

# **Rainbow District School Board's First Nation, Métis and Inuit Cultural Standards**



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The development of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Cultural Standard guidelines for the Rainbow District School Board, include a focus on schools, educators and curriculum. The cultural standards presented in this document were developed in consultation with local First Nation, Métis and Inuit community members in the Sudbury, Espanola and Manitoulin Island areas. We acknowledge that over time, we may need to revisit this document and make appropriate changes based on further feedback from stakeholders and as schools progress in the implementation of these standards.

These Cultural Standards are meant to support schools and educators in recognizing that the ways of knowing and the worldview of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people are valid ways of learning and interpreting their environment. The development of these cultural standards will also help to bring recognition of equality and respect of these cultures. As this understanding is developed and educators begin to implement these standards, First Nation, Métis and Inuit students and their families will be able to more confidently and successfully engage in the education system and achieve to their highest potentials.

It is important that educators continually critically review their teaching methods and approaches to ensure they are meeting the needs of all students. Although these standards have been developed from First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives, they can be used as a model to ensure an equitable and inclusive education is being offered to students of all backgrounds.

The Rainbow District School Board sincerely thanks the Alaska Native Knowledge Network for their generous permission to use their document, *Alaska Standard for Culturally Responsive Schools*, as a model to begin our work in this area.

As well, we would also like to thank Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute in M'Chigeeng First Nation for allowing us to use their *Plan for incorporating Cultural Standards at Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute*, as a guideline for the development and implementation of cultural standard guidelines within the Rainbow District School Board.

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The Rainbow District School Board strives to be a culturally responsive school board by heightening awareness of staff, students and the school community to the nuances of cultures within Rainbow schools and assisting staff, students and the school community to respond in ways that are inclusive and supportive of our diversity.

Culture can be defined by a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and artifacts that the members of a society share and are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. Within a culture, sub-cultures exist based on shared interests, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability and disability, religion, creed, social or economic status. As societies become increasingly more complex and intercultural, individuals identify with many cultures.

Assumptions:

- That what makes us different defines us—identity
- Respect for difference engenders respect

The original people of Canada were the First Nations and Inuit peoples, followed by the French and English, the Métis and immigrants of a variety of ethnicities. Constitutionally Canada recognizes the rights of Aboriginal people defined as First Nation, Métis and Inuit, French and English 35(1).

## **Rationale**

**The vision for the First Nation Métis and Inuit Policy Framework (2007) for Ontario states:**

“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.”

The development of these cultural standards will support schools and educators as they work towards realizing this vision not only for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, but also for all students in the Rainbow District School Board. The introduction and implementation of these cultural standards will support schools and educators in ensuring that First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, families and communities have a positive and successful educational experience. Implementing these standards will help to eliminate negative stigmas, reduce stereotypes and remove barriers as staff and students broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding of First Nation people, their histories and worldviews.

## Culturally Responsive Schools

- A. A culturally responsive school fosters the ongoing participation of elders in all aspects of the schooling process.**

**Schools who achieve this standard will:**

- Invite Elders/Senators to school throughout the year as well as to special events like graduations
- Provide a space in the school for Elder/Senator visits
- Follow protocols for greeting and thanking Elders/Senators

- B. A culturally responsive school provides multiple avenues for students to access the learning that is offered, as well as, multiple forms of assessment for students to demonstrate what they have learned.**

**Schools who achieve this standard will:**

- Encourage and support experientially oriented approaches to education that makes use of community-based resources and expertise.
- View students as capable learners, each with unique skills, talents and gifts

- C. A culturally responsive school provides opportunities for students to learn in and/or about their heritage language.**

**Schools who achieve this standard will:**

- Offer Ojibwe language courses and/or Ojibwe language activities for all students
- Play “O’Canada” in French, English and Ojibwe
- Incorporate signage in the school that includes English, French and Ojibwe language

- D. A culturally-responsive school has a high level of involvement of professional staff who are of the same cultural background as the students with whom they are working**

**Schools who achieve this standard will:**

- Hire First Nation, Métis and Inuit people as part of staff compliment

- Foster and support opportunities for teachers to participate in professional activities that help them to expand their repertoire of cultural knowledge and pedagogical skills

**E. A culturally responsive school fosters extensive ongoing participation, communication, and interaction between school and community personnel.**

**Schools who achieve this standard will:**

- Connect with the local First Nation community throughout the year
- Host interviews and other school-related activities for parents in First Nation friendly places either in the school or in the community
- Provide opportunities throughout the year for students to put into practice or display their knowledge of local cultural traditions

**F. A culturally responsive school consists of facilities that are compatible with the community environment in which they are situated.**

**Schools who achieve this standard will:**

- Consult with First Nation, Métis and Inuit families and community to determine how to welcome their families and communities
- Create a physical environment that is inviting for First Nation, Métis and Inuit families and their communities
- Utilize local expertise, including students, to provide culturally-appropriate art displays and for culturally appropriate workshops
- Make use of facilities within the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers

## **Culturally Responsive Educators**

**A. Culturally responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work**

**Educators who achieve this standard will:**

- Show and take an active interest in learning about the First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures
- Demonstrate familiarity with the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Guide for Staff and implement the recommendations in the guide
- Include resources in teaching that include First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives

- Demonstrate knowledge of First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditional world views and ways of knowing and acknowledges these as valid ways of understanding and learning
- B. Culturally responsive educators use local environment and community resources on a regular basis to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of students**

**Educators who achieve this standard will:**

- a. Provide opportunities for students to learn in settings where local cultural knowledge and skills are naturally relevant
  - b. Provide integrated learning activities organized around themes of local significance and across subject areas
- C. Culturally responsive educators participate in community events and activities in an appropriate and supportive way.**

**Educators who achieve this standard will:**

- Support the cultural traditions and expectations of the local community in which they teach
  - Develop a working relationship with the local community and makes appropriate use of the cultural and professional expertise of the local community
- D. Culturally responsive educators work closely with parents to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school**

**Educators who achieve this standard will:**

- Seek to continually learn about and build upon the cultural knowledge that students bring with them from their homes and community
  - Promote parental and community involvement in their children's education
- E. Culturally responsive educators recognize the full educational potential of each students and provide the challenges and supports necessary for them to achieve that potential**

**Educators who achieve this standard will:**

- Understand different learning styles and provide opportunities for students to show what they know and can do in culturally appropriate ways.

- Seek, first to understand before interpreting actions, words or events related to a cultural group, of which you are not a member
- Work to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices within the school (staff and students)
- Recognize the need for all people to understand the importance of learning about other cultures and appreciating what each has to offer

## Culturally Responsive Curriculum

### **A. Culturally Responsive Curriculum reinforces the integrity of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them**

#### **Curriculum that achieves these standards:**

- Respects and validates knowledge that has been derived from a variety of cultural traditions
- Provides all students with the knowledge of Canada's history including accurate history of First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada
- Provides all students with the opportunity to learn about local First Nation, Métis and Inuit knowledge systems
- Infuses and acknowledges First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives, values, histories
- Provides avenues to display knowledge and skill based on learning styles
- Acknowledges the local carriers of knowledge as resources

### **B. Culturally Responsive Curriculum recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future**

#### **Curriculum that achieves these standards:**

- Situates First Nation, Métis and Inuit people in the present
- Incorporates reviewed, recommended and accurate resources including websites at all levels throughout the system
- Provides students with an understanding of the dynamics of cultural systems as they change over time, and as they are impacted by external forces
- Incorporates First Nation, Métis and Inuit values and teachings into regular studies
- Moves student beyond cultural awareness to advocacy (i.e., building students' ability to stand up to racism)
- Supports students with deeper understandings of culture to find acceptance within the school
- Makes connections to the land, to animals and nature, to the communities, as a means to achieve well being and balance





- Recognizes the contemporary validity of traditional cultural knowledge systems, values and beliefs and grounds students in the values of balance and healthy living through connections between people and place
- Incorporates in-depth study of settlements, land claims, treaties, current dilemmas and current political positions

**C. Culturally Responsive Curriculum uses the local language and cultural knowledge as a foundation for the rest of the curriculum**

**Curriculum that achieves these standards:**

- Starts when students are young
- Develops the ability to use the language in the every day life of school (i.e., greeting, thanking, showing respect for Elders)
- Recognizes that the spirit of the culture is in the language and the need for retention of the language
- Utilizes the local language as a base from which to learn the deeper meanings of the local cultural knowledge, values, beliefs and practices, within Native Language courses for all grades and teachers through arts events
- Recognizes the depth of knowledge that is associated with the long inhabitation of a particular place as home
- Incorporates language and cultural immersion experiences within Native Language courses
- Views all community members as potential teachers and all events in the community as potential learning opportunities
- Recognizes knowledge keepers of local history
- Treats local cultural knowledge as a means to acquire the conventional curriculum content

**D. Culturally Responsive Curriculum fosters a complementary relationship across knowledge derived from diverse knowledge system**

**Curriculum that achieves these standards:**

- Accepts oral traditions and oral knowledge as valid and equal to the written word
- Draws parallels between knowledge derived from oral tradition and that derived from books
- Promotes and engages students in the construction of new knowledge and understandings that contribute to an ever-expanding view of the world from oral traditions
- Encourages students to become experts in researching a tradition (plants, animals, nature) from the learner's point of view



**E. Culturally Responsive Curriculum situates local knowledge and actions in a global context**

**Curriculum that achieves these standards:**

- Builds relationships with the local community in order to make these connections
- Encourages students to consider the inter-relationship between their local circumstances and the global community
- Conveys to students that every culture and community contributes to, at the same time that it receives from the global knowledge base
- Emphasizes the four races and connections between the races
- Compare and contrast Indigenous cultures (plants and animals)
- Respects and promotes Indigenous ecological knowledge
- Prepares students to “think globally, act locally”

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