

Indigenous Education

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Indigenous languages are at risk of disappearing and the recent realignment of the Indigenous Education Grant in last year's education funding has raised concerns in many OPSBA member boards. Some boards fear a deficit in funding may jeopardize Indigenous education initiatives.

Ontario's English public school boards serve the majority of self-identified Indigenous students who attend publicly funded schools. Our member boards support Indigenous students by developing relationships, supports and access to resources in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The numbers of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Speakers with language knowledge continues to decrease, and the number of language speakers with teaching certification is even smaller. Publicly funded schools face challenges like teacher vacancies and an inability to offer programming due to this issue. The revitalization of Indigenous languages is essential for Indigenous student success and cultural preservation.

The inclusion of Indigenous voices at school board tables through Indigenous Trustee and Indigenous Student Trustee roles is an important and growing trend, which should be supported.

Respectful engagement with Indigenous partners is essential. Celebrating contemporary Indigenous communities is also crucial.

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 intergenerational impact on Indigenous children and their families, and the ongoing legacy that is the responsibility of all Canadians to reconcile with.

OPSBA RECOMMENDS

- Developing an Indigenous Languages Strategy in partnership with Indigenous education stakeholders
- Further investment for Indigenous Language Revitalization initiatives.
- Providing long-term funding to hire Indigenous Graduation Coaches in all school boards.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why is it important for all students to learn about treaties, the '60s Scoop, residential schools and the full context of Indigenous cultures, societies, and histories?

Why is it so important to ensure we maintain Indigenous languages?

