



The Ontario Government has identified Aboriginal (First Nation, Metis and Inuit) education as a priority. The goal is to improve achievement and narrow the gap (achievement, retention, and graduation, postsecondary) between First Nation, Metis and Inuit, and non-indigenous students by 2016. The Aboriginal Education Office (AEO) was established in 2006 to work with school boards within the province. One of the initiatives aimed at achieving these goals includes the self-identification of First Nation, Metis and Inuit students within the Province to help facilitate opportunities for success for these students.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board has been working with Aboriginal communities prior to the introduction of the AEO and funding specific to these projects. TCDSB started liaising with Attawapiskat in 2002 through a literacy project and was extended through projects led by Lieutenant-Governor James Bartleman; a book drive in 2003 and a twinning project, which paired up TCDSB schools with schools in Nunavut (Inuit) and Northern Ontario (Cree). That same year, the first TCDSB Arctic Games were also held. TCDSB has continued with other First Nation, Metis and Inuit projects including book drives, letter exchanges, projects at the Toronto zoo, the Ontario Science Centre and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, student exchanges (Rankin Inlet, Attawapiskat), teacher and student symposiums, and the expansion of the Arctic Games.

During the 2008/09 year, the Board sponsored the Attawapiskat Human Rights Forum (November 26, 2008), and was instrumental in a letter writing campaign to assist these students with the opportunity to build a school; additionally, secondary students from TCDSB attended a rally in Ottawa in February 2009 to present their letters. Other plans that year included the Arctic Games Symposium (Circle of Friends: Sharing the Spirit of the Community) for teachers and students leaders, the Arctic Games in February (Brebeuf, Neil McNeil, Pope John Paul 11, Archbishop Romero, Msgr Percy Johnson), community consultations, the implementation of a confidential voluntary First Nation, Metis and Inuit self-identification policy, and the second annual FNMI teacher symposium.

Objectives of the projects included:

- Cultivating partnerships and relationships between TCDSB and diverse First Nation, Metis and Inuit communities
- Providing relevant, targeted programs to improve TCDSB community understanding of the culture, history and traditions of the Aboriginal populations in Ontario and Canada
- Improving student indicators of success among Aboriginal students K-12
- Narrowing any gaps in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students

For 2009 - 2010

1. TCDSB Teacher Symposium on Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives
 - In-services in "Native Arts" delivered by local FNMI artists to intermediate teachers
 - Teachers participated in 2 workshops held at the Upper Grand DSB
 - Teachers participated in a workshop sponsored by TDSB
2. Increasing Aboriginal Knowledge and Awareness among TCDSB Students

- Northern Spirit Games - approx. 1 800 elementary students attended; hosted by 6 secondary schools
 - Aboriginal Social Justice Forum at Bishop Allen Catholic Secondary School
 - Canadian Aboriginal Festival (annual Pow Wow) in Hamilton - attended by 180 secondary students enrolled in the Native Studies courses
 - Approximately 1 000 elementary students attended "National Aboriginal Day" at St. Marie Among the Hurons
 - FNMI TCDSB full colour calendar, September 2010 - December 2011 and distributed to all families (over 55 000) in the board; artwork from the TCDSB Great Canadian Poster Challenge (students submissions from 2008 - 2009) was included
3. TCDSB Aboriginal Self-Identification Policy and Implementation
- Policy approved by the Board January 2010
 - 90 000 colour brochures printed and distributed to each student in the system to explain the Self-Identification Initiative and encourage the return of voluntary self-identification information
 - Trillium system and data updated to reflect new initiative on Self Identification.
4. Inaugural year of Native Studies Courses offered within TCDSB schools:
- Four Secondary schools offered Native Studies credit courses in the areas of English, Arts and History: Blessed Mother Teresa, Madonna, Notre Dame and M.Power/St.Joseph - 297 credits earned.
5. Symposium for 50 Secondary School Teachers: The Urban Aboriginal Experience
- Pre-contact, legends, stories and traditions
 - Contact
 - Contemporary Issues
 - Bata Shoe Museum Exhibit: Beauty, Identity & Pride (educational component)
6. Great Moon Festival in Moose Factory
- TCDSB educators presented to FNMI educational staff from surrounding communities
7. TCDSB - on site Attawapiskat Reserve in-services:
- i. Elementary focus - Literacy
 - ii. Secondary focus -Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting (AER) and technology

For 2010 – 2011

- Native Studies Credit courses expanded to 12 secondary school sites
- Resource Development and Activities to Support Increasing Knowledge and Awareness
- Native Story Teller in the Classroom
- FNMI Library Book Selection for Elementary schools
- Expansion of student involvement for Northern Spirit Games
- FNMI Artist in the Schools Explorations
- Aboriginal Student Self-Identification Policy Implementation
 - Communication of initiatives
 - Public information and consultation sessions
 - Professional learning to support "using data"
- Targeted Professional Development
 - Featured speakers for symposiums – Pamela Toulouse

- Targeted to Administration, Teachers, Parents

For 2011 – 2012

- To further refine the process for students within TCDSB to self-identify as Aboriginal/First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI); this self-identification will be both voluntary and confidential by continued development of strategies to encourage *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Voluntary Self-Identification* of TCDSB students.
- Co-ordinate and consolidate various forms and process for having a consistency in method of data collection and access.
- Cultivate partnerships and relationships between TCDSB and various First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities within the City of Toronto
- Provide, support and initiate relevant, targeted programs to understand the cultures, perspectives, history and traditions of the various FNMI populations. FNMI self-identification data for TCDSB students has been reported in Trillium as of the 2009/2011 school years
- Preparation of additional self-identification materials (e.g., posters to be distributed all the schools, re-create and maintain an interactive First Nation, Métis and Inuit TCDSB Web site)
- Northern Spirit Games increase in participation and city wide visibility through media contacts.
- Expansion of Native Studies Curriculum offerings to 15 secondary sites
- Professional development opportunities that will promote awareness and understanding of FNMI history, perspectives, and culture for Teachers and administrators
 - Teacher Symposium on Respecting and Honouring Aboriginal Culture and Identity to be held at OISE and the Royal Ontario Museum – Clayton Shirt, Dr. Alis Kennedy, Peter Ittinaur (speakers)
 - Secondary School Teachers all day workshop and a separate Elementary Teachers all day Workshop to be held at the Canadian Native Center Toronto focusing on understanding and teaching current curricula;
 - Principal Workshop Sept 2011 with a Sensitivity Worksop on Aboriginal philosophy, culture, and raising awareness of FNMI identity within TCDSB's family of schools
- Continue to engage in consultations with various First Nation, Métis and Inuit groups within the Greater Toronto Area and the Province of Ontario (e.g., Elder Consultations - one and one conversations for TCDSB Resource Teacher - on direction of TCDSB self-identification Initiative.

For 2012 – 2013

- Presentations (Historical and Cultural combination) to 15 secondary schools who are currently offering Native Studies by team First Nations, Métis and Inuit (Clayton Shirt, Dr. Alis Kennedy, Peter Ittinaur) along with Métis Fiddlers, First Nation Dancers and Inuit Throat Singers

- Review TCDSB is existing process for self-identification and accompanying forms, including registration and annual update of Student information forms, and Parent/Guardian FAQ brochures, information sheets and both local school and central staff can provide assistance or directions.
- Educators and students have very little knowledge and understanding of: Aboriginal students' needs and experiences; the complexities of teaching Aboriginal subject matter and the initiate relationship between culture, colonialism, and education. As a result, teachers face numerous challenges delivering programs and, importantly, a lack of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures and urban aboriginality.
 - The Teacher Symposium - Informative Aboriginal Content and Perspectives into Teaching. Keynote Dr. Pamela Toulouse plus speakers; Dr. Jean-Paul-Restoule OISE U of T, Darren Thomas, Sir Wilfred Laurier University, and First Nation Elders Andrew and Esther Wesley
 - Providing FNMI to Elementary Libraries (170) – “Turtle Island Voices” Grades 1 to 3 by David Bouchard, Robert Cutting and David Booth, Pearson Publications
 - Classroom Presentations by, FNMI Artist in Schools, Ojibway Storyteller, Sky Buffalo
 - CEC presentation during June (Aboriginal week) of student art, invitation to central staff experience varied cultural activities that happen at schools
 - Central support for exchange trips between TCDSB schools and FNMI communities across Canada.

For 2013 – 2014

- FNMI Community visits by Toronto Council Fire Native Culture Center to TCDSB schools during regular instructional time. FNMI Community visits scheduled for from 1 to 2 hours during student lunch hours in the school lobby and or cafeteria for maximum visibility. A table will be set up with respective FNMI community members and Aboriginal youth (from their youth programs) to be available to answer questions about FNMI history, culture and worldviews, and about Toronto Council Fire Native Culture programs, and TCDSB voluntary, confidential self id information.
 - 32 (secondary) Lunch Time visits – all secondary locations
- FNMI co-curricular presentations (i.e., History and Treaties, Contemporary Issues of FNMI Peoples, Myths, Stereotypes and Misconceptions of FNMI Peoples, Protocols, Melding of Traditions and Contemporary Life) by Toronto Council Fire Native Culture Center to TCDSB schools.
 - 34 Classroom visits – requested by teachers in Canadian and World studies, Religion, Native Studies and Art. Note repeat sessions were booked by individual schools for multiple classes
- . FNMI Student Symposium “Were Here Were Proud” Exploring the Diversity and Complexities of Melding Traditional and Contemporary FNMI history, culture and worldviews in the urban classroom”.

- Two Student symposiums (600 students) focus on NAC 10- Expressing Aboriginal Culture and NBE 3U/C English: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices with Drew Hayden Taylor as key presenter.
- . A series of workshops detailing First Nation, Métis & Inuit Children's Books for Elementary Grade Teachers in our schools. These workshops would introduce First Nation, Métis and Inuit authors and their books. The focus will be on incorporating these books into the teacher's classroom lessons. Material will cover a range of picture books appropriate for all ages throughout the elementary grades, as well as fiction, non-fiction and folklore materials.
 - After school Presentation to Primary and Junior division teachers on FNMI authors and materials suited for students and integrated into multiple curriculum areas.
- FNMI and Literacy Symposium for 200 teaching staff featuring Joseph Boyden
- Distribution of Curriculum FNMI Resource DVD from Eastern and Northern Catholic Curriculum Corporations.