

## Truth and Reconciliation in Action in Grand Erie

### What actions towards Reconciliation do you want to accomplish?

Grand Erie's reconciliation goals are captured in its Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and Annual Learning and Operating Plan (ALOP).

The MYSP guides collective efforts related to learning, well-being and belonging, and the ALOP puts these priorities in motion and monitors progress towards achieving goals. The ALOP commits to "deepen our system commitment to reconciliation and improve education achievement outcomes for all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students."

### To accomplish this, Grand Erie is working to:

- Provide ongoing professional development for staff at all levels of the organization to actively engage in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action
- Promote and participate in reconciliation and community engagement opportunities
- Engage in authentic learning with Indigenous peoples, communities and perspectives
- Deliver Indigenous courses and programming that enables students to see themselves in their own learning (language, culture, graduation pathways)

### What actions towards Reconciliation have you accomplished?

In the ten years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission introduced the Calls to Action, Grand Erie has focused its efforts on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students, fostering strong relationships with local Indigenous community partners, providing meaningful opportunities for all students and staff members to unlearn colonial versions of Canada's history and the damage caused by educational institutions, and building staff capacity to meet these goals.

### Student-centered initiatives:

- In 2018, appointment of the board's first student trustee representing the interests of Indigenous students across the district
- In 2019, the formation of the United Indigenous Student Council, with representation from all Grand Erie secondary schools
- Creation of alternative education programs NATIONS and NewStart, serving secondary students in smaller, more flexible community settings
- Introduction of Grade 11 English course (Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices) in 2020, with collaboration with community partners to include Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation authors

- Expansion of Indigenous language course offerings to include Cayuga, Mohawk and Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwe, and online learning options to reduce barriers to participation
- Secondary Online language courses were offered as reach ahead opportunities for students in Grade 8.
- Creation of the Land-Based Learning course bundle at Hagersville Secondary School in 2024, offering two mandatory courses per semester (Math, Science, Geography and English) taught through Indigenous perspectives and in concert with community partners
- The hiring of additional Cultural Mentors/Graduation Coaches who work directly with students to monitor progress from registration to graduation
- Indigenous Student Leadership Initiative created to provide culturally authentic leadership development opportunities to empower students to become agents of change within their schools, communities and across the district
- Signature events planned and organized by the United Indigenous Student Council, including year-end powwow and opportunities for student voice
- Annual Sharing Our Voices event brings together elementary students from across the district in day of learning and Indigenous performances to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day
- Iroquois Lacrosse Program aims to bring communities together and provide a means for improved mental health and well-being, while learning the history behind what the Haudenosaunee consider a game of medicine and healing
- Implementation of an Indigenous Knowledge Specialist High Skills Major focusing on Lacrosse was piloted in February 2025 in partnership with local Indigenous Lacrosse groups
- An extensive Transition plan is established each year in cooperation with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River to support students transitioning from Grade 8 on reserve to Grade 9 in a Grand Erie Secondary School
- Dedicated Indigenous numeracy/literacy coach supported Indigenous students with improving skills to be successful with student achievement on the pathway to graduation
- Innovative Indigenous MLL supports were provided to students who had been in an Indigenous language immersion program as they transitioned to a Grand Erie Secondary school

### Board-wide initiatives:

- In 2023, the appointment of a trustee representing the interests of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) students who attend Grand Erie schools
- Creation of the Principal Leader of Indigenous Education position in 2021, with the intention of working with Indigenous communities, students and families

to support student achievement, well-being, and advance truth and reconciliation commitments

- Renaming of Ryerson Heights Elementary School to [Edith Monture Elementary School](#) in 2022
- In November 2023, Gimaa (Chief) R. Stacey LaForme of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Chief Mark Hill of Six Nations of the Grand River were honoured with [Learn Lead Inspire](#) awards, recognizing the outstanding contributions each has made to learners and school communities
- Helped promote the launch of three books by Gimaa (Chief) R. Stacey LaForme, including [an evening with Gimaa Laforme](#) on October 29, 2025.
- N'we Jinan and First Nations students at Princess Elizabeth [participate in Music Project](#)
- Art Project Raises Awareness on [Red Dress Day](#)
- Grand Erie [hosted a free viewing of The Rules of Lacrosse](#) – and the Men Who Break Them featuring Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation, Gaylord Powless.
- Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School [hosts an annual Every Child Matters football game](#), a collaborative effort planned with the Indigenous Student Association, Athletic Council and Student Council.
- Tammy Sault and Claudine VanEvery-Albert [shared a tribute](#) and moment of silence for the Honourable Murray Sinclair.
- Ongoing Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee and Indigenous Education Advisory Committee speaker series, including [Darren Thomas](#).
- [Anti-Racism](#) staff training video series includes Indigenous voices and reinforces importance of upholding commitments to reconciliation efforts
- Opportunities for educators to complete Additional Qualification courses in Indigenous Education including First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples – Understanding Traditional Teachings, Histories, Current Issues and Culture courses
- Updated and rebranded [Land Acknowledgement](#)
- Imbuing local Indigenous voices into board-recognized days of significance, including [Earth Week](#)
- [Indigenous speaker series](#) offered to students, staff and families. Speakers included local community members, scholars and knowledge keepers:
  - **Ellie Joseph** – A retired Mohawk Nation educator and founder of “Two Row on the Grand,” Ellie Joseph shares stories of growing up at Six Nations and promotes treaty awareness and cultural connection to the land through community engagement.
  - **Leroy (Jock) Hill** – A Cayuga Nation Faithkeeper and Sub Chief from Six Nations, Leroy ‘Jock’ Hill emphasizes the importance of our spiritual and reciprocal relationship with Mother Earth through Indigenous teachings and storytelling.
  - **Oren Lyons** – A Seneca Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan, Oren Lyons is a global advocate for Indigenous rights and environmental stewardship, known for his leadership in lacrosse and international diplomacy.

- **Rick Hill** – A Tuscarora Nation educator and cultural leader, Rick Hill brings deep academic and institutional experience to discussions on Indigenous knowledge, leadership, and the significance of lacrosse in Haudenosaunee culture
- **Pamela Toulouse** – Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse, an Anishinaabe-Kwe scholar from Sagamok First Nation, is a nationally recognized educator and author who advocates for authentic Indigenous land-based learning rooted in traditional knowledge.
- **Betts Doxtator** – Elizabeth “Betts” Doxtator, a Haudenosaunee multi-media artist from Six Nations, uses cornhusk art and storytelling to celebrate Indigenous history and values, and has been recognized for her cultural contributions and educational outreach.
- **Nikki Shawana** – Nikki Shawana, an Odawa Nation artist and educator, shares Indigenous culture through Pow Wow and Hoop dancing, singing, and workshops, drawing on teachings from both Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee traditions.
- **Carolyn King** – Carolyn King, former Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and creator of the Moccasin Identifier Project, is a nationally recognized advocate for Indigenous-led initiatives and public education on First Nations history and presence.
- **Samantha Doxtator** – Samantha Doxtator, a Personal Development Consultant from the Oneida Wolf Clan, shares Haudenosaunee perspectives on Indigenous astronomy and life cycles, continuing her late sister’s legacy of integrating Indigenous knowledge into education.
- **Darren Thomas** – Dr. Darren Thomas, Bear Clan of the Seneca Nation and Associate Vice-President of Indigenous Initiatives at Wilfrid Laurier University, leads efforts in Indigenization and reconciliation while advocating for systemic change to fulfill the TRC’s Calls to Action.
- **Tom Porter (Sakokwenionkwas)** – Tom Porter, Bear Clan of the Mohawk Nation and founder of the Kanatsiohareke community, is a renowned Haudenosaunee spiritual leader and master storyteller who teaches Mohawk language, history, and philosophy.
- **Dan Longboat (Roronhiakewen)** – Dr. Dan Longboat, Turtle Clan of the Mohawk Nation and founder of Trent University’s Indigenous Environmental Science/Studies program, bridges traditional Indigenous teachings with science to promote environmental stewardship and cultural identity.

### Community partnerships:

- In 2025, a partnership with His Majesty’s Royal Chapel of the Mohawks in Brantford is offering educational sessions sharing the history and stories connected to this National Historic Site, with the intention of supporting educators initially, and additional employee groups in the upcoming year
- Indigenous Cultural Competency Training (ICCT) through the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) offered to all staff, designed for the development of necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and

values to support participants in building meaningful and informed relationships with urban Indigenous communities

- Creation of Ohahi:yo program, in partnership with Ministry of Child and Youth Services, Youth Justice division, to provide services and supports through a holistic approach to youth engaged with the criminal justice system
- Partnered with the Kanien'kéha Circle to support the certification of Mohawk language speakers to become a certified teacher

## What relationships have you built and/or renewed with Indigenous partners? How do you take care of these relationships?

Relationships are rooted in representation and common goals. The development of strong community partnerships has been vital to Grand Erie's ability to achieve its goals related to the calls to action. Some examples include:

- Partnerships with on-reserve elementary schools, including co-planning and co-teaching opportunities, as well as collaboration on events and transitional programming to strengthen relationships with students and families and ease transition to secondary school
- Community-based education programs including NATIONS and NewStart provide greater opportunities for experiential and culturally relevant learning
- Appointment of a trustee representing the interests of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation students in 2023 marked first more than one trustee representing Indigenous learners has been a part of the board of trustees
- The United Indigenous Student Council formed in 2019, with representation from all Grand Erie secondary schools. The Council adopted a process of consensus-building, rather than voting, to elect Indigenous student trustees, reaching holistic decisions through community values, traditional practices and a deep respect for the interconnectedness of individuals within that community
- Regular connections with the community take place through the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee to promote, enhance and improve Indigenous Education for all students.
- A dedicated Advisory Committee was established to ensure the educational services purchased through the Education Services Agreement are maintained at a high-quality level, and to represent the interests of the students from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory enrolled in Grand Erie schools

## What successes in reconciliation have you achieved?

### Student achievement:

- Increased 4- and 5-year graduation rates (Ontario Secondary School Diploma) and Ontario Secondary School Certificate, and a decrease in number of early leavers

- The 2024-25 school year saw 72 per cent of Indigenous students in Grade 9 on track to complete semester 1, up from 65 per cent the previous year

#### Staff development:

- Increased participation in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Additional Qualification courses and in reconciliation events and cultural competency training
- Increased Indigenous resources within schools across Grand Erie
- Increased Indigenous language and curriculum offerings across Grand Erie