.pdf.

DEALING WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM

A fundamental aspect of learning and teaching about current and historical First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics is the consideration of controversial issues – issues that involve ethics, principles, beliefs, and values. Teachers should not avoid controversial issues. Diversity of perspectives, beliefs and values, disagreement, and dissension are all part of living in a democratic and diverse society. Furthermore, discussion and debate concerning ethical or existential questions serve to motivate students and make learning more personally meaningful. The classroom provides a safe and supporting environment for students to meaningfully explore such topics.

The following guidelines will assist teachers in dealing with controversial issues in the classroom:

- Approach all issues with sensitivity
- Clearly define the issues
- Establish a clear purpose for discussions
- Establish parameters for discussions
- Ensure that the issues do not become personalized or directed at individual students
- Protect the interests of individual students by finding out in advance whether any student would be personally affected by the discussion (for example, teachers may ask students to respond to a written questionnaire in advance of the learning experience. Subsequently, an interview may be arranged with any student whose response indicates that he or she may be personally affected in order to discuss the student’s concerns and to explore options, such as an alternate or adapted learning experience. The interview might include a guidance counsellor or other staff, such as a trusted teacher or educational assistant, with whom the student is comfortable. Monitor student reactions in the classroom to gauge discomfort or stress. Formulate a policy and procedures in collaboration with students for those students unexpectedly affected by classroom discussions or learning/teaching materials: “If you’re feeling uncomfortable, what should be done?”)
- Exercise flexibility by permitting students to choose alternative assignments
- Accept the fact that there may not be a single “right answer” to a question or issue
- Respect every student’s right to voice opinions or perspectives or to remain silent
- Help students clarify the distinction between informed opinion and bias
- Help students seek sufficient and reliable information to support various perspectives
- Allow time to present all relevant perspectives fairly and to reflect upon their validity
- Encourage students to share their thoughts and feelings with their families

TEACHING CURRENT TOPICS IN FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT STUDIES

Note: Many of the observations and suggestions in this section refer to the Indigenous learner, but many of the teaching practices and principles described are generally applicable to all students.

Cultural Competency

The flexibility to move back and forth between cultures is a definite asset in Canadian society today. Some educators call this flexibility 'empowerment,' others call it walking along two different paths. (Aikenhead Masakata Ogawa)

Ideally, teachers of *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* are culturally competent, with knowledge of the history, worldviews, traditions, and ways of knowing of Indigenous peoples in Canada. In addition, teachers need to be aware of their own cultural traditions and how their worldviews may affect their understanding, perceptions, attitudes, and decision making. Non-Indigenous or acculturated Indigenous students are confronted by the same challenges facing a teacher with a similar cultural grounding. The reverse is true for those Indigenous students who practise their cultural traditions and view the world from an Indigenous perspective. These students must also navigate across cultures. The challenge is to manage cross-cultural education without eroding the Indigenous identities of such students.

Effective teaching of this course requires teachers to think and act outside of the boundaries of their worldviews. Teachers, in effect, will act as cultural brokers by building bridges between the dominant and Indigenous cultures for students who must navigate between the two, and by creating an inclusive classroom climate that respects and honours Indigenous traditions and knowledge and is inclusive of both Indigenous and Western history and culture. Pamela Toulouse advocates informal and flexible learning environments that enhance the learning of Indigenous students, differentiated instruction and evaluation, the inclusion of Indigenous history and culture in the classroom, and strong partnerships with the local Indigenous community. These practices offer an opportunity for the teacher to create an inclusive climate that will encourage First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students to become engaged in learning.

Positive Teacher-Student Relationships—Building Trust and Respect

It is also key that...students know that their teachers care about them and have the highest regard for their learning. Respect ... means knowing that we are sacred and that we have a place in this world. That is how we need to foster and support our Aboriginal students. (Toulouse)

Research (Bell, Fulford, Hampton & Roy, Goulet, and Swanson) has demonstrated that the self-esteem of Indigenous students is key to their success in school. Toulouse states that teachers can “make or break” the school experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, and stresses the importance of a caring and respectful relationship between teachers and students.

Viewing Indigenous Knowledge, Ways of Knowing as Assets

In our cross-cultural approach..., Aboriginal knowledge and languages are treated as an asset in the science classroom. Rather than adopting a deficit model (i.e. an Aboriginal background puts a student at a disadvantage in school science), we recognize the advantages that accrue to Aboriginal students who can see the world from two different perspectives (Aboriginal and Western), and who can choose the one that better fulfills their goals at any given moment. (Aikenhead)

Historically, being Indigenous has been viewed as a drawback in public education, which has used Western measures to determine the performance of Indigenous students within the school system. Low graduation and high drop-out rates among Indigenous students have engendered the belief that Indigenous students are somehow deficient and need to change in order to succeed. Rather, the education system must serve the needs of students through appropriate curricula, teaching and learning resources, and instruction and assessment practices. Research has demonstrated the connection between academic success and a strong sense of cultural identity. In “Motivating Learners in Northern Communities,” Sharon Swanson notes that “...motivation is the most critical ingredient in a literacy learner's success, and the key factors that contribute to motivation are cultural awareness, culturally sensitive teaching processes, and a sense of community.” Although Swanson’s statement refers to literacy and the North, it is applicable across subject areas and geographic regions of Canada. Teachers of *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* should, as suggested in the above quote by Glen Aikenhead, view students’ Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing as an asset, most particularly in the context of Indigenous studies.

Community Involvement

The involvement of community is a key aspect in the education of Aboriginal peoples. Because of the fact that Aboriginal people understand the world in terms of relationships, the inclusion of community in the learning process of Aboriginal people is fundamental. (Little Bear)

Indigenous cultures are diverse, and therefore teachers need to adapt teaching and learning strategies in *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* according to the history, traditions, and knowledge of the community in which they teach. Teachers should engage parents and family as active participants in the learning process, and, perhaps equally importantly, build relationships with family and community members that extend beyond the school. Meaningful community involvement also includes the use of community Elders and other knowledgeable people as teachers who can enrich student learning by sharing local traditions, history, and knowledge. When Elders and other knowledge holders are included in the learning process, students come to understand proper protocols for accessing community knowledge. The process also builds student respect and appreciation of their Indigenous heritage. By meaningfully incorporating the authentic knowledge and ways of knowing of the community in the classroom, students learn that Indigenous knowledge is a valid way to understand the world and that Indigenous and Western knowledge are complementary. Aikenhead suggests that, in the case of conflict between Western and Indigenous knowledge, teachers should encourage students to seek a resolution.

Holistic Teaching and Assessment

...success is best achieved when students' social, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs are being met and that this holistic-balanced instructional approach reflects FNMI philosophy of interconnectedness and harmony. (Wiseman)

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learning, as characterized by the Canadian Council on Learning (2007), is “holistic, a lifelong process, rooted in Aboriginal languages and culture, spiritually oriented, and a communal activity involving family, community and Elders” (5). Holistic learning addresses all aspects of the learner, including the spiritual. Teaching and learning strategies in this course address the intellect of the learner, as well as his or her emotional/spiritual and physical aspects. Many of the strategies are hands-on and experiential, engaging the physical as well as the intellectual and emotional aspects of the student. The use of reflection journals encourages the student to reflect upon and to share emotional/spiritual responses to her or his learning experiences. Teachers should arrange with students which journal entries they are willing to share and which they want to keep private.

Fairness in student assessment is about giving different students an equal chance at expressing what they understand and can do, rather than treating all students identically by assessing them the same way. (Aikenhead)

Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies offers teachers a wide range of assessment options *for and as* learning, including reflection journals, learning logs, and portfolios that allow teachers to assess student learning on an ongoing basis and to demonstrate student learning in a variety of ways. Assessment *of* learning (summative assessment) may include quizzes and tests as well as demonstration projects, which are a feature of each learning experience. Cluster 5: A Festival of Learning allows students to demonstrate their mastery of the Enduring Understandings that underpin the course. Teachers may facilitate meaningful student participation in the assessment process by allowing students choice over which assignments to include in their portfolios or by developing rubrics to measure their learning. In this way, students assume more responsibility for their learning. Aikenhead suggests that students be allowed to express important skills and knowledge learned in their community, and be rewarded in the assessment process for doing so.

Indigenous teachings affirm that every child has a gift. By attempting to discover these gifts, assessment is made fairer and, at the same time, reinforces student self-identity. *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies* offers students a wide choice of creative ways to demonstrate their learning, including role-play, visual expression such as posters and winter counts, a diversity of non-academic writing opportunities such as script writing, poetry, and lyric writing, and musical expressions such as song.

The following sites provide information on the use of portfolios, learning logs, and reflection journals:

- *Senior 3 English Language Arts: A Foundation for Implementation: Overview: Senior 3 Teaching and Learning in English Language Arts – Part 3 Managing Results-Based Curricula through Literacy Portfolios*
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/docs/sr3teach3.html
- Portfolio Guidelines
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/docs/sr3teach3.html
- Learning logs in *Success for All Learners (SFAL)*, 6.56, 6.57
- Reflection journals
www.utextension.utk.edu/4H/sos/whatisit/reflection/reflection_journal.htm

The teaching practices described here form the basis of a respectful student-teacher relationship and promote success for all students. Through this process, teachers discover that learning is a reciprocal process, and that, as well as sharing their knowledge with students, teachers may learn from the knowledge and experience of students and community.

Best Practices for Teachers of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students

Instructional Methods

- Use hands-on learning strategies
- Use experiential teaching and learning when possible and appropriate
- Use culturally appropriate materials
- Include traditional knowledge, histories, values, and cultures of Indigenous peoples
- Create a climate of collaboration
- Encourage reflective learning
- Maintain high and realistic expectations of students
- Encourage collaborative (group, pair) work
- Encourage students to gradually assume responsibility for their learning
- Use a variety of instructional models including music, demonstrations, and kinesthetic activities

Ways of Learning

- Develop a holistic perspective where teaching and learning strategies address the intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the learner
- Encourage reflective meaning-making
- Use visual learning modes, including pictures, illustrations, and graphic organizers
- Use oral traditions and storytelling
- Allow students to demonstrate their learning in a wide variety of ways

Assessment

- Maintain ongoing assessment practices
- Have students demonstrate learning through authentic products and processes
- Use assessment strategies that demonstrate each student's progress
- Use a wide range of tools
- Use peer and self-assessment

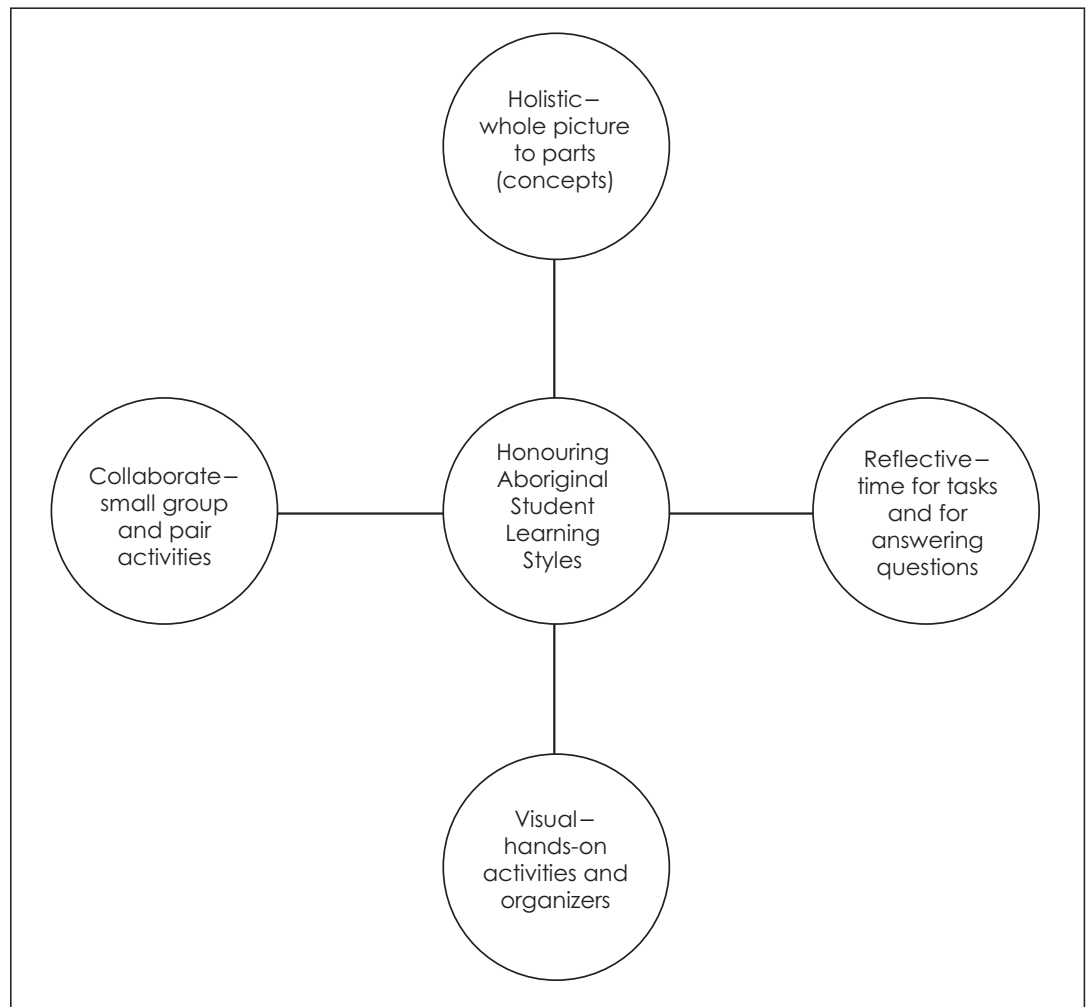
Culturally Appropriate Practices

- Encourage parent, community, and Elder involvement
- Utilize oral traditions and storytelling
- Integrate Indigenous knowledge, practices, traditions, protocols, and values

Classroom Environment

- Ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect
- Recognize that all students have gifts that should be shared with others
- Create an informal, flexible learning environment
- Encourage personal goal-setting and future focus
- Encourage development of values and life skills
- Encourage development of leadership, and allow for decision making and other opportunities for meaningful participation
- Emphasize creativity

Appreciating the Learning Styles of the Aboriginal Student



Appreciating the Learning Styles of the Aboriginal Student: From *Supporting Aboriginal Student Success: Self-Esteem and Identity, A Living Teachings Approach* by Pamela Rose Toulouse. Reprinted with permission from the Ontario Ministry of Education. Available online at <www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/toulouse.pdf>.

TERMINOLOGY

Who are the Indigenous peoples of Canada? The 1982 *Constitution Act* recognizes three groups of “Aboriginal” peoples: “Indians,” Métis, and Inuit. The term *Indian* is widely regarded as inaccurate and inappropriate, and, outside of legal and governmental usage, is often replaced by the term *First Nations* in Canada. Other terms, such as *Native Americans* (used mostly in the USA) and *Amerindians*, are used by some writers. In this document, the term *First Nations* is preferred.

The term *Aboriginal* came into general usage in Canada following the 1982 *Constitution Act* as an umbrella term for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. While the use of the term *Aboriginal* is widespread, there has been an increasing trend towards the term *Indigenous* to describe these groups. In this document, both terms are used. Teachers should be aware of the connotations of these terms.

The term *Aboriginal* is increasingly regarded as having been imposed on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples by the Canadian government, connoting a minority within the nation state. Among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada engaged in the process of decolonization and the struggle for rights, there is an emerging consciousness of and identification with the global struggle by other colonized peoples to assert their identities as peoples with unique cultures and rights of citizenship. There is growing recognition of Indigenous populations as distinct peoples by the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, and other world bodies. The definition of Indigenous peoples that follows has been adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights:

Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, and, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic, and cultural customs and traditions than the institutions of the country of which they now form a part, under a state structure that incorporates mainly the national, social, and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population that are predominant (Cobo).

In *Indigenous Knowledge and Science Revisited*, Glen S. Aikenhead and Masakata Ogawa defines Indigenous peoples as follows:

Indigenous peoples, according to a UN perspective, are the descendents of the first people to inhabit a locality, who self-identify as members of a collective, who are recognized by other groups or by state authorities, and who wish to perpetuate their cultural distinctiveness in spite of colonial subjugation and pressures to assimilate (Battiste and Henderson 2000, pp. 61–64). They generally share a collective politic of resistance arising from commonly shared experiences of oppression—that is, marginalization, economic servitude, and socio cultural genocide (Niezen 2003, p. 246).

Within the UN paradigm of Indigeneity, McKinley (2007), a Māori scholar and science educator, acknowledged different types of Indigenous peoples, including: (1) those whose colonial settlers/invaders have become numerically dominant (e.g., Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand, First Nations of Canada, the Quechua nation of Peru, and the Amei nation of Taiwan); (2) those in Third World contexts whose colonial settlers/invaders never reached a majority but left a legacy of colonization (e.g., Africa and India); and (3) those who have been displaced from the locality from which they once drew their cultural self-identity (e.g., immigrant Hmong communities in the USA and China, originally from Thailand). In addition, McKinley warned, “Indigeneity is a heterogeneous, complex concept that is contextually bound” (2007, p. 202). The qualification “contextually bound” means there is no universal definition of Indigenous. Indigenous peoples worldwide tend to reject a universal definition for fear it might create an outsider-imposed Indigenous identity, thereby colonizing them all over again (Niezen 2003).
(Aikenhead, Masakata Ogawa 554-555)