

Kashkikwaata lii troo

Mending the Gap



A Guide to Indigiqueering
the Curriculum



Funded in part by the University of Manitoba Undergraduate Research Awards

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Suggested citation: Anderson, K., Hallett, L.G., Young, M. & Delgado, L. (2024).
Mending the gap: A guide to Indigiqueering the curriculum. University of Manitoba.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is important to first acknowledge who we are, **where we (and our knowledge) come from**, and the context within which we are situated. Our research has been conducted through the University of Manitoba, in Treaty 1 Territory. Specifically, the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Ininiwak, Anisininewuk, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline peoples, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge the land, the plants, the air, and the animals, as well as the long-lasting effects that colonization has brought upon them. We would like to recognize that the water in Treaty 1 Territory, which brings life to all beings, is stolen from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation Reserve, located in Treaty 3 Territory.

We are a team of Red River Métis researchers and thinkers. We would like to acknowledge our cultures, our ancestors, and the heart work that took place before our time to pave the way for this project to become a reality.

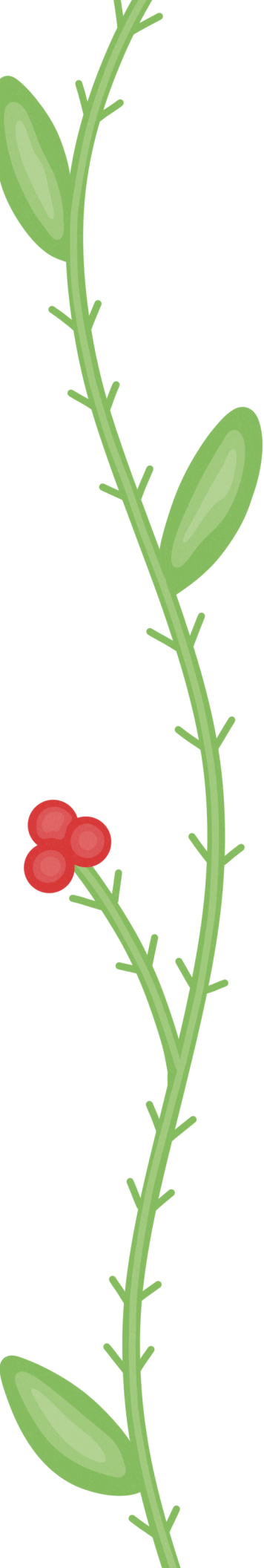
We carry these spirits with us in the work that we do.

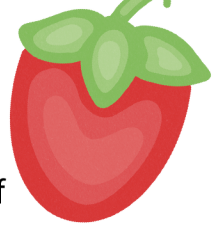
We acknowledge the educators, families, and community members who contribute to the queering and Indigenizing of our education systems. For those who identify as members of these communities, the work can be tiring, slow, and draining, but we are stronger together. Thank you for putting your hearts and minds into our young people's education. Thank you for making our classrooms more inclusive, open, and loving. To allies of these communities, continue to amplify our voices and work.

At the heart of this project is our desire to make school's a safer space that is representative of all students, especially Indigenous and queer youth and their experiences. Until recently, there have been limited initiatives towards creating curriculum that is inclusive towards the Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer community.

We acknowledge the students who are not presented with role models or historical figures like them in classrooms, those whose identities make them a target for bullying and discrimination, those who are proud of their identities, and those still figuring it out.

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To be Indigenous and to be queer is to see the world in a multitude of ways. As Red River Métis people, we are the descendants of strong members of the Métis Nation and carry histories and stories from all of our ancestors. The term Two-Spirit was adopted by queer Indigenous peoples at the 3rd Annual Native American Gay Lesbian Conference in 1990 in Winnipeg. There are many different understandings of what Two-Spirit means; our understanding of the Two-Spirit identity is that we carry spirits that belong outside of binary terms, whether it be who you love or who you are. As Métis and Indigiqueer people, we have a responsibility to bridge gaps and forge connections. Through our research, we have identified gaps in the curriculum documents put out by Manitoba's government. Specifically, we reviewed the K-12 core subjects, including Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts), Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, English Language Arts, and Physical and Health Education, as well as resource documents. Despite the curricula's emphasizing diversity as a crucial resource for learning and teaching, our analysis has shown that there are significant gaps surrounding queer and Indigenous identities, experiences, and perspectives within the Manitoba curricula.

Queer people have existed and been celebrated on Turtle Island since time immemorial, however these identities continue to be ignored, stigmatized, and politicized. Similarly, Indigenous peoples have experienced both segregation and attempted assimilation with no chance to share our stories ourselves.

In Indigiqueer spaces, drawing connections between individuals is one of the main ways communities are formed. When there is neglect for certain marginalized groups in a community, a gap is formed. This results in a lack of representation, voice, and diverse perspectives. Similarly, the core subjects can only be as diverse and rich as the community who created and contributed to the curriculum. When educators only focus on Western and Euro-centric ideas of education and schooling, students learn one rigid way of being and knowing, preventing them from engaging with deeper learning.



Dr. Lucy Delgado, Research Supervisor

Taanshi kiyawaaw! I am Lucy, a Two-Spirit Métis woman from Winnipeg. My family took scrip in St. Andrews and St. Johns, and some of my family names include the Sinclairs, Cowies, Cummings, and Prudens. I also have non-Indigenous family from Ireland and the Orkney Islands, and adopted family from Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. I am the current elected Chairperson of the Two-Spirit Michif Local of the Manitoba Métis Federation and part of the Two-Spirit Manitoba Board of Directors. I am a mama, a sister, a daughter, a spouse, and an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba.

Why this matters to me:

I spent a lot of time growing up feeling like the things that I was learning in school didn't represent me, and a lot of time feeling uncomfortable in community when I was only hearing gendered teachings about women. I didn't feel like my identity was tied only to my assumed ability to give birth, and I didn't feel like being queer was because I was also a little bit of a man inside. This project is a small piece of a larger project and I am thrilled to share the incredible work that Lauren, Katie, and Meghan have been working on. I hope this document can provide a small step towards more representative, just, and equitable learning spaces, both inside and outside of formal classrooms.



Meghan Young, Graduate Research Assistant

Taanshi! I am Meghan Young, a Red River Métis woman with ancestral connections to St. Norbert and St. Vital. I am a descendent of the Normands, Roys, and Carrierres. I am a year-round harvester and take pride in providing my family with food derived from the land. I am a land-based educator at the University of Manitoba and a research assistant in the Faculty of Education. I am also the current elected Vice-Chair for the Regional Youth Advisory Committee of the Manitoba Métis Federation. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba, researching fishing as a place of traditional Métis education.

Why this matters to me:

As a first-generation Métis post-secondary student, I am constantly reminded that our current education systems and schooling were not intended for Indigenous students to succeed in. Therefore all of my work, research, and studies are driven by my passion to create meaningful change that will allow the next generation of Indigenous students to feel respected, supported, and reflected within all levels of education. Throughout this project I have constantly been inspired by my younger cousins who are currently going through the K-12 public school system and being taught through the Manitoba curriculum. I do this work for them. I do this work in hopes that Indigenous knowledges, Métis stories, women perspectives, and Two-Spirit voices no longer get left out or erased from our education.



Lauren G. Hallett, Research Assistant

I'm a Red River Métis, Two-Spirit woman born and raised on Treaty 1 Territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I have family ties to Grand Rapids, Bissett, the Pas, St. Laurent, and beyond. I am in my last year of a Bachelor of Health Studies, concentrating on Family Health, and minoring in Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba. As a student I've maintained my position on the Dean's Honour List for the last three years. I'm also a daycare teacher, research assistant, and scaabe. In June 2024 I was blanketed in the UM Honouring our Indigenous Campus Community ceremony, being recognized for leading by example in community and creating safe(r) spaces

for Indigenous students. I have done my Berry Fast, I attend Full Moon Ceremony, and participate in Sweatlodge ceremonies. More than anything, I try to be a helper and a learner.

Why this matters to me:

This project is extremely close to my heart. I am passionate about building up communities and promoting health from a multidimensional view, as something manageable and achievable. I try to destigmatize conversations about identity, sex, and gender and show queer youth that they are valid, worthy, and not alone. I believe in the power of education, but I think up until now the powerful forces behind education and curriculum content have not been doing us justice. To be Indigenous and/or queer is to be born with a political identity. It is not something we can ignore for the comfort of others, nor should we have to. I hope that we can stand united on this journey, to bridge gaps for Indigiqueer learners, to decolonize our hearts and minds, and to move forward in good ways for the health and safety of the next generations. I intend for this resource to destigmatize and reinform ideas about including queerness and Indigeneity in the learning environment.

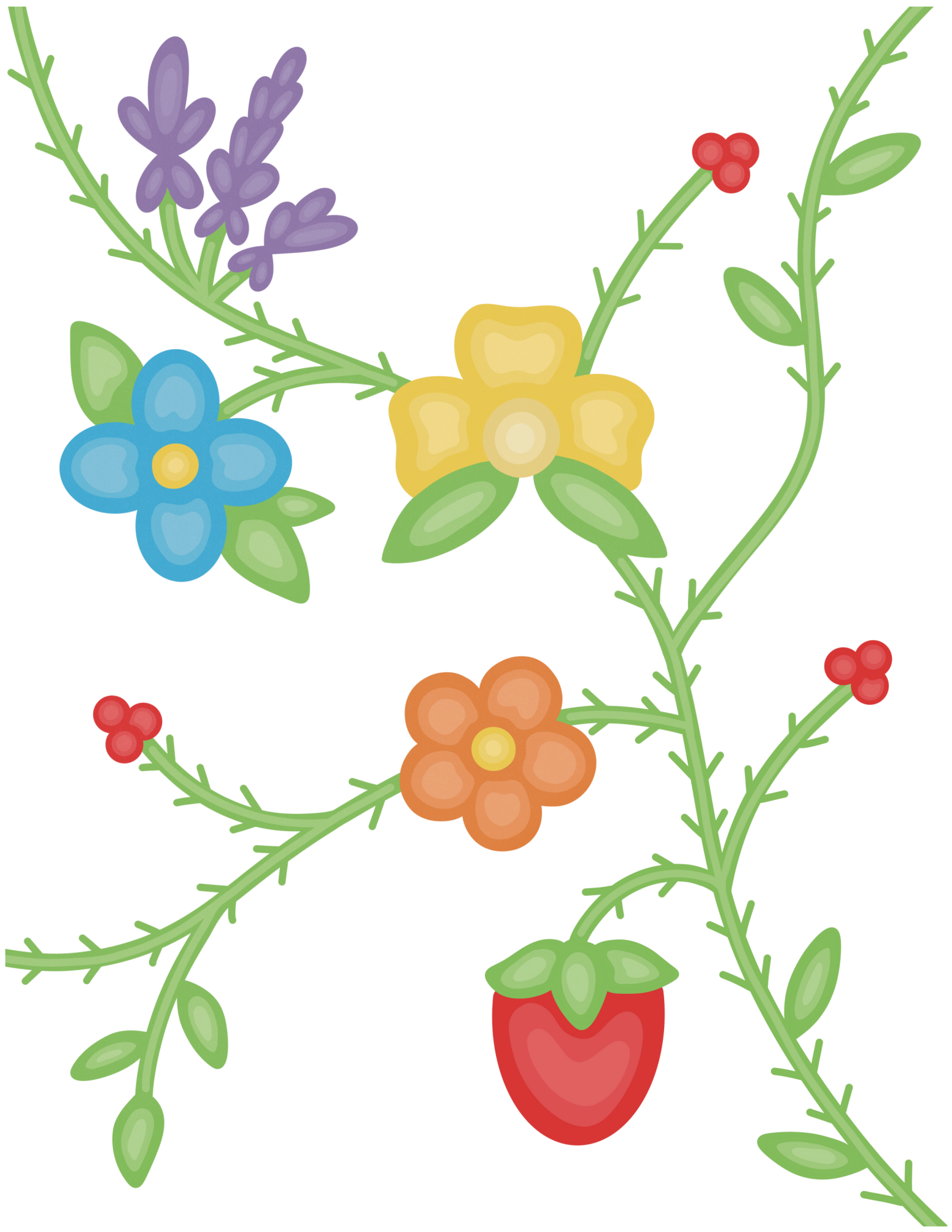


Katie Anderson, Research Assistant

Tansi, nitisiyhkason Apisci-kahkakis inninew. Part of my ancestral roots are First Nations and Red River Métis, sprouting from St. Peters Indian Settlement, Balsam Bay, Norway House, and Peguis First Nation through my paternal side. I also carry Scottish and Dutch roots through my maternal and paternal side. I was born and raised in Treaty 1 Territory in the North End of Winnipeg. I have received a Bachelor of Music Education at Canadian Mennonite University, and am currently working towards a Bachelor of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am an academic, research assistant, and an artist. Reconnecting and decolonizing have been at the forefront of my work in both academia and artistry. I have a passion for digital art, beading, and mural painting!

Why this matters to me:

As a future Indigenous educator, I am constantly thinking about how I can form my pedagogy to be inclusive of all students. As a music educator, I am aware of the biases and Euro-centric techniques that are taught within the school system. My efforts are focused on decolonizing and Indigenizing the classroom so students are able to see themselves in the curricula. Working on this research team has allowed me to think critically about the documents I am working with and consider those who are left on the sidelines. I have been offered different perspectives and want to share these with colleagues and peers. As a mixed-Indigenous person, there is a responsibility for me to do the work to amplify marginalized voices and work towards bettering the school system for the next generation of Indigenous students. My hope with this resource is that we can work to inform educators and encourage collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.





In Spring 2024, Dr. Delgado and her graduate research assistant Meghan Young were joined by two winners of the Undergraduate Research Award at University of Manitoba: Lauren Hallett and Katie Anderson. Over four months, the team examined Manitoba curricula and discussed their findings, and out of those conversations decided to create this document as a starting point for Manitoba educators who want to bring the missing perspectives of Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer peoples into their classrooms.

These findings include research summaries, identifying overall gaps in the Manitoba curriculum, as well as subject-specific analyses, and recommendations/resources for educators.

Throughout our writing, we use the words Indigiqueer, queer, and Indigenous. Queer is an umbrella term used to refer to any individual who identifies outside of cisgender and/or heteronormative labels. In our context, we use Indigenous to refer to the people who are the original occupants of Turtle Island. Within the term Indigenous there are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and under these three labels lie countless Nations. The term Indigiqueer is an identity and pedagogy. It encompasses Two-Spirit, Indigenous, and queer ways of thinking, seeing, and being.

To identify as Indigiqueer is to combine two sectors of being. Originally conceptualized as “Indigequeer” by TJ Cuthand in 2004, an Indigiqueer person is someone who identifies as Indigenous and queer and feels that these two parts of themselves intersect and connect. The act of Indigiqueering is like weaving together Indigenous worldviews and queer worldviews to create a unique and diverse perspective. In *Love after the End: An Anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction*, Joshua Whitehead asks, “who defines queerness and under whose banner does it fly? Who lands it is pocked within?” (Whitehead, 2020, Introduction, para. 2). The identity of Indigiqueer offers a space for individuals who may not see these parts of themselves as inseparable and do not fit into the Western binary standards of queerness.

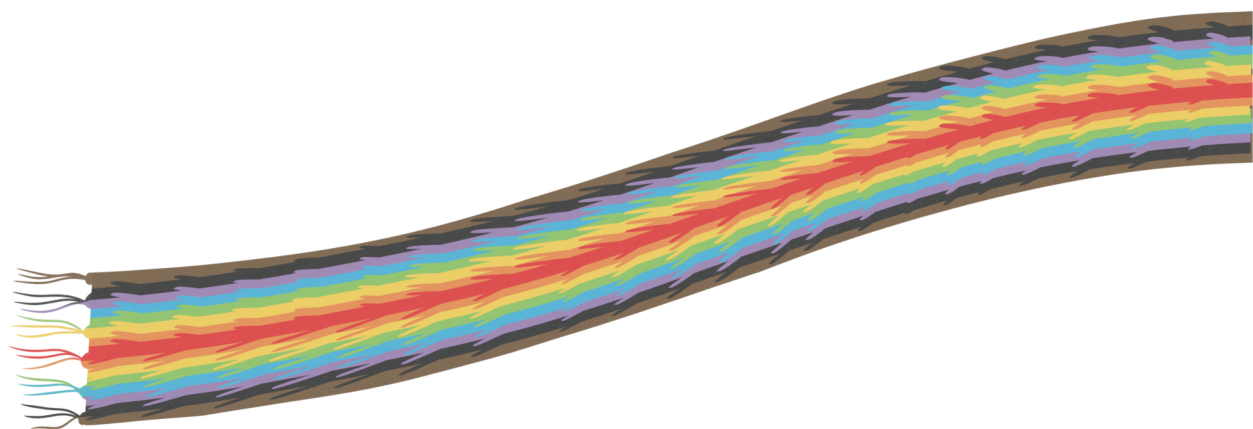
Whitehead, J. (2020). *Love after the end: An anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer speculative fiction*. Arsenal Pulp Press. Ebook.

Schooling was created to produce like-minded thinkers and re-enforce class systems; there is no room for marginalized students in these Euro-centric spaces. To Indigiqueer education is to focus on diverse perspectives and ways of knowing, encouraging learners to view the world in a multitude of ways. It is to rethink ideas of pedagogy and practice and challenge the status quo of schooling. “Just as Indigenous ancestors and queer ancestors have done; the idea is about not just surviving but thriving” (Ty Defoe, as quoted in Gareiss, 2021, p. 2).

Using this definition of Indigiqueering education, we have created a tree model (fig. 1.) The tree model visualizes a learner experiencing an Indigiqueered version of education. In a variety of Manitoba curricula, the usage of the tree model to represent the learner is done to display how students grow and develop throughout their time in school. In our model, we focus on a similar aspect, but our approach incorporates the importance of support and community through Indigiqueer perspectives, pedagogies, resources, and representation. For many students who identify as Indigenous and queer, there are limited spaces within education where they see role models and can explore their identity in confidence. With this model we lay out the importance of having a solid foundation rooted in Indigiqueer values, as well as the students' role in providing the same efforts for the generation after them.

Many Indigenous Nations carry teachings about trees and respecting their existence, ensuring we do not harvest from them until the time is right. Trees are living beings, worthy of relationship and respect. The tree model reflects Manitoba curriculum efforts and incorporates an understanding that trees build community.

Gareiss, N. (2021). *IndigiQueer the space: An interview with Ty Defoe*. *Critical Studies in Improvisation*, 14(2–3), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.21083/csieci.v14i2.6406>



BRANCHES

The branches represent the learner's connection building.

Without a strong trunk and grown-out roots, branches cannot reach up towards the sun and receive nutrients for the whole tree. Similarly, the student in this model cannot provide for community and vice versa if there is not a solid foundation for the branches to work from and give back to.

Building from prior knowledge (which lies in our roots/trunk) and allowing the reach of their knowledge to extend as they do.

Different branches serve different purposes, they connect different sources of knowledge, different fields of interest, and expand their ability to take in new knowledge.

Students are encouraged to remain curious and create their own connections.

ROOTS

The roots represent the learner's capacity to grow. Deep roots matter. It is important they are built upon a strong foundation and that students ground themselves in community and are supported through Indigiqueer inclusion.

Community refers to external support (such as resource centers), guardians, parents, teachers, places, and connection to culture.

The educator's role in this model is to provide deep and meaningful inclusion for students through up-to-date resources and support.





FIG. 1

LEAVES

The leaves represent sections of information being learned and the flourishing of students with strong roots and solid foundations.

As trees develop, they produce seeds to promote growth and build community. Students within an Indigiqueer model of education are encouraged to work towards better futures for the next generation, encouraging reciprocity and collective responsibility, and disrupting cis-heteronormative systems.

Seasons change and trees go through growth and loss periods. This is applicable to students as well. In the Indigiqueer tree model, students are encouraged to be ever-changing and educators support and celebrate these seasonal changes.

TRUNK

The trunk represents building a strong foundation from community and Indigiqueer roots. For many Indigiqueer and Two-Spirit youth, there are barriers in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces. There are communities and sacred spaces that do not act as safe spaces for these youth, and it is crucial that inclusive ceremony and experiences led by Elders and Knowledge Keepers are provided within this foundation.

Having a strong foundation allows students who experience trauma or setbacks the ability to lean on community for support. Our roots ground the trunk, and no amount of wind can take them down.

Students can withstand setbacks, challenges, and barriers (with the support of their strong roots).

Across Turtle Island, the Seven Sacred Teachings have been adopted from Anishinaabe people as life-guiding principles. Specific teachings may vary from nation to nation, but the concept remains the same. The animals and their teachings revolve around relationships between all living entities and suggest ways that we can walk through life in good ways with one another.

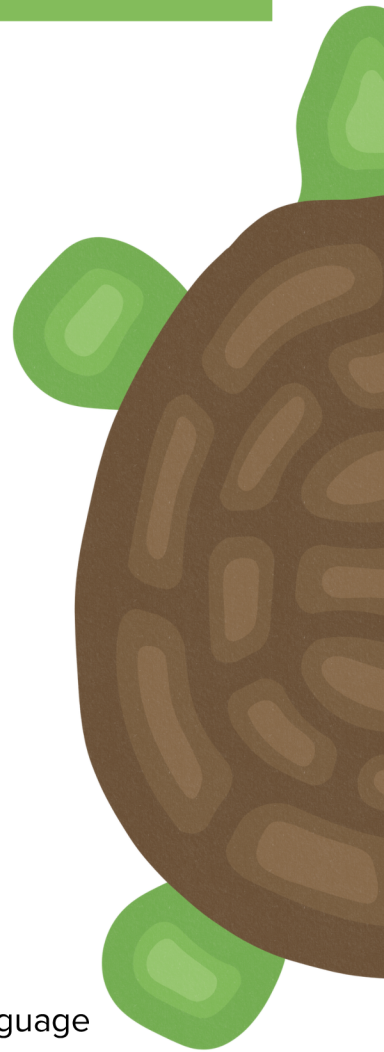
Turtle is representative of truth. Truth is symbolic of law and principle. Without acknowledging the truth we cannot move forward in reconciliation. In this resource, the turtle reminds us that these gaps are real, ever-present, and must be addressed.

PAN-INDIGENEITY

A common thread throughout each curriculum document is the persistence of pan-Indigenous and pan-cultural language. When Indigenous education is promoted in schools, it tends to be First Nations focused, ignoring the diversity of our nations and excluding Métis and Inuit communities from conversations. Majority of the curriculum documents fail to highlight the differences between various nations and often misrepresent cultures due to the pan-Indigenous outlook. Promoting the idea that all Indigenous people are the same results in a misunderstanding of the communities and their history and culture. There are hundreds of different Indigenous nations across Turtle Island, and there is rich and deep learning to be done within each nation's practice. To use pan-Indigenous language and pedagogy is a disservice to the unique characteristics and teachings from each nation.

QUEER-EXCLUSION

Queer voices are not included in the curriculum documents, nor is the language inclusive of students who are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. When content regarding sexuality and gender orientation (aside from cisgender/heterosexual identities) are not included in the curriculum, queer education becomes optional. Without queer education, a multitude of histories and identities become erased, and human rights issues continue to be ignored. Educators are also not given the proper resources on queer understandings within curricula, leaving them with minimal supports and discomfort around the topic of queer education.



INACCESSIBLE

Both students and educators are affected by the inaccessibility of the curriculum documents. On one hand, educators are often asked to implement new pedagogies and ideas without including any support or resources within the curriculum itself. For educators who do not identify as Indigenous or queer, it can be difficult to find trustworthy resources and the fear of getting it wrong often prevents change in classrooms. On the other hand, the current curriculum does not consider the barriers that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) face. When discussing Indigenous rights, it is important to consider intersectionality and the idea that to support decolonization of education is to support true accessibility for students and teachers with ID/DD.

LACK OF DIVERSITY

All learners need to be exposed to diverse perspectives on various subjects. Being exposed to diversity throughout school is how learners can expand their knowledge and understand multiple viewpoints. It allows learners to think critically about the world they live in, how they and others experience it, and what needs to be done if they want change in the future. Diverse cultural perspectives are referenced numerous times throughout the curricula, yet the documents never specify which perspectives to share within the physical classroom. When curriculum does not name specific perspectives, educators may focus on what they are comfortable with, or who is in their classroom based on assumptions, and learners may not be able to see themselves represented in their education.

OUTDATED

In an age of education where students' social and academic development is constantly changing, curriculum must be altered to continue to fit the needs of the students today. The curriculum documents we reviewed were published between 1998-2021, with most coming out before 2015. The learning outcomes within core subjects are not expressed in ways that represent the times students are growing up in. There have been massive shifts in our social, political, educational, and cultural landscapes since their releases, including the legalization of same-sex marriage and the publication of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Further, there have been changes regarding terminology for both queer and Indigenous identities. Outdated curriculum content and a lack of resources for educators continues to reproduce barriers and gaps for all students.

CREATING REPRESENTATION

The majority of history has been written by those who have had the most power in society. This means the information we teach to students is reflective of the dominant group. Examples of this can be found in the way curricula teaches Canadian history and advancements, where only male European role models are listed as examples of influential people across the subjects. This instills, whether consciously or not, white supremacy, and that certain groups are better suited for certain fields, which can impact students' self-esteem, self-image, and interest in a particular subject area.

Societal pressures or expectations, based on stereotypes about certain identity groups, can influence learners' belief in their capacity, especially in a society where there are many negative biases towards Indigenous and queer people. Schools are full of diverse identities, and all students should be able to see a piece of themselves in their learning.

In the Seven Sacred teachings, eagle, wolf, and bear represent love, humility, and courage. In order to push for change, it is important to first recognize why gaps in the education system are important to mend. In education, love, humility, and courage build a strong foundation for educators to create relationship and practice inclusive pedagogies. Without these teachings, it is impossible to reform education into a system that uplifts all students.

PROMOTING RECONCILIATION

The National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation published the 94 Calls to Action in 2015. Many of the core subject curriculum documents have been updated or revised since 2015, yet the Calls to Action for education, child welfare, and health are not incorporated into the learning environment nor the learning outcomes. In an age where reconciliation is moving to the forefront of education, it is important to recognize the unique challenges that Indigiqueer youth face. To participate in active and meaningful reconciliation, educators must understand the work that needs to be done to create representation and support for Indigiqueer students to enhance their learning and give back to community and the land.

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

Without recognizing the barriers that students may be facing based on their identity, educators cannot address them. Students who are queer and/or Indigenous face unique challenges and are often disadvantaged by the current schooling systems.

Colonial systems, such as school and curricula, marginalize Indigenous and queer learners, along with women, people of colour, disabled people, immigrants, and low-income households. To right the wrongs of the past and challenge ongoing disadvantages, education must be reimagined as a more equitable process, where no one group or learner experiences educational barriers because of their identity. It is crucial that those working in education systems work to identify barriers and gaps in students' learning experiences and provide support and resources.

SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

By streamlining Indigiqueer inclusion in educational spaces, the work of seeking out current, reliable sources should not fall solely to the teacher. Educators are currently working with outdated curricula, and any enhancements made are done through going above and beyond and working outside of allotted hours. While educators and staff should continue to develop their pedagogy and approach, there should be efforts made to provide an adequate foundation for further learning. Funding professional development through up-to-date resources, extra funding for fieldtrips and Elder/Knowledge Keeper visits, and working collaboratively with community (including guardians and students), are all ways that educators should be receiving support. When this work is not done in community, educators can experience burnout and tokenism.

MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS

Current students have lived through a global pandemic, seen the evolution of queer culture since the decriminalization of same-sex marriage, witnessed the discovery of unmarked graves of children in residential schools, and so much more. Through technological advancements, globalization, and rapid news cycles, all students are exposed to media in some way, shape, or form. Having a safe space to be open, share feelings, and ask questions about hard topics is vital, particularly during critical developmental periods. To create those spaces, educators must be informed about current topics, have access to reliable information sources, and foster a trusting, accepting classroom environment. By keeping topics like queer rights, history, and identity out of these spaces, we are not meeting all students' needs. Students are constantly developing, and curriculum and pedagogy must develop with them.

PROVINCE

The Manitoba government is responsible for the creation and publication of these curriculum documents. It is our recommendation that the Manitoba government works to form a panel of educators, Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and youth, with representation from a variety of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as

Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer representatives. Each curriculum document should be carefully reviewed and re-written through a decolonial and queer-integrated lens, aiming to close gaps in inclusion and representation through changing pedagogies and learning outcomes. This work must start from community consultations; beginning consultations with a partially revised document for the group to work with removes their autonomy to issue recommendations. This group should also have the last approval of the document before it is released, ensuring that voices and perspectives are not lost through the editing process.

SCHOOL DIVISIONS

The role of school division trustees and school board members is to implement and develop policies for the betterment of the schools within their district. It is our recommendation that these members assess the work being done within their schools to celebrate Indigenous and queer identities while also taking account of where these supports are lacking. The school division should seek funding to support programs and opportunities for students to explore their identities, histories, and learn more about the diversity of Manitoba, such as beading clubs, field trips to pick medicines, or attending pride events. This also means ensuring that Indigenizing happening within schools is inclusive and respectful of a multitude of gender and sexual identities, and that learners are exposed to knowledge holders who also value these communities.

The last of the Seven Sacred Teachings, *sabe*, bison, and beaver, represent honesty, respect, and wisdom. Using our research and experience in education, we created these recommendations with the intent of highlighting each specific area of the Manitoba education system. In the work that needs to be done, honesty, respect, and wisdom encompass the responsibilities and duties of each tier. The province, school divisions, administration, educators, staff, and community must be honest about the work being done. They must respect the identities of marginalized communities, and it is crucial that they work with the various wisdoms and perspectives of community members and generations.

ADMINISTRATION

Principals and vice-principals are responsible for various tasks within the school year. They must communicate with staff and educators on any updates or changes within the school and are expected to form relationships with the students attending their school.

This unique job allows them to assess barriers and gaps within their school and consider ways to meet the needs of their individual students. It is our recommendation that school administrators implement student groups for Indigenous and queer students and support the staff running these programs through overtime pay and peer support. It is also important for school administration to ensure that they are supporting Indigenous and queer educators by creating safe spaces and advocating for these educators. In an age where Indigenous and queer educators are at risk of harm in the workplace and community it is crucial for administration to provide protection and support in their schools.

TEACHERS AND STAFF

Teachers and staff (such as EA's and Learning Support) are at the forefront of the school system. These are the faces that work with students everyday providing academic and emotional support. It is our recommendation that teachers and staff continue developing their pedagogies and practices to include a variety of Indigiqueer perspectives. It can be easy to fall into a routine, but students are ever-changing, and educators must adapt to the needs of students in their classroom. Teachers and staff must continue their learning through professional development, literature, and forming relationships with members of Indigenous and queer communities.

COMMUNITY

School systems depend on the participation of the community that they exist within. These are often the parents, guardians, family, and peers of the students who attend the school. It is our recommendation that schools consider how they could continue to offer opportunities to engage with community and work on schooling through connection and collaboration. Those with relationships with students should consider what they may want to share with the school community, whether that be a skill, craft, or teaching. Continue to support the staff and teachers that work in your school community, strength and reconciliation happens through relationships. While educators are responsible for teaching students, the community provides a strong foundation for the school to succeed. It is important that community members advocate for Indigenous and queer rights in their own environments by calling out homophobia and racism in their circles.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

The arts curricula are full of missed opportunities to engage with Indigenous and queer perspectives throughout the K-12 programs. Within the arts curricula, there is a focus on building student's skill sets through technique-based learning as well as connecting awareness and critical thinking skills to the various mediums. Although these documents attempt to incorporate multi-cultural practices, the majority of the techniques students are expected to retain are focused on Euro-centric ideas of creation and using art as a response. Diversity then becomes limited to specific learning outcomes that use a pan-Indigenous approach with no reference to the queer community.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art is a rich tapestry of different nations' art forms and practices. Each nation carries a variety of traditional art techniques, songs, dances, and teachings. Diversifying the arts must extend beyond one lesson or learning outcome. One way that this approach could be avoided is by incorporating a variety of perspectives and techniques alongside what the curriculum suggests and working to Indigenize pedagogy and queer ideas of learning and teaching. In practice, this could look like constantly challenging what is considered the “norm” of art and working alongside students to enhance the existing curriculum through Indigenous and queer inclusion.



VISUAL ARTS

Within the Visual Arts curricula, there is a focus on highlighting how art has been used in response to social injustices, political decisions, and other events in history. Despite this, there is no specific mention of the work that Indigenous and queer artists have contributed towards the ever-growing community of art itself. Excluding this history and the contributions of Indigiqueer artists not only prevents students from having representation in the art classroom, but it also deprives students of critical thinking skills and placing themselves within the context of society and their responses to the world around them.

Meeting the history of art learning outcomes in the Visual Arts curriculum could be done by discussing Indigenous and queer artists that have paved the way for younger generations to come. For example, you could talk about Jackson Beardy, an Anisininew artist who was a part of the Indian Group of 7 and resisted anti-Indigenous racism through both his artwork and character. You could also discuss the work of late gay artist Keith Haring and use this to discuss how he advocated for more research and understanding for those living with HIV/AIDS through his work as an artist.

DANCE

Within the Dance curricula, there is consistent mention of multicultural dances as the document encourages educators to incorporate a diverse range of steps and choreography in the classroom. However, since there are no tangible resources given to do these styles correctly, these specific learning outcomes can often get swept to the side in dance courses. This limits the students to practicing only a small scope of dance as an art, rather than allowing them to deeply engage with a variety of identities and styles.

In order to encourage cultural appreciation over appropriation, educators could consider inviting in community members who practice a variety of dance styles. This could be an Indigenous student's family member coming in to teach round dancing steps and discussing different dance styles commonly seen at powwows. In the current age, many of these styles are gendered through regalia and strict guidelines surrounding categories. For example, grass dancing is often reserved for male-presenting dancers, and shawl dancing is only for female-presenting dancers. It is important to have conversations about how individuals should be encouraged to dance however they feel called to.

DRAMA

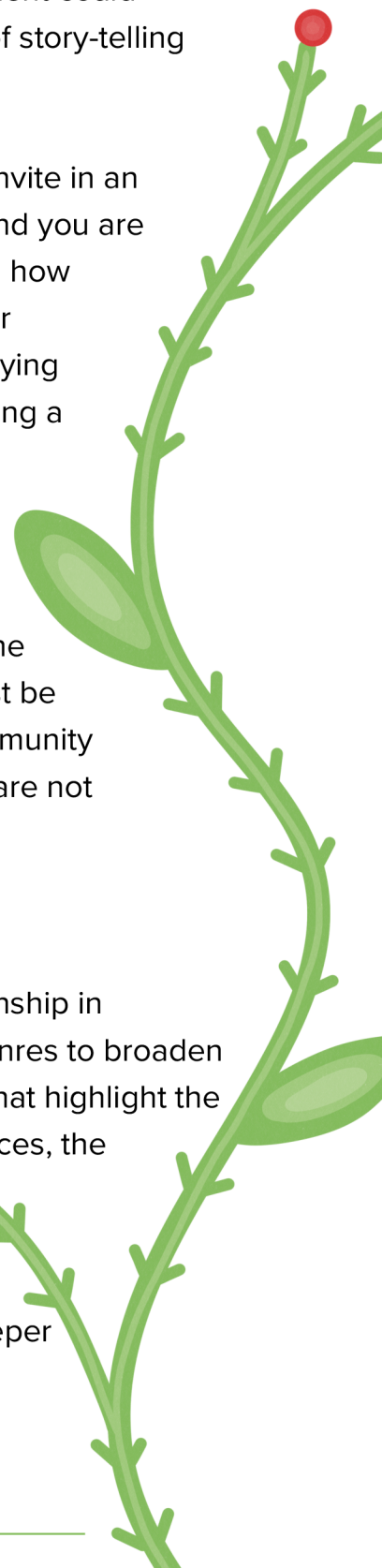
Within the Drama curriculum, the document provides scaffolding techniques to encourage students to become creators themselves after practicing a variety of drama techniques and mediums. The curriculum recommends that students draw from their identity and society around them in order to create responsive drama or shows. There is no mention of queer identity as being one of the things a student could explore, and the curriculum does not mention how Indigenous forms of story-telling practice in a similar way to drama techniques and practices.

To encourage students to tell a story using the context around them, invite in an Indigiqueer Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or storyteller who is from the land you are teaching on. Consider the stories the classroom was told and focus on how the stories might be translated into everyday life and circumstance. For example, looking at the story of the Seven Sacred Teachings and applying these things to students' everyday lives could set an example of creating a drama form from a life or identity context.

It is important to note that when inviting Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and other members of the Indigenous community, there should be an awareness of their protocols and restrictions with what they share in the classroom. If it is requested that the teachings remain private, this must be respected, and lesson plans should honour this as well. Even two community members from the same place can have different teachings, so if you are not absolutely sure, ask.

MUSIC

Within the Music curricula, educators are encouraged to build musicianship in students while providing them with “multicultural” experiences and genres to broaden their musical knowledge. While there are specific learning outcomes that highlight the importance of introducing students to a variety of music-making practices, the foundations they are built upon are restricted to only Western techniques and values. When students begin to engage with a variety of multicultural music, they then interpret and approach this art from this taught and reinforced Western perspective, preventing a deeper connection and understanding with the music.



To avoid treating multicultural music as the opposite end of Western music forms, consider looking at the techniques and sounds used by the people who belong to the land you are teaching on. For example, in Winnipeg (Treaty 1 territory) there is a rich and deep history of music that belongs to the First Nations and Métis people of this land. In teaching rhythmic notation and the idea of consistent downbeats or tempo, consider the usage of the drum within drum songs and how this beat guides the singers and provides a foundation for their lyrics. Further, you could touch on the use of lyricism within Sherryl Sewepagaham's compositions and differentiate between vocables and words to encourage an understanding of how music-making can be made up of different sounds, timbres, and techniques.

Lastly, the music room is a great space to introduce musical role models. Jeremy Dutcher, a queer Wolastoq artist, is one musician that could be brought to the music room to teach about language revitalization and connecting different music genres to each other.

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are the sources being used in my classroom reflective of Indigiqueer perspectives?
2. Do I feel comfortable teaching about Indigiqueer perspectives, do I need to learn more first?
3. Am I keeping up to date with terminology and resources?
4. Do all students feel represented in what we do in the classroom?
5. Am I honouring the Indigenous land I am teaching on?
6. Is my pedagogy evolving every year or am I following a strict routine?

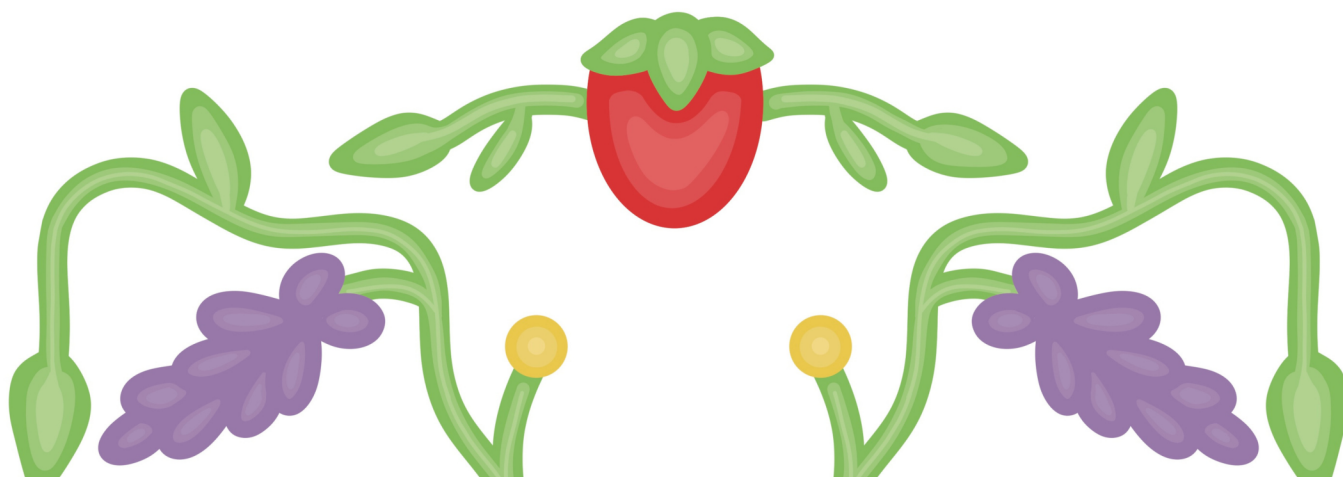
PHYSICAL/HEALTH EDUCATION

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Within the Physical and Health Education curricula, health is framed as one-dimensional and a status to be achieved instead of a resource that we must continue to pursue throughout our lives. Though there was a brief discussion in the curriculum surrounding mental, spiritual, emotional, social health and wellness. These are not given the same emphasis as physical health. Learning outcomes lack a nuanced, holistic approach and instead focus on proper techniques and skills to attain peak health and functioning.

When reimagining health education from an Indigiqueer way of seeing, knowing, and doing, we must ask what good health means to us, and where those ideas come from. Various social determinants of health (such as race, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, physical ability, education, and class) impact each person differently and influence our capacity to live long, healthy lives. Often, those with intersecting, marginalized identities (such as Indigiqueer people) have more barriers in place to achieving “good health” simply due to their life circumstances and environment and are prone to worse health outcomes overall.

Spaces like gym class or sex education lessons are often exclusive of queer perspectives, which reproduces the narrative that classroom learning related to reproductive/sexual/physical health is only for cisgendered, heterosexual folks and does not provide a safe space for identity exploration outside the binary, dominant norm. With Indigenous and queer youth in mind, curriculum surrounding health and fitness could include more outcomes related to balance in each aspect of health (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual), positive self-talk, building confidence through movement, and ultimately instilling a life-long love of the pursuit of health.



MOVEMENT

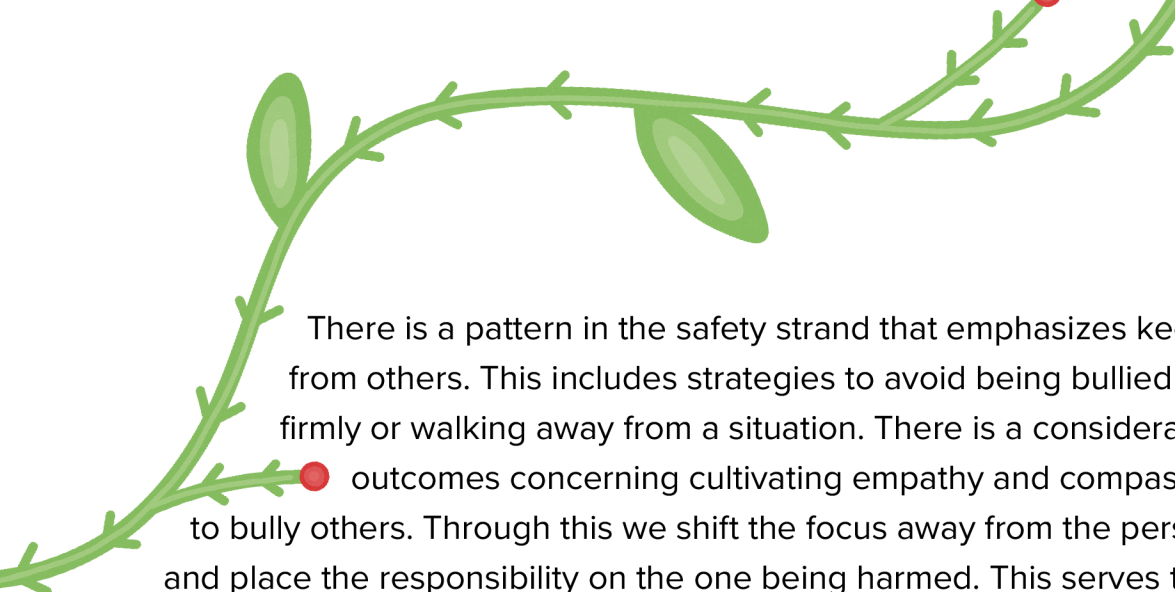
Within the Movement curriculum, there are examples listed with certain specific learning outcomes. Some of the examples point to Indigenous inclusion efforts, such as listing “Inuit partner activities”, “Aboriginal games”, and certain Indigenous styles of dance like a round dance, hoop dance, powwow dances, and jig.

Physical Education classes could teach about the connectedness of the body with the mind, the heart, and the spirit and how they interact through movement, specifically cultural dances that are ceremonial. Powwows are a ceremonial celebration. There is a clear lack of emphasis on the origins of certain activities that dilute their traditional significance. Educators should be teaching about movement/dance styles that are relevant to the context of the classroom location. For example, the jig is a style of dance that has been very prominent in Métis culture and in some First Nations communities. There are many different kinds and various styles within the art, but it is not seen as ceremonial in the same way that powwow dance is.

There are many questions concerning Indigiqueer inclusion in movement, what context are these activities given beforehand? What teachings go along with them that indicate the traditional importance and meaning of these movements? When sharing knowledge, it is important to position where it came from. Whether it be a teaching from an Elder or knowledge keeper or something you learned in a class. Some people reinforce binary gendered rules in certain dances, and others have inclusive understandings of who can dance different styles. Be deliberate about who is brought into classroom spaces to share these teachings and cognizant of how they are heard by Indigiqueer students.

SAFETY

Within the Safety strand of the curriculum, it is important to consider the current environment in which students live and the realities they are exposed to day-to-day. There is very little information regarding supports in community that contribute to safety and wellbeing, especially for queer and BIPOC (black, Indigenous, and people of colour) students. There are no explicit standards, guidelines, or protocols for supporting teachers in providing reliable health information and a clear gap between what schools are supposed to teach and what youth need to know, particularly for minority groups.



There is a pattern in the safety strand that emphasizes keeping yourself safe from others. This includes strategies to avoid being bullied like saying no firmly or walking away from a situation. There is a considerable lack of outcomes concerning cultivating empathy and compassion, and why not to bully others. Through this we shift the focus away from the person causing harm and place the responsibility on the one being harmed. This serves to reproduce societal patterns of violence and shame or scare people into silence. This is a particular concern for Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer peoples, and Indigenous women, as demonstrated by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S) movement.

The current health curriculum centers an abstinence approach, whereas a harm reduction approach could be more effective. Young people make mistakes and are bound to experiment. For example, although we might not be able to stop experimentation, we can arm them with the knowledge they need to make smart choices for themselves and understand the consequences of their actions (or inactions). There should be more information concerning gender identity, safe sex practices for all genders, intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, STI testing/treatment, safe consumption/supply of substances, and more when teaching young people about safety.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PRACTICES

Within the Health Lifestyle Practices curriculum, sexual health and substance use are taught from an abstinence approach. This curriculum should seek to empower young people to make healthy decisions for themselves because they want to, not their teachers, parents, or anyone else. Young people are curious and experimental and peer pressure is not the only reason people try substances. Alcohol, for example, is so glorified in our society, that simply telling students to abstain is inadequate and unrealistic. It ignores the real problem, which is not that youth will consume substances, but that they do so unsafely, which can become life-threatening.

Health education learning outcomes revolving around sex/sexual health fail to include anything outside of binary terms. This leaves Indigiqueer youth having to seek out their own sources of knowledge, potentially leading to the spread of misinformation and unreliable health education. The curriculum focuses on sex for reproduction, ignoring another appealing aspect: pleasure. The current curriculum learning outcomes do not prepare learners to become respectful, consenting (and consent-seeking) adults. Sexual intercourse is a way to build intimacy and deepen relationships but can also be exploitative and traumatizing. There is no mention of the term consent throughout the entire physical and health education curriculum. The only strategies presented for protecting from STI's and pregnancy are abstinence, using condoms, and monogamous relationships.

This approach does not consider same-sex couples, intersex folks, those having sex without penetration, asexual people, or non-monogamous people. It does not teach queer people how to be safe during sex. Unwanted/mistimed pregnancy prevention and education seem to be directed towards only female-identifying students. By doing so, we exhume men and boys from taking responsibility for their actions and leave the consequences to the people who can get pregnant.

Sex, intimacy, and pleasure have been a part of life since humans have been on Earth. Today, these topics can be seen as inappropriate or taboo, but they are also more nuanced and multidimensional. This is why it is so important to foster open dialogue within classrooms about such topics that have previously been avoided. It may be beneficial for teachers to talk about getting tested regularly, asking your partner about their sexual health and discussing your own, setting boundaries, etc. Teach young people to seek enthusiastic consent versus the lack of a no, and the importance of getting consent beforehand. Consider all genders when discussing contraceptive methods. Suggest alternative forms of pleasure that don't involve penetration, avoiding the risk of pregnancy.

The earlier we begin these conversations, the more normalized they become to those involved in them. Let's make space for Indigenous and queer narratives to be explored within the realm of health and lifestyle practices. When we educate young people honestly, we empower them to make informed, smart decisions about their health and wellbeing. We can do so by honouring Indigiqueer values like openness, fluidity, respect, and love.

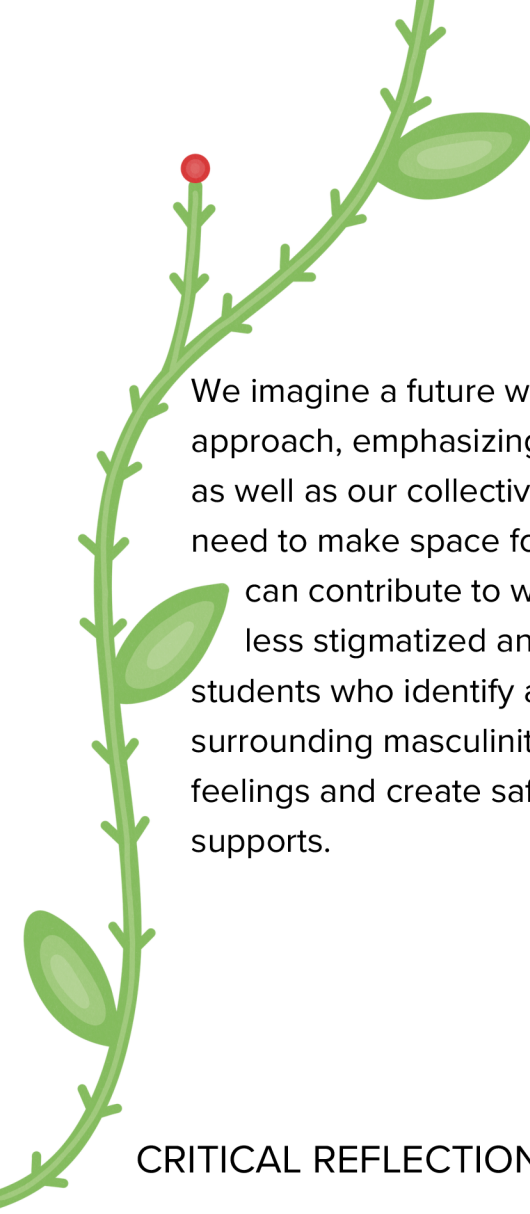
FITNESS MANAGEMENT

Within Fitness Management, the skills being taught are meant to apply to all people. Some are necessary to avoid injury, illness, and worse health outcomes later in life. However, the curriculum is so dry and rigid that the goal, to incite a passion for pursuing health, becomes lost. The learning activities such as fitness management plans or nutrition tracking, are dull. They may also serve to reproduce harmful ideas surrounding body image, self-esteem, health, and nutrition. It is a Western lens for viewing health and fitness management that does not consider Indigiqueer learners.

There is a considerable lack of outcomes that center on social determinants of health and how they contribute to our capacity to participate in fitness management. Some kids are statistically more prone to developing chronic illnesses throughout their lives. It could be empowering and motivating to teach them this knowledge. For example, educators should continue to create opportunities for students to be more interested and invested in their own wellness and the health of their communities through collaboration and listening to student voice. Avoiding a teacher/student hierarchy and shifting from a “one size fits all” approach offers students a chance to understand and interact with their health in a safe and comforting environment.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT

Within the Personal and Social Management strand of the curriculum, there is very little mention of culture, only religion. There are repeated references to religious leaders and the church as community resources and safe spaces, but not Elders, knowledge keepers, or others that may be better suited to an Indigiqueer student. This exemplifies the impacts of European, Christian values on our learning systems and instills those values, worldviews, and perspectives onto students, whether consciously or not. This dilutes equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts by failing to normalize and teach about multiple cultural perspectives.



We imagine a future where physical and health education take a more holistic approach, emphasizing our interdependence on one another and the land and water, as well as our collective responsibilities to each other and the Earth. For example, we need to make space for conversations about spirituality and culture, and how those can contribute to wellbeing and personal management. Mental health needs to be less stigmatized and more open to discussion in classrooms, particularly for students who identify as male, because of engrained stereotypes and ideas surrounding masculinity. By doing so, we can help all learners put names to their feelings and create safe(r) spaces for them to lean on their community and seek out supports.

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What context are my learning activities given beforehand?
2. What teachings go with my activities that indicate their importance to some groups?
3. Where do my activities originate from? How can I respect and acknowledge its origins?
4. How have the current ideas I teach been informed by outdated societal constructs?
5. Will my students leave my class with the knowledge they need to live long, healthy lives?

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Within the science and mathematics curricula, specific learning outcomes focus on encouraging students to build on curiosities and continue questioning existing solutions and structures. As subjects where there is little room for subjectivity and personal interpretation, it can be difficult to imagine how these courses could be decolonized through Indigenizing and queering the curriculum. When looking at skill sets such as solving a numerical problem or describing chemical bonds, teachers may become apprehensive about challenging the current pedagogies surrounding these topics. While there are beneficial methods to walk through these subjective curriculums with your students, there will always be gaps for marginalized students when approaching STEM courses.

Although there may be differences across nations, Indigenous pedagogies share a common thread of using experiential learning to engage students and incorporate education into day-to-day living. There is also a practice of humility in both a personal and community sense. While some individuals may be skilled at one topic, they may lack the skills that a peer holds in another subject. Similarly, the traditional role of teacher and student holds the same sentiment, where the teacher is there to teach, and a student is there to learn. Indigenous pedagogies encourage a mix of both, where the teacher approaches their position with humility and the classroom becomes more collaborative and engaging for all students. Indigenous land-based pedagogies promote the idea of viewing the land as the teacher and educators/students as the learners; no matter age, race, or gender, everyone can learn from the land. Queering and Indigenizing understandings of traditional learning, especially in the math and science field, is crucial in closing educational gaps for marginalized students.



K-12 MATHEMATICS

Within the K-12 Mathematics curricula, there is an emphasis on meaning-making pedagogies as well as a brief mention on how Indigenous education offers the idea of hands-on learning. It can be difficult to imagine what queering and Indigenizing a subject could look like when there is often only one right answer. The curriculum provides outcomes that specify what sorts of arithmetic skills students should bring in from previous years, and how teachers can scaffold these techniques until the students reach high school. Despite mentioning the importance of hands-on learning and focusing on meaning-making, there is very little evidence of this style of learning within the outcomes themselves, leaving educators to dig for their own resources.

In Indigenous spaces, it is rare that every individual will possess the same knowledge. Similarly, in queer communities, there is not one rigid definition of identity and sexuality. When looking at mathematics, although there may be one correct answer, there are numerous methodologies that can be used to get there. In order to promote accessibility through Indigenizing and queering, educators should celebrate and support students who may not think in the way they have been taught by adjusting pedagogies to encourage the students to discover their own ways of learning mathematics. For example, this can be done through approaching courses with a collaborative focus and asking questions of “why” and “how” rather than “yes” and “no.”

K-8 SCIENCE

Within the K-8 Science curricula, there is a theme of analyzing advancements and how these have benefited society. Through units looking at food webs and using resources to developmental advantage, students begin to understand the earth and its creatures as a hierarchy with humans on top and everything else below. Although there are aspects regarding treating nature with respect, it is contradictory to teach about sustainability while also focusing on and celebrating technological advancements in society that have been detrimental towards sustainability and conservation.

Indigenous understandings of land and water differ from the Euro-centric view of the resources on the earth.

Indigenous Peoples are stewards of the land, the relationship between Indigenous communities and the world around them is one of equality and respect. While humans and nature co-exist, Indigenous communities practiced providing for one another without taking more than what they needed. For example, in teaching students about scientific advancements, encourage them to critically think about what is necessary to human life, and what the consequences of these human actions are towards the land. To learn, grow, and develop is crucial, however building the Indigenous perspective of only taking what you need and always giving back is necessary to promoting sustainability and critical thinking skills in students.

BIOLOGY

Within the Biology units, students are expected to learn about general human anatomy and their own bodies through a binary lens. The curriculum does not include inclusive language, nor does it provide resources and guidelines for teachers apprehensive about updating their approaches to human anatomy and reproduction units. Further, there is minimal inclusion of students who belong to the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, whether it is through pronouns, hormone supplements, sexual attraction, or students who are intersex. Neglecting inclusive practices in biology as the curriculum does, prevents students from understanding themselves and keeps their peers from receiving a deeper understanding of the human body and mind.

Indigenous communities on Turtle Island have a long-standing history of individuals who did not fit the gender binary we follow now. To include students within Biology is to promote an Indigiqueer approach to understanding who we are and how we identify. As an educator, this can be done by adjusting pedagogy and language to include a variety of individuals, whether they are represented in your class or not. In personal relationships with students and in teaching strategies, this can be done by discussing the history of Indigiqueer peoples and approaching anatomy content without a binary focus. Western perspectives of science also neglect to highlight the importance of connectivity and the ties we have with the land and world around us. Inclusivity of a variety of identities can be done using Mitakuye Oyasmin, we are all related, a Dakota teaching. For example, when teaching objectively about what makes up the human biome, focus on the idea that humans are more than just tiny bits and piece of matter and encourage students to draw connections between each other and the earth around them.

CHEMISTRY

Within the Chemistry units, students learn about the relationship between compounds and elements and how understanding these can benefit human life. Despite learning about a variety of theories and equations, there is very little time spent on the people who contributed to this knowledge and honouring the knowledge from a variety of people, places, and contexts. Further, there is very little about the controversial history of many of these theories and knowledge and the complicated past of scientific inquiry and experimentation.

Indigenous communities across Turtle Island have been using plants and animals for medicinal and spiritual purposes since pre-colonization. Many of the advancements made that built the foundation of health and medicine can be attributed to Indigenous nations who shared their understandings of the world with non-Indigenous peoples. For example, as you teach about different elements, consider diving deeper into how different cultures in Turtle Island use the earth around them to heal wounds, treat illnesses, and create spiritual items or household items. In other units, consider how you could diversify your role models and sources to better represent your students by highlighting Indigenous and queer people who have benefitted to the world of science, such as Kim TallBear who is working to weave together the world of science and technology with Indigenous perspectives

PHYSICS

Within the Physics units, students learn the why, how, and what of energy and matter. Students often engage with physics through experiential learning in classroom activities and experiments but there is little in the curriculum about the importance of intentional land-based learning in physics. While students may learn about the different equations and calculations, they are often not given a chance to see how these things can be done hands-on in their own environment and context.

In Indigenous communities, youth are taught through hands-on experience. They often sit with a mentor and learn skills by observing and attempting in the same context. To help students draw connections between their everyday lives and physics, consider implementing learning on the land through the guidance of an Elder or Knowledge Keeper. For example, rather than having one-time visits or one to two classes outdoors, consider how you can incorporate the land into every lesson or unit taught through student/teacher collaboration or working with an Elder/Knowledge Keeper to form unit plans.

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are the theories being used in my classroom reflective of Indigiqueer perspectives?
2. Am I able to see where Indigiqueer perspectives overlap in these curricula? Am I always working to learn more?
3. Are my resources culturally appropriate and do they use the correct terminology?
4. Do all students feel heard in what we do in the classroom?
5. Am I honouring the Indigenous land I am teaching on and the nations around us?
6. How can I rethink STEM pedagogy to promote decolonization?

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Within the English Language Arts curricula, there are many areas where Indigenous and queer inclusion could be incorporated. Despite this, there are very little specifications on where to do this within the outcomes and strands of learning. The K-8 document has a focus on building on students existing strengths, and there are many resources given for Indigenous education. Some of the resources given for Indigenous inclusion are outdated and use terminology that is longer relevant (ie. the use of Aboriginal instead of Indigenous). In the current grade 9-12 curriculum, there is no mention of Indigenous education. For many teachers, incorporating Indigenous and queer inclusion into the classroom can be daunting. Within ELA, there are small steps that can be made within the classroom and learning context to incorporate these identities, even if there is little knowledge about these communities.

For Indigenous communities, individuals are taught through a variety of teachings, which focus on the importance of context and self-identity. In the seven teachings from Anishinaabe people, youth are taught about the seven traits to live by, and how these can be incorporated into their lives. Other nations have different core teachings, and teachers should work to include community voices so students do not assume one teaching applies to all nations. English Language Arts as a subject is generally inclusive. In early/middle years, students are encouraged to learn a variety of writing methods and are often taught to experiment with language and create new writing through storytelling and self-reflection in poetry. These documents have evidence of creating space for students to explore identity and meaning, so there is already room for incorporating the idea of identity and grounding oneself within ELA. For example, Indigiqueering ELA can exist through examples in the classroom (books, poetry, resources) and encouragements to dive deep into identity, using these findings to create literature and experiment with language.



K-8 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Within the K-8 English Language Arts curricula, there are efforts made to support Indigenous inclusion within the subject. The curriculum discusses the value of diversity in the learning experience, respecting other ways of knowing, and having material that is relevant to the context in which the learning is done. The document asks multiple reflection questions for teachers to consider their positionality, their biases, and their power in the classroom and beyond. It specifies that the goal is to teach the skills, strategies, attitudes, and behaviours related to English Language Arts. By straying away from specific, technical learning outcomes about grammar and reading, this document allows for more flexibility and responsive teaching. There is no effort to promote queer inclusion within the pedagogies or resources that are given, despite being one of the more recently published curriculums.

There are two sides to teaching ELA as described in curricula. One side looks at grammatical technique and proper usage of the English language through a Western lens. The other side focuses on literature and building techniques in reading and writing in various styles/mediums. Indigenous and queer authors have thrived in literature spaces, and it is crucial that proper support is given to members of these communities. For example, when building classroom libraries, consider how you can incorporate a variety of voices through the books chosen rather than focusing on classics or sticking with the same books each year. For students who identify as queer and/or Indigenous, these books can provide representation, and for students who do not, they can teach in an age-appropriate manner about diverse identities.

9-12 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Within the 9-12 English Language Arts curricula, there is very little to no mention of Indigenous or queer perspectives. Although the K-8 document highlights resources and ways to incorporate Indigenous worldviews into the classroom, these curricula do not share the same inclusive efforts. Out of the four ELA high-school curricula, only one document, Senior 4, mentions the use of Indigenous resources. When educators work with curricula that provides very little mention of Indigenous or queer culture and creation, this inclusion can often get brushed to the side. Further, these documents follow a strict and exclusive model of grading that focuses on reproducing students with similar thinking, rather than celebrating diverse approaches and understandings.

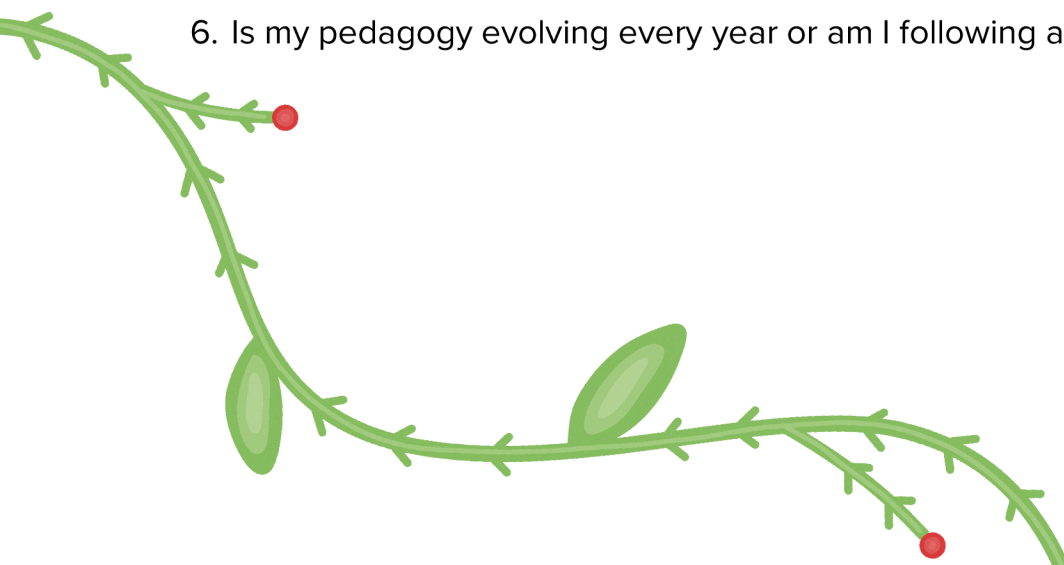
The statistics for Indigenous and queer youth in terms of graduating from high school show a significant gap for students from marginalized communities. Societal pressure, through negative stereotypes and biases, takes a toll on youth, and when their education does not have representation or understanding for these students, there is very little support for their success. Using grading models like the ones presented in the 9-12 ELA curricula prevents students from displaying their learning in a variety of ways creates significant barriers, and educators should be working to challenge traditional assessment methods. For example, rather than creating rigid rubrics and deadlines with specific expectations, allow your students to create their own rubrics and deadlines that work with their learning. Encouraging students to consider their own abilities and set realistic goals for themselves. This can help students develop an understanding of themselves and teach accountability without the fear of failure or rejection.

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do all of my students feel heard/seen in what we do and read in the classroom?
2. Am I accurately portraying Indigenous knowledges, values, and perspectives?
3. Why is it important to include Indigenous and queer perspectives in ELA learning?

Are learners aware of the why?

4. Are my resources diverse to incorporate a variety of perspectives and backgrounds?
5. Who does my assessment benefit and who does it fail?
6. Is my pedagogy evolving every year or am I following a strict routine?



RESEARCH SUMMARY

Within the Social Studies curricula, most of what learners are taught is through the eyes of the settler-colonizer perspective. The curriculum is not inclusive of perspectives from First Nations, Inuit, Métis or queer people. The history of Canada as retold in schools recalls only the building of a Confederate nation post-contact. Lessons about the land and traditional ways of life before the arrival of settlers are sparse. This tells learners that history before settlers' arrival does not matter to the same extent, despite Indigenous peoples being the original occupants of these lands. It is a clear demonstration of the inherent bias within the curriculum when it is created and executed without the genuine input of Indigenous peoples.

A recurring issue with the Social Studies curriculum is the use of pan-Indigenous learning outcomes. By lumping First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups together, we miss out on context-dependent, rich learning opportunities that arise when differentiating between Indigenous nations. Furthermore, the curriculum documents are queer-exclusive and do not encourage any learning about gender diversity and/or sexual orientation, and how those identities impact our places in society. There are many examples of queer strength and activism to teach in classrooms, such as Pride Month and its significance, the fight for marriage rights for same-sex couples, and or notable 2SLGBTQ+ figures like Uzoma Asagwara, the first non-binary person elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. There are also plenty of examples, past and present, of Indigenous, queer, and Indigiqueer people's rights being disrespected and ignored which showcases the importance of these Canadian human rights issues. We cannot continue to ignore Two-Spirit, Indigenous, and queer perspectives when aiming to promote safe, inclusive learning environments.



K-8 SOCIAL STUDIES

Within the K-8 Social Studies curriculum, Indigenous communities are defined and explained in colonial terms, where those narratives may not fit. To incorporate an Indigiqueer approach within Social Studies means making an effort to understand who people are, where they come from, and how this impacts their lives.

Certain SLO's use unclear, questionable language which can lead to important points being missed by teachers who do not have a background in or experience with Indigenous, queer studies. For example, in grade 6, students learn about Farming the Land. The four SLO's related to the topic look at agricultural practices of settlers living on homesteads in the prairies. This is a prime example of a missed opportunity to include Indigenous and queer knowledges, including how we lived off of the land for so long, taking only what was necessary, with respect, humility, and love for the land. We could also incorporate gender and sexuality teachings surrounding plant life and agriculture. There is very little mention of Inuit communities in Northern Manitoba and beyond and their impact, contributions, and stories. There is no clear differentiation within the SLO's between First Nations and Métis people and culture, nor do they highlight our similarities and related histories. To be clear, we are not advocating for more pan-Indigeneity, but instead a clearer framework for teaching about the Indigenous groups in Manitoba, who are interconnected and also unique.

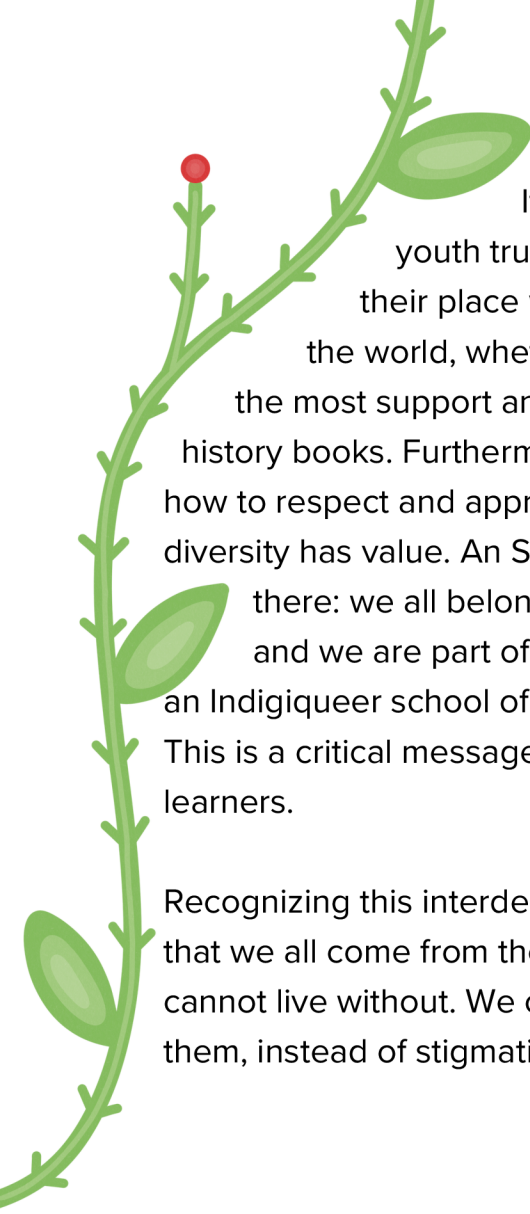
One of these interconnected groups with important ties to Winnipeg, Manitoba is the Métis nation. It is introduced and highlighted in the curriculum mainly in relation to the fur trade and the rise of Canadian nation building. This does not showcase the rich culture and history of Métis people prior to Manitoba's annexation into Canada. Our communities were powerful, adaptable, motivated, and forged meaningful relationships with First Nations and European peoples over time. Furthermore, land rights and scrip were a significant part of Métis history in relation to the Canadian government and the history of so-called Canada, yet these injustices are left out of the curriculum and we miss out on deeper learning experiences for students and educators alike that are relevant to their local context.

The curriculum is very male dominated in terms of referenced historical figures and changemakers. There is no mention of ways that women supported and spearheaded social and political change in the world. For example, women's contributions throughout World War II are ignored in grade 6. There is no mention of queer rights, fights for which have been foundational to social justice and advocating for change. Where does this leave women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people? Excluded from history and unrepresented in learning.

To be more queer-inclusive in social studies adjust pedagogy and language to include a variety of individuals. For example, this might look like asking about and respecting preferred pronouns. In personal relationships with students and in teaching strategies, this can be done by discussing the history of Indigiqueer peoples, the overlapping experiences of Indigenous and queer communities, and approaching humanities and social justice content without a binary focus and assumptions about students' identities or understandings. Make the effort to include more Indigenous and queer figures in classroom content.

9-12 SOCIAL STUDIES

Early colonization learning outcomes are not framed in a way that showcases its harms, but instead, their language makes colonization seem value neutral. It heavily focuses on the perspective of European Canadians, including highlighting those whose efforts contributed to the building of Canada. This ignores those who were displaced, exploited, and killed to do so. Though some outcomes refer to various social justice movements, there is no mention of anything to do with queer people's efforts to have their rights seen and respected on a larger scale. An example of how educator's could include Indigenous and queer perspectives into social justice/human rights conversations is by fostering meaningful discourse about the intersections of race, culture, and sexuality/gender identity. It may be useful to compare the similarities and differences, as well as intersections between, Indigenous rights movements and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movements such as land back efforts, having to fight to have our identities recognized in public policy, colonial institutions, and social spheres, and more. A particularly powerful example is the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Peoples movement. It considers the overlap between gender, sexuality, race, culture, and colonial, systemic violence faced disproportionately by marginalized groups.



It is important to note that the Senior years is often when youth truly begin to grasp the reality of their social environment, and their place within it. If we do not expose each other to the inequities in the world, whether they affect you or not, we ignore those who may need the most support and their perspectives within the learning environment and history books. Furthermore, it could be more effective to engrain within young minds how to respect and appreciate the diversity of humanity, besides simply stating that diversity has value. An SLO introduced in grade 12 states, “There is no them or over there: we all belong to the human species, our concerns are interdependent, and we are part of the natural world.” This observation is inherently aligned with an Indigiqueer school of thought yet is only introduced in the last year of schooling. This is a critical message that is suitable and understandable for most younger learners.

Recognizing this interdependence can help us to focus on the bigger picture, which is that we all come from the same mother, Mother Earth. The life force with which we cannot live without. We can embrace our differences and build each other up for them, instead of stigmatizing, shaming, or discriminating against certain identities.

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Whose perspectives dominate historical narratives in Canada?
2. How have queer and Indigenous rights movements contributed to Social Studies?
3. Do all students see themselves represented in my class content?
4. Are my expectations and assignments inclusive for a variety of learners? Who does my assessment benefit and who does it fail?
5. Why is it important to include Indigenous and queer perspectives in Social Studies learning? Are learners aware of the why?
6. Am I up to date with terminology and resources?

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As a research team, we understand the lack of resources and inaccessibility of Indigiqueer educational supports. We have created a list of starting points for educators in each mandated subject by the Manitoba Education system. These are not exhaustive, and we urge educators to continue their learning and adjusting pedagogy with a variety of sources, conversations, community engagements, and professional development opportunities. Through collaboration, strength, and resilient learning, the system can be altered to create a better system for all students.

Students deserve the right to feel seen, supported, and represented within their school systems. The work to bridge gaps in education will never be over. It is more than dedicating one lesson or unit, to mend the gaps is to re-work pedagogies and understandings of education. Do not lose hope in this work. It is difficult heart work, but it is crucial to living miyo-pimatishiwini, the good life.

We have a responsibility to honour our ancestors and create change for the generations to come. Please be aware that this document and the information within it is context-dependent, and based on our ways of knowing as Red River Métis thinkers. It may not be applicable to all nations or communities, but it is a step in decolonizing Manitoba classrooms. When we challenge the traditional methods of schooling and push for Indigiqueer perspectives of pedagogy and assessment, we inherently show students that to learn differently is something to celebrate. We invite you to walk this journey of mending the gap with us, learning from mistakes, and striving to do better.

Maarsii, Ekosáni, Miigwech, Ghaniih, Miikwech, Pidamiye, ᖃᕐᙵᓱᑦ, and thank you!
Dr.Lucy Delgado, Meghan Young, Lauren G. Hallett, and Katie Anderson

ARTIST STATEMENT



My creative process as an artist starts with connection to the story or message that is trying to be conveyed. The art throughout *Kashkikwaata lii troo: Mending the Gap* is inspired by conversations and collaboration with a strong group of Métis academics. Our work was organic, we learnt to tan fish hides alongside our weekly meetings, and maintained a focus on holistic methods. This inspired me to keep the artwork nature-based. Some of my creations, including the gap filler beadwork design, were encouraged by my research partner, Lauren Hallett. To create art is to collaborate with others and yourself. It was a pleasure connecting both creatively and academically with this resource.

Ekosani,
mînisis co. (Katie Anderson)

“Education has gotten us into this mess, and education will get us out”
- **Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair**

