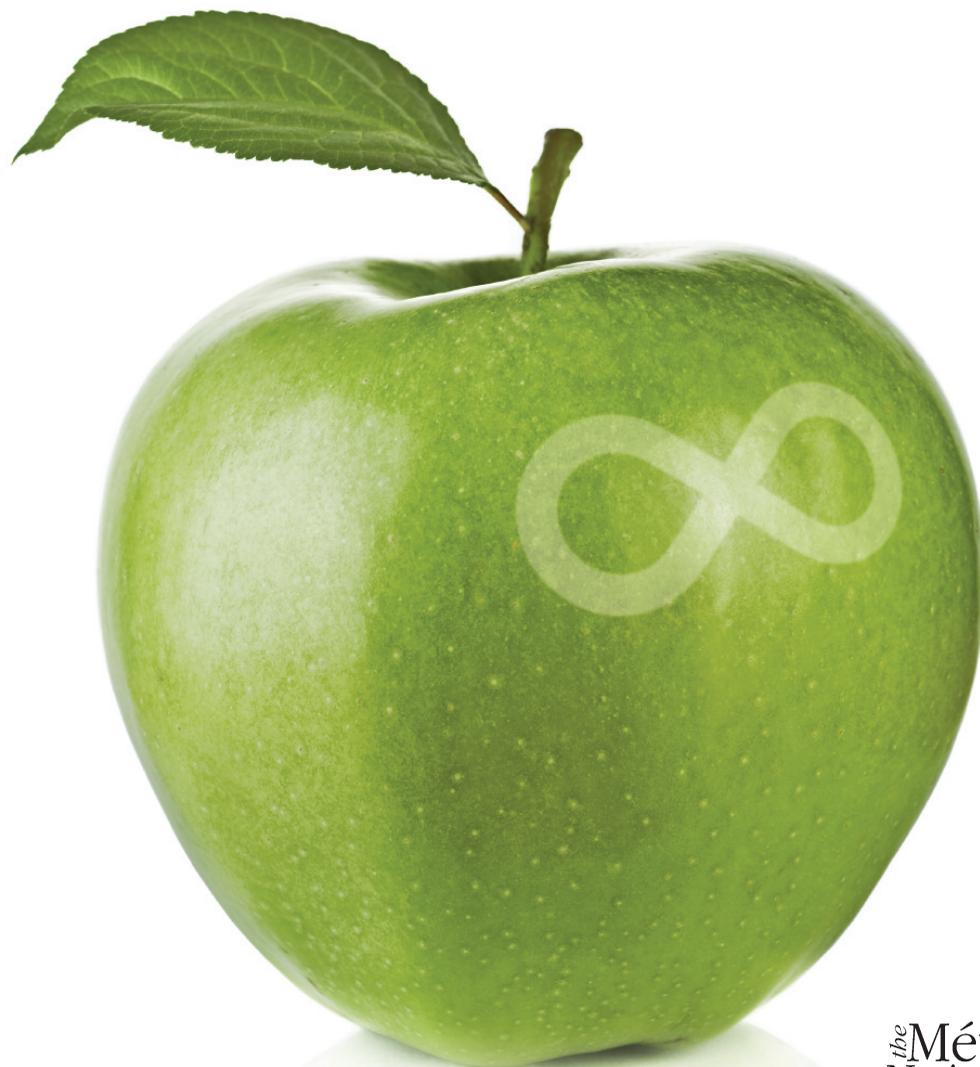


A MÉTIS EDUCATION ACTION PLAN



SUMMARY

A MÉTIS EDUCATION ACTION PLAN ¹

A Métis Education Action Plan will lead to a coordinated, focused and strategic approach by the Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO), in collaboration with other agencies, education partners, and parents to address the needs of Métis learners. The MNO is looking to an engaged Métis student in every publicly funded school in Ontario and is committed to the provision of an improved and appropriate education for all of its students that will be a sustainable effort over time.

LONG TERM GOALS:

- Improved Métis student attendance, retention and graduation rates
- Improved Métis student achievement K-12
- Improved Métis student well being
- Engaged parent and community partners in Métis student education and increased parent satisfaction with their children's education.

Three objectives represent Phase I of an ongoing commitment to Métis student education.

Objective #1

To increase the attention to better Métis education in the Ontario education system:

- (a) the development and implementation of a robust education action plan including key messages and strategies that speak to an active and contributing MNO role in policies and programs that will contribute to Métis student success;
- (b) active participation and contributions to ongoing work with key partners in the education of Métis students through the inclusion of qualified Métis candidates on decision-making bodies at all levels of the education system and;
- (c) identifying roles and responsibilities that will be needed to begin effective implementation of the Metis Education Action Plan in the 2008-09 year.

Objective #2

To build capacity for evidence-based decision-making:

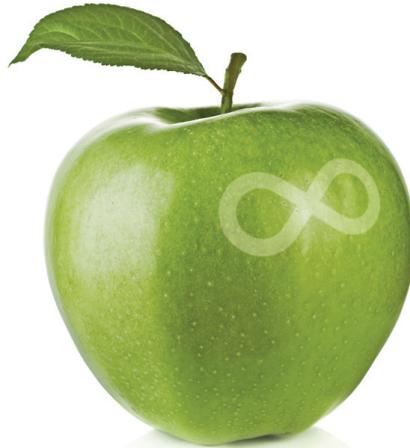
- (a) support and facilitate the strategy to establish self-identification for all Métis students in Ontario
- (b) initiate dialogue with key partners in education regarding the development and implementation of tracking mechanisms that align with existing provincial student identification tracking systems to address and facilitate transitions for both "mobile" students and students moving through the levels of the system and;
- (c) contribute to an annual symposium on the topic of Aboriginal student achievement with a Métis component based on data within a successes, challenges and opportunities context.

Objective #3

To develop a Community Outreach parent engagement process that supports improved Métis student achievement:

- (a) develop and communicate a strategy including key messages for community outreach and parent engagement at all levels of education beginning with internal organizational input and implementation;
- (b) build on those strategies that speak to the engagement of Métis parents and the community identifying the resources that will be needed in support of an overall strategy and;
- (c) look to deepen understandings and approaches of board and school improvement plans K-12 that address community outreach and parent engagement goals in pursuit of improved Métis student achievement.

¹ Document was created in 2008 by Education and Training Branch and adopted at the 2009 Annual General Assembly in Sudbury.



■ INTRODUCTION ■

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) continues to place a high priority on the educational needs of its citizens and in looking to ensure that the voice of the Métis is clearly reflected in the education system. To this end, the MNO has been actively engaged with the federal and provincial governments, school boards, and other education stakeholders to close the achievement gap in the education of Métis students.

The educational outcomes of Aboriginal students, including Métis students, found in metropolitan areas are improving². There are signs of progress. Despite these successes, generally, the numbers of Aboriginal students impacted on remains marginal and the situation is such that the opportunity for Aboriginal students to access an equitable education remains unrealized. The MNO is committed to improved education outcomes for Métis students. The MNO believes that the provision of a quality education will produce Métis students who are contributing and productive citizens of a changing and complex knowledge-based Canadian economy and society.

² Siggner & Costa (2005a) examine the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Aboriginal people residing in selected metropolitan areas in the 1981 to 2001 period.

■ CONTEXT ■

Aboriginal student retention is an ongoing issue

Dropout rates continue to be high. Graduation rates and high school to postsecondary transitions remain low. This is true at a time when we are seeing a significant increase in the Aboriginal population³. Of the three indigenous groups that make up the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, First Nations, the Inuit, the Métis have experienced the greatest increase in the past decade, more than 11 times the rate of increase for the non-Aboriginal population. Some of this, it must be noted, is owed more to non-demographic factors such as “ethnic mobility” rather than to a natural increase⁴. While Ontario is home to the largest urbanized group of Aboriginal people in Canada at 61%⁵, it is also the case that the largest urbanized Aboriginal group in the province remain the Métis at a population of 73,605⁶.

Several other factors call for consideration:

- It is widely acknowledged that the gap in achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students continues to widen.
- Higher rates of mobility present for Aboriginal students within Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) (35–40% changing residences within the community compared to only 25% of non-Aboriginal people aged 5+ years) as well as in and out of CMAs negatively impacting on grades and school attendance.⁷
- Aboriginal student transitions for high school completion or high school into postsecondary education/training programs continue to warrant monitoring.⁸
- Curricula and instructional delivery do not take into account Aboriginal cultural considerations and do not reflect Aboriginal values.
- Aboriginal parent and community engagement in education is tenuous.
- There is a lack of data speaking to Métis student achievement which is necessary to evidence-based decision-making.

3 Harvey & Houle (2006) Major demographic changes in Canada’s school age populations including its Aboriginal populations are viewed through the lens of challenges and opportunities for the education systems.

4 Siggner & Costa (2005a) include detailed information on the impact of more recent contributors to population growth such as non-demographic factors.

5 Harvey & Houle (2006) The urbanization of Canada’s Aboriginal people, especially the Métis people, is similar to the country as a whole.

6 Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census: Findings. Nearly nine out of 10 Métis live in the western provinces or in Ontario.

7 Siggner & Costa (2005a) speak to the mobility of Aboriginal students and its negative impact on school enrolments and student progress in schools, among other things.

8 Siggner & Costa (2005a) Aboriginal levels of schooling over the 1981–2001 time period are discussed in detail within a metropolitan context.

■ DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS ■

Engaged learners in a public education system are critical to a nation's well-being. This had never been truer than in the information and knowledge age in place currently. The education system is facing unprecedented challenges from various forces of demographic change and circumstances⁹.

Within this context, Aboriginal peoples present with the highest birth rate of any demographic group in Canada. Aboriginal youth will be a growing component of the school age population¹⁰.

More and more, Aboriginal peoples are found in urban settings. Specifically, the majority of Metis (70%¹¹) are becoming increasingly urban. There is high mobility in their settlement patterns¹². Urban communities are not homogenous in nature. Engaging urban parents is proving more challenging than engaging rural parents.

Clearly, these demographic factors warrant attention.

■ EDUCATION OUTCOMES ■

Significant disparities remain between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education outcomes

Generally, any successes to date in educational outcomes achieved by Métis students, over time, appear to be due to specific intervention programs (e.g. pilot projects). There is a paucity of wholesale or system-level successful models or practices. Existing programs typically supplement and/or are built on mainstream efforts to meet specific needs of individual learners. Some of this work has been highly successful, but there is simply not enough and access has been limited to small numbers of students, not nearly enough to allow educators to come to generalizations that can be routinely utilized in mainstream classrooms.

Some researchers have noted that while these programs have been of value, there are unintended consequences. Some of this work has been seen as supplementary to mainstream work and not work integral to core classroom practices. It can also have 'labelling' effects on students. Added to this are timelines which are supported for specific periods of time and not as the work of the system.

These outcomes continue to pose a challenge in the education of Métis students. They limit life options and choices. They contribute to, and perpetuate, ongoing and continuous cycles of social and economic disadvantage.

9 Harvey & Houle, (2006) take the position that Canada is a meritocracy and that education is the institution through which socioeconomic mobility takes place.

10 Harvey & Houle (2006) The school age population including those of Aboriginal origin is projected to increase from 5.6% in 2001 to 6.6% in 2016 reflecting a relatively high birth rate for that subpopulation..

11 Harvey & Houle (2006) look specifically at the data that illustrates that the growth of Aboriginal peoples in urban areas has grown substantially.

12 Chalifoux & Johnson (2003) illustrate that the Métis are in a high state of flux – 'high residential mobility' within urban areas using 2001 statistics state that the urban Métis chances of staying in one place are much less than other Aboriginal peoples.

■ CHALLENGES ■

The challenges experienced by Métis students impact directly on their achievement

- The consistent lack of equitable access for preschool programs and opportunities for Aboriginal children only speaks to disadvantaged children.
- Disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal students, generally speaking and widely acknowledged, do not meet provincial standards as measured by annual EQAO provincial testing at Grades 3, 6 and 9. Suffice it to say that the early disadvantages of the Aboriginal students both in the lack of access to early childhood development opportunities and an education that does not recognize their existing knowledge and skill sets upon beginning a formal education contribute to a lack of academic achievement and loss of confidence in these very early years initiating and perpetuating the cycle of students who may never catch up.
- Urban Aboriginal youths attend school less than their non-Aboriginal peers (among CMAs, Aboriginal youth attendance rate was 50–66% while for non-Aboriginal youth, the attendance rate in 2001 was approximately 60–70%¹³). This impacts on achievement resonating further on the level of participation in their educational lives. Lack of attendance can become the critical factor.
- Aboriginal students experience grade repetition proportionately greater than that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (20% for 15 year olds compared to less than 10% for non-Aboriginal youth¹⁴; nearly 7% of Aboriginal 15 year olds reported that they had repeated Grade 1, compared with just under 2% of non-Aboriginal students¹⁵). Post-secondary attainment data also shows that among those still in school, a significant proportion has repeated a grade.
- Aboriginal students are more likely (at least twice as likely) to be in special education than are other students¹⁶. This includes the Métis cohort.
- Urban Aboriginal students are mobile, much more so than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. This impacts on both attendance and achievement¹⁷.
- Aboriginal students become school leavers well before they complete a secondary education – (for 18–20 year olds, the percentage of Aboriginal youth who ever dropped out of school is over 30%, but only 15% for non-Aboriginal youth¹⁸) resulting in students who do not complete or participate in a post-secondary education of either a university, trades, apprenticeship or training context.
- Métis parents, for the most part, are not active and contributing partners in their children's education to the extent that they could be.¹⁹

13 Siggner & Costa (2005a) compare school attendance rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth 15–24 years.

14 Harvey & Houle (2006) suggest that high dropout rates and grade repetition are features which are closely associated with low school performance and a low level of education.

15 Siggner & Costa (2005b) use grade repetition data in an overview ppt that looks at the education conditions of the urban Aboriginal population in Canada.

16 Harvey & Houle (2006) include data that speaks to the School Performance of Aboriginal children.

17 Siggner & Costa (2005a) look to highlight the mobility of urban Aboriginal students and its impact on the education of this group.

18 Harvey & Houle (2006) include data that speaks to the School Performance of Aboriginal children.

19 Report by the SSTA Research Centre Report #93-10 Indian and Métis Education: Engaging Parents as Partners.

PURPOSE OF A ■ MÉTIS EDUCATION ACTION PLAN ■

A *Métis Education Action Plan* will lead to a coordinated, focused and strategic approach by the MNO in collaboration with other agencies, education partners, and parents to address the needs of Métis learners. The MNO is looking to an engaged Métis student in every publicly funded school in Ontario and is committed to the provision of an improved and appropriate education for all of its students that will be a sustainable effort over time.

PRINCIPLES

The intent of the Métis Action Plan in looking to facilitate and support a quality education for the Métis students of Ontario is built on the following principles:

- A commitment to essential considerations in an Aboriginal education program will ensure an equitable education for all Métis students.
- An Aboriginal education experience must include active commitment to improved student achievement by all stakeholders involved in the education of Métis students.
- Deepened understandings of the goals of Aboriginal education must be shared through a comprehensive communication plan that includes key messages that are clear, purposeful, and meaningful to all stakeholders.
- A commitment to a collaborative partnership between schools, parents and school communities will maximize the attendance, engagement and achievement of Métis students

LONG TERM GOALS

- Improved Métis student attendance, retention and graduation rates
- Improved Métis student achievement K-12
- Improved Métis student well being
- Engaged parent and community partners in Métis student education and increased parent satisfaction with their children's education.

OBJECTIVES

Three objectives represent Phase I of an ongoing commitment to Métis student education. It is only the beginning of a larger multi-stage process. Phase I looks to address structural and organizational issues.

Objective #1: To increase the attention to better Métis education in the Ontario education system: (a) the development and implementation of a robust education action plan including key messages and strategies that speak to an active and contributing MNO role in policies and programs that will contribute to Métis student success; (b) active participation and contributions to ongoing work with key partners in the education of Métis students through the inclusion of qualified Métis candidates on decision-making bodies at all levels of the education system and; (c) identifying roles and responsibilities that will be needed to begin effective implementation of the Métis Education Action Plan in the 2008-09 year.

Objective #2: To build capacity for evidence-based decision-making: (a) support and facilitate the strategy to establish self-identification for all Métis students in Ontario based on the work as delivered by Northern Ontario Education Leaders (NOEL) for its Aboriginal cohort; (b) initiate dialogue with key partners in education regarding the development and implementation of tracking mechanisms that align with existing provincial student identification tracking systems to address and facilitate transitions for both “mobile” students and students moving through the levels of the system and; (c) contribute to an annual symposium on the topic of Aboriginal student achievement with a Métis component based on data within a successes, challenges and opportunities context.

Objective #3: To develop a Community Outreach parent engagement process that supports improved Métis student achievement: (a) develop and communicate a strategy including key messages for community outreach and parent engagement at all levels of education beginning with internal organizational input and implementation; (b) build on those strategies that speak to the engagement of Métis parents and the community identifying the resources that will be needed in support of an overall strategy and; (c) look to deepen understandings and approaches of board and school improvement plans K-12 that address community outreach and parent engagement goals in pursuit of improved Métis student achievement.

LONG TERM OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Improved Métis student attendance, retention and graduation rates.
- Improved Métis student transitions between programs, between elementary and secondary programs, and between schools in the same school year.
- Increased numbers of Métis students continuing their education into post-secondary education.
- Improved indicators on Métis student achievement based on available data.
- Improved Métis parent and community engagement.

INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

An active and contributing Métis voice and presence in any and all initiatives in education ongoing in the province of Ontario and beyond.

Indicators of Métis student achievement based on self-identification data including common data elements across a variety of areas and skills as well as tracking data that will facilitate individual programming from school to school to inform all stakeholders as to measures of success and next steps for Métis learners. This information can be utilized in sharing successes, challenges and in coming to next steps at annual symposiums looking to improved opportunities.

A framework with accompanying resources for educators of Métis students to enhance parent and community engagement for both rural and urban settings.

■ CONCLUSION ■

While educational outcomes for Aboriginal students may be slowly improving, it is imperative that all stakeholders involved in education, including parents, take responsibility to effect further needed change in the education of our Aboriginal students. It is the intent that the Métis Nation of Ontario Education Action Plan will serve not just as catalyst initiating collective constructive dialogue in pursuit of this but, also as leader in the commitment to a series of concrete and much-needed next steps.

Métis students, as one cohort of the Aboriginal population, are being underserved by the public education system. When students of any population do not experience success in their educational outcomes, it reflects on everyone. Are we truly making a difference as teachers, as parents, as an organization or, as a province for our Métis learners? It is a duty and responsibility that belongs to all of us.

*** This plan is based on information contained in a number of current reports, reviews and research on the topic of Aboriginal education as found in Table A. Many of these reports were based on data as provided by Statistics Canada. Reports include those completed by the federal government, some relevant provincial work, as well as research oriented organizations such as The Learning Partnership. It includes work that has been built on extensive consultation with Aboriginal populations and stakeholders on the topic of education and contributing factors. Where possible, with available data, the Métis are referenced specifically and are otherwise subsumed under the Aboriginal grouping.

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