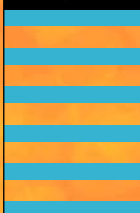




Ontario
First Nation,
Métis, and Inuit
Education
Policy
Framework



2007

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION OFFICE • MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**Ontario First Nation,
Métis, and Inuit
Education Policy Framework**



**Delivering Quality Education to
Aboriginal Students in Ontario's
Provincially Funded Schools**

Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Cadre d'élaboration des politiques de l'Ontario en éducation des Premières nations, des Métis et des Inuit.*

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website, at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>.

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Introduction

The Ontario government is dedicated to excellence in public education for all students, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. This position is reflected in *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs*, released by the government in June 2005, which envisions prosperous and healthy Aboriginal communities that will create a better future for Aboriginal children and youth.¹ Ontario and Aboriginal leaders recognize the importance of education in improving lifelong opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children and youth. *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs* commits the government to working with Aboriginal leaders and organizations to improve education outcomes among Aboriginal students.²

Acting on this commitment, the Ministry of Education has identified Aboriginal education as one of its key priorities, with a focus on meeting two primary challenges by the year 2016 – to improve achievement among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates, and advancement to postsecondary studies. The ministry recognizes that, to achieve these goals, effective strategies must be developed to meet the particular educational needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, as presented in this document, is intended to provide the strategic policy context within which the Ministry of Education, school boards,³ and schools will work together to improve the academic achievement of the estimated 50,312 Aboriginal students who attend provincially funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario (18,300 First Nations, 26,200 Métis, and 600 Inuit students who live in the jurisdictions of school boards, and 5,212 living in First Nations communities but served under a

1. The term *Aboriginal* includes First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples. First Nation, Métis, or Inuit students are referred to specifically where appropriate to the context.

2. See Appendix A for background on Aboriginal education in Ontario.

3. In this document, the term *school boards* is used in reference to both district school boards and school authorities.



tuition agreement). The framework also clarifies the roles and relationships of the ministry, school boards, and schools in their efforts to help First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students achieve their educational goals and close the gap in academic achievement with their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

The strategies outlined in this framework are based on a holistic and integrated approach to improving Aboriginal student outcomes. The overriding issues affecting Aboriginal student achievement are a lack of awareness among teachers of the particular learning styles of Aboriginal students, and a lack of understanding within schools and school boards of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives. Factors that contribute to student success include teaching strategies that are appropriate to Aboriginal learner needs, curriculum that reflects First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures and perspectives, effective counselling and outreach, and a school environment that encourages Aboriginal student and parent engagement. It is also important for educators to understand the First Nations perspective on the school system, which has been strongly affected by residential school experiences and has resulted in intergenerational mistrust of the education system. It is essential that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students are engaged and feel welcome in school, and that they see themselves and their cultures in the curriculum and the school community.

Although improvements have been made in some areas, including curriculum, in recent years (see Appendix B for a summary of current ministry initiatives), greater efforts are needed to ensure that Aboriginal students succeed at a rate comparable to that of other students in the education system. The Ministry of Education also recognizes that K–12 education is only one part of the larger picture for creating a better future for Aboriginal children and youth, and is therefore committed to working with other ministries across government on ways to improve outcomes for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners. The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework will provide the impetus and structure for implementing a new approach, with effective measures for change.

Vision

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario will have the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to successfully complete their elementary and secondary education in order to pursue postsecondary education or training and/or to enter the workforce. They will have the traditional and contemporary knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to be socially contributive, politically active, and economically prosperous citizens of the world. All students in Ontario will have knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit traditions, cultures, and perspectives.



Policy Statement

The Ministry of Education is committed to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student success. Through cooperation and partnerships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit families, communities, and organizations, First Nation governments and education authorities, school boards, other Ontario ministries, the federal government, the Ontario College of Teachers, and faculties of education, the ministry is committed to developing strategies that will:

- increase the capacity of the education system to respond to the learning and cultural needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;
- provide quality programs, services, and resources to help create learning opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students that support improved academic achievement and identity building;
- provide a curriculum that facilitates learning about contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives among all students, and that also contributes to the education of school board staff, teachers, and elected trustees; and
- develop and implement strategies that facilitate increased participation by First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents, students, communities, and organizations in working to support academic success.



Framework Principles

The First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework is guided by the following principles:

1. Excellence and Accountability

The Government of Ontario believes quality education is essential for the continuing development of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The academic achievement of every First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student is supported through the delivery of quality education. The Ministry of Education provides support and resources adapted to the specific needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

2. Equity and Respect for Diversity

The Government of Ontario creates and nurtures an academic environment for every First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student that promotes the development of a positive personal and cultural identity, as well as a sense of belonging to both Aboriginal and wider communities.

The Government of Ontario creates and supports an academic environment that fosters First Nation, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultures. It acknowledges the diversity found in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and endorses learning about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives in the public education system.

3. Inclusiveness, Cooperation, and Shared Responsibility

Cooperation among governments, ministries, educational institutions (including the Ontario College of Teachers and faculties of education), and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit families, communities, and organizations is essential for the implementation of education programs and services designed to meet the specific needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, regardless where they live.

4. Respect for Constitutional and Treaty Rights

The Government of Ontario respects Aboriginal and treaty rights protected by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Goals

The Ministry of Education has set the following goals to address the objective of improved student achievement and engagement for all students and to meet the expectations of Ontario's diverse society for a quality public education system. The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework is designed to achieve these same goals for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students:

1. **High level of student achievement**
2. **Reduce gaps in student achievement**
3. **High levels of public confidence**

Strategies and Activities for Achieving the Framework Goals

The strategies outlined in the following pages have been identified as necessary elements in achieving the ministry's goals for improving education outcomes of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. The strategies build on the ministry's key initiatives in support of the same goals across the Ontario education system, particularly the initiatives led by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and the Student Success initiative. These strategies, along with the activities and responsibilities described for each, provide a framework that will guide the ministry, school boards, and provincially funded elementary and secondary schools in delivering programs, services, and supports for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario. The strategies identified here are meant to be a starting point only. All parties are encouraged to identify additional measures that would contribute to meeting the framework goals, particularly strategies that reflect local circumstances (north/south, rural/urban), as they implement the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework.



Measuring Success

For each goal, specific quantitative and qualitative performance measures are provided. These ten performance measures will be used to gauge the success of the implementation of the framework. The ministry is planning to develop a “framework implementation plan” that will include specific targets in connection with the performance measures to aid in assessing system effectiveness and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement. School boards will implement the framework through their own school board planning, which will include locally developed targets.

In order to assess progress towards the goals of improved student achievement and closing the gap in student achievement, it will be important to have reliable and valid data. Although census data is available on the educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Ontario (see Appendix C), a particular challenge for the Ministry of Education is the inability to identify First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students who live within the jurisdictions of Ontario school boards. Aboriginal student-specific data is not available to support improvement planning and accountability, or to inform policy and funding decisions, measurement, and reporting. For this reason, boards are encouraged to develop policies for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification that would provide a basis for gathering the relevant information. The ministry will provide a resource guide and other supports to school boards for developing such policies.

Establishing baseline data on the achievement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario’s provincially funded schools will be a key target in the implementation of the framework.

The ministry is committed to providing progress reports every three years on the implementation of the framework, based on the ten performance measures.

The Framework

GOAL 1: High Level of Student Achievement

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics
- Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario

STRATEGY 1.1 Build capacity for effective teaching, assessment, and evaluation practices.

The Ministry of Education will:

- a. support school boards in developing policies for voluntary, confidential, and positive First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student self-identification, in partnership with local First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents and communities;
- b. increase internal capacity within the ministry to support school boards and schools in their efforts to close the gap in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' academic achievement by hiring First Nation, Métis, and Inuit educators;
- c. encourage faculties of education and community colleges to attract, retain, and train more First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students to become teachers and education assistants who are knowledgeable about their own cultures and traditions;
- d. encourage more faculties of education and colleges to further enhance the knowledge and skills of teacher candidates and teachers in the field to better prepare them to work with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, including students with special education needs;
- e. collaborate with faculties of education, the Ontario College of Teachers, and Aboriginal communities and organizations on potential revisions to the College's Teacher Qualifications and Additional Qualification



Program Guidelines to ensure that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures and perspectives are represented in both relevant requirements and program offerings;

- f. partner with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, faculties of education, and Aboriginal organizations to develop centres of excellence for curriculum development and Aboriginal teacher education, establishing a formal network among partners;
- g. research and promote effective practices for helping First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, including students with special education needs, succeed in school;
- h. support and disseminate research that would identify assessment tools that reflect Aboriginal ways of learning and cultural perspectives that can be used in the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process.

School boards will strive to:

- a. consult on, develop, and implement strategies for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification, in partnership with local First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents and communities;
- b. ensure that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students benefit from school-based early screening and intervention programs;
- c. provide professional development activities focused on the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, including students with special education needs;
- d. enhance resident expertise in the board by hiring First Nation, Métis, and Inuit staff at all levels;
- e. support teachers in adopting a variety of approaches and tools to teach and assess Aboriginal students more effectively;
- f. review First Nation tuition agreements in collaboration with local First Nations to ensure they are designed with strategies to improve student achievement in mind.

Schools will strive to:

- a. develop awareness among teachers of the learning styles of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;
- b. employ instructional methods designed to enhance the learning of all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;

- c. incorporate meaningful First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultural perspectives and activities when planning instruction;
- d. implement targeted learning strategies for effective oral communication and mastery of reading and writing;
- e. implement strategies for developing critical and creative thinking.

STRATEGY 1.2 Promote system effectiveness, transparency, and responsiveness.

The Ministry of Education will:

- a. support school boards in integrating the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework into school board planning in order to improve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement;
- b. renew targeted support of boards' initiatives directed towards First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;
- c. ensure the involvement of Aboriginal communities and agencies in the development of a strategy to integrate community services for students with special education needs;
- d. develop a process for reporting on the implementation of the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework every three years.

School boards will strive to:

- a. in collaboration with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations, parents, and students, integrate the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework into school board planning in order to improve Aboriginal student achievement;
- b. develop a process for reporting to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents and communities on Aboriginal student achievement.

Schools will strive to:

- a. develop a process for reporting to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents and communities on Aboriginal student achievement.

GOAL 2: Reduce Gaps in Student Achievement

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students
- Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement
- Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem
- Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need in order to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools
- Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively

STRATEGY 2.1 Enhance support to improve literacy and numeracy skills.

The Ministry of Education will:

- a. provide focused support for training in effective literacy and numeracy strategies for teachers of all students, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;
- b. collaborate with faculties of education, the Ontario College of Teachers, and Aboriginal teachers and communities to provide focused support for the ongoing education of teachers of Aboriginal students in literacy and numeracy strategies;
- c. provide support to school boards to develop yearly action plans focused on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, including students with special education needs.

School boards will strive to:

- a. develop yearly action plans focused on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, including students with special education needs;

- b. ensure that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students are included in early screening and intervention programs aimed at the identification and remediation of learning difficulties.

Schools will strive to:

- a. in collaboration with ministry resource staff, implement yearly action plans focused on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

STRATEGY 2.2 Provide additional support in a variety of areas to reduce gaps in student outcomes.

The Ministry of Education will:

- a. ensure continued Aboriginal representation on the Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE);
- b. in collaboration with school boards and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations, develop innovative approaches to meet the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students living in large urban centres;
- c. support horizontal policy development among ministries responsible for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children and youth, on the model of current efforts by other ministries and social agencies in the area of early childhood development, which involve assistance with prenatal and postnatal nutrition, prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder births, support for young parents in raising children, support for early literacy environments, and programs for early detection of learning difficulties, all with sensitivity to Aboriginal cultures and traditions;
- d. support the Native Counsellor Program in training qualified Aboriginal Education Counsellors, who would provide counselling services to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in elementary and secondary schools;
- e. collaborate with faculties of education and the Ontario College of Teachers to consider the development of a Native Counsellors Additional Qualification Program for members of the College who provide counselling services to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in elementary and secondary schools;

- f. continue to support the Alternative Secondary School Program within Native Friendship Centres;
- g. ensure that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students have access to the accommodations and/or modifications and special education programs and services they need to achieve success.

School boards will strive to:

- a. create strategic partnerships with First Nations to help students make a smoother transition from schools in First Nation communities to provincially funded elementary and secondary schools;
- b. develop strategies and procedures to ensure smooth placement, and any necessary subsequent adjustments, for First Nation students with special education needs as they move between schools in First Nation communities and provincial school boards;
- c. hire qualified Aboriginal Education Counsellors and promote their effectiveness in providing appropriate services to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;
- d. provide First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students with access to programs that focus on Aboriginal cultures and traditions and are delivered by Aboriginal staff, such as the Alternative Secondary School Program within Native Friendship Centres;
- e. develop lighthouse programs focused on Aboriginal students under the ministry's Student Success and literacy/numeracy initiatives.

Schools will strive to:

- a. in cooperation with First Nations, provide support for First Nation students making the transition to provincially funded elementary and secondary schools;
- b. provide a supportive and safe environment for all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in provincially funded elementary and secondary schools.

GOAL 3: High Levels of Public Confidence

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children
- Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Aboriginal communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education
- Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples

STRATEGY 3.1 Build educational leadership capacity and coordination.

The Ministry of Education will:

- a. through the Aboriginal Education Office, provide leadership on Aboriginal education for the various branches of the ministry and for other ministries, school boards, schools, and other education stakeholders in Ontario;
- b. strengthen Aboriginal voice and involvement in educational structures, such as the Education Partnership Table, which includes First Nation and Métis representation;
- c. work with the federal government and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit organizations to strengthen coordination on Aboriginal education;
- d. collaborate with the Ontario College of Teachers to help strengthen education leadership with respect to the education of principals and supervisory officers by ensuring that appropriate attention to Aboriginal education is reflected in the College's Additional Qualification Guidelines for the Principal's Qualification Program, the Principal's Development Course, and the Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program;
- e. offer assistance to First Nations to help strengthen education leadership in areas such as training of principals, with sensitivity to First Nation traditions and practices;

- f. research and disseminate information about effective practices for helping First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students succeed in school.

School boards will strive to:

- a. build strong positive connections with local First Nations and other Aboriginal organizations, such as Friendship Centres;
- b. engage in shared planning with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit families and communities with respect to student transitions, curriculum, resource materials, and student supports;
- c. maintain continuous dialogue with First Nations regarding tuition agreements, thus ensuring transparency and accountability;
- d. research and promote effective practices for helping First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students succeed in school.

Schools will strive to:

- a. implement best practices relating to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student success;
- b. in cooperation with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations, offer career events involving First Nation, Métis, and Inuit role models;
- c. foster Aboriginal students' leadership skills.

STRATEGY 3.2 Build capacity to support identity building, including the appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives, values, and cultures by all students, school board staff, and elected trustees.

The Ministry of Education will:

- a. integrate content that reflects First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and perspectives throughout the Ontario curriculum and related resources;
- b. increase the knowledge of all Ontario educators about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit issues and raise their cultural awareness by encouraging faculties of education, the Ontario College of Teachers, school boards, teacher federations, and professional associations to provide appropriate training and professional development focused on Aboriginal histories, cultures, and perspectives for teachers, principals, and supervisory officers;

- c. encourage trustee organizations to promote awareness of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, values, and cultures among elected trustees.

School boards will strive to:

- a. offer training for teachers about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and perspectives;
- b. develop and implement programs and services that are supportive and reflective of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures and languages;
- c. increase access to Native Language and Native Studies programming for all students;
- d. facilitate intercultural dialogue throughout school communities.

Schools will strive to:

- a. increase knowledge of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures among all school staff;
- b. acquire and provide access to a variety of accurate and reliable Aboriginal resources such as periodicals, books, software, and resources in other media, including materials in the main Aboriginal languages;
- c. recognize and promote Native Language and Native Studies programming for all students;
- d. foster school-community projects with appropriate cultural components.

STRATEGY 3.3 Foster supportive and engaged families and communities.

The Ministry of Education will:

- a. ensure Aboriginal representation on the Parent Involvement Advisory Board;
- b. through the Parent Engagement Office, directly support schools and school boards in their efforts to enhance First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parental engagement;
- c. communicate to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit families and communities, in a clear, concise, and accessible way, information about the overall and specific expectations in the Ontario curriculum that reflect First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and perspectives.

School boards will strive to:

- a.** establish First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Advisory Committees that include representation from First Nations, community members, and local Aboriginal service delivery organizations, such as Friendship Centres;
- b.** develop creative strategies to encourage more First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents to participate more actively and directly in the education of their children;
- c.** develop strategies to involve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and service providers in ensuring that integrated and seamless services are provided to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students with special education needs;
- d.** increase involvement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents, Elders, and other community resources;
- e.** provide continuing education programs for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents;
- f.** develop creative strategies to engage more First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in school activities and encourage them to participate more actively in school.

Schools will strive to:

- a.** implement specific strategies, including support networks, to increase First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents' participation in their children's education and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student participation in school;
- b.** support First Nation, Métis, and Inuit families in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and career development.

Framework Summary



GOALS	STRATEGIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<p>1. High Level of Student Achievement</p>	<p>1.1: Build capacity for effective teaching, assessment, and evaluation practices.</p> <p>1.2: Promote system effectiveness, transparency, and responsiveness.</p>	<p>1. Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics</p> <p>2. Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario</p>
<p>2. Reduce Gaps in Student Achievement</p>	<p>2.1: Enhance support to improve literacy and numeracy skills.</p> <p>2.2: Provide additional support in a variety of areas to reduce gaps in student outcomes.</p>	<p>3. Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students</p> <p>4. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement</p> <p>5. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem</p> <p>6. Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools</p> <p>7. Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively</p>

GOALS	STRATEGIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<p>3. High Levels of Public Confidence</p>	<p>3.1: Build educational leadership capacity and coordination.</p> <p>3.2: Build capacity to support identity building, including the appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives, values, and cultures by all students, school board staff, and elected trustees.</p> <p>3.3: Foster supportive and engaged families and communities.</p>	<p>8. Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children</p> <p>9. Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Aboriginal communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education</p> <p>10. Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples</p>

Appendix A

Background Information on Aboriginal Education in Ontario



Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are recognized and affirmed in the Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982 (section 35). Section 35(2) indicates that Aboriginal peoples of Canada include Indian, Inuit, and Métis people. Section 91(24) gives the Parliament of Canada exclusive jurisdiction over the creation of laws relating to “Indians and lands reserved for the Indians”, and section 93 gives provincial legislatures exclusive jurisdiction over the creation of laws related to education.

There are five cohorts of Aboriginal students in Ontario, as follows:

1.	First Nation students who live in First Nation communities and attend federally funded elementary or secondary schools in First Nation communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The estimated number of students is 20,100.4• Elementary and secondary education of these students is the responsibility of the local First Nation Education Authority, the band council, or the federal government.• Funding for the education of these students is provided by the federal government.• Secondary schools in First Nation communities register with the Ministry of Education as private schools in order to offer credit courses leading to the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. In 2005, there were 34 First Nation secondary schools.• The Ministry of Education provides professional development opportunities for teachers and principals in First Nation schools on a fee-for-service basis.
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4. 2001 Census of Canada.

2.	<p>First Nation students who live in First Nation communities but attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools under a tuition agreement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of students is 5,212.⁵ • Some First Nations provide education programming up to Grade 6, others up to Grade 8. Most students must leave their communities to continue their education in provincially funded schools. • A tuition agreement between a First Nation or the federal government and a school board covers the cost of education provided by the school board.
3.	<p>First Nation students who live in the jurisdiction of school boards and attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The estimated number of students is 18,300.⁶ • Education funding for these students is provided by the Ministry of Education under the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), and the students are treated like all other students of the board.
4.	<p>Métis students attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The estimated number of students is 26,200.⁷ • Education funding for these students is provided by the Ministry of Education under the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), and the students are treated like all other students of the board.
5.	<p>Inuit students attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The estimated number of students is 600.⁸ • Education funding for these students is provided by the Ministry of Education under the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), and the students are treated like all other students of the board.

According to 2001 Census data, there is a significant gap between the educational attainment of the Aboriginal population and that of the non-Aboriginal population (see Appendix C for detailed census data). Many Aboriginal people have few employment skills and lack the academic/literacy skills needed to upgrade their qualifications in an increasingly knowledge-oriented labour market.

5. Ministry of Education October Report (2004/05). • 6. 2001 Census.
7. 2001 Census. • 8. 2001 Census.

Census data indicates that 42 per cent of the Aboriginal population in Ontario, aged 15 years and over, have less than a high school diploma, and only 6 per cent have completed a university degree. The 2005 federal Auditor General's Report estimated that it would take 28 years for First Nation high school graduation numbers to reach the Canadian average.

A number of studies conducted over the past 30 years, including the Penner Report (1983), the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Final Report* (1996), and the Nault Working Group Report on First Nations Education (2003), have pointed to the urgent need for governments to focus their efforts on improving educational outcomes among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations), released a document titled *Indian Control of Indian Education*. The document emphasized, among other things, the need for control of First Nation education by First Nation people, as well as the need for greater involvement of First Nation parents in the education of their children.

There are a number of issues that impact on Aboriginal student achievement, including a lack of awareness among teachers of the learning styles of Aboriginal students and a lack of understanding within schools and school boards of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives.

A further challenge is the lack of coordination between First Nation governments, Aboriginal organizations, and the provincial and federal governments, which has resulted in varied levels of educational support for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. However, efforts are currently under way at a number of levels to find collaborative ways of improving the education outcomes of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

In September 2004, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, identified Aboriginal education as a priority issue. Ministers acknowledged the need to find new and varied ways of working together to improve the outcomes of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students across both the elementary/secondary and postsecondary education systems.

The Ontario government's *New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs*, released in June 2005, envisions prosperous and healthy Aboriginal communities that will create a better future for Aboriginal children and youth. Ontario and Aboriginal leaders recognize the importance of education in improving lifelong opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children and youth. The *New Approach* commits the government to working with Aboriginal leaders and organizations to improve educational outcomes among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children and youth by:

- working with Aboriginal communities and organizations and school boards to develop an Aboriginal Education Policy Framework;
- fostering good relationships between First Nations and school boards;
- establishing clear roles and responsibilities, including those that pertain to the federal government's relationship with First Nations;
- working with the federal government to improve the learning environment and educational outcomes of First Nation students on reserve.

At the November 2005 First Ministers' Meeting, first ministers and national Aboriginal leaders agreed to close the quality-of-life gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by addressing several issues, including health care, housing, and improvement in the K-12 educational achievement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. First ministers and Aboriginal leaders set a target to close the high school graduation gap by 20 per cent over the next five years.

According to census data, improvements in Aboriginal educational attainment have been made over the years. However, greater efforts are needed to ensure that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students succeed at a rate comparable to that of other students in the education system. Through strategies such as those described above and through the implementation of the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, the Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario have the necessary support to succeed.

Appendix B

Selected Ontario Aboriginal Education Initiatives



Alternative Secondary School Programs within Native Friendship Centres

- The ministry provides \$650,000 in support of alternative secondary schools in eight Native Friendship Centres to address high drop-out rates among urban First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.
- Funding is intended to support activities such as cultural programs and counselling, as well as the use or engagement of resources such as Elders.
- Programs are located in London, Sudbury, Fort Erie, Fort Frances, Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, and Ottawa.

Native Studies

- Curriculum policy documents have been developed for Native Studies, Grades 9-12.
- The Native Studies curriculum is designed to provide students with a broad range of knowledge related to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples to help them better understand Aboriginal issues of public interest discussed at the local, regional, and national levels.
- The curriculum provides students with an increased awareness and understanding of the histories, cultures, and world views of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada.

Native Languages

- Since 1987, the Grade 1-12 curriculum has included seven Native languages.
- Curriculum resource guides focusing on language patterns (grammar) have been developed to support the Native language curriculum.
- Native language teacher training programs are in place to train qualified Native language teachers.
- Students enrolled in a Native language program may be exempt from learning French as a second language.

Curriculum Review

- As part of the curriculum review process, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit content has been integrated into the revised curriculum as appropriate, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations.
- Curriculum review has been completed in social studies (Grades 1-6), history and geography (Grades 7 and 8), Canadian and world studies (Grades 9-12), mathematics (Grade 1-11), Kindergarten, language (Grades 1-8), guidance and career education (Grades 9-12), and business studies (Grades 9-12).
- A resource guide is being developed to support the integration of Aboriginal content in social studies programs.

Native Counsellor Training Program

- The Native Counsellor Training Program was initially established in 1976. After withdrawing its support for the program in 1995, the ministry renewed its funding for the program in 2006.
- The program was established to address the need for Aboriginal Education Counsellors who would provide counselling services to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students attending elementary and secondary schools both within and outside First Nation communities.

Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program in First Nation Secondary Schools

- First Nation students participating in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) now have the same exemption as other OYAP students with respect to wage rates and ratios under the Trade Qualification and Apprenticeship Act (TQAA) and from registration and classroom fees under the TQAA and the Apprenticeship Certification Act.
- One First Nation school, N'bisiiing Education Centre, near North Bay, is currently participating in the OYAP program.

Northern Ontario Education Leaders (NOEL): K-6 Literacy Local Initiative

- The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat worked in partnership with NOEL to implement a collaborative project to achieve equity of outcomes in the area of literacy and to close the achievement gap,

with particular emphasis on the needs of Aboriginal learners. One area of focus for this project was the critical area of oral language. Over the past year, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has provided more than \$2.5 million to the NOEL boards in support of this initiative.

Tutors in the Classroom

- This project has provided more than \$2.5 million over the past two years to provide tutors for students who require additional support. Aboriginal students are among the students who have benefited from this program. This is a partnership program between school boards and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat that has resulted in the hiring of more than 3500 university and college students, since September 2005, as tutors for students in JK-6.

The Learning Circle Partnership: Renfrew Catholic District School Board, Renfrew County Public District School Board, and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation

- The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has provided \$380,000 for the development of this partnership to provide additional support in literacy and numeracy to Aboriginal students and to enhance student confidence and engagement in learning.

Professional Learning

- The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat is committed to providing resources and support to boards to assist them in achieving equity of outcomes. To that end, a series of webcasts has been produced to support teachers in strengthening classroom practice. These webcasts allow for “anywhere, anytime” professional learning. Although the webcasts provide valuable professional learning on a variety of subjects, two are of particular value for supporting teachers as they improve educational opportunities for Aboriginal students. These include “Unlocking the Potential of Aboriginal Students” and “Differentiating Instruction”.

Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP)

- The Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) provides a range of supports for boards and schools in general and more intense support

for particular schools that have experienced difficulty in achieving continuous improvement. Several of the schools identified have a significant Aboriginal student population.

- Many of the teaching strategies and resources used in these schools are specific to the needs of the Aboriginal population, such as focusing on oral language and using resources that reflect Aboriginal cultures. The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat is providing more than \$25 million province-wide to support the implementation of the OFIP initiative.
- The OFIP initiative encompasses the pre-existing Turnaround Teams Program, which has provided support to improve early literacy learning in struggling schools, including several schools and authorities with a high proportion of Aboriginal students.

Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Literacy Camps

- In 2006, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat provided \$270,000 to support these literacy-based summer camps offered in isolated Northern Ontario Aboriginal communities. Secretariat staff also acted as volunteer instructors in a variety of locations.

Aboriginal-Focused Project Proposals as Part of the Parents Reaching Out Grants for Schools and Parents Reaching Out Grants for Regional/Provincial Projects

- In 2006-07, the ministry launched the Parents Reaching Out Grants with allocations of \$1 million for school-based projects and \$750,000 for regional and provincial projects. The grants aim to support enhanced parent involvement, with a special focus on reaching out to parents who experience barriers or challenges to getting involved. Several strong Aboriginal-specific proposals were submitted for review in both programs.
- The ministry, through the Parent Engagement Office and the Aboriginal Education Office, will continue to ensure that appropriate outreach strategies are used to inform schools, school boards, and stakeholders about these programs.

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Student Information

- There is currently no ministry policy requiring boards to implement Aboriginal student self-identification policies.

- Aboriginal student-specific data is not available on enrolment, EQAO results, graduation rates, and/or drop-out rates.
- As of the 2006-07 school year, seven school boards have a student identification policy in place.
- The ministry is providing a resource guide and other supports to school boards for the development and implementation of policies for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification.

Northern Ontario Education Leaders (NOEL): Aboriginal Education Project

- The ministry provided \$175,000 to NOEL in December 2003 to develop and implement specific projects that seek to improve Aboriginal student achievement.
- Projects included the development of a policy for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification, a parental involvement strategy, and support for early and later literacy.
- Results include the establishment of policies for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification in two boards, and recommendations in support of oral literacy.

Aboriginal Student-Focused Student Success Projects

- In 2004-05 and 2005-06, \$2.3 million was provided to boards for seven projects on alternative pathways for Aboriginal secondary school students to complete their secondary education. The projects are as follows:
 - Algoma District School Board: *Late School – An Alternative Pathway*
 - James Bay Lowlands District School Board: *Innovation Teacher*
 - Near North District School Board: *Success Through Alternative Routes*
 - Northern Ontario Education Leaders: *Aboriginal Student Success (Grades 7-12)*
 - Rainbow District School Board: *MKWA Police Opportunity Circle*
 - Simcoe County District School Board: *Seventh Fire Education Centre*
 - Toronto District School Board: *Retaining Aboriginal Students in Toronto District Schools*
- In 2006-07, \$1.2 million was provided to NOEL for innovative projects aimed at providing alternative pathways for Aboriginal secondary school students. The goals of the projects are to increase credit accumulation,

reduce drop-out rates, and encourage students who have left school to return and complete their diploma requirements. Projects include:

- Skills development
- Student retention
- Alternative pathways to education and training
- Behaviour intervention
- Transition program
- Oral language support

Funding also covers a full-time Aboriginal student success coordinator and three research projects being conducted by Lakehead University.

Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG)

- The Learning Opportunities Grant consists of three components: a Demographic component (which makes up over 80 per cent of the grant's total funding); a Literacy and Math Outside the School Day component; and a Student Success, Grades 7 to 12, component.
- Aboriginal status is one of five socioeconomic factors used in calculating the Demographic component of LOG.

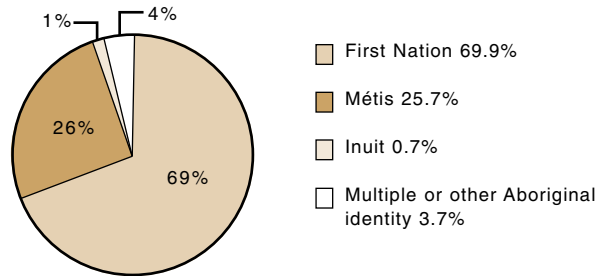
Appendix C

Demographic and Educational Attainment Statistics (2001 Census)



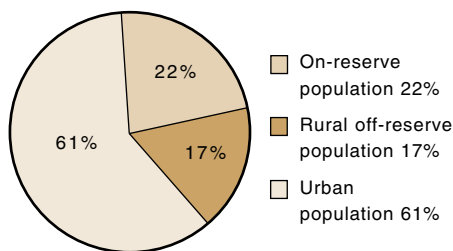
Although it is widely recognized that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit demographic and educational attainment statistics derived from census data are not entirely accurate, these are currently the only statistics available to inform policy and program decisions.

Breakdown of Aboriginal Identity Population in Ontario
(2001 Census)

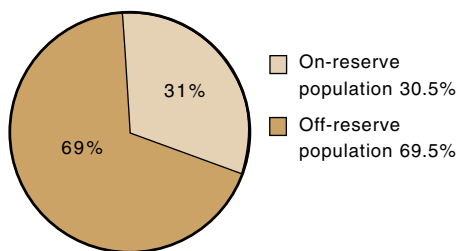


According to the 2001 Census, the Aboriginal population of Ontario is 188,315, which represents 1.7% of the total provincial population.

Aboriginal Identity Population in Ontario by Area of Residence
(2001 Census)



First Nation Identity Population in Ontario by Area of Residence
(2001 Census)

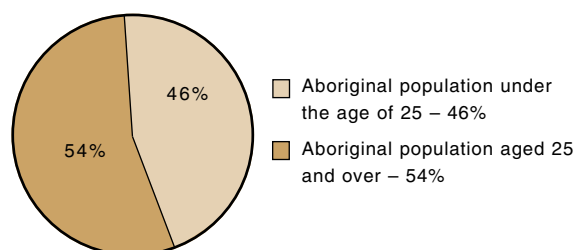


Seventy-eight per cent of the Aboriginal population live off reserve, with 61% living in urban centres. Of the total First Nation population, approximately 70% live off reserve.

Communities in Ontario with Significant Numbers of Aboriginal People (2001 Census)	
City (C) or Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)	Aboriginal Identity Population
Toronto (CMA)	20,300
Ottawa (C)	8,625
Thunder Bay (CMA)	8,205
Greater Sudbury (CMA)	7,385
Hamilton (CMA)	7,265
London (CMA)	5,640
St. Catharines-Niagara (CMA)	4,970
Sault Ste. Marie (C)	4,530
Windsor (CMA)	3,965
Kitchener (CMA)	3,235
Oshawa (CMA)	3,020
Timmins (C)	2,880
Brantford (C)	2,475
North Bay (C)	2,320
Kingston (CMA)	2,205
Mississauga (C)	2,055

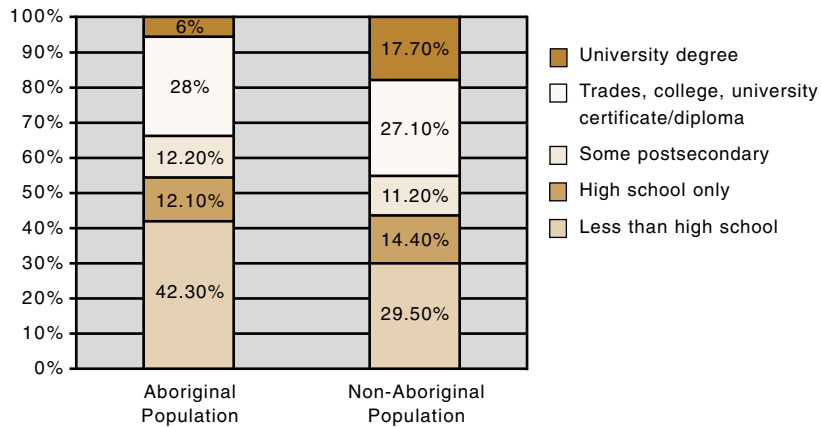
The above chart provides an overview of communities in Ontario with significant populations of Aboriginal people (over 2000), as a demonstration of the extent to which the Aboriginal population is dispersed throughout the province.

Aboriginal Youth Population, Under Age 25, in Ontario (2001 Census)



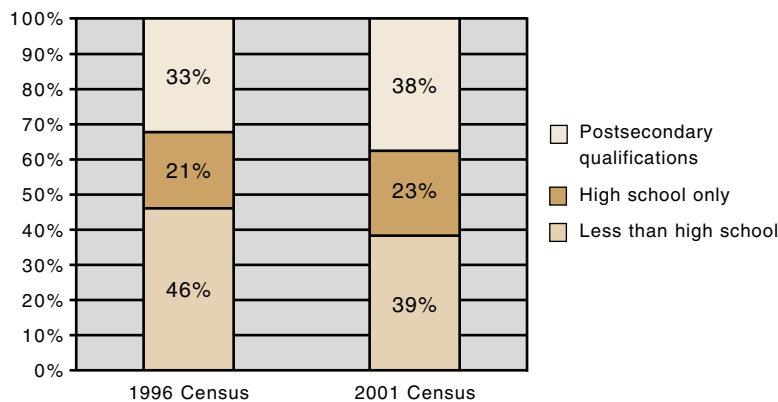
The Aboriginal population is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population. In Ontario, the Aboriginal population (under age 25) makes up 46% of the total Aboriginal population. It is expected that this trend will continue, as the birth rate among the Aboriginal population is approximately 1.5 times higher than the Canadian average. This will result in an increasing number of Aboriginal students moving through the school system.

Educational Attainment of the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Population in Ontario, Aged 15 Years and Over (2001 Census)



There is a significant gap between the educational attainment of the Aboriginal population and that of the non-Aboriginal population. Forty-two per cent of the Aboriginal population in Ontario, aged 15 years and over, have less than a high school diploma, and only 6% have completed a university degree.

Educational Attainment of the Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, Aged 25–64 (1996 vs 2001 Census)



Improvements in Aboriginal educational attainment have been made over the years. Across Canada, the proportion of Aboriginal people with a high school diploma increased from 21% in 1996 to 23% in 2001, and the proportion of those with postsecondary qualifications increased from 33% to 38% during the same period. However, greater efforts are still required to close the gap in Aboriginal student outcomes.

Appendix D

Glossary of Key Terms⁹

Aboriginal peoples. The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, states: “In this Act, ‘Aboriginal peoples of Canada’ includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.” These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their indigenous ancestry.

Aboriginal rights. Rights held by some Aboriginal peoples as a result of their ancestors’ use and occupancy of traditional territories before contact with Europeans or before British sovereignty in Canada. Aboriginal rights vary from group to group, depending on what customs, practices, and traditions were integral to the distinctive culture of the group.

Band. Defined by the Indian Act, in part, as “a body of Indians ... for whose use and benefit in common, lands ... have been set apart”. Each band has its own governing band council, usually consisting of a chief and several councillors. The members of the band usually share common values, traditions, and practices rooted in their language and ancestral heritage. Today, many bands prefer to be known as First Nations.

Band council or First Nation council. The band’s governing body. Community members choose the chief and councillors by election, or through traditional custom. The band council’s powers vary with each band.

Elder. A man or woman whose wisdom about spirituality, culture, and life is recognized and affirmed by the community. Not all Elders are “old”. Sometimes the spirit of the Creator chooses to imbue a young Aboriginal person. The Aboriginal community and individuals will normally seek the advice and assistance of Elders in various areas of traditional, as well as contemporary issues.

9. Information in this glossary is adapted from the Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs website.

First Nation. A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian”, which many found offensive. The term “First Nation” has been adopted to replace the word “band” in the names of communities.

First Nation Education Authority. A First Nation Education Authority is comparable to a board of education. Most First Nations have an Education Authority, which is responsible for administering education for the community. It is responsible for hiring teachers and principals working in the community school(s), determines the curriculum to be used in the school(s), and negotiates tuition agreements with local provincially funded school boards when students have to leave the First Nation community to continue their elementary and/or secondary education.

First Nation governance. Refers to negotiated arrangements that enable First Nations to exercise greater decision- and law-making authority than is currently possible under the Indian Act. (The Canadian government refers to this process as “self-government”.) In Ontario, the governance arrangements that are being negotiated by Canada with First Nations will not be treaties; will not create new rights, such as hunting and fishing rights; and will not expand the reserve land bases of First Nations.

Indian. A term that may have different meanings depending on context. Under the Indian Act, it means “a person who pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian”. A number of terms include the word “Indian”, such as “Status Indian”, “Non-status Indian”, and “Treaty Indian”. Status Indians are those who are registered as Indians under the Indian Act, although some would include those who, although not registered, are entitled to be registered. Non-status Indians are those who lost their status or whose ancestors were never registered or lost their status under former or current provisions of the Indian Act. Treaty Indians are those members of a community whose ancestors signed a treaty with the Crown and as a result are entitled to treaty benefits. The term “Indian” was first used by Christopher Columbus in 1492, believing he had reached India.

Indian Act. Federal legislation that regulates Indians and reserves and sets out certain federal government powers and responsibilities towards First Nations and their reserved lands. The first Indian Act was passed in 1876, although there were a number of pre- and post-Confederation enactments with respect to Indians and reserves prior to 1876. Since then, the act has undergone numerous amendments, revisions, and re-enactments. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development administers the act.

Inuit. Aboriginal people in northern Canada, living mainly in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador. Ontario has a very small Inuit population. The Inuit are not covered by the Indian Act. The federal government has entered into several major land claim settlements with the Inuit.

Métis people. People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. The Métis history and culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, Irish, French, Ojibwe, and Cree.

Reserve. Lands set aside by the federal government for the use and benefit of a specific band or First Nation. The Indian Act provides that this land cannot be owned by individual band or First Nation members.

Traditional lands. Lands used and occupied by First Nations before European contact or the assertion of British sovereignty.

Treaty. A formal agreement between the Crown and Aboriginal peoples.

Treaty rights. Rights specified in a treaty. Rights to hunt and fish in traditional territory and to use and occupy reserves are typical treaty rights. This concept can have different meanings depending on the context and perspective of the user.

Tribal council. A body that typically represents a group of First Nations to facilitate the administration and delivery of local services to their members.



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