

# Indigenous Education

## What's the issue?

Advancing Reconciliation is a priority of OPSBA and supporting this through Indigenous education is important for all school boards. We support a curriculum for all students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 that contains clear expectations that every student will acquire knowledge and understanding of Treaties and of the historical context that gave rise to residential schools, the impact on Indigenous children and their families, and the ongoing legacy that is the responsibility of all Canadians. **Seventy-one percent of Ontarians have indicated they support or somewhat support mandatory Indigenous education curriculum for all students.**

Indigenous students are one of the fastest growing student populations across the province, and in fact, are the fastest growing student demographic in Northern Ontario, with more students self-identifying as Indigenous every year. Increases have also been seen in the number of Indigenous Trustees as members of public school boards, with more Boards moving to formalize the representation of Indigenous students at the governance level.

Ontario's English public school boards have the majority of self-identified Indigenous students who attend publicly funded schools provincially. For the past several years, OPSBA representatives, alongside school boards and Indigenous leaders, have been working with the government on the Reciprocal Education Approach. OPSBA fully supports the right of Indigenous parents to choose the schools that best meet the needs of their children.

## Current Challenges:

- Lack of mandatory curriculum. In May 2019, the Ministry of Education released a revised First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies curriculum comprising 10 elective secondary courses.
- Lack of Indigenous language teachers. There is a serious need for the retention and revitalization of Indigenous languages in schools taught by fluent Indigenous speakers.

OPSBA believes that through education we will move towards a Canada where the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is founded on mutual respect. We support the Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

## Questions

How can we ensure there is mandatory Indigenous education curriculum for all students?

What can be done to protect Indigenous languages?

How can we hire more Indigenous teachers and education workers in our schools?



The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents English public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario, which together serve more than 1.3 million public elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the English public school system in Ontario.